



Wilderness News



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • SPRING 1982

A SADNESS IN THE SINGING WILDERNESS

by Ted Hall

Sigurd Olson was the poet of that selfless band that came to the rescue of the unspoiled Minnesota-Ontario boundary lakes wilderness just a minute before the execution was to take place.

While others coaxed and hammered reluctant guardians of the public interest to do their job, organized public campaigns in support of preserving a priceless heritage for future generations, raised funds from

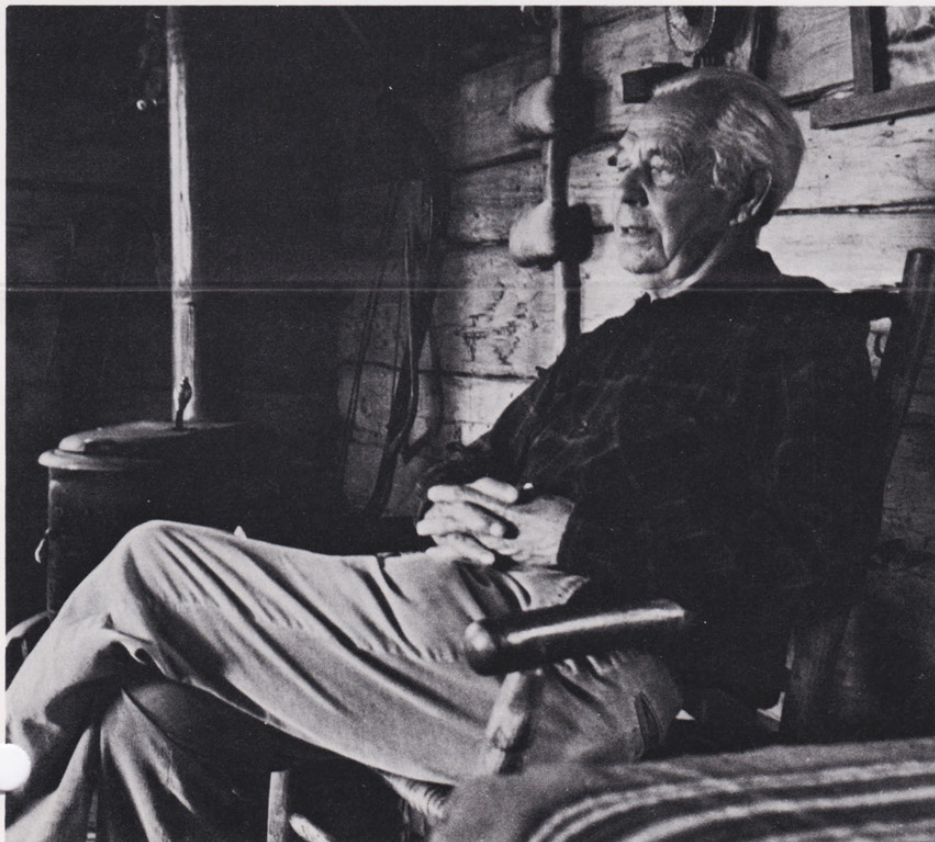
friends and friends of friends to pay for the research, legal work and lobbying that the campaign demanded, Sigurd Olson put pen to paper and wrote of the lure of the wilderness in a way that won it new friends and cemented the allegiance of old friends.

His prose-poetry flowed into the battle, from his books and from the lectern, and the battle went better for the cause of common-sense use of this planet, for the safekeeping of some places of space and silence and inspiration. He awakened his generation and the next to the practical value of conservation, and he did it with words that will sing on long after the looters have been routed.

Sig Olson and his magic pen were welcomed by the battle-weary defenders of the Boundary Waters wilderness. They welcomed a fresh drumbeat, this schoolteacher-outfitter come to give a hand. Thus he joined the illustrious company of such veteran wilderness warriors as Ernest Oberholtzer, Charles Scott Kelly, Frank Brooks Hubachek, Sewell Tappan Tyng, Frederick and Donald Winston, and Robert Marshall, and now he leaves his great testament to the worth of the conservation battle they fought for a wilderness treasure still threatened, but still there.

Sigurd Olson served his planet well.

