

Isle Royale Backpacking Trip

In the summer of 1963, Joanne and I along with my friend Malcolm Jenkins and his girlfriend Suzanne planned a trip to Isle Royale National Park. We were interested in this park because it was an isolated wilderness area which contained a pack of wolves which preyed on a population of moose. Isle Royal is located in Lake Superior and we would take a boat called the Voyager to get to the island. From there we would backpack from the south end of the island to the north end, a distance of 45 miles. Since we were students on very limited budgets, we designed and made our our backpacks which we filled with lightweight items. We were also counting on catching fish so we took a fishing pole and line.



We were finally ready to depart so we piled into my 1955 Chevrolet and started the long drive to a point in Michigan to catch the boat. After an overnight drive, we arrived at the departure point, caught the boat and enjoyed a short trip to Isle Royale. When we arrived on the island, we set up camp and prepared a meal. There was Wildlife everywhere. A fox came right into camp and seemed unafraid of approaching humans. waterfowl were everywhere. We were very excited!

After a night's sleep, we began our long hike by ascending up to the island ridge trail, which ran the length of the island. We were searching for a cabin 10 miles away that the park ranger had said we could use that evening. As mile after mile passed by as kept looking for the cabin. Nothing! We were about ready to give up when suddenly, there it was on the horizon! Upon reaching the cabin, we settled in for the night.

The next morning, we took our fishing gear down to a small interior lake. We baited our line with a "daredevil" lures and cast into the water. On the first attempt, a large fish, a northern pike, followed the lure as we reeled in the line, and, at the last moment swallowed the lure. We had caught our first fish! We quickly removed our first catch, reattached the lure and cast again. Lo and behold, a second pike took the lure. This was too good to be true! These were hungry fish! We had caught enough for a day's meal for four people. That night we made a big campfire and cooked our fish. Delicious! After dinner we played the card game Bridge by the light of our Coleman lantern. And then we went to sleep for our second night on a Isle Royale.



The same routine continued for the next few days: we would hike along the ridge trail and then descend off the ridge to a cabin for the night. Then on the fifth day something very unfortunate happened. Malcolm had hiked far ahead and missed the turn off for the next cabin. We took the turn and descended to the cabin where we made a fire. After two hours, Malcolm appeared at the cabin exhausted and upset. He asked why we didn't call out to him when we found the trail down to the cabin. We replied that he was too far ahead to hear us. What happened next was the most unfortunate event of our trip. As I emerged from the cabin, I accidentally let the screen door slam shut. Malcolm yelled out "why don't you let that door slam a little harder!" I was irritated by his reaction, so I went back to the cabin and slammed the door harder. As I turned around to go back to the campfire, he lunged at me, tackled me, and we fell to the ground in an all-out fight. We rolled around on the ground close to the campfire while the two girls yelled "stop, stop!". We finally separated, and after cooling

off, decided to divide into two groups of two and go our own ways. So we divided all of the cooking utensils and food, agreeing to meet at the end of the island in three days in order to catch the boat back to the car.

Well, three days later we did meet up and there were some apologies made. We took the boat back, put everything in the car and drove back to our starting point in Indiana. Afterwards, we continued to be good friends. Malcolm and Suzanne got married and had two children. So ends this dramatic story!