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## Cross Country Canoeists in Old Town at the End of 5,000 Mile Trip

WLBZ Radio

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**University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department**

Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Cross Country Canoeists in Old Town at the End of 5,000 Mile Trip

Date: November 11, 1957

Recording number: Tape 35, part 3

Length of recording: 6:42

[transcript begins]

BILL MINCHER: The following material was recorded at the Anchorage Hotel in Old Town on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1957, when the four canoeists whose exploits are described shortly arrived on their, at the end of their long, long journey from Denver, Colorado.

[A few seconds of silence]

First of all, a welcome home to Old Town on this long, long journey for two canoes which were built here. And all of the, all of you people were from different parts of the country. Why don't I pass the mic around here and if you say your name and where you're from, perhaps we can get that established first thing.

SODERSTROM: I'm Red Soderstrom from Aspen, Colorado.

RICKERS: Earl Rickers from Chester, California.

VESTAL: I'm Ed Vestal from Aspen, Colorado.

HEWEY: I'm Gerry Hewey from Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

MINCHER: Cape Elizabeth. We've been paying most of attention to you, Gerry, because one of our home town boys here. I want to find out something about your trip. What would you say was the toughest day that you had? Anybody got an answer?

ONE OF THE CANOEISTS: Well it's rather difficult to find out which is the toughest day because there were a lot of them that were awfully rough.

MINCHER: Was there anything that you had, uh... what sort of difficulties did you run into?

ONE OF THE CANOEISTS: Well, it was low water, high water, storms, sun. I mean when you're outside for six months, you hit just about everything. And low water, I expect we'd say, was one of the toughest things.

MINCHER: Of course that would run you into danger in rapids and shallow water, rocks and so forth?

CANOEIST: Correct, yeah.

MINCHER: What would you say was the easiest day?

CANOEIST: There wasn't anything easy. [All laugh]

MINCHER: Was there any one of them that, any one of the days, that stands out as being perhaps a little bit easier than the rest of them? Or how about this one, the last one? You were glad to get it over with?

VESTAL: Well, yes, I guess you could say if anything was easy, it would be the last few days when we had all our low water problems and tough portages over with, and now the homestretch is in view and and nothing, practically, could stop us.

MINCHER: That was Ed Vestal. Now let's find out what was the longest portage? How about Red Soderstrom for this one?

SODERSTROM: The longest portage, Bill, I would say it was the one that we made between St. George, up in Quebec over to Portage Lake, some 30 miles where we pushed a trailer, push-pulled, and got it up somehow, I don't know how. That, in my estimation is the toughest, toughest portage I would ever want to go through again.

MINCHER: How much gear did you have with you? Mr. Rickers.

RICKERS: Well, by weight, I would say that our gear weighed...

MINCHER: A few tons?

RICKERS: Oh, it felt like it, of course, [laughter] but, been between 250 and 300 pounds, besides the canoe, for each canoe.

MINCHER: Total? In other words, about 500 pounds? Plus the canoes.

RICKERS: Right. Five hundred pounds of luggage plus the canoes.

MINCHER: Did you find that most of the material that you brought with you, you had to keep, in other words, if you wore out a pair of shoes, of course, you'd have to replace them. And did you find out that most of the other stuff you started out with had to be replaced?

RICKERS: Strangely enough, most of our things lasted through the trip. Clothing was a thing that wore out and we took an axe on the trip which we never used. And we finally discarded that because we were using machetes. They were much the handier instrument and by far lighter.

MINCHER: How much of the time did you have to camp outdoors and actually stay outdoors? Did you have many, I know that when you arrived in Maine, in Millinocket, for example, you did have a night in a hotel. Were there many occasions like that along the way?

RICKERS: That's right. Well, I would say there were only two or three occasions on which we were staying indoors. Well, maybe four occasions which we stayed indoors, and the rest of the time we were out sleeping in our hammocks or on the ground.

MINCHER: Anybody can see that by looking at your complexions because you're all red, windburned and probably some sun even though the sun isn't at it's height around this time of year. How many people did you run into along the way? I know several points here in Maine you have come into communities which have held celebrations as you arrived on the way through. Did you have many of those? Red?

SODERSTROM: No, we didn't. As a matter of fact we were pretty much on our own all the way until we came into Maine. The first, really, celebration-type greeting that we had was up in Millinocket where they turned out a fantastic greeting for us when we came in. It was a school band and everybody.

MINCHER: Now one thing more, two things more. First, and let's make a round robin out of this one again, too. I'd like to ask each one of you what made you decide on this trip in the first place, and second place, what plans do you have for your beards, which are very luxurious? Red first.

SODERSTROM: Well, it sounded like a good trip and it didn't take long to talk me into it. I saw the possibilities, and so much for that. As far as the beard goes, I think I'll keep it for a while, but I think I have to get rid of it before the winter season starts.

MINCHER: Whose idea was this originally?

SODERSTROM: This is Ed's idea.

CANOEIST: You can blame it on him

MINCHER: Ok, and now over to, is it Earl Ricker?

RICKERS: That's right, Earl Rickers. Well I'm, uh, I wanted to go on the trip because I'm an adventurer at heart, a geologist by trade, and a writer by intent. And this trip has almost all of those involved in it.

MINCHER: And now how about your...

RICKERS: Oh, as far as the beard goes, well I'm probably one person who wants to keep his beard, although in a far more dignified form than it is presently. [laughter] This bush is rather, rather shaggy and has all sorts of things in it and I think I'll have it trimmed down to where I can keep track of what's going on.

MINCHER: Okay, now to the originator of the idea, Ed Vestal.

VESTAL: Yeah, Bill, of course I had to go on the trip because it was my idea. And as for my beard, well, my fiancé tells me that it's got to go.

MINCHER: I guess that's the answer to that one and now to Maine's Gerry Hewey.

HEWEY: Well, it's one way of getting home. And it's kind of a long way, but we've enjoyed it a lot, and it's adventure, outdoors and of course coming from Maine I'm kind of used to that kind of stuff. As far as the beard is concerned, well I think we'll probably keep it until people get tired of looking at it.

MINCHER: Ah, that's a good enough answer. OK, thanks a lot fellas and I know that you a lot to take care of here now, so best wishes.

ALL: Thank you, thank you.

[transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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