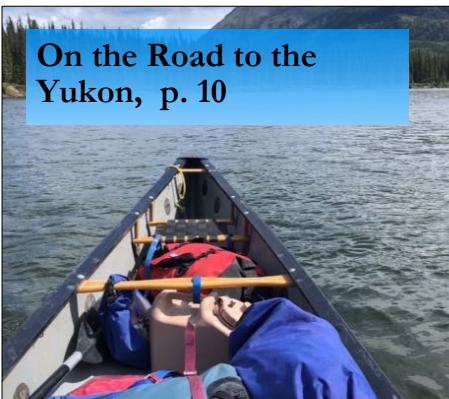




Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

September 2020

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Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



A View from the US Helm

By Robin Marshall
TARSUS Coordinator
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I am sure that most of us are taking cover from the virus, and I hope all have kept well. Time to do those jobs around our homes that we have been putting off. I have, however, had trouble with getting enough enthusiasm even to do that. Florida summers just are not enjoyable at the best of times — too hot and very humid — so outside chores are no fun.

We have turned to TV and books to pass the time, and watching other people's adventures on YouTube. I never knew there was so much to see, covering almost everything. Some videos are excellent and well done, others not so much.

You can find several sailing adventures. One we particularly like is called

Sailing Magic Carpet, produced by a young couple in a 28-ft sailboat they bought as an insurance write off after it had fallen from a crane.

He, Aladino, is a Swiss Italian and a qualified boat builder, so was quite able to restore the boat. Maya, his wife, is Canadian and a musician. They post a new video once a week, showing them sailing in the Med and on French rivers and canals. They are currently travelling through France to reach the North Sea, though the pan-

demie has delayed them a bit. Fifty years ago I would have loved to do the same, but it's great to see others fulfilling their dreams.

YouTube seems a way for people to do these things and earn enough to live on these days, which is good if you have the skill to use the many opportunities available.

I note in the last *Signals* that there are proposed changes to membership costs, with pensioners now going into the adults pricing category. We will have to wait and see what the outcome is.

Finally, congratulations to our valiant editor Simon for his award of the well-deserved AusTARS Cup. Thanks Simon for your great work.

Keep well and safe everyone.
Robin



Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator
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gallivanterthree@telus.net

Greetings Canadian TARS Members.

After threats of being **Black Spotted** I finally got myself underway and sat down once again to provide some

semblance of a newsletter for this issue of the *North Pole News*. But with yellow plague signal flags flapping all around us, this summer has been like no other for many TARS.

My personal bubble is quite small and fortunately it did not pop as I kept a slack fathom's length away from family members or good friends. It will be

more challenging when the cold weather arrives.

I do want to advise members to be on the alert for attempted electronic scams by a fraudulent, false TARS member. Recently I received an email from someone who used the name and address of a retired TARS member asking if I could help him send an

Amazon Gift Certificate for \$200.00 to his daughter. The hoaxer apparently needed my help, he wrote, because Amazon had reportedly closed his account when he had tried to send the gift certificate himself. The culprit said he would send me a personal cheque to cover the amount if I would be so kind as to send the \$200.00 for him using my Amazon account.

Immediately suspicious, I telephoned the retired member who told me his computer and email account had been hacked. Full of apologies, the legitimate retiree said Telus was working on the problem but the contents of his email address book was compromised. A few days latter I received a similar email from the same hoaxer

worded exactly the same as his first email.

* * *

Recently, an old friend and I decided that a small open boat expedition into the far reaches of Indian Arm in the waters of B.C.'s lower mainland would be exciting and would also allow us to social distance ourselves from the local native inhabitants. So we looked at our camping gear, ensured that our Thermo-Rests still held air, checked over tents, sleeping bags and my old faithful two-burner kerosene Primus stove, together with the necessary pots and pans, and purchased provisions for three days. Our open boat 'Lopstick', affectionately known as *Loppy*, is a Drascombe Lugger and would provide our sea-going transport. Loaded to the gunnels, with an additional 12 litres of gas, 20 litres of drinking water and all the gear, we launched from the trailer ramp and set off!

Of course, as is often the case the inlet was like a millpond, not a breath of wind to even ripple the glass-like surface of the sea. So the outboard motor was awoken and told off to push us sedately to the headwaters of the Arm at a steady five knots.

The shores of Indian Arm are sparsely populated and are steep with occasional alluvial fans to seaward of the few creeks entering into the Arm. A number of substantial houses and small cabins are clustered on the fans while



others are perched somewhat precariously on the rocky slopes. North of the Woodlands settlement, the habitations can only be reached by water.

Arriving at our remote camp site at Bishop Creek some two hours later we found it completely deserted, which pleased us greatly. Beaching *Loppy*, we sloshed back and forth through the shallows to the higher ground above the beach unloading our gear, still under a perfectly clear and still windless blue sky. Thus began two days of lovely warm sunny bliss. Swimming in the crystal clear water. Watching the sea otters swimming home at speed while the shore birds did their thing. Our routine was dictated by the tides as we watched to make sure *Loppy*, moored fore and aft, dried out safely on each low water on a sandy part of the shore. We hated to leave when the time came. What a perfect way to social distance!

Our return voyage to civilization took place in thick smoke which had drifted up the Arm and into our camp during our last night. The sources of the smoke were the terrible forest fires raging in the U.S. Pacific States to the south of us.

Stay well and healthy.

Best regards,
Ian Sacré





A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, sjhorn@gmail.com

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for September 2020.

Thanks for all your contributions. As so often happens, about a month before publication I think, “Oh no! Things look bleak. A 10-page issue, at best!” And then people come through and we are OK.

Of course, if Molly McGinnis ever decides that she no longer likes writing and/or cooking, all bets are off!

In this issue

In *Dipping our Hands*, **Marilyn Steele** has provided another letter from Ransome to his American illustrator, Helene Carter, this one from December 1931, when Carter was working on the pictures for *Swallowdale*.

In *Kanchenjunga's Cairn*, **Jill Blair** presents part 2 of her “Road and River Odyssey” through the Yukon to Dawson City and then south to Skagway in the Alaska panhandle.

Alistair Bryden was also in Canada's north. In “On the Road to the Yukon”, he recounts a summer canoe camping trip to visit Yukon rivers and at the same time introduces “a thoroughly Ransome-like adventurer”, R. M. Patterson, who wrote of his journeys in the Yukon and northern B. C. in books like *The Dangerous River*, about the Nahani, and *Trail to the Interior*, about adventures in the Cassiar region. (Should this be in *The Ship's Library*?)