From the Rainy Lake Chronicle



Sigurd F. Olson

IN PRAISE OF SIGURD F. OLSON

Excerpts from the Eulogy delivered on January 16, 1982, at the First Presbyterian Church, Ely, Minnesota, by Malcolm McLean, President, Northland College, Ashland, WI.

Sigurd Olson was blessed with special gifts, and he used them completely. He understood duty and served gallantly. His public actions did not stray from his private pronouncements. I think that's one meaning of integrity. He moved the hearts of thousands through his books and his speeches. He touched the lives of hundreds and hundreds of our students at Northland College and elsewhere through his courage, his intelligence and his example. They want to be like him, and that is why, in the final analysis, the Sigurd Olson Institute was named for him. His long and generous view of history destined him to be a champion of conservation causes. He was a man of style and taste and high standards. Literature enlivened his career and his gifts to the world. Philosophic and religious insight rounded and gentled the man. Extraordinary powers of observation and expression enriched his artistic legacy. In an epoch of feverish mobility in the lives of so many, he had an innate sense of place and of time and that, in fact, became the theme and title of his last book.

We can conclude, then, with Shakespeare, that he was a man, take him for all in all, whose like we will not see again. With Milton, he neither praised nor had a "fugitive and cloistered virtue." He did not die nor weep for

lost causes; he struggled energetically for good and valuable and humane causes here in this world. And with Wordsworth, he helped us understand that there is splendour in the grass and glory in the flower, that soothing thoughts spring from suffering, that there is a faith that looks through death, and that we can aspire to the philosophic mind.

One final word. Sig would not have us leave this holy place today with heavy hearts. He would have had us understand, I believe, that he died as he would have wished. He would ask us to get on with the urgent tasks to which his own life was devoted and to which we are called. He would ask us to set out with lively step on the woodland trails of our own experience. He would insist that our own campsites in life be places of joy and celebration. He would hope that we would cheerfully stride through the forests and meadows and hills and streams and lakes and waterways of our own adventures, with eyes looking with hope and confidence to the far eastern horizon where the sun's glow shows that a new day is dawning. So go forth from here in good heart and with high spirit, refreshed by the presence and inspiration of a great and gifted man who has been among us.

I had prepared the text of these remarks before arriving in Ely yesterday. It was moving beyond description to learn last night from the Olson family that on Wednesday morning, the very day of Sig's death, he had gone once more to the beloved writing shack next to the home on Wilson



Sig and Elizabeth Olson

Street. That day he had typed on his faithful old Royal these words:

"A new adventure is coming up and I know it will be a good one."

This was his last testament of hope and encouragement to us. Let us remember it. And let us remember another passage of his that proclaims that this cold northern winter will inevitably and through eternal mysterious design soon give way to spring:

As snowbanks sink and then disappear, there are drifts of pussy willows in still frozen swamps and then, almost overnight, a brush of Nile green on aspen-covered ridges and in warm cozy nooks out of the wind the rosy hue of maples bursting into bloom. Though the forest floor is still brown and the smell of it is of mold and wetness, by mid-May, it is gay with blue and white hepatica, pink anemones, and — along the flooded banks of creeks — marsh marigolds.

All my life is stirring now in lakes, and ponds, and streams, and in myriad tiny pools of snow water. The earth is awake at last after the long winter's sleep, and within it is a quickening. After half a year of frozen silence, spring is a miracle of rebirth, a time of rare transcendent beauty and promise.

— Amen —

Sig Olson speaking at the Sigurd Olson Institute of Environmental Studies, Northland College.



VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK ISSUES

Mary M. Kenny
Executive Director

Voyageurs National Park Association

Over the years, beginning back in its earliest stages, Voyageurs National Park has been the target of controversy, uncertainty and ongoing opposition.

In the past, controversy has revolved around issues involving the designation of the park and its boundaries and the use and management of the park. Uncertainty has been precipitated by the lack of funding appropriations, although authorized, and the delay of a final decision on the wilderness issue rendering the approved management plan a somewhat useless tool. Opposition has taken the form of special interest groups and small groups of individuals intent on desecrating the parklands and eliminating the wilderness areas.

