

HOW WE FOUND JOE FRIDAY

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1990 7

Over fifty years ago I had seen bears swimming across beautiful lakes, Indians paddling canoes on swift rivers thru deep forests, beaver slapping their tails on the water and heard big fish jumping during the night. It was not only a boy's dream but it was real. I thought of Martha, my sweetheart. Boy, I'll bring her up here on our honeymoon. Alas, the Navy got me first, but when the war was over the great day came, delayed several years to be sure.

It was in August that three people in a well packed canvas canoe paddled west into Lake Timagami (meaning deep water). Believe it or not, we had taken my dad along on our honeymoon. He weighed over two hundred pounds, pushing the prow of the canoe down in the water, while I weighed about one hundred and forty pounds at the stern where I sat high out of the water. Little Martha in the middle made very little difference in balance. This must have amused the Indians who saw us start out and certainly did not help me when we hit the storm later.

We had two tents. Dad's was a boy scout pup tent. His feet stuck way outside when he slept. It was really the first time that he and I had ever camped together. He had been too busy. I was amazed; he was such fun and a good sport to boot. How much we had missed. In all his years he had never caught such fish as these landlocked salmon. We used copper wire for lines and brought the fish up from the deep water. They were as cold as ice.

One day we paddled from our forest island camp-site and headed for Bear Island Indian Village fifteen miles away. There was a Hudson Bay Fur Co. post there too. As we were coming into view of the island, when a sudden storm roared out of the forest ahead into our big lake. Water rolled into the canoe right over Dad. It would soon fill the canoe. There was no chance to proceed. Turning about in the trough was dangerous now, but it had to be done before we swamped. Fortunately, we had just passed a small island. WE managed to turn safely and crash landed thru the waves on its rocky shore, drenched to the skin but safe. Turning the canoe on the rocky shelf of stone, we crawled under until the storm ended. The only casualty was my fingernail which hung by a shred after I had caught it on the edge of the gunnel while paddling.

gunnel

Again we headed for Bear Island which we could see several miles from us now. A crowd of people were on the dock. As we drew near someone spouted, "What are you doing up here Keltner?" I was astounded since I knew no one in this country. Several hands pulled us ashore and then I recognized a former Buffalo man. He said, "I have turned missionary to the Indians, meet my first church member." I turned to shake hands with a tall dark smiling Indian. It was Joe Friday. Joe said "We saw the storm hit you out there and then all of a sudden you were out of sight in the waves. We thought that you had gone under and were getting ready to search until we saw you again on the way here. Come on up to the cabin and my wife will fix your finger".

Such a welcome; Indians and white people all talking together; children shouting and laughing; dogs barking and jumping up on us. I did not know it then, but here was Indian Guides in the making. Here was my dad whose companionship I had craved as a youth; here was Martha who had called the first Indian Guide tribe together and saved my first <sup>draft</sup> ~~draught~~ of the manual from oblivion and here was Joe our inspiration.

As we hiked up the hill to the cabin, we were surrounded by dogs of every color and size. One mongrel jumped up on me, "what's this dog's name?" I asked Joe. He grinned, "We call him Dow-wogen; which means, for Sale." Soon we were at the cabin and to our surprise found that Joe's white wife was a graduate nurse who soon repaired the finger. Here we also found Brave, the big sled dog and leader of the dog team. He was a beautiful big white animal, part dog and part wolf. He figured in many a dog story of the north. Several years later Joe came down to the States and helped us to spread Indian Guides and tell us of many stories of his own people.

Harold S. Keltner  
January 1970