Next, **David Elms** also adds to *The Ship's Library* with his appreciation of Hugh Brogan's biography, *The Life of Arthur Ransome*. He first picked up the book in order to learn about Ransome's time in Russia in anticipation of a now Covid-postponed Baltic

cruise. Let us all hope it works out next year.

Dot's Latest Story continues to chronicle Dot and Dick's adventures in California with a report on the “Use of locally found feathers to produce a featherboard” by “Richard Callum”. Thanks to **Molly McGinnis** for her reporting.

Beckfoot Kitchen gives us **Molly's** recipe for baked beans, which were referenced in *The Big Six* when the Death and Glories had “money to burn” thanks to the owner of the *Cachelot*. Mollie's recipe looks much better than the canned variety and, as always, she provides variations galore for the adventurous.

Lastly, in *Pieces of Eight* **Paul Nelson** introduces a story of real-life children's adventures as chronicled in *The Curve of Time*, which follows “Capi” Wylie and her five children as they cruise the waterways of coastal B. C. in a 25-foot wooden boat, *Caprice*.

The next issue is scheduled for in January 2021. Your contributions make it possible. I will send out a reminder December 1, but don't wait, start writing now.

By now you should all have received the Sept.-Oct. issue of *Signals*. If so



you may have noticed that I have been awarded the 2019 AusTARS Cup for my work on this newsletter. I greatly appreciate the recognition. Many thanks to the AusTARS Committee and to the TARS Board.

The Covid pandemic continues to disrupt all our lives. As you probably know the Society's 2020 IAGM has been cancelled as a result.

I hope you are keeping safe and, please, do your bit to keep it under control.

Take care of yourselves,
Simon

Guidelines for Submissions

Preferred document formats:
Microsoft Word (docx), Apple Pages, RTF.

Illustrations and photos:
You can indicate in your article where you would like your illustrations to appear, but please provide them separately in jpg or png formats, since they may be difficult to extract from text.

Images should be reasonably large: I can make a big photo smaller without losing quality, but I can't make a small one big!

Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

A Letter from Ransome, December 1931

Courtesy of Marilyn Steele (Damascus, MD), presented by Simon Horn

Helene Carter was American illustrator for Arthur Ransome's books. Ransome sent this letter to Carter in December 1931, when she was working on *Swallowdale*, and he was about to head off to Syria to visit the Altounyans.

As a child Marilyn Steele communicated with both Carter and Ransome. Eventually a number of Ransome's letters to his illustrator were passed on to her directly from Carter. Here is one of them.

Dec. 21, 1931.

Dear Miss Carter,

You must be thinking me all kinds of an ungrateful rogue and good for nothing. I have never been able to get and send the photographs you wanted. Partly I've been having the old troubles when trying to do journalism. Partly there's been hardly any sunshine. Between the two reasons, or at least putting the two together, a pretty good and solid excuse results. And really, I don't expect it has much mattered. The Webb farms will have showed the sort of architecture. The only thing that I really had wanted to send you was a picture of one of the stone walls. These are built without any mortar, just flat stones laid one on another, small flat stones, *very irregular split stones, limestone, or slate, flat but all sorts of shapes.* and other stones put cross ways at the top. The result of this is plenty of good stones sticking out for climbing purposes, and lots of moss everywhere and little ferns growing in the crevices. We never use wooden palings or railings. Always these loose stone walls.

But, you know, some details are bound to be different, and after all the country is a dream country though a real one, and there is nothing against it being a different country in different places

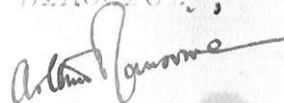
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as it is bound to be a different country to different people. All that matters is that it shall be consistent with itself. And you are far too good an artist for it to be anything else. I am looking forward no end to seeing the whole book when it comes along with your pictures to it. I am absolutely sure that you will have made it a lovely thing and a new thing, and I shall have all the pleasure of seeing it for the first time.

The safest address for me for the next six months will be care of the British Consulate, Aleppo, Syria. And it saves a lot of time on the way if you remember to write "via Stamboul" on the top of the envelope. Where I shall actually be I am not quite sure. Part of the time in Aleppo, part of the time in the mountains, part of the time in the desert, and part of the time sailing in some queer waters near the head of the Euphrates where the islands are covered with narcissus and the reeds are or so I am told ten feet high. I leave Windermere on January 6, and sail from Manchester on Jan. 9. After that, Aleppo, which will be my address until I have finished another book.

Good luck to the pictures. And a Happy New Year to you. And if there is any chance of your coming to England this year, do try to fend it off until about August or September when we shall be back.

Yours sincerely,



If the poor quality of parts of the letter makes it hard to read, remember that you can enlarge it in your PDF reader. — Ed.

Kanchenjunga's Cairn — Places we've been and our adventures

A Road and River Odyssey: Part 2

Whitehorse and Dawson City, Yukon and back vi Alaska to Prince Rupert

By Jill Blair (Vancouver, B.C.)

On our return to Whitehorse, following our exciting paddling expedition on the Tatshenshini and Alsek rivers, my friend and I laid out the map of the Yukon Territory to decide where we wanted to go next.

My small car was packed to the roof with camping gear. Fortunately we had been able to leave it at the hotel in Whitehorse during our river trip and, as it was only late August, provincial camping grounds were still open.

We headed north on Highway 2 — the Klondike Highway — towards Dawson City. Learning more about the 1898 Gold Rush and seeing first hand where it took place determined our route. Driving north, we camped beside Lake Laberge, made famous by Robert Service in his poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*.

The Cremation of Sam McGee

There are strange things done in the
midnight sun

By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret
tales

That would make your blood run
cold;

The Northern Lights have seen
queer sights,

But the queerest they ever did see
Was the night on the marge of Lake
Lebargé

I cremated Sam McGee.

Note that Robert Service changed the name from Lake Laberge to Lake Lebargé to rhyme with marge.

Continuing north we drove past Carmacks, Yukon Crossing, Pelly Cross-

ing and Stewart Crossing, camping in old mining towns and beside lakes. The Northern Lights were evident one night, although rather faint. It was little early in the season to see the lights in all their splendour.

