

**Vacation Trip to Mobley Lake, B.C.**  
**October 1937**  
**[unpublished account]**

Don Baker while on a grizzly bear hunting expedition with Dr. Bill Day from Dayton, was snowbound in a tent on the Northern edge of the Columbia water basin in British Columbia earlier this year and during the various discussions that developed during these days in the tent Charley Mobley, the guide, told them about a country north of Kamloops that to his mind was the most beautiful undeveloped country of British Columbia and that it was his plan to build a cabin up there some day for his boys for their own private enjoyment. At that time Don developed with him the possibility of several of us here in the States joining together and assisting financially in the building of this cabin, whereas Charlie was to get the rights on the cabin site and pasture land adjoining the same.

These details were later consummated and we held numerous meetings during the summer planning on our hunting trip this fall. Although there were eight of us in the group, it finally develops that only six could go on the trip and this further developed into the decision whereby Leigh Savage and George Van Waters and myself were to make the first trip and dates were set for leaving Seattle on Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1937. We gathered at George Van Waters home for breakfast at 4:30 in the morning, leaving at 5 – George taking his Packard Sedan and Leigh Savage furnishing one of his Dodge delivery trucks, which the evening before I had reinforced with 2x4 bracing to hold our meat which we expected to obtain. Then we arrived at Sumas at the border at 7 o'clock and had to wait until 8 o'clock for the Immigration Department to open the border for our entrance. We obtained at Sumas from the British Columbia officials hunting licenses and proceeded on to Chilliwack where we obtained permission to carry firearms in British Columbia and from there on I took the responsibility of driving the truck on thru, Hope Yale, Boston Bar – Leigh relieved me to Cache Creek at which point I took the truck into Kamloops, arriving there about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and after gassing and oiling the cars, we proceeded on straight North for a period of about four hours to Clearwater Park Junction where we met Charlie Mobley, the guide. We had dinner there at a wayside farmhouse and it was decided to push on to the end of the road that evening and it took us approximately two hours to cover the twenty odd miles to the end of the trail where we spent the night in Howard Mobley's cabin, arriving next morning at four to have breakfast and have our truck down at the **Lafe** Anderson's ranch where we were to obtain the horses, and at that time loaded the animals with our packs. At about 7 o'clock we proceeded towards Mobley Lake, the site of our newly built cabin. We traveled for the first three hours thru meadow country over small knolls thru a burned area. For the next three hours we continued to climb our trail became a little more difficult through this burn country. This burn, by the way extended for approximately 45 or 50 miles from Clearwater on in to the mountains and in width possibly 25 to 30 miles the country having been burned over some six or eight years ago with what is know as a crown fire, leaving most of the standing timber which as the years progressed started the right-of-way and the high winds had blown the trees every which way making it almost impenetrable without a trail of some kind but making a fine moose shooting country due

to the fact that the burn had overgrown with the type of willows that is the main feed of moose.

We continued on and at the end of six hours we reached Stillwater where Charlie had had a camp in the building of the trail. The area here is broad meadows which had been heavily timbered and with myriad of lakes, many of the connecting with the running water of Myrtle River which passes through this meadow country and it is excellent moose and deer and bear hunting country. IN another hour we passed into green timber and for two hours continued in the green timber to our cabin, passing a water falls of the Myrtle River with a drop of about 50 feet, the guide telling us that about 15 miles further down on the Myrtle River there was a drop of about 450 feet, which precluded and possibility of trout in the earlier days coming up to the lakes in the water shed above, but that in the years gone by the Dominion of Canada Forestry Department had planted Kamloops trout in the upper water shed and they had increased with great rapidity.

On reaching our cabin at 4:30 found a splendid peeled log cabin 16 x 26 beautifully finished inside – 8 bunks for eight men, a cook stove and an oil ball type heating stove. The general type of cabin was in keeping with all of the other types of log cabins used by the settlers in this area and was certainly completed by expert workmen.

