

# BWCA Trip 2006

## Day 1: Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006 The Drive Up

The Crew:

GeoFisher's Family.....George (GeoFisher), Susan, Elise, Natalie (MadNat), and Elise's best friend Bree.

GadgetMan's Family....Dave (GadgetMan), Daphne, Jordan, and Jared.

I have always wondered how my daughters and wife would fare in the Boundary Waters. They are not really the outdoors type, and quite frankly.....HATE mosquitoes. This would be the year my family would experience some of the things about the north country that I have fallen in love with over the past 10 years.

GadgetMan and I decided EARLY last year that we would try to find cabins in the Ely area to rent. We looked long and hard, and after a few discussions, we chose Kawashiwi Lodge. They had the right type of cabins, a GREAT location, and access to what we thought would be good fishing lakes.

We packed up the trailer Thursday night, and hit the road. We left at 12:00am Friday morning, with plans of spending the night in Duluth, MN. We were expected to be in Ely in 5:00pm Saturday to take possession of the cabins, so this would give us some time in Duluth to shop.

The drive from New Albany, Indiana to Duluth was pretty uneventful. As always, we drove through Chicago, arriving there around 5:00am. This was NOT too bad, but the Ryan, as always was a MESS. We really need to reevaluate our choice of routes, because a minor accident on the Ryan can lead to a 2-3 hour delay in reaching our destination.

We stopped in Au Claire, Wisconsin for Breakfast/Lunch, and then continued to Duluth, arriving around 2:00pm. This was actually not too bad. 12 hours to Duluth is about normal, and we actually made it in about 11 hours.

Once in Duluth, we found our hotel pretty quickly. A note about the hotels.....Don't believe Priceline. A 3 star hotel listed in Duluth turned out to be about 2 stars, if that. I hated spending over \$100.00 for a CRAPPY room, when I could have stayed at a Super 8 for about half that much, and would have had a MUCH better room. Oh well....the kids REALLY liked the pool, and we only need the room for one night, so it worked out ok.

We had dinner at Fingers in Duluth. This was another disappointment. GadgetMan and I had eaten there on a few occasions in the past, but this time service was bad, and the food was barely edible. It is a shame, because they have such a robust history, and they had been on the "A-list". Maybe we will try them again, but with so many other options, they may not get another chance.

After dinner, we headed back to the hotel for a quick swim, and then off to bed. Tomorrow would bring a trip to Gander Mountain, and a visit to Gooseberry Falls.

## **Day 2: Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 Gooseberry Falls**

Once we roused out of bed, we need to visit the local Target for some much needed supplies were needed. Some stuff that was left at home and we also needed to fill up the "car" cooler. On long trips like this, we ALWAYS take a cooler of snacks and drinks. That makes the drive up less expensive. With 3 teenagers, and 2 adults, stopping every few hours to gas up, and break for nature can be expensive, if you purchase stuff from the gas stations. At breakfast, we made our plans. We had wanted to visit the Great Lakes Aquarium, but felt we needed more than ½ a day to adequately visit the site. It was decided that we would save the money, and spend some more time in Ely.

At the Target store in Duluth, my van started acting up. Nothing too bad, but something was DEFINITELY wrong. I was pulling the trailer, so I figured I had messed up my transmission or something. The van was having problems idling, and was switching out of gear from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> pretty roughly. HM.....GREAT, now I need a transmission. At least we were close enough to Ely for contingency plans.

Gadget and I decided to change the tow vehicle. He was driving his Land Cruiser, which has made MANY trips to the BWCA. Earlier, we had decided that I would tow the trailer up, and he would tow it back. This would help even out the fuel costs, and would allow us to take it easy on the return trip. So, we change the tow vehicles in Duluth. After changing the vehicles, my van ran a little better, but was still having some issues.

We left Target, and headed to Gooseberry Falls. At the falls, the kids were able to expend some SIGNIFICANT amounts of pent up energy. Between the two families, we had 5 kids, including three teenage girls, and two younger boys. The boys and girls explored pretty much EVERY inch of the falls, without actually getting wet. All in all, we are glad we stopped at Gooseberry falls. In 12 trips up north, I have never stopped, and I'm glad we did this time.