At the Dempster Highway junction we turned northeast and drove about 70 km to Tombstone Territorial Park campground and interpretive centre. It was Labour Day weekend and, as a celebration of the end of the season, park staff had arranged various activities. We learnt to make bannock on the camp shelter stove and lotions using plants from the area and we enjoyed music and entertainment provided by local First Nations musicians. What a wonderful way to end the season. We also managed a couple of day hikes up towards North Forks pass, which is the highest point on the



Along the Dempster Highway

The Yukon River

Dempster highway. The Fall colours were beautiful as autumn approached.

Dawson City: What an experience. Instead of camping we decided to stay in a cabin, with hot showers and a comfortable bed! We walked everywhere in town, spent an evening in an 1898 style casino, visited Jack London's cabin with its many artifacts of his time there, and participated in an out-house relay race! What fun. We also crossed the Yukon river and took the Top of the World Highway towards the Alaska border. Reaching the high point, we turned back to Dawson City. We had hoped to spend a day canoeing part of the Yukon River but we had not brought our own canoe with us, and all canoe rental stores were closed for the season.

The time had come to turn south for the trip home to Vancouver. Dawson City is over 400 km north of Whitehorse, so we had rather a long way to go on our return journey. Despite it being September, we were really lucky with the weather. We always found somewhere to camp. Once we even



followed a moose along the road and saw black bears in the bush, together with marmots and pikas. We constantly tried to imagine what it would have been like for the gold miners of '98. Our original plan was to drive home via the Alaska highway but arriving back in Whitehorse we decided to take a side trip over White Pass through Carcross to Skagway. I had been to Skagway almost 40 years earli-

er when I hiked the Chilkoot trail. At that time, it was a quiet western style town with wonderful character. Nowadays it is a cruise ship destination. The drive over White Pass was beautiful. There is a really interesting desert near Carcross worthy of a visit.

Luck was with us in Skagway. Instead of driving back to the Alaska highway, we made enquires as to the possibility of driving onto the ferry for the trip to Prince Rupert, B.C. An hour or two later we were heading to Haines, Alaska, which is only an hour or so from Skagway. We disembarked and stayed in Haines overnight. The area is well known for the grizzly bears, which can be seen fishing for salmon at the mouth of the river each evening. Next afternoon it was back on another Alaska State Ferry for the trip to Juneau. As it was so late in the season, the ferries were not crowded. We had a resident naturalist on board who made the trip even more interesting. The ferry, although much more basic than a cruise ship, was very comfort-





able. We saw orcas and eagles en route. Arriving in Juneau in pouring rain about 9.00 pm we drove straight to the state park nearby. Only problem: the tent decided to leak! and we woke up to very wet sleeping bags and foam mattresses. I decided that another night in a motel was necessary in order to dry out our gear. Juneau, apart from being another cruise ship destination, is a lovely town. One can take a local bus to the glacier where there is a very interesting interpretive centre. Juneau is also the capital of Alaska.

The next night we slept in the car in the ferry carpark for a few hours as the ferry did not depart until 4.30 am. We had a cabin for the journey to Prince Rupert, calling in at Petersburg and Ketchikan on the way. We arrived the following morning so were able to spend time

in Prince Rupert visiting the First Nations Museum and Archives and the old fishing area before beginning our drive east on Highway 16.

Driving south for 2 days, we arrived at 100 Mile House. We had decided to visit a ranch nearby for some horseback riding and then drive to Clearwater, B.C. in order to rent a canoe on

Clearwater Lake in Wells Grey Provincial Park. Well worth the side trip.

Time was now catching up with us so the next day we packed up our camping gear for the last time and headed home to Vancouver. This was a trip which will stay in our memories for many years to come.

Prince Rupert



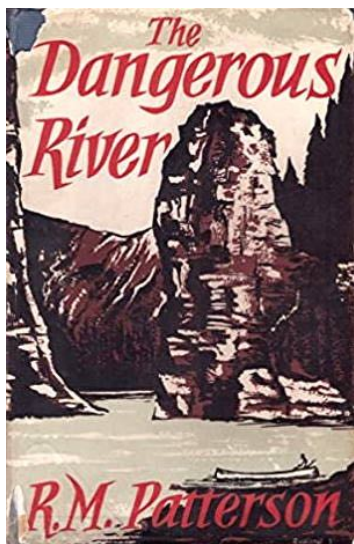
On the Road to the Yukon

By Alistair Bryden (Calgary, Alberta)

One of my all time heroes and a thoroughly “Ransome-like” adventurer is a unique character called R. M. Patterson. He was a little younger than Ransome but not by much. He would have got on very well with Captain Flint and Timothy and would be an asset around any campfire.

Patterson was educated in England at Rossland School where I believe he experienced the Lake District. He was briefly a soldier in WWI but was taken prisoner in 1917 and spent time in a German PoW camp. After repatriation, he joined the Bank of England but only lasted two years before escaping to Canada, where he started an outdoor life of energy and experience.

He homesteaded in the Peace River country and then went further north to the Yukon, where he was one of the first men to explore and trap the Na-



hanni River. He was famous for his canoeing skills and his winter travelling ability. He ran a ranch near Calgary in the 1930s and then moved to the west coast, where he owned an orchard on Vancouver Island and

staged many canoe adventures into the north of British Columbia. He recorded his adventures in a regular series of letters to his mother back in England and in his later years turned these stories into a series of books that are still in print. *The Dangerous River* about the Nahanni is his most famous book but he wrote half a dozen more that are as good.

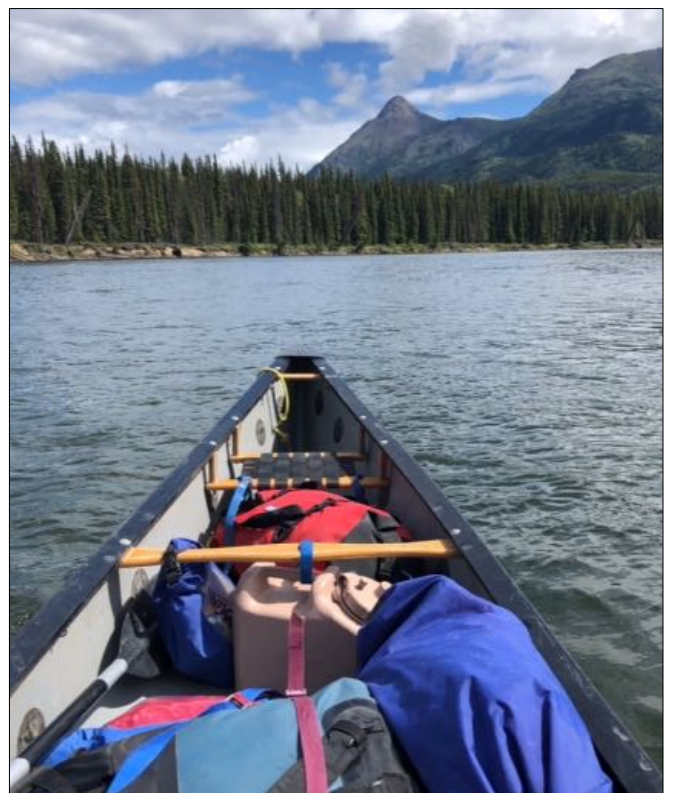
He writes with style, knowledge and experience but also with a wonderful sense of humour. Truly a great storyteller. One of his books, *Trail to the Interior*, tells the story of his adventures in the Cassiar region of Northern B.C. near the Yukon Border.

