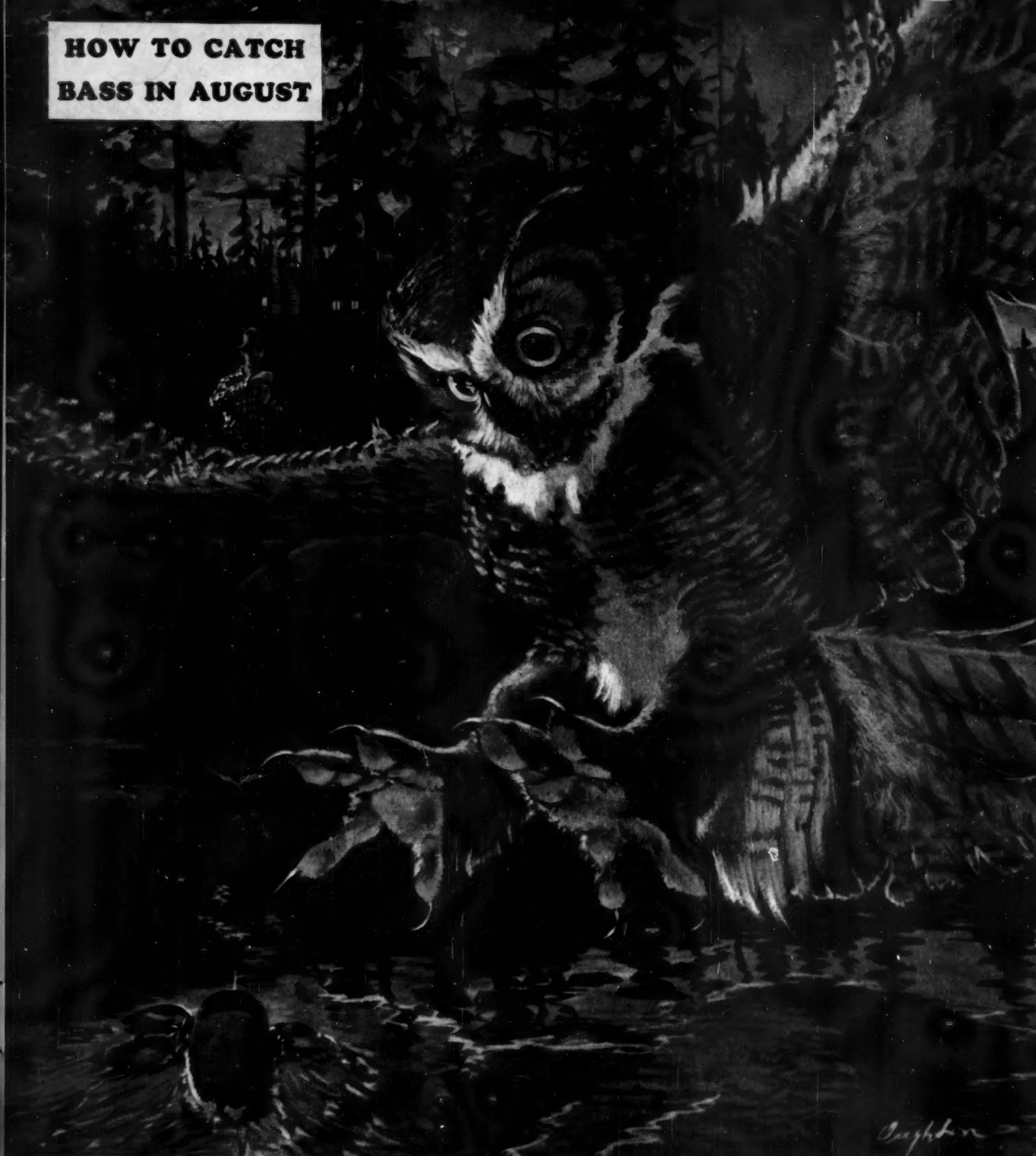


# Outdoor Life

AUGUST

25¢

**HOW TO CATCH  
BASS IN AUGUST**



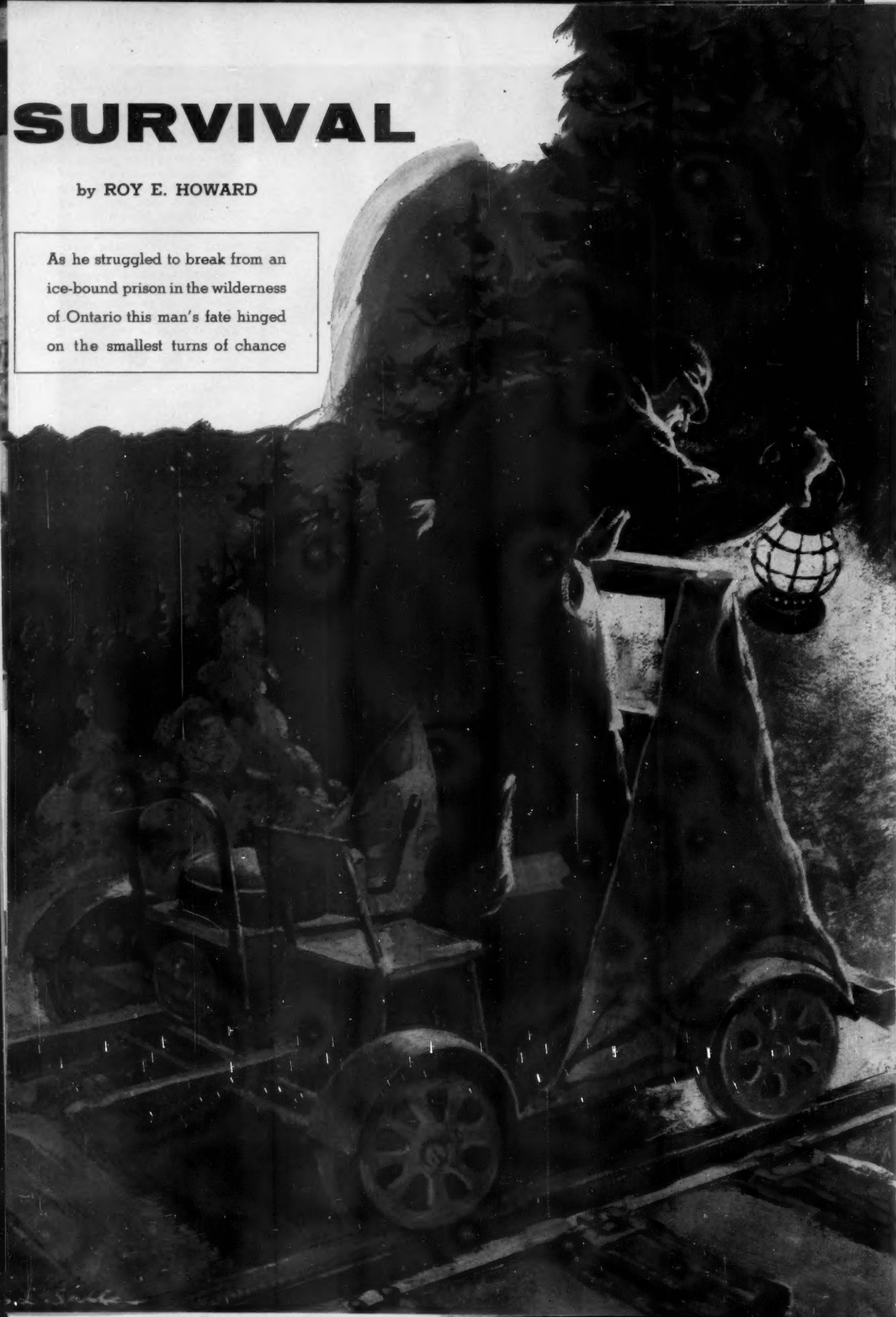
*Copyright*

**A NEW WAY TO FISH p. 25--ESCAPE FROM ICY DEATH p. 50**

# SURVIVAL

by ROY E. HOWARD

As he struggled to break from an ice-bound prison in the wilderness of Ontario this man's fate hinged on the smallest turns of chance



**D**ave Racicot is an educated man. He hasn't had the formal schooling a university gives, but he has graduated from a much tougher school—the school of survival. The son of a French-Canadian father and a Norwegian mother, he is big, rawboned, tough-muscled, and fast on his feet. And he has an understanding of the northland.

Northern Ontario has been his homeland most of his life, or about 40 years. Dave won't tell his age, and with a man like him, you can't tell yourself. His steel-rimmed spectacles, which helped save his life, frame clear blue eyes that are sometimes calculatingly cool, often warm and cheery.

