

Travel Day, 7:55 pm Thursday Evening, July 31, 2008

We left Downers Grove, IL, this morning at 5 am. As soon as Cathy and I climbed into the back seats of Allan's van we fell asleep. The seats tilted back and really were very comfortable. Allan drove for three hours without stopping while we snoozed. We made a breakfast stop at the Country Kitchen restaurant in Mausten, Wisconsin. Later we stopped for lunch and sat outside in a cute little gazebo at a Rotary Park in Superior, WI. There we enjoyed sandwiches, chips and homemade brownies that Marilyn had packed for us. One other stop along the way to gas up Allan's van, the desert fox, and stretch our legs was all we needed. Allan brought along several books about the Quetico/Boundary Waters area. I like to read out loud and I asked the group if they wanted me to read to pass the time. They agreed so I selected, *Portage into the Past* written by J. Arnold Bolz. In this book Bolz tells the story of the journey that he and his wife along with a guide made in 1958. They retraced the steps that the voyagers of the 1700's made from Grand Portage at Lake Superior through the Quetico Superior Country to Rainy Lake. It is an interesting story telling the history of the early fur traders and explorers of this area. I got about half way through the book and the time in the car passed quickly.

Now, after a dinner of cheeseburgers, French fries and homemade coleslaw, at the Trails End Café, Cathy and I are sitting outside of our cabin. We turned on the Thermacell mosquito repellent and we are quite impressed. It seems to be keeping the mosquitoes away. Allan went to the pay phone booth to call home and give Marilyn the report that we arrived safe and sound at the outfitter at 5 pm right on schedule. It seems so strange to see a pay phone booth, but there is no cell phone coverage here, nothing at all past Grand Marais. The Voyager Canoe Outfitter is located 58 miles up the Gunflint Trail past Grand Marais, Minnesota. Chris is taking a walk and Cathy is playing solitaire, so I am taking time to reflect on our first day of travel. I believe we are going to be a great traveling companion group. Everyone seems to be easy going and cooperative, and I think we will get along just fine.

The immediate area where the outfitter is located was hit by the Hamm Lake Fire last year. The Voyageurs lost three buildings, but they have been rebuilt. The rebuilt buildings were the ones that the staff call home. You can tell that many trees were lost but the area is already beginning to replenish itself. The weather is beautiful as we sit here, about 70 degrees. There have been clouds all afternoon, but only a few drops of rain hit the windshield as we drove along the north shore of Lake Superior. My hope of course is that this kind of weather stays with us. Cool and crisp at night and 70 during the day would be just perfect.