This summer with some friends, my partner and I caught the ferry from Port Hardy in Northern Vancouver Island to Prince Rupert up the famous Inside Passage. We then bicycled and drove north on the Stewart Cassiar Highway to the Yukon. The Cassiar highway, #37, is a wild, beautiful and isolated road. We saw more bears (over 50)



than people on the road (not many roads have a rest stop called Rabid Grizzly).

Among other adventures, I used my



van to haul a Native fellow and his two sons out of a ditch they had landed in with their truck after swerving to avoid a moose. They had been sitting there all night hoping someone would come along with a tow rope. They were most grateful when their truck emerged from the ditch.

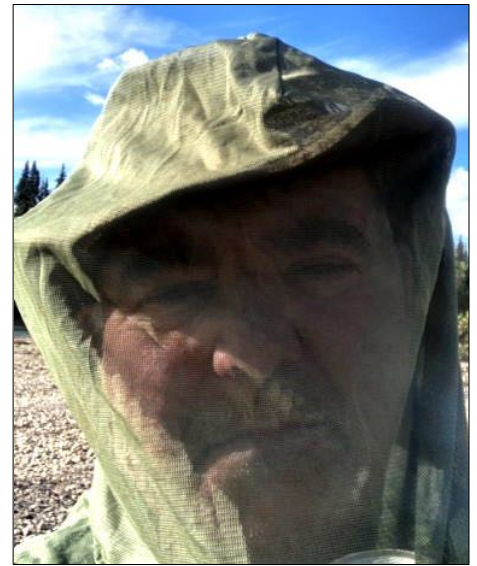
In *Trail to the Interior*, Patterson tells the story of his solo canoe trip down the Dease River, which runs from Dease Lake to the Yukon. This area the centre of a great Gold Rush in the 1870s and now there is active copper exploration in the region... sound familiar?

The route runs past ghost towns and once famous gold creeks and in the 1870s was a major transportation

route for the prospectors. However, the rush only lasted a couple of years before the prospectors moved on and the area reverted to wilderness.

I was lucky enough to be able to spend a few solo days in my canoe retracing Patterson's 160-km journey, and I didn't see another soul on the river... plenty of moose and beaver though. It was great fun being by myself on the river, camping where I chose, though it was a bad bug year and the bugs meant that I didn't linger in camp.

Go there if you can; the road is paved now but it still feels adventurous. Don't expect too much in the way of accommodation and take your bug hat and bear spray. Oh and even if you



don't go, if you want a good read, buy or borrow some books by R. M. Patterson.



Useful Links

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) website: <http://arthur-ransome.org>

All Things Ransome, a website devoted to keeping articles, artwork, and anything related to Ransome:
<http://www.allthingsransome.net>

The Arthur Ransome Wiki, an encyclopedia on Ransome, his life and works:
http://arthur-ransome.wikia.com/wiki/Arthur_Ransome_Wiki

Ship's Library — Books we've read and want to share

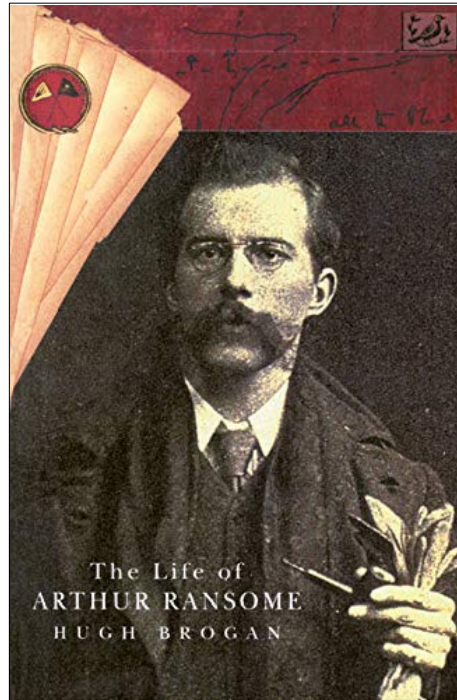
The Life of Arthur Ransome, by Hugh Brogan

Reviewed by David R. Elms (Newmarket, Ont.)

I have just finished reading Hugh Brogan's *The Life of Arthur Ransome*. My initial reason for getting the book was to learn about his time in Russia, as we had booked a Baltic cruise for July of 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the cruise was cancelled, and we have folded the funds into a booking for July 2021 with hopes for a vaccine or cure by then.

This biography commences with the birth of Arthur Mitchell Ransome on the 18th of January 1884 in Leeds, England. His "largely unremarkable" boyhood was traumatized by the death of his father in 1897 and his leaving formal education for a while at the age of seventeen. Brogan makes use of many references from Ransome's own autobiography throughout the entire book, and one can easily see Ransome's various childhood experiences in and about the northern lakes later appear within the fictional Swallows and Amazons stories.

Ransome's minimalistic "Bohemian" life as an adult in London is well described; so is his lifelong connection to the hills of Coniston, which he visited whenever opportunity permitted. His "sexual innocence" and falling in love with several women (including Barbara Collingwood, whose family would play a significant role in his future) eventually lead to him meeting Miss Ivy Constance Walker in 1908 and marrying her. As with many young romances that decision plagued him for many years and re-



sulted in alienation from his one daughter Tabitha.

In order to escape his estranged relationship with Ivy, Ransome took an assignment as a war correspondent in Russia in 1913. Brogan makes many references to personal correspondence between Ransome and his mother during this time; the closeness between Ransome and his mother attests to his dedication to family.