He's a little shy in the village, but in his own surroundings it's easy to see that he's a true woodsman. The way he points out an Indian boy picking suckers out of a creek, and his confident stride along the trail to camp, tell you at once that he is at home in the north country. His face is like tanned leather after years of exposure to sun, rain, and biting cold

winds, and his hands are big and calloused from wielding an ax and rough from setting beaver traps in partly frozen streams.

For more than 15 years Dave was a prospector and trapper in the Ontario wilderness north of Lake Superior. The prospecting was profitable and the trapping good, and the natural run-off of wildlife from the 5,000-square-mile Chapleau Game Preserve always kept him busy.

This work put enough in Dave's poke to enable him to start a fishing and hunting camp on the shores of Lake Wabatongushi. The lake, a natural for northern pike and wall-eyes, extends about 20 miles north from where it touches the Canadian Pacific Railway's main line at Lochalsh, a hamlet perched on rocky outcrops about 125 miles north of Sault Ste. Marie. Two trains a day, one going east and one west, stop there on a flag. Get half a mile out of town and you might get lost if you're a stranger. That's the spot (continued on page 62)

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES LA SALLE



In the light of the railway buggy a man wobbled dazedly, gasping out a plea for help

## SURVIVAL

(continued from page 51)

where Dave's fishing camp is located.

In 1939, on a prospecting trip through the Chapleau preserve, Dave uncovered some large quartz veins about 15 miles north of the fishing camp. The veins panned no gold, but he noticed some dark minerals in the veins and in the granite, and also some rock which Dave thought might be uranium.

When he first saw the "black stuff," uranium didn't count. But soon after the war it did, and Dave decided to go back to his find with a Geiger counter. Even if there was no uranium, he could bring out some of the vein material and have it assayed for gold. Gold is for the finding in that territory—if you know where to look—and Dave felt sure he was close to a find. But it was the thought of uranium that made him return.

Late in November, 1952, Dave's wife and child left for a visit to Dave's mother in Toronto. Dave figured it would be a good time to hit out for his discovery. However, he decided to wait until the small lakes, which polka-dot the area north of Lochalsh, were frozen over. It was a tough trip by canoe because only a few portages were cut in the land linking a chain of small and medium-size lakes between Wabaton-gushi and the site of the quartz. By his reckoning it was a two-day trip—one in, with enough time to make tests, pick up samples, and grab some sleep, and then one out.

Because of its size, Wabaton-gushi was not yet frozen. Dave packed food for two days, cooking utensils, his counter, an ax, and snowshoes, and loaded them and his dog Skipper into a canoe. Starting out before daylight on a day in early December, he paddled almost seven miles to the east bay of the lake and pulled ashore to begin his over-land journey. He rolled his canoe over on two logs, hoping that a sudden cold snap would not freeze up the bay and force him to go home afoot.

He first cut across from the east bay of Wabaton-gushi to Katherine Lake, less than a mile, feeling glad he'd brought his snowshoes. When he reached Katherine he tested the ice. It wasn't too good, but he figured it was safe enough. Turning back into the bush he cut a long, stout pole and headed north for Meath Lake. He holds that a pole is much better than an ax for testing doubtful ice. An easy blow from an ax will cut through ice which is strong enough to walk on, but a pole won't. With a pole you can probe, and if the ice is "dummy"—if it has air between it and the water—the sound of the scratching pole will signal danger.

After crossing Meath Lake Dave and Skipper traveled for about 10 miles, following a chain of small lakes, narrows, and streams. Most of the time they crossed on the ice, but sometimes they had to skirt along the shore, especially around fast-running streams.

During the day the weather turned noticeably milder. The west wind, usu-

ally a sign of clear skies, brought scudding gray clouds, and by afternoon the clouds settled into a heavy overcast that blotted out the tops of the high, rock-ribbed hills.

Just as they reached the vein location, rain began to trickle off the peak of Dave's cap. He'd brought no suitable bedding material, for rain was the last thing he expected when he set out. Besides, Dave never had used a sleeping bag. He'd often slept out in 40-below weather with nothing more than a blanket spread under him and a fire to keep him warm. He reasoned that if you were dressed warmly enough to withstand the cold during the day, you could stay warm next to a big fire at night.

Realizing he was in for a tough time, he quickly built a fire with fire-killed jackpine. When the blaze was going good, he took out his Geiger counter and, with high hope, went to try out his vein. He clambered about for half an hour, but there were no kicks on his counter to show uranium. The vein still looked good for gold, though, so he broke off about 40 pounds of it from various places, and he also picked up a few samples of mixed rock.

