

A Book Review— The Mighty MacKenzie

The Mighty MacKenzie; Highway to the Arctic Ocean by Lyn Hancock. Hancock House Publishers, 3215 Island View Road, Saanichton, B.C. Canada. 95 pages, price \$3.95

The MacKenzie River is a very historic highway to the Arctic and Alaska. It was over this route that Alexander Murray first came to Alaska to establish Fort Yukon in 1847. For perhaps thousands of years it was the homeland of the Indians and Eskimos. Then came the gold rush and the booming fur trade.

Following the decline of the fur industry, many people left and today only derelicts and ghost towns mark the sites where they lived.

Today there is renewed interest in this area. An increasing number of people prefer to "rough it" on their vacation and are finding that a trip down this magnificent waterway is truly a unique experience. The author, Lyn Hancock, made such a journey in a small boat and recorded her adventures and observations. She generously documents her trip with many photographs — averaging more than two each page. She also points out some of the hazards involved.

There are those who don't really understand that such a journey takes them into real wilderness; it's not a trip through a city park! Finally, the author makes her own speculations on the future of this region and the possible impact of a natural gas pipeline and future development.

For those of us in Alaska, the book is interesting from two points of view. First, it provides an interesting glimpse at our arctic neighbors in Canada. It might even prompt some of us to make the journey ourselves. She explains the various means of getting there, places to stop and what is available along the way.

Secondly, it may make us consider some of the tourism potential within our own state. Generally, we think of tourists as desiring "plush" accomodation, planned entertainment and artificial entertainment; maybe we're missing the boat! It could stimulate tourism along the length of our mighty rivers such as the Yukon and Kuskokwim without disturbing the environment and without great capital investment. For those who enjoy travelogues, this is really fun reading.

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