I must admit that the story line now gets a bit heavy, perhaps due to my personal deficiencies of Russian history. I intend to search out my old VHS of *Doctor Zhivago* (based on a novel by Boris Pasternak, first published in 1957) to support some of the historical references by Brogan. Whether Ransome was a British spy

or not is left to the reader to decide but the reality is that he became very embedded in the politics of Russia. He eventually fell in love (while still married to Ivy, who refused a divorce until 1924) with Evgenia Petrovna Shelepina who was working as the personal secretary to Leon Trotsky, a leader of the Bolshevik party during the Russian revolution.

The reading became more enjoyable with the description of Ransome's boating history and adventures around the coastlines of the Baltic. My next read became Ransome's "Racundra's First Cruise". Of course, with the creation and development of the S&A characters and their subsequent stories, these books became the most enjoyable to read, especially as I have visited the northern Lakes, Walton on the Naze and the Norfolk Broads. Brogan's annotations along with Ransome's descriptions have only added to my desire to revisit those places when time, finances and pandemic permit. The paperback edition of the biography that I read contained several wonderful black and white photographs, some over 100 years old.

I did have a bit of a tear at the end of the book, and due to the fact that he died on my 17th birthday (I knew that years ago after visiting the Rusland church).

I would wholeheartedly recommend the read to any S&A fan.

Dot's Latest Story — Your S&A-inspired writing

Dot and Dick in California

“Edited” by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

Important Note from Molly!

Though some names used below are real, all other details are strictly fictional. Neither the professors nor Dick's neighbor Karen have ever lived in Davis, California, or had anything whatever to do with UC Davis. Karen's name is used with her permission and the two professors memorialized here died many years ago.

Dick will explain why his project is written up as a scientific paper.

Use of locally found feathers to produce a featherboard

Richard Callum
Davis, California

Abstract

Fallen feathers were collected from the author's yard and nearby sites and attached to an 8 1/2 x 11" backing. Attempts to identify the birds from which the feathers had fallen were made, based on observations and identification of the birds present on the sites. The final collection will be placed in an inexpensive frame to flatten the feathers for ease of examination and to help preserve them.

Introduction

As fall approaches, birds begin to molt their bright breeding season feathers as their drab winter feathers begin to grow in. Fallen feathers were suddenly abundant after a summer in which very few feathers could be found, and the brighter breeding plumage of the feathers often helped identification.

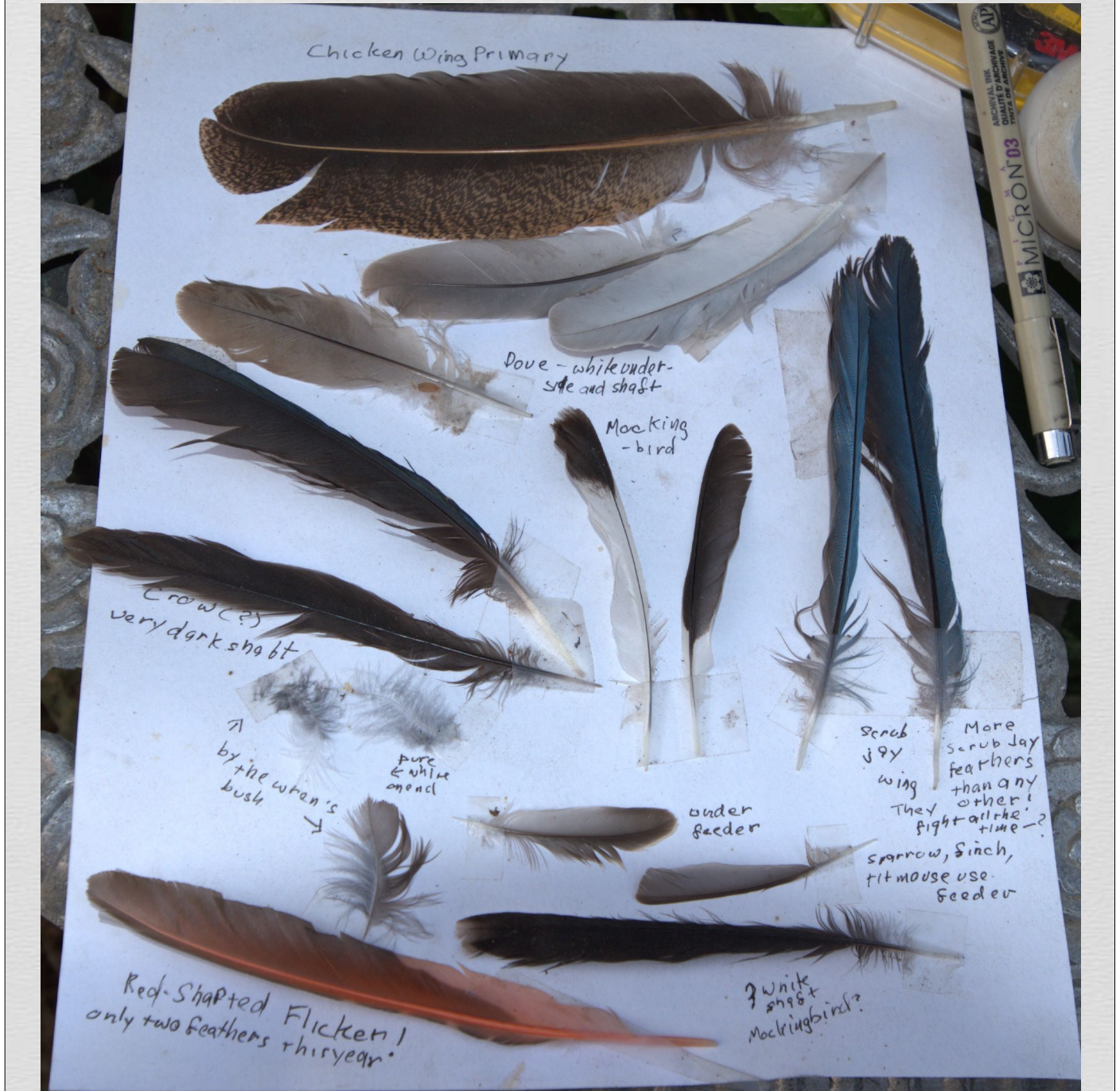
Methods and Materials

1. Neenah Exact Index 110 lb 8 1/2 bt 11 inch (letter size) Premium Cardstock was used for attaching the feathers, but any size and any kind of stiff paper of a neutral color will work.
2. The author wished to be able to move the feathers about as they were collected and annotated and used Scotch 'Magic' (matte finish) tape, with occasional pieces of removable double-stick tape to help keep feathers flat. The feathers could be adjusted slightly after taping, and the non-removable tape peeled cleanly from the hard-surfaced cardstock used. Many other adhesives could be tried: white glue, rubber cement, quick-set epoxy and hot glue in a glue pen are possibilities. A glue stick with "post-it" type glue didn't hold the feathers well on a rougher-surfaced paper, but might work on smooth card stock.
3. For precision, the tape was cut with a pair of sharp scissors. The ends of lengths of tape stuck to the edge of the work table made cutting appropriate pieces easier and faster. (Note: if the nature of the work surface's finish is uncertain, a trial in an inconspicuous place should be