Immediately upon arrival at the cabin, Leigh wanted to catch a few trout and rowed out into the lake with Frank Mobley and after catching several trout observed a large grizzly bear swimming the lake close to them and on account of the fact that they did not stop to get good oars and the boat was rather slow with their poor equipment they had to row rapidly out of the way of this grizzly and from that time promised themselves never to be away from camp without a high power rifle. After a hearty dinner of caribou stew, we turned in at 7 o'clock, Saturday night, Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Sunday:** Charlie Mobley, the head guide suggested that we spend considerable time Sunday in fishing and resting up after our trip in and we were all anxious to get out on the lake and try our luck fishing and there seemed to be no possible combination of lures we could throw in to the water that did not create great interest with the trout and after a few hours fishing we had 80 or 90 trout ranging from 12 to 30 inches in length of what is known as the Kamloops trout type, a pink meat fish that is one of the gamest trout in the West, but as we had taken steam cookers and can sealers and empty cans along, we continued to fish for canning and about noon became restless with the fishing and returned to the cabin for lunch, after which we took a short walk out into the timbered meadow country adjoining the lake, returning that evening after a hearty meal at about 7 o'clock.

**Monday:** The weather continued unsettled with rain and some wind and it was suggested by Charlie that two of us continue to stay on the lake and watch the caribou crossing in the hopes that game would start swimming the lake with the possibility of obtaining shots at grizzly and other animals on the shore, while he took Leigh Savage thru one of the portages off the main lake up into some smaller lakes and George and I spent an uneventful morning running the put-put around the lake doing some fishing and

considerable exploring of this body of water, returning at noon to find that Leigh had shot a beautiful black bear and that it had all been skinned out and was laying on the floor as a rug and we were all excited as this was the first trophy which we had obtained at the camp.

After lunch we wound up the put-put again and started down the lake for further exploration and George and I were getting kind of uneasy about having stayed around the lake so long and not having a chance to do any shooting ourselves. The weather being unsettled we contented ourselves with further exploration of the lake which is about 18 miles in length and varying in width from one-half to three or four miles, set in virgin country without a sign of habitation, entirely wild, set in the distances to the north with snow-capped peaks and inhabited only by two trappers in winter, one of them Howard Mobley, who is the son of our guide, the other Dave Anderson who furnished the horses for our pack train. Howard had purchased his trap line from an old settler some several years before and advised us that some of the finest furs ever produced in British Columbia had been obtained from his trap line and we were very much interested in the details of his trapping operations, he handling 250 traps over a line of probably 40 or 50 miles with frequent small cabins for winter habitation during heavy storms, his type of fur being principally marten with some other fur bearers during the winter period, and in the spring of the year his trap lines vary to the low lands where he trapped beaver and mink and other water fur bearing animals. Until this trail was put in, it was almost impossible for anyone to obtain access to the lake due to the extreme difficulty in getting through the burn and the virgin timber with horses and pack trains.

During the day it was decided that Leigh Savage and I with Frank Mobley would take a trip over one of the low lying mountains, probably 1500 feet above our base camp which was at an elevation of 4000 feet and on Tuesday at 5 we warmed up the put-put and started out across the lake to what is know as File Creek probably a mile from camp and there set out on our trip which was to be one of the most strenuous excursions of our trip. We crawled over and under and thru windfalls and became intimately introduced to what is know as Devil's Club which is dried, large leafed acidulous plant with main stalks of about ½ inch in diameter, ranging from 2 to 4 feet high, completely covered with little spines or pricklers that were very anxious to disengage themselves from the parent stalk and get into our knuckles and fingers and hands, each one of them causing in a day or two little festers.