Today, these threats continue to hover over and surround the lands designated as Voyageurs National Park. Not only are we still faced with some of the same opposition and uncertainty, but we are now faced with additional threats involving serious consequences: the loss of funding nec-

essary to complete acquisition of the parklands and the philosophy of a man who claims he is in the mainstream of the Environment Movement.

One only needs to read recent newspaper headlines to realize the magnitude of these threats. Budget constraints and the less than favorable environmental climate have virtually brought to a standstill most all park development and acquisition projects. This situation places Voyageurs National Park in a precarious position.

Currently there exists approximately fifty willing sellers within the boundaries of the Park. Yet no monies are available to acquire these parcels. The initial Act to authorize the establishment of Voyageurs National Park created an obligation to purchase the properties within the park boundaries. By being unable to do so, the good faith of those willing sellers and the future of the lands could be sacrificed.

In 1971, it was predicted that nearly 1-1/2 million yearly visitors were expected to be visiting the park by 1977. Current actual figures fall considerably below those predicted. The cause for this disparity lies in the lack of facilities and the lack of any marketing program. But even more conspicuous is the lack of a focal point or information center. Without some form of Visitors Center, the Park has had and will continue to have an identity problem.

Initially the park promised much local benefit. For years the residents of International Falls have been waiting to partake in the advantages: to derive economic benefit from the tourism that would be present. Unfortunately, this has not been realized, nor will it be if funding is not available. If local needs are not soon met, the result will be further bitterness and opposition on the part of the local citizens.

Other critical issues continue to plague the protection and preservation of the resources of Voyageurs Na-



From the air, Voyageurs National Park presents a mosaic of water and forested island outcroppings. In this photograph, taken toward the southwest from above the northwest corner of the park, Dryweed Island is in the center foreground. Jutting out from left center is the northwest lobe of the Kabetogama Peninsula, with Black Bay beyond it.

Voyageurs National Park Issues (Cont.)

tional Park today. These include the lack of any consistent periphery zoning laws which ultimately will have an effect on the character of the park, the legislation seeking to delete Black Bay from the Park, and the resolution of the Wilderness Issue. The recent actions of Secretary Watt regarding the lifting of the snowmobile ban in Lassen National Park in northern California and the opening of five park areas for mining and drilling purposes indicate one further threat to a favorable decision on Wilderness des-

ignation for the Kabetogama peninsula.

Much of the controversy, uncertainty, opposition and threats affecting Voyageurs National Park has served to delay and distort the original purpose of its existence. That is, the development of a National Park and the preservation of its distinctive resources to be enjoyed by all citizens and future generations. National leaders have played politics long enough with our National Parks. Self-serving motivations and political pressures should not be dictating the future of our parks. Efforts should be

confined to the issues that are positive; the acquisition of the parklands, the building of a focal point, the implementation of a Management Plan consistent with the resources and the education of the public to the benefit of Voyageurs National Park.

The historic significance of the French-Canadian Voyageurs, the "elusive" character, the sheltered intimate bays and coves, the sparkling waters, these are present today. Will they continue to withstand the everpresent threats and pressures to ensure their existence and benefits for our future generations?

FOREST SERVICE REVISES ENTRY QUOTAS FOR 1982

The U.S. Forest Service has revised entry quotas for specific entry points to better distribute visitors throughout the million acre wilderness. The intent is to reduce the crowding that has occurred on some lakes in the heart of the BWCA.

The daily entry of overnight groups (up to 10 people per party) will be reduced from an upper limit of 417 parties to 395 parties. Lake quotas are developed by a "travel mode," specialized computer program that correlates entries through each of the 87 entry points with the number of campsites available on each lake. The revised quotas are based on 1981 travel patterns and this is the first major revision of the model since 1976.

In 1982 the U.S. Forest Service will be charging a \$5 reservation fee for making advance reservations to enter the BWCA. Robert Rehfeld, Superior National Forest Supervisor, said that making a reservation is an option that many canoers use to guarantee entry at a favorite location or on a specific date. Approximately 20,000 reservations were taken in 1981.

The fee is charged only for reservations made more than 48 hours in advance of the trip date. The fees will be in effect only between May 1 and September 30. Travel permits are not required the rest of the year.

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