made to make sure that the tape won't take the finish off.)

4. Notes were made directly on the card stock with a Pigma Archival Ink Micron 03 .35mm pen as feathers were attached, in effect making the display board serve as an illustrated field note page.

5. The completed featherboard will be inserted into an inexpensive frame or sandwiched between a piece of thin transparent plastic and a stiff backing secured with tape for display and storage.



Results

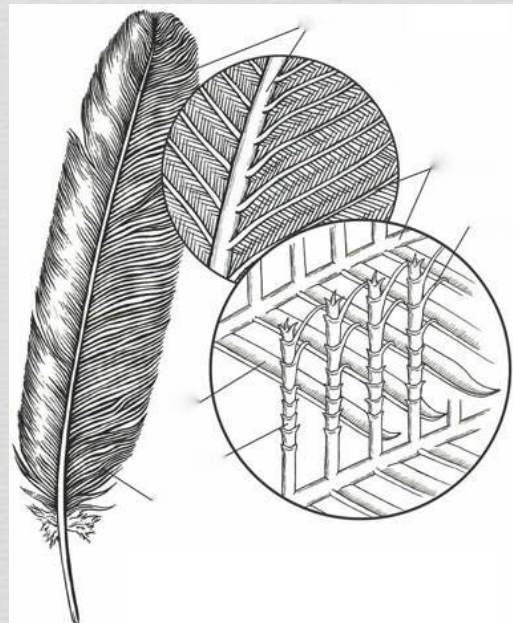
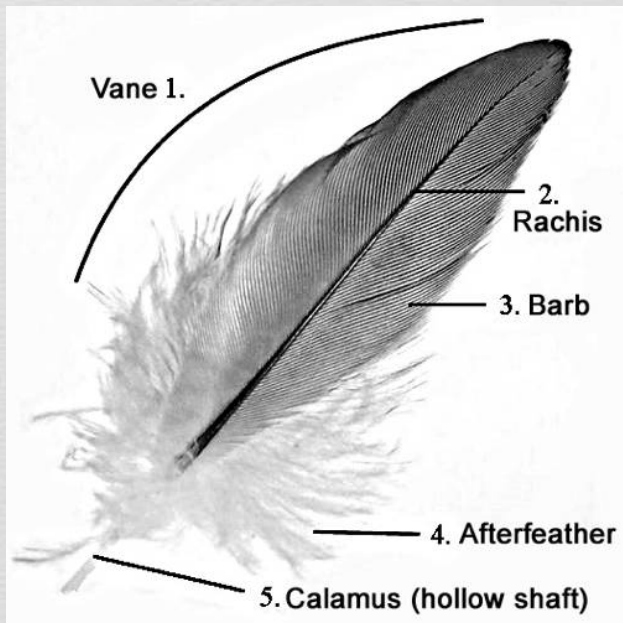
Featherboard in progress, with feathers of introduced birds (chicken and dove) placed and labelled at the top, those with doubtful or ambiguous identifications at the bottom, and feathers of known and distinctive birds in the center. Note that the bright optical blue of the Scrub Jay feathers doesn't show well in the photo, but is quite apparent when viewed directly.

Discussion

Birds observed on the sites were identified with the help of several field guides, Professor Stoner B. Haven, and longtime local resident Karen (who prefers her last name not be used). In one case a cluster of feathers from a hawk or owl kill was easily identified as from one of the two doves known to live nearby.

The birds most often present in early fall include two species of dove (Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*, and Eurasian Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*), American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*), California Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) and possibly similar finches, and one or more species of wren (*Troglodytes*), House ("English") Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

Scrub Jay feathers were by far the most abundant. Like other Corvids (Crow family birds), Scrub Jays all but disappeared from the area following the onset of the West Nile virus and are now in recovery. They fight each other more than any of the other birds (pers. comm., Karen) perhaps because they're regaining territories (pers. comm., Dr. Stoner B Haven).



Feathers found under the sunflower feeder were assumed to be those of House or Purple Finches or House Sparrow, the only summer residents seen at the feeder.

Spotted Towhees (*Pipilo maculatus*), California Quail (*Callipepla californica*), Coopers' Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*), and Barn and Great Horned Owls (*Tyto Alba* and *Bubo virginianus*) are often seen and heard, but no identifiable feathers were collected.

Lastly, the city of Davis allows residents to keep up to three hens (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), and our neighbor and fellow bird observer Karen kindly contributed feathers from her Araucana laying hens. These proved very helpful for comparing with found feathers' shapes and coloring. The author used the above diagrams to acquaint himself with feather parts, but no attempt was made to identify the feathers by type (wing, tail, contour, primary, secondary, etc).

Some feathers were worn and disheveled and needed gentle grooming by smoothing outward from the rachis between thumb and finger. As shown in the diagram on the right (previous page), the barb feathers interlock with tiny hooks to keep the vane together and the feather flightworthy.

Author's note: This first trial collection and project helped the author learn about local birds. At the suggestion of Dr. Haven, who says I'm obviously going to write many scientific papers in my life and may as well start now, I've attempted to put my writeup into the form of a standard scientific paper. It was hard at first, but really working to this plan made describing the project simpler, and having had to put what I did in order according to the form will help me design future scientific projects, so it turned out to be a very good suggestion.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Karen, who not only contributed feathers but her knowledge and observations of the local birds to my project.

And to Dr. Stoner B. Haven, Assistant Professor of Biology, UC Davis, who has been so generous with his time and knowledge, and even gave me the bird book that's now my favorite, *Robbins's Birds of North America*.

