

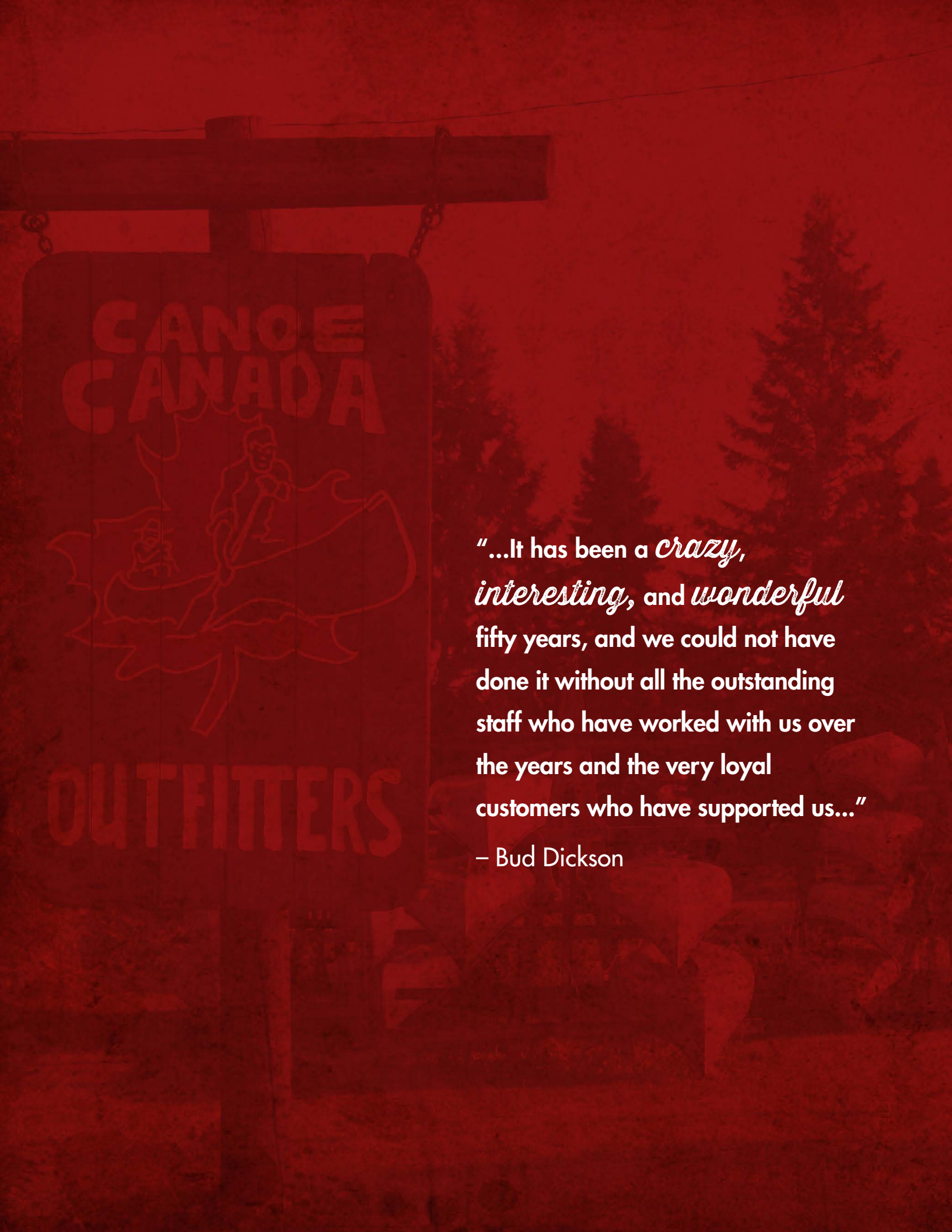
EST. 1973



*Celebrating 50 years  
in outfitting!*







"...It has been a *crazy, interesting, and wonderful* fifty years, and we could not have done it without all the outstanding staff who have worked with us over the years and the very loyal customers who have supported us..."

– Bud Dickson



# *Canoe Canada's 50th season in business is now behind us...*

Our staff are still busy winterizing all of our facilities and taking advantage of some nice fall weather (and low water) to repair or replace some outpost cabin docks and other small projects.

I was lucky enough to spend the day in the bush with my dad a few days ago. Sadly, we don't get to spend that kind of quality time together often enough but when the opportunity arises, we make the most of it. We picked up a moose for some archery hunters about 60 miles up a bush road, set up some beaver ponds that Bud is contracted (at 74 years old) to keep clean so they don't destroy the roads, and we visited.