By the time he'd finished it was raining hard, so Dave returned to his fire, cut more jackpine, and soon the blaze was casting a cheery glow over the rain-soaked snow. The roar of distant thunder heralded worse weather, and in a few minutes the rain came down in a torrent.

Dave cut some small poles and brush and built a crude shelter, but found it impossible to keep more than half of himself dry at one time. Skipper—part everything but all dog—was also having a tough time keeping warm and dry. On Dave's side of the fire, under the so-called shelter, the dog was shooed away, and on the other side he was warm but rained on. Skipper's big eyes finally persuaded Dave to invite him over to his side, but by that time the dog's feelings were hurt, and he refused. Dave didn't get much sleep that night.

The rain stopped just before dawn. Dave got up then and warmed a tin of beans and melted a pail of snow for tea—not a substantial breakfast but enough to start him on his way home.

Rain had weakened the ice considerably. It was covered with water and honeycombed in many places. It presented a problem. Not to travel across the ice meant a two-day trip home, but using the ice would mean constant testing with a pole. Dave didn't have rations for the extra day, so he decided to try the ice. He figured he could get back before sundown.

He selected a sturdy, 15-foot pole, packed his gear on his back, and started out, keeping close to shore so that if the ice broke he could quickly reach firm ground. But despite his testing and probing, he went through the ice when he'd been out about an hour. Fortunately, he was only a short distance off a sandy point, and within minutes he was safely out and stamping his feet on the ground.

The sky was clearing, and the wind had veered to the north. It was getting colder. Dave circled the rest of the lake. He took to the ice again, however, when he came to the chain of small lakes and connecting creeks and narrows. He cut a new pole for each lake and threw it away when he had to skirt open-water creeks.

He was about an hour from an abandoned lumber camp where he planned to have lunch. By now he was more confident, sometimes venturing as much as 50 feet from shore. He felt that, with the pole to support him, there was little chance of his sinking more than waist deep, and he knew the procedure for getting out. But he took the precaution of slinging his pack on only one shoulder, so he could get rid of the extra weight quickly if necessary.

Judging time by his compass, Dave reckoned he was behind schedule when he arrived at the deserted lumber camp, so he quickly brewed a pot of tea and shared his sandwiches with Skipper. His clothes were dry now, and he started out again with renewed vigor, hoping to get home before nightfall.

He was making good progress over the bigger lakes when Skipper fell through the ice. As the dog made an ever-widening hole in the ice about 50 feet out, Dave watched from near the shore, thinking the dog could pull himself out. But Skipper was having a hard time. Dave knew it would be risky for him to go out on ice that couldn't hold a dog's weight, but he just couldn't watch the dog drown.

Whipping out his ax he cut a 15-foot spruce and shoved the butt end out where Skipper floundered. When the tree reached the edge of Skipper's hole, Dave walked toward it along the trunk, hoping its bushiness would distribute his weight. He reached the hole, grabbed the dog by the scruff of the neck, then beat it back to shore. Skipper shook himself hard, pranced a bit, and let out a few happy barks. Dave hoped his rescue would soothe the dog's feelings which he had hurt the night before.

At Lake Meath, Dave was about equidistant from the rail line and the east bay of Lake Wabaton-gushi where he'd cached his canoe. The cold was setting in, and he decided to get the canoe before ice formed on the bay. By cutting across Lake Meath and Lake Katherine Dave figured he could reach the canoe in time to paddle home before dark. He knew that if he walked home by way of the railroad, he would be in the dark for the last couple of miles along the tracks. He wanted to avoid this because the rain and snow were combining with the cold to make an icy surface.

"Before starting out across Lake Meath," Dave recalls, "I looked around for a good pole, but it was all second growth in that area and the best I could find was only about 10 feet long. It was less than an inch around at the butt and it tapered away to nothing at the tip. But it had to do."

Since his pack was feeling so heavy, Dave made a crude sleigh. Two pieces

of birch about three feet long served as runners and the snowshoes made a fine chassis on which he loaded his pack.

There was no water on the ice covering Lake Meath, but Dave found that a strong thrust could plunge his flimsy pole right through it. The ice was honeycombed with thin spots, but Dave decided to risk a second dunking to save time. He slid along the shore, pulling the sleigh easily behind him, and approached a rocky point jutting out into the lake.