And to Dr. Howard L. Cogswell, Professor of Ornithology, University of California at Davis, who allowed me to work with his collection of museum skins to help with identification of the feathers collected.

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Beckfoot Kitchen — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

Baked Beans

by Molly McGinnis (Manteca, California)

“And what about tins of beans?” said Bill.” (*The Big Six*)

Well, what about them? The D&G’s beans are the only dry or tinned beans in the S&A’s books, but tinned baked beans have been a British staple since the early 1900’s, and they’re easy to make at home.

Bake them in a low oven, simmer on the stove or in a slow cooker, put them in a Dutch Oven and bury it in the banked ash and coals of a fireplace or campfire—and sea-

sonings are almost as flexible as cooking methods.

Susan could have buried a Dutch oven of soaked, seasoned beans in the banked campfire to cook overnight and given the crew hot baked beans on toast for breakfast.

(Note that British tins and American tinned beans aren’t alike, and the New England classic of this recipe isn’t like either.)



Baking beans: Small whites, Yellow Eye, Soldier, Jacob’s Cattle, Swedish Brown (Maine favorites)

The first baked beans I ever really liked I made from a recipe in Linda Greenlaw’s *Recipes from a Very Small Island* and my recipe is based on hers. These beans are medium sweet, good for a first trial.

Total work time: about 10 minutes even though the whole process can take 12 hours or more. The beans will bake for

several hours at about 300°F. Servings? At least four as a side dish. For dinner? Two to four depending on accompaniments and appetites.

Leftovers keep for at least a week if sealed into a zipper plastic bag, and baked beans freeze well too.

Prepare:

The Beans

Small white beans are easiest to start with. All supermarkets have some kind, whether they’re labeled Great Northern, Navy Beans, Pea Beans, or Small Whites.

Equipment

For soaking: a quart mason jar, bowl, or yoghurt container

For cooking: have ready:

Measuring spoons

One-cup measuring cup
(1/4 c measuring cup)

5-6 cup baking dish:

Soufflé dish Casserole
8x8” baking pan bean pot, or
Pyrex mixing bowl

Lid or foil to cover the
baking dish

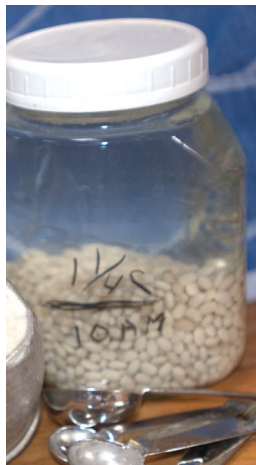
Teakettle or saucepan for
heating water

Now begin:

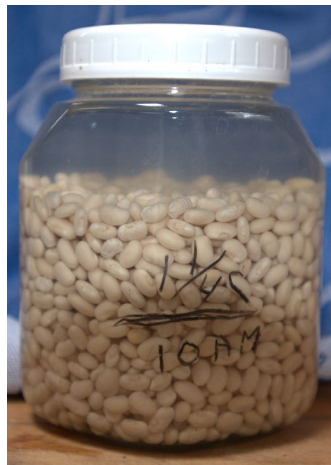
Pour 1 1/4 cups of beans into a quart container. Rinse any dust off: fill with water, shake or stir, and quickly pour the water off. My hand makes a perfect strainer for a can-

ning jar, or use a sieve or small colander (try holding it upside down over the jar Julia Child style). The strainer should only need rinsing afterward.

Fill the container with water again



Soak 4 hours to overnight



The beans may need loosening with a fork or chopstick a time or two so they don't pack together tightly.

Put It Together:

My Recipe

Have ready:

4 T (1/4 c) maple syrup

2-3 T brown sugar

2 T blackstrap molasses

1 tsp each dry mustard & ginger

few grinds pepper

(1/4-1/2 tsp salt)

Whole cloves (for the onion)

Onion: see photo below

I had half an onion cut, so I used a bit from the middle and a few outer layers cut into squares. Nail the onion layers together with a clove or two.

Or use what you have

For instance, substitute

1/4 c brown sugar (light, dark, or a mix)

1 or 2 T any dark molasses

or

1/3 c (5 1/2 T) brown sugar(s)

Seasonings: substitute

2 tsp prepared mustard

Tiny pinch ground clove

Omit ginger (or grate a bit of fresh in)

Add Salt Pork (see below)

New England beans use the onion to flavor, not to eat. A pinch of dried onion powder?

Variations (untried)

Many recipes also add

1-2 T ketchup

or

2 T tomato paste

or

1/4 c tomato sauce

or even

2 T vinegar

The goal seems to be “just like canned.”

You'll top off the beans with boiling water or soaking water, so start it now. 2 cups should be enough. Pour the soaking water off the beans (into a saucepan if using for cooking liquid), put the wet beans – a little soaking water

with them is okay – into the baking dish, and follow the photos. See above for quantities.

Start the oven at 300°F. You can turn it down to 250°F once the beans start to boil.

Sprinkle mustard & ginger



All the sweetening



Onion ready to bury



2 layers non-stick foil



The order really doesn't matter much

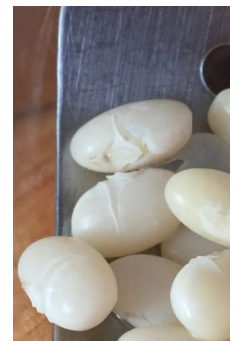
Give a gentle stir as you add seasonings, to disperse lumps, then a more thorough stir to mix everything in. **Then** add the prepared onion. Add boiling liquid – new water or soaking water – to about 1/2" over the top of the beans, cover tightly, put in the middle rack of the oven, and bake 6 hours or until the beans are tender. Peek every few hours and top up with more boiling water if needed. If too much water evaporates and the top beans dry, cover them with beans from further down (and add water!). Keep the beans warm as low as your oven goes (145-150 °F is a good temperature) until ready to serve.

No oven? Bake your beans in a crockpot or other slow cooker, or simmer them on top of the stove (heavy pot, "asbestos" mat). I've done both these, times when I didn't have an oven.

Quick-soak? Often recommended but I don't see the point for beans that soak up in 4 hours. Boil about 6 cups of water for every cup of beans. Drop them, a few at a time, into the boiling water, so it keeps on the boil. Turn off the heat and let stand for 2 hours. There's one thing, though—it's said that this dissolves out polysaccharides, and if you then cook in new water the 'musical' quality of beans is reduced.