Spending the day with my dad reminded me that Canoe Canada Outfitters is truly a family business and always will be. Our staff has traditionally either been blood family members or people that soon become family. Our guests, many of whom have done 20, 30, 40, 50, and even 60-plus trips with us, are family. Our goal as a business is to provide our guests with memories and outdoor experiences to last a lifetime. The enjoyment I get from this "job" is derived directly from the joy and happiness of our guests as a result of the experiences we provide.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank every person who has ever worked for us and every guest who has ever done a vacation with us

for helping make Canoe Canada the successful business that it is today. I'd also like to thank my father Bud for having the foresight as well as the nerve to leave a secure job as a teacher to start and build such an amazing business and legacy.

I am honoured to carry on our tradition and hope that my children and/or nieces will do the same in years to come.

Have a great winter and I look forward to seeing many of you again soon in the coming years!



*Jeremy Dickson*

President and CEO



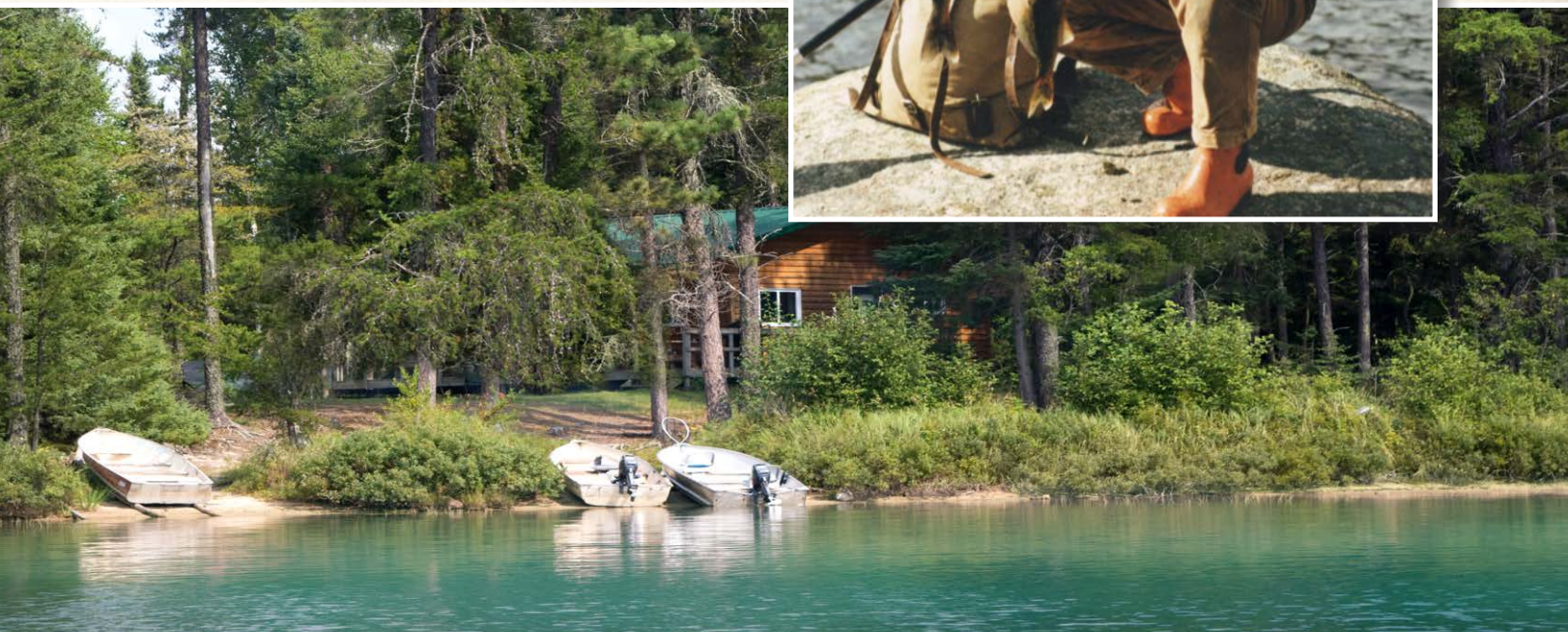
# *Message from Bud and Sandy*

Over the past fifty years, I have garnered so many memories of special times spent with the wonderful people who have passed through Canoe Canada's doors. The tens of thousands of guests we've outfitted have come from all over the world. We've shared stories, watched their families grow, and ultimately had their children and grandchildren continue the Canoe Canada tradition. Our guests have become more like family to me and Bud, and to Pam and Jim and we all looked forward to seeing them each summer. It was always exciting to look over the calendar to see who was arriving each day, and then be able to greet each of them with a big hug and a warm smile.