Since we were at Gooseberry falls, we decided to take Highway 1 into Ely. The drive was pretty scenic. I kept telling the kids to look out the windows, for wildlife, as in the past trips, I've seen moose out the windows. This was NOT the Gunflint trail though.

A couple hours later, we arrived in Ely, and our first stop was at VNO. I needed to get some bait, purchase some other goodies, get some maps, and of course, talk to Lynn and John. As always, they were quite helpful. I even talked about outfitting some gear to actually do an overnight trip into the park. I was hopeful the kids would want to spend the night on Lake 2, but that was NOT going to happen on this trip. At VNO, I asked Lynn about a reliable mechanic, and she pointed me to Ely Auto, which we ended up using later in the trip to get the van fixed. AGAIN.....MUCH thanks to Lynn.

After getting some other additional last minute items, we headed up the Fernberg road to Lake One and Kawashiwi Lodge. Once at the lodge, they informed us that the road to cabins 16 and 17 was open, and we could drive right to the cabins. That was GREAT news, since we had about 500 canoe loads of stuff that would have taken Dave and me many, MANY hours unload if we had to paddle it across the lake.

The cabins were GREAT. We opted for cabin 17, while Dave and his family took cabin 16. Cabin 17 was bigger, and had a better layout, but cabin 16 had an air conditioner. Man, that was nice, but the weather was pretty much good all week, so the air really didn't matter too much.

We unloaded the trailer, and started getting stuff together. Gadget and I were already chomping at the bit to get out and do some fishing, but we had LOTS of stuff to do around the cabin first.

While we were unloading, we noticed some of our food goods did not fair too well during the trip. Mainly, we had some biscuits that burst open, and some of the lunch items had become waterlogged. We made a list of things that we needed, and would go into town Sunday or Monday to get them. These food items were not needed until later in the week anyways.

Did I mention that the cabins were great? Kawashiwi Lodge has some pretty neat cabins. The two cabins we rented had running water, flush toilets, showers, comfortable beds, better than average furniture, stoves, and a fridge. Also included was a TON of firewood, a decent fire grate and fire ring, and a kettle grill. My wife and kids DEFINITELY would enjoy these accommodations.

After unloading all of our gear, the kids REALLY wanted to get out on the lake, so that is JUST what we did. Before anyone was allowed on the lake, we sat down and discussed the RULES. Rule 1.....Everyone, even the adults had to wear a life vest ALL the time in the canoe. We didn't get past RULE 1, as that really was the most important. And I believe everyone followed that rule all week.

MadNat (my daughter), and Bree, went out, and both the younger boys also went out. Gadget and I, naturally, had to checkout the fishing. The other three, my wife, Gadget's wife, and my oldest daughter decided to stay at the cabins to continue unpacking the food, and to get the cabins organized. After a couple hours of paddling, we headed back to the cabins for some dinner, and to hit the sack. At the cabins, we found a note from Elise stating that Daphne, Susan and Elise had went to Ely to get some "stuff", and they'd be back for dinner. Dinner should have been around 8:00pm. At 10:30pm, they were still NOT back. I was not too sure what we were having for dinner, so we waited.....and waited.....and WAITED.

Many things went through my mind, especially since they had opted to take the mini van.....The EXACT van that was having some mechanical issues the day before. Dave and I both had figured they broke down somewhere, and we were going to have to go find them. Just as we were getting ready to go looking for them, they drove up. After a few choice words on my part, we decided that all was good, and figured out WHAT was for dinner. By this time, it was pushing 11:00pm, and the kids were ready to eat tree bark.

Dinner for Saturday was a QUICK dinner. We decided to have Dinty Moore beef stew, and biscuits, which went over GREAT. We were in bed by Midnight. Dave and I would be getting up in 4 hours to do some fishing tomorrow morning, so we really need to hit the sack, which we did.

### **Day 3:        Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006        Lake One**

During the planning for this trip, Gadget and I both decided that this trip was NOT a fishing trip. We would do whatever it took to make sure everyone had a good time. That meant no 18 hour fishing days, no 30+ mile round trip daytrips, no MONSTER portages to find that magical fishing hole.....you get the idea. Basically, Gadget and I would get our fishing fix by leaving EARLY every morning and be back for breakfast, which we would prepare for our families. Hey.....It sounded like a GREAT plan.

