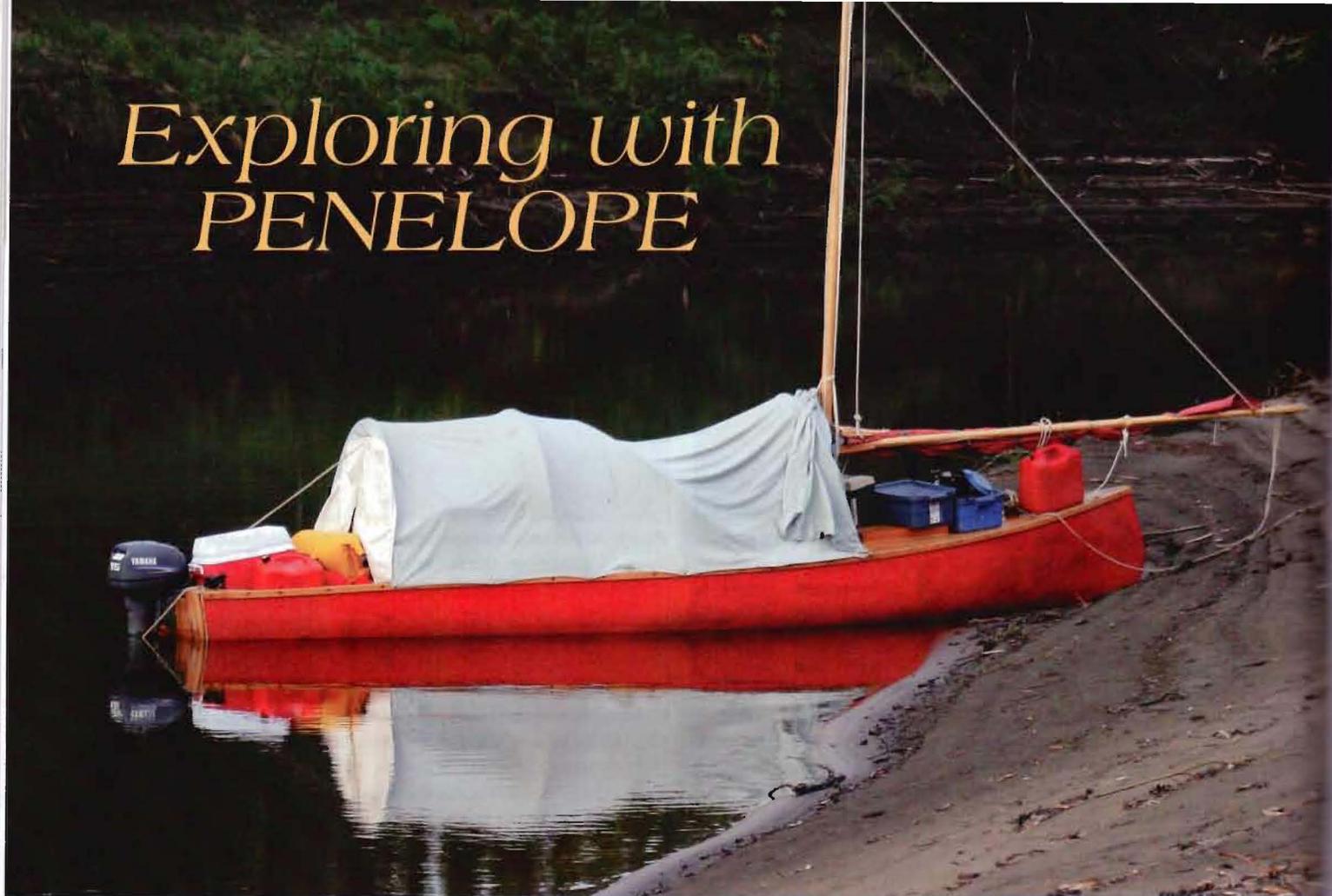


Exploring with PENELOPE



ALL IMAGES ARE FROM THE ALBUM OF KEN WEAGLE AND CLIO SMEETON

Four thousand miles in a hundred-dollar canoe

by Ken Weagle

Since the mid-1960s, during my university days in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, I have loved Chestnut canoes. During my four years there I spent many a great day wandering around the Chestnut Canoe Factory watching the manufacture of these beautiful craft. My summer jobs then were with the Canada Department of Fisheries on the Miramichi River, where we used Chestnut canoes as our main means of travel.

It was not until 1997, however, that I actually came to own a Chestnut. I was living in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, Canada, when I saw an abandoned Chestnut freighter canoe in the Department of Fisheries boatyard. After a few inquiries, I discovered that it was actually owned by the president of the Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Association. I made him an offer of \$100, which, to my delight, he accepted.

The model was called Daddy. It was 22' long, had a beam of 62", and a depth of 24". This particular design, with its carrying capacity of 5,000 lbs, had been built continuously from 1934 to 1976. The white-cedar planking was 1/8" thick on 1/2" by 3" white-cedar ribs, and it was covered with No. 4 canvas. Its carrying capacity and durability made it a mainstay in a region where transportation was mostly by water and generally on large lakes and

ivers. This was one of the canoes used extensively in the northern regions of Canada for prospecting, fishing, and general transportation. An interesting note to this is that one company in Canada still produces a similar-sized model, and the main market is in the Arctic communities of far northern Québec and the Canadian Arctic Islands where they are primarily used on the ocean for hunting, fishing, whaling, and general transportation.

My newly acquired boat was named PENELOPE, and a quick survey indicated that aside from a bullet hole (.303 caliber) in the bow, she was in very good shape for a 25-year-old craft that had not been particularly well looked after. I reinforced the transom, plugged the bullet hole with a bit of fiberglass resin and canvas, gave her a coat of paint, and she was ready to use.

Arctic travel can be a relatively uncomfortable business in an open boat, so most of the original open freighter canoes have been modified to provide for some shelter and semi-dry storage. While in Inuvik I added a small forward cuddy to store fuel and sleeping bags, as well as an aft storage area just forward of the aft seat for stowage of food and cooking gear. The freighter canoes are designed for an outboard motor, and although this model could take 40 hp, I fitted a 25-hp short-shaft,