Our CCO guests were always happy and enthusiastic when they arrived. Going on a wilderness vacation and escaping the realities of everyday life is the ultimate getaway, and the anticipation showed on their faces.

The staff at CCO were also more like family than employees. Over the years we have watched them grow into fine adults with varied and interesting careers. We are proud of each and every one of them.

We will be forever grateful to have established a business fifty years ago that enabled us to get to know people from across the globe, assist them on their holidays, share in their lives, and become their friends. Canoe Canada Outfitters is so much more than a business. It is a family in every sense of the word, and we are proud that the tradition continues.





# *50 years of memories...*



## *Jim Clark*

Greetings Everyone!

"Quetico" was a life-changing experience for me. I'm sure it was for many of you too! To drink the water from under your paddle and sleep under the stars is an experience that very, very few people will ever know. And, I really miss sharing that excitement with you. As crazy as the world has become, how amazing is it that escape from it all is so accessible? Thank you for the memories and stay in touch via email at [EmailJim@hotmail.com](mailto:EmailJim@hotmail.com).

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## *Shane Selman*

It's hard to believe that Canoe Canada is in its 50th year of operation. Time does fly! I've been lucky to have been around the company for all of it, although I don't remember much from the beginning, as I was only 2 years old.

The vision, drive and adaptability that Bud, Sandy, Jim and Pam had to build Canoe Canada to what it is, is unprecedented, especially in today's world. I thoroughly enjoyed the adventures and time I was able to spend with Bud and Jim through the years on and off. I am very proud to be able to continue building Canoe Canada with Jeremy into the future. Hopefully we do it right.





# *50 years of memories...*



## *Sheila Sinclair*

It was an absolute joy and honour to work for Canoe Canada for 34 years. The friendships and memories I created over the years are truly ones I will cherish for the rest of my life. There are so many guests I looked forward to seeing every year, and hopefully that will continue even now. The office was my home away from home, and I'm glad to know that when I retired last year I left it in capable hands.

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## *Ted Hollander*

The Hollander family has been coming to CCO since the summer of 1975. We have not missed a year except for 2020 and 2021 due to Covid restrictions (See you again this summer). We started in Plateau Lake (surviving a tornado); we have canoed into Quetico Park; and we graduated to outpost cabins. To splurge a few times we went to Tip Top Lodge for a "civilized wilderness" experience. We appreciated the sidewalks that accommodated Eleanor and her wheelchair needs in her later years. Fishing seems to be getting better every year. We have lots of pictures and fond memories of smallmouth bass, walleyes, northern pike, lake trout and the airplanes. Some of our amusing recollections are of Garth (our first bush pilot) and campfire stories of the good times enabled by CCO leadership and staff.





# 50 years of memories...



## *Bucky and Sandy Walters*

Columbus/Lancaster, Ohio

Summer 1973...Our fearless leader David Chilcoat, Young Life Ministries, Columbus, Ohio set out to seek a new and exciting adventure for the high school kids he was working with. By chance, Dave Chilcoat attended an Outdoors Sports and Vacation travel show and met Bud Dickson from Canoe Canada. He offered Dave an adventure like no other. Dave accepted the offer to bring 12-15 group leaders to try this venture out. Long story short...it was a trip that had a profound impact for the rest of my life, and my wife, and our children's lives. Starting in 1973 and continuing until the last couple years (due to health problems) I became a changed man for the better! As a result of these adventures, I became a lover of nature and found

beauty like I never experienced. My family has as many endearing and life experiences as well: Hail on Batch in August, capsizing canoes in the middle of Sturgeon Lake, moose and bears inviting themselves to our campsite, bald eagles everywhere, fishing like none other (oh how I do love those 40" pike!), beaver dams, stepping in muck and getting stuck up to our waist, giardia (not fun, we had to get flown out), but building those close family ties has to be the BEST. Our conversations around the campfire and in a canoe have been stored and frequently revisited time and time again. Quetico and Canoe Canada will always hold a special place in our hearts. And to the people of Canoe Canada...dear friends for life.