GadgetMan and I awoke at 4:00am, gathered our gear, and took the Minnesota III. The Minn III is an OK canoe.....It certainly is NOT a Souris River. It is MUCH faster, but in my opinion, it is NOT a very good canoe for fishing, and for that matter, I really don't believe anyone besides a small female would be comfortable in the bow seat. Talk about being cramped. There is hardly any room for my feet, let alone any fishing gear. I don't believe I will EVER rent this canoe again. Outside of those complaints, the canoe actually performed quite well, and we used it many times for 3 or 4 people, which is why I rented it in the first place.

We headed to the far eastern part of the lake where Lake Two dumps into Lake One. Running water is ALWAYS a good place to find fish. On the way to the "falls", we hit a couple humps that reminded us of some magical spots on Ottertrack Lake and Cypress Lake on the Gunflint side. On trips in the past, we generally can find fish pretty quickly using some very specific methods. On this trip, pretty much ALL of those methods would fail us. We did catch fish, but not NEARLY the fish I had expected, both in size and numbers. In fact, on this first day out, we managed to only catch 10-12 fish, with NONE being small mouth. We caught a couple rock bass, a few northern pike, a couple largemouth bass, and 1 small walleye, which we took back to camp.

After a few hours of fishing, we knew that Lake One is NOT a smallie lake. Sure, there may be some smallmouth, but it was NOT what I would consider a prime lake. There really are no deep holes, no pebbly rocks, no chunk rock, and no deep drop offs.

We fished for a few hours, and then headed back to the cabins. We told our wives that we would be back by 10:00am for breakfast. After breakfast, GadgetMan and I took a nap. Most of the kids were out and about. Some were paddling, some were inside reading, and, some were watching a portable DVD player we had brought to keep the kids busy.

Once we had slept for a couple hours, and had our "second wind", we asked the kids who wanted to go out and paddle. GadgetMan and the boys used my spare seat, and headed out in their rented Grumman canoe. MadNat, Bree, and I headed out in the Minn III. The girls wanted to catch some Monster northern, so we headed to the main body of Lake One. Dave had caught a 10lb northern that morning, and I figured we could fish similar areas and have some decent luck.

The wind had started blowing, and was now giving us some decent whitecaps on the lake. I'd say the wind was blowing about 10-15 mph, with gusts up to 20 mph. With both girls, and me in the canoe, the Minn III was a TUB. It was hard to turn, hard to paddle, and really HARD to control in the wind. We fished for 2 or 3 hours, but soon realized we were spending MORE time trying to keep the boat controlled, than fishing. We even took the anchor, but the girls got afraid EVERY time the canoe would shift due to the anchor bouncing on the bottom. We were really NEVER in any situation that actually scared me, but I knew then that Dave and I would have to dramatically change our plans for the week.

We stayed on the water until about 5:00pm, at which time, the girls notified me they were hungry, so we headed back to the cabins. During this mini fishing trip, we managed to catch Zero fish. This was turning out to be a ROUGH fishing trip.

When we arrived back at the cabins, Susan, Daphne and Elise had once again, went into town. This would be a theme played many times during this trip. The girls had decided we needed some additional food items for dinner. We were planning lasagna, and Daphne needed some additional stuff, so into town they went.

For meals for this trip, we decided to have breakfast and lunch with our individual families, and then to share dinners EVERY night. This worked out GREAT, and we had some really good times together. The dinner times with everyone were probably the BEST I have had in many, many years. Dave and Daphne were to host 3 meals, Susan and I would host 3 meals, and we would eat 1 dinner in Ely. This worked out perfectly.

The lasagna went over GREAT. We had lasagna, garlic bread, and salad. Daphne made 2 HUGE trays of lasagna. We manhandled 1 tray, but kept the second as leftovers. We also had some Mrs. Smiths apple pie for dessert. This was definitely not going to be a trip that I would be losing weight.

After dinner, we made plans for Monday, which included taking the van into town for service.

## **Day 4: Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Fixing the Van**

GadgetMan and I had decided that we would STILL get up every morning to go fishing. Well, 5:00am came around, and it was pouring down rain. Normally, this would be a GREAT day to be fishing, but since I really didn't feel like getting out of bed, and I really need the sleep, I turned the alarm off, and went back to sleep. A few hours later, I finally roused out of bed, and went over and knocked on the door at GadgetMan's cabin. They were also asleep. Since we had missed the morning bite, we decided to go ahead and take the van into Ely, and try to get it fixed. With this in mind, we had a quick breakfast, cleaned up a little, and headed to Ely.