During this climb Leigh and I divested ourselves of most of our outer clothing, altho it was a drizzly, cold day and loaded down Frank with our various coats and lunches and finally about 10 o'clock during one of the steepest parts of our climb in a heavily timbered area, we found that we had walked to within about 20 feet of two large caribou. The guide pointed them out to us but Leigh was the only one who could get a glimpse of them and so our first disappointment of the trip arrived in that we did not get a shot at the game at all. We continued climbing over trees and windfalls until about 12 o'clock we reached the granite ledge which indicated we were nearing the top and it was interesting to note that Frank had taken us through this jungle not missing his mark by more than a 100 feet. Again I wondered how anyone could keep their bearings so accurately in such a

dense underbrush and wooded area. It was then only a matter of about half an hour before we reached the summit and continued along into what is called an alpine meadow in about three inches of snow for another half hour at which time we examined the various grizzly bear diggings and were told that just before hibernation the grizzly bear goes out into these meadows and unearths as many gophers as he feels he needs to top off his feeding for his winter hibernation and probably fortunately for us we did not meet up with any grizzlies and along about 1 o'clock we got in the lee of some trees and built a fire, much fatigued but still hopeful that we might see game. For lunch we dressed out a grouse that Leigh had been fortunate enough to hit over the head on the way up with a club, and we roasted the grouse with the green boughs over a fire, sitting there in the snow, taking off our shoes and three pairs of socks to wring out the water and get them all smoothed out for our foot protection on our return trip. At that time I found blisters on my heel and instep that are slowly healing up now but was advised the best thing to do was to tape them solidly with tape which I found very satisfactory.

We stayed at the top approximately an hour and left well refreshed for our return journey which we found almost as difficult as our journey upwards and we were really quite disappointed on returning back to the cabin about six o'clock that night not to have seen any fresh sign of game after this trip but we ate an enjoyable dinner and I for one immediately crawled into my sleeping bag for a little rest.

**Wednesday:** Charlie having felt I believe Monday that there was a little unrest amongst us regarding not seeing more game so he had arranged to send his son Frank and one of the horse wranglers up to what we would later designate as possibly grizzly shooting. So we got started about 5 o'clock in the morning, George and Leigh in company with Frank found the trail which he had come up the previous Saturday for about a two hour walk at which point we found the slashing for the new trail up to Caribou Flats and after about two hours further walk up this trail we broke out into the last of the burned timber mentioned previously and by the use of occasional lifts with the horses, we made the top about 1 o'clock. Charlie picked out a campsite in a small group of trees and as they were starting the fire and preparing lunch Leigh and I decided we would like to go out and look over this beautiful alpine country. It resembles nothing else so much as a splendidly laid out golf course – broad fairways extend thru scattered groupings of trees, some of them covering ten or fifteen acres, others covering only a small are of ten or fifteen trees. The grass from the heavy frost had turned brown but in every way it resembled a park country and immediately below our camp there was a broad fairway of several hundred yards in width extending over a little low rise to the south. We journeyed down to there talking and discussing the possibilities of game on this alpine meadow and about thirty minutes later returned to camp for lunch and when about 200 yards from camp I called attention of the guide to some animals moving out of the timber. This later developed to be a spike caribou and so we sat down to watch what he would do and were advised that if I waved my red hat the caribou being very curious would come out and see what was going on and later he was followed by presumably his mother and father and as they proceeded to within about 300 yards of us, we had our first view of caribou, the buck caribou having a beautiful set of antlers, we decided we should obtain some meat for

dinner and Leigh and I proceeded to shoot about eleven shots at the caribou, being only successful in taking off one rear leg and the animal eventually escaped us thru the forest.

While the guides were trying to track the caribou thru the forest I decided to go around this little group of trees and when only a short distance from where the caribou went into the woods George hailed me from a distance and I waited for his arrival, continuing to walk slowly, however, up and around the south edge of this group of trees and after proceeding about 100 yards I looked down one of these dark fairways and at a distance of probably feet it brought me in a distance of 300 feet away right in the middle I saw the antlers and head of what to me looked like a beautiful caribou and I waited for George to come up to join me and about 50 feet from us there was a low lying moss covered rock which made a beautiful rifle rest and we proceeded to this rock and the caribou gaining more interest in our activities accommodately trotted down about 100 yards to get a better look at us and George was successful in shooting the animal thru the head and shoulders killing it instantly. We were all very happy for George to have the first shot at the caribou as he was rather incapacitated for walking and it might have been difficult for him to continue hunting the rest of the day.