# OUR CANOE CANADA STORY

*by Bud Dickson*



While I was in high school, I had a job with the Ministry of Natural Resources on a portage crew in Quetico Park. I had planned to go to Ranger School, but I changed my mind, got my deposit back, and went back to high school to complete advanced Grade 12. My portage crew partner, the late Lee Glieheisen, said, "Instead of going to grade 13, go to the University of North Dakota and try to get on the hockey team". I followed his advice and went to North Dakota, met Sandy, didn't make the hockey team, and after two years at UND, I could no longer afford the out-of-state tuition and decided

to move home. Sandy said she would go with me, and we got married in 1970. During 1970 and '71 we attended Lakehead University and became elementary school teachers. During the summers we were rangers at Prairie Portage. I remember seeing all the people entering Quetico Park from Minnesota and thought it was a shame that more people didn't enter the park from the Ontario side. We started teaching in 1972, me at Hemlock School, and Sandy at St. Patrick's Separate School.



In 1973 I was in Jack McTaggart's clothing store, and he asked what I was doing for the summer. I said I was working for an outfitter at Nym Lake, an American guy by the name of Andy Hill. He asked if I had a piece of the action, and I said no. He suggested we should start an outfitting base in downtown Atikokan. That fall we met at Jack's house on Friday nights to begin planning the establishment of a canoe outfitting company. We had seen an ad in a ski magazine called "Ski Colorado" and came up with the name Canoe Canada. We also went to Ely, Minnesota and visited with many of the outfitters.

In 1973, Jack registered the name Canoe Canada Outfitters without the help of a lawyer which saved us \$500. Next, we bought an old tire shop in downtown Atikokan and applied for a loan from the Northern Ontario Development Corporation (NODC).

NODC then sent a loan officer to inspect the building and our business plan. When I spoke with him, he said, "I'm not going to finance a retail outlet!" I replied, "No, this is going to be the biggest canoe outfitting base in Canada. Don't you know that the river goes right to Hudson Bay?" So, he went to Mr. McTaggart and said "This young guy has a vision. I'm going to give you guys the money".

Because we needed further financing, Jack said, "We can finance this one of two ways. Either I can match you dollar for dollar or you can match me dollar for dollar, and I'm pretty sure you can't match me dollar for dollar". Although I was a little insulted, I realized that he was right. Jack then signed a credit line for me at the bank. We became equal partners.

We grossed about \$12,000 the first year, and that was because of an ad we put in Outdoor Life Magazine. Ron Larson, a stockbroker from San Francisco, was our first customer because of the ad. It was a fourteen day completely outfitted canoe trip, he had a great trip and brought groups for many years after that. We also outfitted five youth groups

from the USA and many of those customers continue coming to Canoe Canada to this day. Two examples are North Star Camp from Hayward, Wisconsin who have outfitted with us since 1976, and Camp Kamaji from Minnesota for over thirty years.

Jim Clark showed up as a wandering canoeist and volunteered to help us renovate the old building into what it is today, including laying a twenty by fifty-foot carpet. That carpet was just replaced a couple of years ago!

Jim stayed upstairs above the Canoe Canada office that first summer. He guided five trips that year, and one of them was Dennis "Mack" MacKenzie, who came for many, many years after that first trip. Because we weren't paying him, I tried to give Jim a set of hockey gloves as a present, but he wouldn't take them, so I hid them in his old station wagon with a birch log for a bumper. Unfortunately, when he tried to enter back into the United States on his way home customs found the hockey gloves and fined him.

While he was here that first summer, two Canadian customs officers came in, wanting to know where Jim Clark was.

I said, "He's over at The Sportsman's restaurant eating breakfast. Why?"

"Well, he's working without a work permit."

"No, he's not working without a work permit, he's just helping me out. I'm not paying myself anything so I'm sure not going to pay him."

So, they went and got him, and told him to go back across the border and tell the officers that he's going





to help his friend Bud for a couple of months. So, off he went and came back six hours later. He had been turned in by someone thinking he was a US citizen working without a permit. The next spring Jim called me and said, "I'm willing to come back but only to guide trips", so that's what he did. That summer he met Sandy's sister Pam, and they got married that November.

By the third year the business was growing quickly. I asked Jim if he'd like to become a working partner in the business. Jim approached Jack and Jack said yes. Make me an offer. If it's too high, I won't tell you and if it's too low I will." Ultimately, they agreed on a price and remain good friends to this day.