Once in Ely, we headed to Piragis. I had actually thought Ely Auto was behind the Piragis. We found out pretty quickly that we were wrong. I left Dave and Daphne and the kid sat Piragis, and headed back to VNO to find out where Ely Auto was located. At VNO, I purchased a couple more maps, bought another shirt, and asked John where Ely Auto was located. He gave me directions, and I headed over there. I dropped my van off, hoping for the best, but expecting the worse. I figured, if I had transmission problems, they MAY be able to fix it by the end of the week, and Susan and I had started mentally preparing for the damage. I had about \$1000 in emergency money, so I figured I'd be able to cover the repair costs, but I really had NO IDEA.

We shopped around Ely for 3-4 hours, got caught in another torrential downpour, ate some ice cream, bought some more stuff at Piragis, and of course, did some antique shopping. I was getting a little concerned about the van, so I gave them a call, and they said that the repairs had been completed.....Basically, I had a vacuum hose that had come loose, and it was causing ALL the problems. The GRAND TOTAL from the Ely auto, was \$38.00. I was relieved, and DEFINITELY in a much better mood.

We had originally planned on visiting the Wolf Center and the Dorothy Molter museum, but decided to hold off and do that another day. We were still planning another FULL day in Ely, and would do the Wolf Center and Dorothy Molter museum then. We decided to head back to the cabins.

By the time we were back at the cabins, it was around 4:00pm. Again almost everyone wanted to go out in the canoes and go paddling and fishing, and that is what we did. GadgetMan, Jarred, and I headed out in Minn III, and MadNat, Bree, and Jordan went out in my Penobscot. Again, the fishing was less than marginal. After 3 days of fishing GadgetMan and I had only caught 15 – 20 fish, and most of the kids had not caught any. Not only that, but GadgetMan and I had decided we would have to search LONG and HARD to find the fish. We fished Lake One until dark, and then headed back to the cabins.

At the cabins, Daphne, Susan and Elise were busy preparing dinner. Jordan, MadNat, and Bree were still on the water, desperately trying to catch a fish. Dinner was FANTASTIC. Susan had made BBQ ribs at home and vacuumed sealed them for the trip up. She simply had to thaw and re warm them for some fantastic sandwiches. We had BBQ ribs with here homemade BBQ sauce, chips, baked beans, and left over salad. Talk about a meal fit for KINGS.

When dinner was finished, GadgetMan and I decided to DRASTICALLY change our fishing plans for the rest of the trip. In order to help the kids catch fish, we decided we would need to push harder into the park, and to fish some water we had not fished yet, and maybe to even.....DREAD.....portage into some other lakes to catch some fish. We would start this plan tomorrow morning, taking Bree out with us first. We also decided this was the best plan, because NONE of the kids were strong enough paddlers to make LONG trips and GadgetMan and I figured we could cover LOTS of water in ½ a day. The 4 other kids back at camp could easily use the other 2 canoes in the bay to paddle and fish. This was a good plan of action, and we would put it in place tomorrow.

## **Day 5: Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Ely and the Wolf Center**

Even though GadgetMan and I had planned on fishing this morning, we had also planned on spending ALL day in Ely. This would include visits to the Wolf Center, Dorothy Molder's museum, LOTS of shopping, dinner, and a movie. One of the selling points to our families was the fact that this was NOT a fishing trip.....it was a family vacation, and to that fact, we did LOTS of vacation type activities.

Anyways.....Back to Fishing. GadgetMan, Bree, and I got up pretty early.....5:00am, and hit the lake. It looked like it would rain, so we put on our rain pants and headed into the Main body of Lake One. Our plan for the day was to fish ALL the way to the Lake Two portage, and back. After an hour of fishing, it started to sprinkle.....then rain, the DOWNPOUR. I'm glad I threw my daughters Marmot Precipt gear into the bag, because this is what Bree ended up using. The positive from this experience is.....The Marmot raingear is going to the TOP of the A-List. We purchased these for a KILLER price, and they were definitely worth the money.