When he reached the tip of the point, he made an impulsive decision to cut across the lake rather than go around. Dave reasoned that since the 500 yards from the point to the beginning of the portage to Lake Katherine was the shortest way across the lake, the ice might be stronger there. He was wrong.

He started out, and found the going better than he had expected. True, he had had to detour a bit, but he was saving time. He was perhaps 300 yards from shore when he broke through.

He didn't get scared. He'd been through ice before, and even the shock of the cold water didn't seem so bad at first. He caught hold of the ice as he went through and was hanging onto the edge of the hole he'd made, partly in and partly out, with the sled close behind him. He put the pole up on the ice, across the hole. Grabbing the pole, he pulled himself up so that his body hung over it. Then he reached out and tried to pull himself up on the ice. But the ice at both ends of the sagging pole crumbled, and he sank into the freezing water. He tried it a couple of times, then noticed that the commotion he was making had weakened the ice under his sled. It sank, carrying down his supplies and samples.

Dave was scared now. He knew that in water like that you don't last long. The time comes when it chills you to the marrow, and then the numbing process begins.

Beating on the cracked, porous ice with his forearms, he forced a channel through it, trying to reach solid stuff. Once he had the channel broken, he put the pole up on the ice and again tried to pull himself up. He kept trying, but the skimpy pole sagged and the ice gave way every time.

Dave stopped to rest—and to think. For years, whenever he was in the bush, he carried a jackknife, but recently he'd got out of the habit. He had a hunting knife in his pack, but his pack was on the bottom of the lake. If it weren't, he thought bitterly, he could get the knife, jab it into the ice, and pull himself to safety.

Dave suddenly remembered that a few days earlier he'd got a package from his mother. It contained the eyeglasses he'd sent to her in Toronto to have fixed, and also a jackknife she'd sent as a present. He was sure there was a jackknife in that package. What had he done with it? Did he put it in his pocket? Did he have it now?

He jammed his numb fingers into his pants pocket, and his fingers touched something hard—the knife!

Carefully, ever so carefully, he pulled it out and held it up out of the water. Using his teeth and his torn fingernails, he pried the blade open.

Dave hung himself over the pole, as before, reached as far ahead as he could, and drove the knife's blade into the ice. The knife gave him a grip. He pulled. The ice broke. Every time he pulled, the ice broke.

Though he was moving toward shore, he knew he'd never last long enough to make it. Skipper had been circling around him, barking his fear, but now he was gone, out of sight on shore.

Dave felt his strength ebbing, but his senses told him he mustn't struggle too hard. He must use his endurance



"Speeder" driven by Tom Rioux, right, was on time for Dave and Skipper, left

to advantage. He must hang on. Keep his head up. Keep trying. Get on top—or drown.

"I started to feel that this was it," Dave says. "This was the end. There wasn't much I could do. Funny thing, I wasn't uncomfortable. The water hadn't shocked me. Maybe it was seeping through my clothes real slow. I thought of my wife and my mother. I didn't yell for help. That would have been a waste of effort because there wasn't anybody within miles. I just said, 'God help me!'"

Dave kept on trying. He put the pole across the hole, heaved up his body, reached out with the knife, pulled, then fell back.

"My mind was flashing warning signals," he recalls. "A voice kept telling me 'You're not going to make it.' My body wasn't even part of me now. I was acting like a machine. I thought of our little baby. He'd never know what happened to his daddy. Nobody would know."

Dave doesn't know what happened next, or how long it took to happen. He was trying to lift himself up again when, all of a sudden, the pole held his weight up to his hips. With a surge of hope, he moved the knife slowly ahead and jabbed it in the ice. He pulled—and slid a little farther out of the water. He cautiously wormed his way a few more feet forward. Then his years of experience in survival started to tell.

He spread-eagled himself on the ice, distributing his weight, and soon clawed

his way far enough to get up on all fours. Then, on hands and knees, he made the shore.

He stood, stumbled, and fell. He shook himself, got on his feet, but when he tried to walk he fell again. Coming to a bit, he realized he still had a firm clutch on his pole and tried to drop it, but his fingers wouldn't work. He had become a human icicle.

He shook his legs, rolled in the snow, and yelled. He yelled like hell and shook like a leaf in a storm. He knew he had to get his blood circulating. Every time he got to his feet he'd stumble, but he kept at it, and soon his head began to clear.

