

Day Two, Saturday, August 2, 2008

I woke up at 5 am refreshed, a bit stiff in the shoulders but not too bad at all. Chris was already up and starting a fire. Small Cedar branches are too damp to ignite, but birch bark stripped thin, burns like crazy and in no time we are staring at the coffee pot waiting for the first perk. As we waited we heard a large splash that sounded like someone doing a canon ball dive into the water. We walked over to the shore to see what it was and were excited to see a beaver swimming across the lake. We had one pot finished by the time Allan and Cathy surfaced. After his coffee, Allan decided to pump some water. He thought it was going a little too slowly so he took the pump apart to clean it to improve the water flow. We heard him exclaim and harrumph and knew there was a problem. He dropped a piece to the pump. He searched and then Chris joined in the search. By this time the bacon and eggs were ready for breakfast so they stopped their hunt long enough to eat. After we finished eating Cathy and I volunteered to help with the search. I ran up the hill to get my flashlight to look better into the dark shadowed water where we thought the piece had fallen. As I returned I thought about the expression "always check the obvious first." The obvious was the land not the water. If the tiny piece had flipped out of his hand it would have gone up to the shore not down into the water. With this theory in mind as soon as I got back to the hunting ground, my eyes made a quick pass through the grass and sticks and brush and sitting right there was the missing piece. I presented it to Allan and he was pleased. However, he was mad at himself for doing the cleaning in such a precarious position. Accidents happen and we are always harder on ourselves than we need to be.

We made a second pot of coffee and began cleaning up breakfast. Well fed and rested, we felt ready for our portage. So we broke down the camp, loaded the canoes, and after Chris did a once around check we headed out for Silver Falls Portage, just five-eighths of a mile away.

When we arrived at the portage, we staged all of our gear off to the side of the trail as we knew it would take us several trips to get across. We were not traveling light. We knew we would have a base camp without a lot of portages, so we decided one big long portage would be okay. Allan helped me load up my back pack and Chris grabbed the first canoe, threw it on his shoulders and the guys took off. I helped Cathy load her back pack and then we headed up the path. I remembered the ranger at Cache Bay saying that the first downhill section of the path was the most difficult. So at the fork at the beginning of the trail, without thinking I headed down hill with Cathy following me.

The path I chose was definitely not the portage path, we were on a dangerous and narrow thrill seekers glimpse of the waterfall path. As I write this, I am still beating myself up for being so stupid as to think anyone could have managed a canoe through the path we were maneuvering. I realized the mistake and told Cathy to sit down while I went to get Allan to help us. I had taken Cathy's pack further along to help her and then accidentally dropped it down the hill toward the falls. It wedged in between some rocks and trees. As I went to get help, I spotted Allan and shouted that we were in trouble. He knew we were off the trail somewhere and had come down the slope looking for us. He retrieved the fallen pack and we climbed and clawed our way back out of the dangerous path. I cried, when we were safe, feeling so bad for my decision to go the wrong way. Allan felt bad for not staying with us to show us the right way. My tears relieved my anxiety, but Cathy's anxiety produced difficulty in breathing. She sat and rested. Allan asked us if we wanted to abort the trip and we both said no, not at all. Valuable

lesson learned about trusting our instincts, if the path is too narrow for a canoe to maneuver through, it is not the portage path. I wiped my eyes and began hauling packs.

The first section of the portage is rough, up and down, twisting and winding the ground covered with many rocks. The plan was that I'd get all of the packs past the roughest point and Allan and Cathy would take them from this spot about 1/3 of the way down the portage where the trail was less treacherous. By this time Chris had both canoes all the way over to the other side and he was on his third trip with his pack. I made three trips just fine hauling the packs, but I was getting tired. Instead of resting I kept at it and as I was heading back for my fourth trip I slipped and fell. My knee went one way and snapped, and my ankle went another way and snapped. I cried again. Sitting there collecting myself I prayed that I could stand and that nothing would be broken. I held my breath as I pulled myself up hopeful that my leg would hold me up. I still saw stars as I put my weight on my right leg, but I was able to walk even though limping a bit. I had three more packs to get. I put one on my back and headed back up the trail. As I climbed the first rise, I felt something snap again in my ankle, but I kept moving. I knew if I stopped it would swell and I'd be useless. So I kept moving. I was lucky there was no break. We got all of the packs across finally. This portage measures out at 616 yards. Chris was supposed to only do three trips but I think he made five. Thank God for his youth and strong muscles. Cathy was beginning to feel better and we got the canoes loaded and shoved off again. We were all happy to have the worst part of our trip behind us.

We decided to paddle to someplace close to have lunch and then go on to find our campsite. We stopped at an island; Allan named it Gull Island because there was a seagull sitting there as we arrived. We ate our tuna stuffed pitas, plums and M & M's standing up because there were a million ants everywhere on the ground, which was clearly not used as a campsite. Allan had talked to the outfitter about the best campsites and he put stars on our map, so we headed for the first starred one on Saganagons Lake. We paddled for an hour or so and when we got to the site it was occupied. So we paddled some more to the next site and it too was full. Wishing we could have made reservations, Allan checked the map and I dipped my cup into the lake for a drink of water. I drank all of my filtered water as we did the portage and so I had to gamble that the lake water was fine. I can't believe how tired I am. I feel like my arms might fall off, my shoulder blades are on fire. Switching paddling sides every now and then, I hope I am not driving Chris crazy. Chris and I are canoe partners and Allan and Cathy are together.

Another mile, and then another, finally we arrive at an unoccupied camp site. We have decided we will stay even if it is not nice enough to be our base camp, we could move if we wanted after a night of rest. We have paddled about 7 ½ miles today. There was not much of a loading dock rock and I hopped out of the canoe and talked Cathy into getting out the same way. This is the second time today she should not have listened to my advice. As she climbed out of the canoe, I was holding the front. Not enough holding - it tipped over. Allan was holding onto a bush on the shore from the back of the canoe and even though the canoe is tipping he continues to hold on for dear life. The canoe filled half full of water. The entire bush is completely uprooted, Allan is turning over like a pretzel and the roots of the bush are facing the sky, we have a good laugh later over the campfire at the scene. We get all of the

packs up on shore and check for water damage, lucky we packed correctly and all is fine. Allan's bright yellow water-proof camera bag did its job again.

We set up our tents and settled all our gear and began cooking dinner. We had a feast, pork tenderloin, stuffing and mashed sweet potatoes, celebrating the successful journey so far. We are all glad this day is over, we are safe and we can now begin the relaxing part of our journey. After dinner we sat for a few minutes and enjoyed the silence. Allan volunteered to do the dishes and Cathy and I, exhausted, decide to go to bed. We made the mistake of lighting our flashlights in the tent before the door was zipped up and in just a very short moment, we let in about a million hungry mosquitoes. I put some deet on my hands and collapsed into the pillow. I was too tired to care if the mosquitoes had a feast on me. Tonight I discovered that Cathy talks in her sleep, I was asleep but jumped as she said loudly, "Oh, No!" Maybe she was reliving our grueling day. Soon, however, I was sound asleep again. She and I had a good laugh about this when I told her about it later.