The fishing area again, proved to be a poor choice. We fished for about 4 hours, and only caught a couple fish. We did manage a few smallmouth bass, and a couple northerns, but NOTHING of size, and NO numbers. GadgetMan and I both caught a walleye. We were planning on keeping them, but 2 simply were not enough to fool with. It was beginning to be etched into my mind.....Lake One is a HORRIBLE fishing lake. I was searching for that one MAGICAL cove that would hold ALL the fish in the lake.....hell, they had to be somewhere. Bree, by this time was getting pretty cold, so we decided to head back. Of all the days to fish, this was the one we figured we'd HAMMER the fish. Little did we know, as we were still under 50 for the week.

We made it back to the cabins by 11:00am, ate some leftover breakfast that the wife had made. I think they had pancakes.....Notice how I only managed to have to cook one breakfast meal. In our search for fish, we had completely abandoned our plan to be home within certain time to fix breakfast for the family. Fortunately, my wife understood. I think she actually felt a little sorry for us.....but MAYBE NOT.

Once we cleaned up from breakfast, we headed back to Ely.....This was the 4<sup>th</sup> trip into town. Our first stop was at VNO. Dave and I had figured we need some fishing help, so we talked to John at VNO. He gave us some information about a couple lakes. These lakes DEFINITELY looked promising. After finding some other lakes to fish, we headed to the Wolf Center.

The Wolf Center was one of the highlights for the kids. ALL the kids loved the displays, movies, and the educational presentations. The information we gathered about wolves was quite interesting. Bree and Elise were probably the most interested. Bree had been studying wolves quite a bit, and it is actually one of her favorite animals. Of course, she spent quite a bit of her travel money there. Lots of things that I thought about wolves was cleared up by the intern who gave our presentation. The only thing that bugged me about the wolf center was the RUDE foreign tourists that insisted on banging on the windows to get the wolves attention. Workers at the center asked them NUMEROUS times not to do that, but they didn't care. I guess since they paid good money to visit the center, they had a RIGHT to act this way.

From the Wolf Center, we headed back into Ely to do some more shopping. We had planned on visiting the Dorothy Molter museum, but didn't have time. Again, we ended up getting stuck in Ely in the rain. Fortunately, we were in one of my favorite stores.....Piragis. In Piragis, GadgetMan and I talked to another person about fishing and hiking in the area. My oldest daughter really wanted to do some hiking, and had actually wanted to hike the Echo Trail. She really had no idea what the Echo Trail was, but she wanted to hike it.

GadgetMan and I talked to a young lady in Piragis for about 1 hour. She was really helpful and offered up TONS of information about hiking and even some fishing ideas. The cool thing about

this young lady.....She was headed out of the store, her backpack in tow. When I asked her about the area, hiking and some fishing, she simply plopped her backpack on the table, grabbed some maps and started talking to Gadget and me about some daytrip areas, and some better hiking areas. Talk about helpful. She went out of her way to give us honest, effective information about some of the areas. She evaluated our group, and gave us some ideas that would not overwhelm our group.

After getting some GREAT advice about fishing and hiking, we decided to get an early dinner, and catch a movie. We ate at a fantastic sandwich place. I believe the name was Northern Grounds, but I'm not too sure. We all decided on watching Poseidon after dinner. The Ely movie theatre was GREAT. I love those old theatres. I remember one like it in my hometown of Muncie, IN. It was called the Rivoli, and this place in Ely brought back many good memories. The movie was OK, considering you know what was going to happen. This was actually the 3<sup>rd</sup> version of The Poseidon adventure that I had seen. There was even a remake on TV that had the boat flipping over due to a terrorist bombing.

On the way back to the cabins, we stopped at Dairy Queen to get some much needed ice cream.

The kids wife, and I were definitely having a GREAT time.

## **Day 6:        Wednesday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006        One Tough Day**

We started out like most other days.....GadgetMan and I got up around 5:00am to head out fishing. Today, we took Jordan with us.....

Jordan can be fidgety, and sometimes has a short attention span, but today, he proved his mettle, and handled everything we threw at him. The plans for today included some portaging. We really didn't know how much, but we knew we would be portaging and paddling a LONG way.