Not enough freeboard!

Speed it up? Maybe. This is the tradition for baked beans and Navy bean soup: I quick-soaked a test batch of beans and simmered about 20 minutes, until the skins split when I blew on a spoonful, then seasoned and baked as above. The beans seemed to take about the same time to get tender, and I thought the texture was less lively. And there was one more pot to wash. So this is a "no" for me. You may find it convenient.



Ready to bake

Rocks, mud, and tough skins: Sometimes organic beans aren't very well sorted and cleaned. Pour a layer of beans onto a big plain-colored plate and, with your fingers, skitter a few beans at a time into a colander, leaving rocks and mud lumps behind. Rinse. Tough skins? That's from calcium in hard water. A pinch of soda will help soften the skins but be sure to rinse the beans and use new water. Some add to soaking water, some to par-boiling water.



Are You on Facebook?

Despite the many problems with Facebook, it does enable groups of like-minded people to share and exchange. (These are the groups I can find. Let me know if you find any others — Ed.)

The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/762560473886537/
(This is a closed group, so you will have to ask to join.)

Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons in North America: www.facebook.com/groups/tarsfriends/

The Arthur Ransome Society in New Zealand & Australia: www.facebook.com/tarsnz/

The Arthur Ransome Group: www.facebook.com/groups/2612950856/



Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



The Curve of Time by M. Wylie Blanchet

A book review, with introduction,
by Paul Nelson (New Orleans)

Many cities have streets, Many cities have cars, but just few have “Streetcars”, at least that is what we call them here in New Orleans. These are 1920 vintage cars that ride on seven miles of tracks that follow the curve of our mighty Mississippi River.



From our downtown business section, through a bit of commercial, and then passing under a tall live oak tree canopy, with mansions on each side of our St. Charles Avenue, it is a 40-minute ride: start to finish. 600 volts of DC electric is fed thru the top wires down thru the motors and to the grounded steel rails.

If the humidity is just right and the night fog is close to the ground, one can stand by the tracks and see the electric magic sparking from the steel wheels.

So, where is the book review? It is coming. What we have here is a collision of 1920 stars:

First, Arthur Ransome started the S&A series in late 1920...

Second, *The Curve of Time* is a book of true-life children’s adventures in the 1920s...

Third: the streetcars were all made in 1920. And it takes just about 80 minutes (a round trip) to read one chapter in *The Curve of Time*. A delightful ride and read!

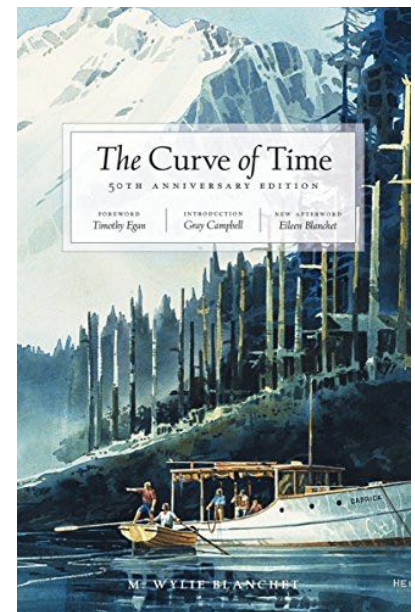
A prelude to the book:

Geoffrey and Wylie Blanchet lived on the East Coast of Canada. Due to multiple financial and health issues, in 1922 they decided to move all the way to the West Coast!. House items were shipped but mom and pop loaded up themselves and the children in a 1922 Willy-Knight Touring car... also known as the Baby Overland Special. The children recall the flapping curtains and the “great top that folded down like an elephant sitting down”.



Weeks later the family arrived in British Columbia and bought a house on Curteis Point, Vancouver Island. Alas, within a few years Geoffrey died, leaving Wylie with an empty

heart, five children and a 25-foot wooden boat, *Caprice*. And here is where *The Curve of Time* begins.



Summer in the British Columbia waterways is the most perfect cruising time and place. So, Wylie, now boat captain, engineer, navigator — and now called Capi — headed out each summer to explore the many islands and inlets of the area, while learning of the old native Indian villages. Raging storms, close encounters with orcas, massive tides, engine issues, and wild animals all add to the experiences and challenges for this close-knit family.

One summer they had a book on board: *The Fourth Dimension*, the fourth dimension being Time, by Maurice Maeterlinck. The author be-



lieved that “we” can stand on a curve of time and see not only the current happenings but also look behind and forward, but only just so far, as the curve prevents us from seeing too much. BUT, he also believes that in our dreams we can see beyond the curve to our future.

The stage is now set for one of the exciting chapters in this book. It is 3 a.m., and Capi awakes in a cold sweat. She has just had the most terrifying dream. *Caprice* was anchored in a calm inlet, breakfast had been completed, dishes washed in the salt water. The skiff had been brought along side, children loaded along with small exploring shovels and Capi too with a basket for blueberry picking in the forest above the shore line. Then, as she was picking berries, she heard her children screaming as they were being attacked by some wild animal. At that

point she awoke from her dream with a pounding heart about to burst. But just a dream. So she tried, without success, to go back to sleep.

The next morning real life started much the same as the dream, which she had forgotten. She was getting breakfast and children dressed for a lovely day on the beach and berry picking.

Safe on the beach, the skiff was dragged up the shore to prevent the rising tide from floating it away. Kids were playing and Capi headed up into the forest for the best berries. She was up about a mile, making good progress filling her basket, when her horrific dream came front and center into her mind. Dropping her basket she went racing down toward the beach thru the brambles and thickets of the forest. Reaching the beach full of scratches and blood her children

looked with amazement at their mother. “Is everybody alright?” Yes, they were, but they did say that a very interesting man had been watching them for a few minutes. He was dressed all in black and standing very tall and very still. Capi looked and in her most quiet and most firm voice told all her children to walk, NOT run, to the skiff. The look on their mother’s face with as intense as they had ever seen. Walk they did, and tried to push the skiff into the water. But the tide had fallen and the boat was stuck firm – and by that time the tall man dressed in black had turned into a 300-pound black bear charging toward the little family. Was the dream coming true?... Read the book and find out for yourself!

Originally published in 1961, The Curve of Time is still in print. Ed.

***Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* is a joint publication of TARSUS (The Arthur Ransome Society USA) and TARS Canada.**

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