Before long, Skipper sidled up. Dave was overjoyed. Not only was the dog safe, but was a source of warmth for his master's frozen hands. Dave held them out to put them along the dog's flanks, but stopped short, surprised at the sight of blood. The jackknife was still in his hand, and its blade was closed on his little and third fingers, cutting them to the bone. He hadn't even felt it. His nails were ripped off, and the ends of his fingers were torn from scraping and pulling on the ice.

When his blood started to circulate normally, Dave made his way to the portage leading to Lake Katherine. At the lake, he skirted the shore until he came to a trail leading to the tracks.

He stumbled and staggered along the trail, reached the railroad line, and knew he still had two long miles to go. The snow was deep and the going hard, and he was very, very tired. He could take only a dozen steps before his strength failed, and he had to stop. He was getting to his feet for the hundredth time—maybe the thousandth—when he heard the sound of the one thing which now could save his life. From far along the tracks came the rumble of a gasoline-powered "buggy" used by the railway workers. With almost his last ounce of strength, he lunged toward the tracks, jumped up and down beside them, and strained his lungs to shout.

Ordinarily the buggy wouldn't have been anywhere near there so late in the day. It made inspection runs three times a week, but this night it was off schedule. It was there because the rain that had caused Dave such discomfort had coated the tracks with ice, making every hill a harder pull and every curve a hazard. Trains were two hours late, and so was the buggy.

The man riding the buggy was Tom Rioux, roadmaster of the line between Chapleau and Lochalsh. Ahead of him, his light picked out a strange figure staggering beside the tracks, flailing its arms wildly. There was a dog, too. Then Tom saw the face of a man. He ran his buggy beyond it, but stopped and backed up. In the light's beam he saw ice caked on the man's face and clothing, and looked into eyes glazed with suffering.

Dave and Skipper stood still. A voice said, "Hello. You in trouble?"

Dave, breathing heavily, held on to the buggy to steady himself. "Loch-

(continued on page 75)

"hoss"—but brother, they run and run. "Looks like that's about it for now," Bill said, and sat down. "You want to try another spot or two?"

I collapsed on the seat. "I've had it. Let's don't run a good thing in the ground."

We paddled leisurely back to the dock, loaded our gear, and headed for town.

Since that first trip Bill Adcock has become one of my favorite fishing partners. He caught his first bass, locally called chub, in the Eno River in eastern North Carolina, and since then has taken others in many parts of the South. Once when he was working on a Florida construction job he weighed what was probably the biggest largemouth of all time. Though the official world record stands at 22¼ pounds, this one went slightly over 24 pounds on two different scales. Unfortunately it wasn't taken on tackle at all. Bill's crew was building a bridge over a stream south of St. Augustine, Fla., and the men working in the water were a bit skittish about alligators. Whenever they got too nervous the dynamite crew would fire off a stick or two to kill any gators that might be lurking about. That was fine, except that they also killed off a few fish—including the monster bigmouth.

Adcock moved to Louisiana in 1929, and brought along his unique method of bass fishing. "Notching" is the accepted term for it, since many people file a notch on top of the plug's screw eye to keep the leader knot from slipping to the front. With the leader pulling from the top of the eye, the plug keeps tilting downward—always digging for depth. Some lure manufacturers, mostly in Louisiana and Texas, have taken note of the wide popularity of notching in their territories and have brought out plugs that are designed to vibrate on fast retrieves. Others will vibrate even when reeled in at moderate speeds.

Quite a feud has developed in some areas between notchers and non-notchers. The nons think notching's a lot of hogwash, but I've noticed they're almost invariably the ones who've never seen a good practitioner. I'd give odds that a poll would show notchers have a higher average catch per trip than the others.

But Bill isn't stubborn. If his method isn't producing, and another is, he'll shift tactics. He carries half a dozen or so "foreign" plugs in his box, such as top-water ploppers, deep-running spinner baits, and a few weedless lures.

"Don't get the idea I always catch bass," Bill cautioned me that first day. "I get skunked like everybody else. Bass are like that." I've shared a number of his fishless outings, but I've also seen him load the boat with fish so many times when they "weren't hitting." So I know what happened that first day was no accident.