We planned on paddling and fishing down the Kawashiwi River as FAR as we could go. I grabbed a couple lunch packs before we left, so I knew we would have some food, but I had NOT planned on being out all day. The weather was perfect, and we started catching fish after the first set of rapids on the Kawashiwi River. All in all we managed to catch about 20 or 30 fish on this day, and it turned out to be the best fishing day of the trip. It still did not compare to the WORSE days we had had in other areas, but at least we were finally catching fish.

To make this daytrip look more like a true boundary waters trip, I took my WHOLE tackle box, bottled, water, water, pump, first aid kit, and LOTS of other HEAVY stuff, and made my boundary waters 70HD pack weigh about 45lbs. This is what Jordan was responsible for portaging on EVERY portage. He did a great job, and would make a good fishing and canoeing partner on future trips.

We had planned on being back to the cabins by Noon, but It was already 11:30am, and we had not started back. We portaged and paddled about 6 miles down the Kawashiwi river. Granted, we fished during the trip down. We decided to turn around and head back. It took about 3 hours on the return leg.

Once we arrived back at the cabin, Gadget and I had been allotted 45 minutes of "rest" before we were to head out again. We were going to take a small hike into the woods to see Kawashiwi Falls. I had seen the postings from JStroke, and figured this would be a good little hike for the wife and kids.

Kawashiwi Falls are a site to see. Really pretty. I was amazed to see all the boats below the falls fishing. I figured they were fishing for walleye, but maybe not. Maybe this was a KILLER smallmouth area. Who knows. I do know the wife and kids had a great time. We took tons of

pictures of the falls. On the way back, it was decided once again.....Dairy Queen was in order. Again, we headed into Ely.

Back at the cabin, we decided tonight would be steak night. We had MONSTER rib eye steaks, potatoes, corn on the cob, and dessert. After dinner, the kids played some games, and the adults settled down for a good ole game of poker.

Gadget and I both agreed that Daphne is not a really good poker player, but she pretty much kicked our Butt.. With real money, I think she would have played differently, but no one really knows. When you're playing poker and there is nothing to lose, I think you play much more aggressive, but that is only my thought on the matter.

After cards, we went to bed. Dave and I had a Major trip planned for tomorrow, and we'd need LOTS of rest.

## **Day 7: Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006 The Hegman Pictographs**

Based on information received from John from VNO and the girl from Piragis, we decided to visit Hegman and South Hegman as our "big" daytrip. We had heard the fishing was good, and the pictographs would be an added bonus.

GadgetMan and I had put the canoe on the car, packed all of our stuff, grabbed a couple lunch packs and put our fishing gear in the car the night before, so we were ready to go. The drive to Hegman is a pretty one. It took us about 30 minutes, maybe more from the cabins. Once at the put in, we had MadNat take the paddles, I took the pack and fishing gear, and GadgetMan took the canoe. The Minn III actually portages pretty well, and the reversible seat/yoke works better than adequate.

Hegman and South Hegman turned out to be an OK set of lakes.....That is if you like SMALL fish. These lakes are definitely the right habitat for smallmouth and largemouth bass, and we didn't catch a single northern. That was strange, since many on the CCBB listed this as a good northern lake. Maybe we were just having one of those weeks.

We did end up catching around 20 fish, and MadNat finally caught a smallmouth bass. Actually, I think she caught 3 or 4. She was having a good time, but did get bored about 3 hours into the trip. She brought a book so the boredom didn't last too long. After fishing for a while, we decided to head up the lake and checkout the pictographs.

The pictographs were really NEAT. We took a couple pictures, and wondered what the pictographs were painted to mean. MadNat had some interesting ideas, and figured they were painted here as some kind of protection from evil spirits. GadgetMan and I have seen 2 or 3 different sets of pictographs in various parts of the park. We both agreed these were the easiest to find, and probably the best that we had seen in the park to date.

Once we saw the pictographs, we decided it was time for some real food, and not snack food. We hit the Echo Trail, headed back to Ely, when I noticed a sign to Chainsaw Sisters. Having heard LOTS of stuff on the CCBB about how good this place was, we decided to take the 6 mile gravel road to Chainsaw Sisters for Lunch. Now, this might just be me, but I was REALLY disappointed. Not only do the NOT serve anything besides pizza and beer, but quite frankly the whole experience reminded me of a scene out of Deliverance. Chainsaw Sisters was NOTHING like what I expected. I had hoped to find somewhere off the beaten path for lunch. Instead, I found a hole in the wall, where you could get pizza and a cold brew. I can understand that this would be JUST what someone coming off the lake would want, but this was DEFINITELY not



what I wanted. I was really HONKED off that this place is made out to be MUCH more than is actually is.