Canoe Canada has always been a family-run affair. Pam looked after the books, Sandy looked after the front, Jim and I trip planned canoe trips, and all four of us packed food and equipment. It was not unusual to be at the base at four-thirty or five in the morning.



When we could finally afford to start hiring people to work, we considered it a luxury. Our philosophy was that we would never ask our staff to do something we wouldn't do ourselves, and that included cleaning out and digging outhouses.

Whatever it took, Jim and I rolled up our sleeves and did it. We also had a motto regarding customer service, the Three "R's" – reputation, repeat, referral. A good reputation led to repeat customers who referred their friends.

I am very proud of the fact that so many students from Atikokan spent their high school and college years working for us and went on to achieve very successful careers. I think of Brad Gascoigne, Jody Jewel, Kristy Davidson, the Williams kids, the Rheault kids, the Haw kids, Trevor Bailey, Mike Bailey, the Zajac kids, and the list goes on. We also had our own kids working at Canoe Canada. Nate, Nick, Jeremy and Jessica spent many summers working at our base. Our nephews and nieces came and worked from time to time as well as our neighbours. I think of Jordan Ehelebe, Eric Zacharias, Jeff Veenbaas, Cuffy Kehl, Mike Krassey, and many others. We now have Megan, Kaya, Shane, and Brad, and we had Nancy, Charlotte, Lauren, Noonie and many others. Not to mention Sheila, who just retired last year after 34 years in the office. Without them, we could not have grown this company to where it is today.

Andy McMullan, our first full-time employee went on to become quite a famous guy up in Nunavut teaching people about bear safety, as a fish and wildlife officer for the Federal Government. I also think of the pilots we've had work for us throughout the years - Jim Hrynuke, Kevin Mason, Liz, and too many others to mention.

We were tough. I remember one morning Nick Clark, Jeff Veenbaas, and Brad Gascoigne were sauntering across the street right at seven and proceeded to pour themselves a cup of coffee. Jim had been at the base since four, and I was probably there at 6. The vans were loaded with canoes and customers who were anxious to get going. I took them outside and I said, "When I say seven o'clock, I mean quarter to seven if you're going to have coffee!"



My son-in-law (Jeff Veenbaas) and Shawn Anderson still laugh about it to this day. "When I say seven, I mean quarter to!"

The community has also been a strong advocate, with business owners opening restaurants early to serve breakfast to our guests, all the suppliers, the lumber yard, the grocery stores, and Tompkins Hardware in Emo. We tried to support local businesses as best we could. Even though we had a small bunkhouse, we supported the local hotels and motels.

I am also proud of the good working relationship we had with other outfitters. We referred customers back and forth, shared equipment, and helped each other in a variety of ways. The Chamber of Commerce, The Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Natural Resources (especially the Park staff) were strong supporters of what we were trying to do, and that community spirit continues to this day.



After a few years, many of the canoeists were finding it difficult to go on the adventurous trips that Jim sent them on. They asked if we could offer an easier fishing trip experience. That led us to invest in Outpost Cabins and ultimately buying out Atikokan Aero from Garf Carson.

Many, many customers have become very close personal family friends and came to us for their very first trip to Canada. One example is the Ted Hollander family who, over fifty years, have



probably done seventy-five trips with us. They've also sent a lot of friends and relatives our way. Great grandkids from that family still come! Or Steve Scott, who started as a canoeist and now comes on outpost trips. And Chuck Radel, a high school administrator from Quincy, IL, came up on a trip with 16 people one year. After that, he started bringing up students for canoe trips every year in July. On one trip he brought 163 people in groups of 8. Jim and Chuck were very organized and somehow managed to pull it off. Some of those kids came for many years, even after they were finished with school. We started calling the day that they arrived "Radel Day", and it was so busy that we tried not to book anyone around it or at the same time.

Several years ago, the Dickson family purchased Jim and Pam Clark's interest in the company. Our son Jeremy has since taken over the complete reins of the company. Despite the pandemic, he has continued to grow the customer base and under his leadership, Canoe Canada enjoyed a very successful 2023.

It has been a crazy, interesting, and wonderful fifty years, and we could not have done it without all the outstanding staff who have worked with us over the years and the very loyal customers who have supported us. We have been extremely fortunate and very blessed.

*Here's to the next 50!*



# CANOE CANADA



*Celebrating 50 years in*

# OUTFITTING

— 1973-2023 —

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