

In Memory of William "Bill" C. Dahl.

June 15/1930--March 2/2022

Northern Manitoba recently lost a unique and long-time trapper. He passed away on March 2 in Snow Lake Manitoba. This is his story and a tribute to his life and memory.

Bill was born June 15, 1930 in Melville Sask. After moving to The Pas with his family, he became employed with the Canadian National Railway, working as a machinist. He trapped part time, while still working and living in The Pas. He lived with and cared for his aging mother until her passing in 1975. Being bored with town life and no longer wanting to be a "townie" (as he referred to town people) he retired and embarked on a new venture.

In 1976, Bill packed up and moved to his registered trapline approx. 140 km north of The Pas. He was hired by a mining company, who were considering the restoration of a Coppermine. His job was to read the temperatures on the hydro transformers daily and to radio in the information into head office in Flin Flon. Bills boss, requested that Bill let them know 2 weeks in advance if he wanted a break or time away from his job. After 2 years of Bill making no such requests, they realized he was a "lifer". When the company wanted to abandon the project and decided to tear down the site, he was told he could remove any lumber he wanted. After obtaining an old truck he began moving his lumber to his new chosen campsite at Norris Lake. As time went on, he also built a second camp on Loonhead Lake where he spent the winters.

In his first few years in the bush, his mode of transportation on the line, was an old double track skidoo. Being concerned with the possibility of a remote breakdown (this happened) and the challenge of getting and keeping adequate fuel supply, he decided to start using a dog team, for the remainder of his trapping career.

This first locally acquired dog team came with a lot of behavioral/discipline problems. He heard about a breeder of Registered Alaskan Malamutes near Seattle Washington, so he wanted to give them a try. His first purchase was a female puppy for 1500.00. Keyla was a grey and white beauty. His next purchase was Granite.,. He was a majestic 179-pound male. Bill paid 1900.00 for him. Remember this was in the early 90s and a substantial amount of money for a trapper. His investment turned out to be the best decision he could make. Bill got 2 litters of puppies from this pair, and he now had a new strong dog team of Malamutes. He no longer had to worry about breakdowns. He travelled between the 2 camps, both summer and winter. He made saddlebags for his dogs and in summer, they carried everything that was needed for the trip. On one of these summer trips, the dogs caught sight of a moose and chased it. They were gone a couple of hours and when they returned to him, some saddlebags were gone and the others were empty. Otherwise, they were a reliable and faithful team.

In late fall, he would set nets, targeting whitefish, until he had a winter supply for his dogs. He supplemented their diet with commercial dry dog food which he had flown in.

Bill always carried a 7-foot wall tent, small wood stove and sleeping bag on his dog toboggan. He was always thinking ahead and prepared for any adverse event. A necessary skill to possess when you live this lifestyle.

When he harvested a moose in late fall, he would cut the meat into thin strips and dry it on screens over a woodstove. This process would ensure the meat kept right through the next summer. In those days, his groceries were flown in only twice a year. He became very creative with what he had. Having freighted sand and peat from across the lake by canoe to make a garden, he was very successful in growing vegetables. He harvested rosehips and fireweed to add to his cereal for vitamin C. Sometimes the conservation officers would stop by for a visit and occasionally stay for a night. As he was the only inhabitant on this isolated lake, he often joked that he baked the best Bannock on Loonhead lake. Bill had a radio in camp, so was able to remain current with world news and events. He would always enjoy a lively discussion about politics and would always win an argument.

One time a friend flew a reporter from the Globe and Mail in, to spend a day with Bill and to learn more about his lifestyle. The Reporter wrote an interesting article about Bill and his views about many things.

For several years his only communication was with an AM two-way radio. When they were discontinued, some friends were concerned about his inability to contact anyone, should he need to. These same friends dropped off groceries and a new satellite phone for him. Bill didn't think he needed it. On their way home after fishing, they stopped at Loonhead camp to pick up their cooler. Later, they got a good laugh when they found the satellite phone buried beneath some books in the cooler.

In his final years on Loonhead Lake, Bill chartered monthly to get his supplies/groceries. Brad Gogal of Gogal Air also would check in on him if he was in the area. It was on one of these impromptu visits that Bill admitted to Brad that his health was deteriorating and he could no longer live there alone. With the help of Brad, Bill relocated to Snow Lake Manitoba. He lived there for the last five years of his life.

During his time in Snow Lake, he needed cataract surgery. His friend Dale was able to escort him to the appointment in Winnipeg. They went by car. Having only been out of the bush a total of 5 times in 41 years, this was indeed an adventure for Bill. He was amazed at the fact

that Dale could pay for the gas right at the gas pump with a card, and you could go through a drive thru to get coffee without even leaving the car. At 86 years of age, he tasted pizza for the first time and loved it. What really amazed him though was that the pizza was delivered right to the hotel room.

Bill passed away in Snow Lake on March 2/2022. He was predeceased by his parents Charles Fredrick Dahl, and Clara Petra Dahl (Sandvold) as well as his siblings, Sandford, Viola, Calvin, Mildred, Doreen, Delores and Carola.

He is survived by his nephew Chris Rushton and family, as well as other extended family.

At Bills request, cremation has taken place and no service will be held. If friends so desire, please consider a donation to the Northern Health Foundation, (Home Care) 84 Church Street, Flin Flon, MB. R8A 1L8.

Bill loved his solitude, his lake, his lifestyle and his dogs. His presence will always be felt on Loonhead Lake.