We drove back into Ely, and headed to Cranberries. I had heard they actually had food, and came highly recommended. The recommendations were not far off, and all three of us, GadgetMan, MadNat, and I enjoyed some really GREAT food. Cranberries is forever on the A-List.

After we finished our lunch, we headed back to the cabins. At the cabins, GadgetMan and I napped, MadNat read a book, and the boys were fishing from the dock, and my wife and my oldest folded laundry. My wife, Bree, and Elise went into town while we were at Hegman, and Cranberries. They went to a laundry mat to do laundry, since we had so many pieces of dirty clothing.

When GadgetMan and I got up, we started a fire for hot dogs and smores. The kids were really looking forward to roasting dogs and brats, and making smores. Each day brought something different to the trip. GadgetMan and I had both agreed that we would NOT be having fish on this trip. Mostly because we really don't like to keep smallmouth or largemouth, had not caught too many of them anyways, and HATED cleaning northern pike. On top of that, we really were not having too much luck on the walleye front either. We had caught a couple really small walleye, but certainly not enough to eat, and none on a consistent basis.

My wife and I also realized we only had one more day in the cabins, and really needed to start cleaning. GadgetMan and his family were planning on driving ALL the way back home on Saturday, so they planned on leaving at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning. Since that was the plan, all of our stuff also needed to be packed and ready to be loaded on the trailer. We were able to get most of the totes and stuff loaded. It was this time that we really started to understand just how much EXTRA food I had packed. We had been in the cabins 6 days, and could easily stay another 6 without ever running out of food. HM.....too much food.....I don't think so. Going fishless the last night was definitely NOT going to be a problem.

A cold front had started pushing in Wednesday. This was a slow moving front, and weather was just beginning to cool down. Thursday evening, you could really tell that it was going to get COLD. By late Thursday, it had already dropped into the 40's. We had all decided to hike the 3 mile Dry Lake and Dry Falls trail on Friday, so everyone decided to hit the hay a little early. It was 11:30pm, and that WAS early.

## **Day 8:      Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006      Dry Lake Trail**

Everyone wanted to do some more hiking, so we decided to hit the Dry Lake Trail, and Bass Lake Trail. The girl at Piragis told GadgetMan and me this trail system would be fine for our group. We had decided to try the 3 mile hike, which would prove to be somewhat challenging.

We made sure the kids and everyone else had a water bottle, and I packed my canoe daypack with some stuff. I took a couple lunch packs, my water pump, some maps, my emergency kit, and my first aid kit. I figured this was a well traveled trail, but I still should take some precautionary stuff. The girls agreed to carry the daypack, trading off every so often, as to not wear anyone out. The pack was not too heavy, but it did weigh probably 20lbs.

We hiked for what seemed like forever, and then we ran into some other hikers on the trail. They were soaking wet. When asked, they said they were swimming at the Dry Lake Falls. Well, that is all the girls needed to hear. Once we made it to the Dry Lake Falls, the kids really wanted to get in and take a swim. The weather was overcast, not too much sun, breezy, and probably 65

degrees outside. Even though we told them they had no spare clothes, and they would be REALLY cold afterwards, pretty much all the kids ended up in the water. Jarred was the first, followed by Jordan, Bree, and then finally MadNat. Elise put her feet in the water, but that was pretty much all. Everything was fine, and the kids were having a GREAT time until MadNat found a leach sucking on her big toe. That really FREAKED her out.....BAM, all the kids were out of the water. WE didn't have any towels, but they managed to dry off using some raingear, and a small pack towel I had in my pack. Bree also used her Wolf Center sweater, which made a great towel. All in all, the girls came out OK, and we finished the hike without any major issues, or any FROZEN toes.

Again, it was time for a Dairy Queen run. Up the Echo Trail we went. I think before we were done with Ely, we had spent many dollars, and had helped the bottom line of Dairy Queen for the month of June.

On the way back to the cabin, I had decided I would finally try the 1lb of leaches I purchased. I was going to have FISH tonight, even if I had to drive to Duluth, and hit the Long John Silvers. I was NOT coming back in from fishing until I caught some walleye.