Later after lunch we were much excited over having seen so much game and Frank and I started out looking for our caribou while Howard went with Leigh and as the afternoon progressed we saw caribou laying in the meadows and spent some little time watching their antics and trying to pick out a sizable set of horns to bring home and about 4 o'clock a very heavy snow storm set in and at about that time we heard shots from across one of the low knolls and realized that possibly Leigh had obtained his caribou and as we journeyed on back to camp as the guide felt we had best get back before the snow storm got too heavy. We came across numerous recent grizzly diggings but had no time to investigate them further due to the snow. But again on returning back to our cabin at about the same place where Leigh and I in the morning had seen our caribou we looked up to see two large buck caribou coming down into the valley apparently entirely oblivious of our presence and by stalking the caribou with the use of the scattered trees which I mentioned before, I was able to obtain a shot at somewhat over 200 yards at the caribou standing. I missed this shot but as the caribou started to run off I was able to kill this animal with my second shot, but the lateness of the evening and the heavy snow prevented me from getting a very satisfactory picture of the animal.

Returning to camp for dinner we had our first experience of eating dinner under the trees with the heavy wind and snow and there was no place around the whole camp fire where anyone could sit without first being showered with sparks and then with smoke but we made away with a splendid dinner of caribou liver and bacon and made up our bunks by our beds that had been prepared for us during the afternoon. The shelter was a very meager one and it was necessary to lay out our bunks with regard to the heavy snow coming in carried by a strong wind. I slept very soundly only to wake in the morning to find the wind still blowing with some snow.

**Thursday:** After breakfast a hasty meeting was called and it was decided by our guides that we had best return to the lake as quickly as possible on account of the danger of this

storm developing into one that would cause us more hardships and with regret we left this lovely country returning to camp about noon after which Leigh and I took the boat out to investigate the lake for crossing of further animals, but the wind was being high and the waves rolling in it was difficult for us to make much headway and even tho I had taken my fly rod along to try fly fishing, it was impracticable due as I say to the heavy wind.

**Friday:** It had been decided the night before to send the horse wrangler and one of the men up with the horses the next day to bring back our caribou meat and leave it on the trail so that we could obtain it on our way out. It was decided too, that we should catch some fish to clean and pack to take out with us so we wound up the motors again and started out on the lake . George Van Waters and myself being with Howard, and Leigh with Frank and it was very interesting that almost any place in this large lake that we wished to cast we found the fish and before noon we had accumulated approximately 100 large trout, had seen four caribou swimming the lake. The largest of which we had followed to the shore and as he went up the rock bank we shot him for the guide and on this shot I was able to hit the caribou in the neck, breaking his neck instantly and it was a simple matter to dress him and drag him back into the water where we hitched him onto the tow line of our put-put and returned probably four miles to camp, arriving there in time for lunch, after which we spent considerable time in arranging our trophies at the cabin. We tried to hang up the hundred fish and spread out Leigh's black bear, together with the caribou trophies and the moose horns which had been obtained from an animal shot by Howard the week before we arrived and after these trophies had been well photographed, we proceeded to dress out the fish and pack them in readiness for bringing them out.

**Saturday:** I was interested in a remark of our horse wrangler late the night before upon arriving from bringing in our meat from Caribou Flats – when I asked him if he had had a pretty tough trip he said, “no, he hadn't minded it much, but it had almost killed the horses!” and on account of this last remark of his, it had been decided in going out that we had best make the pack out in two days, due to the shape that the horses were in after the trip after our caribou meat and for this reason it was decided that the three of us would leave in company with Frank and Howard early in the morning going down the trail to what is know as Hemp Meadows where we would pitch a temporary camp for the night and continue on down with the pack train Sunday to our automobiles. This trip down was uneventful except for the fact that we ran across many fresh signs of moose around Stillwater and as our equipment would not allow us to get a moose, we did not do any intensive hunting for moose but arrived at our temporary camp about noon where we spent the remaining portion of the day getting familiar with that portion of the country. When the pack train arrived we spread out our equipment for dinner and put up a tent to augment the one that was already there for sleeping that evening and I was quite interested at that time to note the equipment that the horse wrangler had brought along for his rest. Although there was a slight rain that evening, he just arranged a careless shelter put up by one of the covers of the pack and for his own blanket took a sweaty canvas from the pack train and rolled up under this shelter to spend a pleasant night sleeping. It seems that for a trip of only a week like that, that he didn't bother to bring any blankets

along. But we all rested comfortably on air mattresses in a bag that kept us warm even tho the weather was getting pretty chilly.