I guess the highlight of all our fishing trips was one afternoon on Bayou Courtableu. We decided to put in just opposite a shallow mound in the middle of the bayou, but before we launched

the boat I asked Bill to try a couple of casts from the bank. He could reach the mound, but my casts were 30 feet short of it. He caught 15 bass on 13 consecutive casts. That's right. Twice he brought in two bass at a time.

The last time we fished the Stump Hole we were just putting into the water when a fellow Bill knew eased his boat into the landing and got out.

"How're they doing?" Bill queried. "Four hours and one fish," the reply came back. "You might as well load that boat back up."

Bill picked up his rod and sent a plug sailing out over the water. "Guess we'll try it awhile since we're already—Oops, think I've got one."

What followed was the wildest exhibition of landing a bass I ever saw. Bill got that fish to jump half a dozen times, almost fell into the drink keeping it under control, and then calmly released it before Bill's friend could tell how big—or little—it was.

I've seen him pull that same stunt several times. He says there's always a fish or two hanging around every boat dock just waiting for the right plug to come along.

Not long ago Bill was fishing City Park Lake, in the heart of Baton Rouge, by casting from the bank. He'd taken a few fish when he noticed another fisherman off to one side watching him. Finally the stranger couldn't stand it any longer. "Mister, would you do me a favor?" he said to Bill. "I'd just like to stick my head under water and have you pull that plug by me right close."

Bill obliged, and the fellow came up sputtering. "No wonder you catch fish," he said. "That plug sounded like a P-38 when it went by."

Well, I haven't got around to doing any underwater listening yet, but I'll bet one thing. I'll bet the first thing that stranger does now when he wets a new plug is try to make it break out of a wiggle into a vibration. THE END

## SURVIVAL

(continued from page 63)

alsh," he said, gasping for breath. "Lochalsh. Please. Ice broke. I fell through."

"Climb on," said Tom, reaching out to pull Dave onto the buggy. Dave sank to the floor and Skipper stretched across his lap.

When they reached Lochalsh, Rioux wanted to help Dave along the trail to his cabin, but Dave felt stronger now and insisted on going alone. Safe at last inside his home, he made a roaring fire and changed his clothes.

"Then," said Dave, "I went to the big trunk in the corner, took out a picture of my wife, and sat down and cried." THE END

## Carrying Small Lines

To carry small fishing lines in your pockets, with hooks attached, wind the lines around a discarded adhesive-tape spool and put the spool back in the metal container.—Harlon E. Hicks.

# GOOD FOR TRAVELING!

## NEW TAWN DE LUXE TRAVEL KIT FOR MEN

The perfect "valet" for him when away from home; plane travel—weekends—business trips—his club locker. Generous portions of everything he needs for perfect grooming in handsome, compact, two-tone simulated pigskin case that fits coat pocket. Light weight, waterproof, unbreakable containers, refillable plastic bottles.



**CONTENTS:** Gillette Super-Speed Razor, Gillette Blue Blade dispenser, Dr. West's Miracle-Tuft Tooth Brush with plastic holder, TAWN After-Shave Lotion, TAWN Hair Dressing, TAWN Cologne Deodorant, TAWN Shampoo, TAWN Brushless Shave (2 tubes), TAWN Talc, Calox Tooth Powder, Styptic Pencil, Plastic Comb, Rubber Funnel for refilling plastic bottles.

Ideal for Service Men!  
At leading drug, toiletries counters. If your dealer is out of stock, write McKesson & Robbins, Inc., Dept. O-854, Bridgeport, Conn.



\$5.89  
Plus 24¢  
F. E. Tax

## Tawn TOILETRIES

Also—Ladies' Travel Kit—\$5.95, 31¢ F. E. tax.

for MORE POSITIVE FISHING RESULTS...  
Be sure to use...  
**Dayton**  
SNAP ON — SNAP OFF  
**FLOATS**

BE SURE TO SEE YOUR DEALER NOW!

MORE FISHERMEN  
CATCH  
**MORE FISH on**  
**WRIGHT & MCGILL**  
**FLASHER**  
TRADE MARK

**SPOONS**  
than any other lure!  
"STREAMLINED"... deep  
cupped shape, mirror finished  
in 6 popular fish-getting patterns,  
1/4 oz. 70c, 3/8 oz. 80c, 5/8 oz. 90c

**WRIGHT & MCGILL CO.**  
EXCLUSIVE MANUFACTURERS OF EAGLE CLEW BOOKS  
Box 7, Capitol Hill Sta. Denver, Colorado U.S.A.