I asked Elise if she wanted to go.....She tells me she hates fishing, but deep down, I still think she likes to, but since I like it, she cannot like it.....This must be one of those 15 year old teenage things. At any rate, Elise and I headed to the "falls". This is where Lake Two dumps into Lake One. I had brought my fish finder on this trip, but this would be the ONLY time I took it out in the water with me. If any place looks like a good walleye hole.....that place does. I searched around for what would be the deep hole that is specified on the map. We fished there for 45 minutes, and I finally caught a small.....VERY SMALL walleye. It was big enough to clean, but was only going to yield a couple bites.

It was getting late, and we had about 45 minutes of paddling to get back to the cabins, so we decided to leave. On the way back, I marked a couple reefs on the finder. These were submerged, and you would ONLY know where they are if you had a fish finder, or you already knew about them. I told Elise we were GOING to catch some walleye. I looked at the surroundings, and figured out which way the reef was running. A quick check of the finder confirmed this information.

Once I figured out what I was going to do, I proceeded to show Elise how to troll for walleye. I hooked up a worm rig with a gold blade, and a nice juicy leach. On the first pass, I hooked up with a nice.....REALLY NICE 3lb walleye.....BINGO.....I had a plan. I put the walleye on the stringer, and made another pass. On the second pass, I hooked up and LOST a much bigger walleye. The third pass yielded a 5 or 6lb northern, but he went back into the lake. The next pass yielded yet another NICE walleye. This one was closer to 4lbs, and bigger than the walleye I normally eat.....but he went on the stringer anyways. Another pass on the outside of the reef yielded yet another 3lb eating size walleye. By this time, it was pushing 9:00pm, Elise was getting hungry, and she was beginning to complain about the COLD.

Back at camp, Elise announced to the WHOLE camp, including every cabin in the cove that I was a master walleye fisherman, having nailed not one but 4 nice walleye. Everyone at camp had already had leftovers, but was ready to eat some fresh fish. Bree and I went over to the cleaning station, and cleaned the fish, while my wife made some stovetop stuffing, and fried potatoes.

Back at the cabins, I used Zatarains Fish Fry Mix, a couple eggs, and some milk to create a piece of heaven. The walleye turned out GREAT, and we had our fish meal. This would have been the only trip in 12 trips that didn't have fish for at least one meal.

After dinner, GadgetMan and I finished loading up all the totes and other loose stuff on the trailer.

I couldn't believe it.....the trip was over, and I had only started to find the fishing holes that would have provided GREAT walleye fishing all week. Oh well, that is how it works out sometimes.

We all decided to hit the beds early.....it was already 11:00pm, and everyone was going to have a HUGE day tomorrow, especially GadgetMan, Daphne and the two boys.

## **Day 9:      Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006      Packing Up and Leaving**

We had planned on getting a REALLY early start, and leaving no later than 7:00am. Susan and I set the alarm for 5:00am, got up, and started getting our stuff together. GadgetMan and Daphne were much better prepared than we were, so I didn't check on them until Susan and I had more of our stuff together, and on the trailer. By 6:30am, they were still not up. I finally went over around 7:00am and woke them up. This gave Susan and me a little more time to get our stuff together.

By 7:30am, we were all loaded up, and had tied the trailer tarp down. We were ready to head down the road. We would follow GadgetMan and Daphne outside of Ely, but they would head towards Duluth, and we would head towards Minneapolis, MN. I had promised the girls and my wife that if we ever made it this far, we would visit the Mall of America. Phase Two of our vacation was about to begin.

### **Final Thoughts:**

This was a different type of Boundary Waters vacation this year. I had hoped to introduce my wife and kids to the Boundary Waters that I have come to love. In some respects, they got that, but in MOST respects, this was FAR from the normal trips we take. That does not mean that I'm not happy with trip. On the contrary.....My wife, kids and I got some MUCH needed family time. MadNat and Bree had a GREAT time in the canoe, and even Elise had a good time. We did things that everyone wanted to do, and we had FUN. I do wish the fishing would have been better, especially because some members of our crew didn't catch any fish. BUT that is why they call it fishing and not catching. GREAT Family, GREAT FRIENDS, Great Conversations.....that is what it is all about. And we did it in one of my favorite places on the planet.