**Sunday:** We were us as usual ready to leave this camp at about 6 o'clock in the morning and it had been decided that Leigh and George would continue on down the trail to our automobiles whereas Howard and I would continue on the trail for an hour or so and then branch off across the burn to see if we could not get a shot at a moose or bear. There was not much enthusiasm about getting a moose as it would necessitate holding the truck with the meat over for a day or two while the meat was being packed out and we therefore enjoyed a very nice walk out into the burn covering possibly five or six miles from the trail to the foot of the mountain. At that point due to the fact that we had disturbed some moose in one of the draws we had gone thru we were going along cautiously when we spied a bear with three cubs out in one of the meadows. After stalking the bear to get as close a shot as possible, I took my first shot at the bear at about 250 yards, missing the bear completely the first shot. The second shot apparently took effect and the bear fell over on its face, and at that distance was able to get one of the cubs at the first shot and as the mother bear at that time clamored to her feet and started over a low knoll Howard suggested we make a run for the knoll to see if we could see where she had disappeared but not being in as good shape as Howard he was able to get to the knoll probably 50 feet ahead of me and as he rounded the tree I saw him bring his gun to his hip and shoot instantly and on catching up with him I found that about 12 or 14 feet from him lay the black bear. He had gone around the tree just beyond the knoll and was waiting for him. So again we learned the lesson that had been discussed with us so much with the guides that it is necessary to treat any type of bear with a great deal of discretion.

We skinned out the large bear and the largest one of the cubs and dressed the meat of all four of them so that if Howard decided the next day to come up and get the meat it would be fresh and in good condition. The other two cubs I decided to bring out and so we dressed them out and I tied their feet together, throwing them over my shoulder and then we proceeded down across the burn, not much concerned for the moment about the weight of the two bear and my gun. Howard taking the skin of the other two bear and as much of the fat and tallow as he could reasonably skim off of the carcasses, as he prizes this very much for grease to waterproof his boots, as well as for cooking lard.

After carrying these bear for three hours over this rough country I began to regret my decision to take the bear carcasses in for food and about the time I despaired of carrying them any farther, we were hailed by members of the pack train coming back to pick us up, realizing that something had happened or we would have been in before that time and we were very happy to load our bear and skins on to the horses and ourselves ride on in to the end of the trail. It was interesting to note that we had a great deal of difficulty getting onto these horse due to the fact that we had been carrying the bear skins so long we began to smell like a bear. When we reached the end of the trail none of the dogs would even come close to us due I believe to the bear smell, but we quickly rounded up all of our equipment and loaded what we had into George's car, Leigh having preceded us by several hours, expecting to meet us at the hotel in Kamloops. And about five o'clock that evening Charlie and Frank joining us, we traveled on down to Clearwater Stationo

where we had dinner on the way up and then proceeded down to Kamloops arriving there about 11 o'clock at night, obtaining rooms and the first semblance of a bath we had since leaving home.

I noticed here in Kamloops too, when we went down to get some toast and milk before retiring that the dogs certainly would not have anything to do with me, one long eared husky type of dog getting my wind came up with in about ten feet of me and sat down on the sidewalk and howled lustily.

**Monday:** This morning we managed to stay under the covers until about 5:30 and at that time called up Leigh Savage to tell him that we were about ready for breakfast on our start home and we decided that Leigh should ride with George for the first part of the road and I started out with the ton of meat and equipment in the Dodge truck and by alternately Leigh and myself changing positions as regards the driving of the truck, we stopped at Siska for 4, arriving in Seattle about 6 where we deposited the meat in the Diamond Ice and Cold Storage and proceeded on to our homes – all of us even then looking forward to our trip next year.

H.E. Gray

copied verbatim

R.W.R. Oct. 24, 1956.