

Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

John Bulmer

Snowstorm by Larry DeLand

I stepped out of the camp to get a couple armloads of firewood and a breath of fresh air. Clouds were racing wildly across a grey sky as the wind found its way through the spruce with a hissing sound. The hardwoods rattled and chafed with the approaching storm. A red fox hurried across the upper end of the clearing. I stomped the snow from my boots and went back inside. I thought to myself, "This is going to be some storm."

As I dropped the wood into the box, a deer mouse darted to a safer and quieter spot under the ice chest. I grinned as I thought of some of the company that I'd had at camp over the years. This little fella I didn't mind at all.



Eric Dresser

I busied myself bringing in more armloads of firewood; enough for several days. I hauled plenty of water from the well and split kindling for the fire.

A glance out the window showed a fine snow falling. The wind was blowing from the northeast with greater intensity. "Boy, am I hungry," I thought, and decided to cook some supper.

The old camp was 16' by 28' with two rooms. One room was for cooking and eating and playing cards. It had an old lumberjack wood cookstove, an enameled iron sink, a large oval table

and chairs, an icebox and assorted pots and pans. It was nicely lit with a gas light above the table and kerosene lamps.

The other room was for sleeping. There were two double bunks made of spruce logs, one on each side, an old easy chair and a large kerosene stove. There were three windows in each room, and various hunting scenes adorned the walls, probably from the 1930s. This camp had been my dad's and was now my most prized possession.

I sliced some raw potatoes and onions into an old cast iron skillet, shook on some salt and pepper, ladled on some bacon grease, and placed a lid on top. Now we were cooking. I say "we," as my little furry friend watched curiously from the corner. Some fried venison and fresh-perked coffee made this a meal fit for a king. I ate my fill of good food while enjoying the sounds of the storm.

After eating, I boiled water for dishes, wiped the table down and stepped outside for a quick trip to the outhouse. The path had at least eight inches of fresh snow, and where it had drifted, it was knee-deep. On my way back to the camp, the wind-driven snow stung my face like needles. Visibility was maybe five feet. As I entered the camp, wind and snow followed me in. I closed the door behind me and shivered.

My snowshoes needed mending, so I got busy working on them. A little pair of eyes watched my every move. Next, I tended the fire. I opened the draft, poked the coals and put in a couple chunks of well-seasoned beech. Time to relax; it

had been a long day. I shut the gas light off, left the kerosene lamp on, and sank into an old easy chair that smelled faintly of mothballs.

In the solitude, I could hear the friendly sound of the woodstove. The heavier wind gusts made the camp creak and I could hear snow blowing against the windowpanes. The clock gonged nine times and I was content to be right where I was. As I sat, my mind drifted like the snow outside. I thought of frozen streams covered with snow; of brook trout waiting for spring; of black flies and deer flies and hot, humid summers. I thought of hunting seasons come and gone, and of winter traplines enjoyed in my youth. I could see the faces of old-timers I have known, wrinkled by age and the elements, telling their tales of the woods. Stories of good times and stories of hard times.

The wind howled and the snow kept coming just outside the walls of the old camp. With my newfound "company" nestled in his corner, I fell asleep as the storm raged on.

Larry DeLand has been an avid outdoorsman all his life.

