

## Experience The Tradition – By Jon Thompson and Nancy Lemmen

### Experience the Tradition The First FIFTY Years 1947-1997

#### Taken from the introduction of “The First 50 Years”

What does it mean to race in the AuSable River Canoe marathon? Here's a way for you to get the feel for it. First, sprint 250 yards with a partner carrying a 30 pound canoe on your shoulder. Trip and fall face-first onto an asphalt paved street.

Now, jump into a cold river in front of 15,000 screaming fans and climb into your tippy canoe as fast as you can. You'll need to avoid the 57 other canoes and 114 other paddlers in a narrow stretch of the river.

For the next five to seven hours, paddle an average of 60 to 70 strokes a minute. Maneuver around stumps, rocks, sweepers and other canoes in a twisting, shallow river. Did we mention you're racing this natural obstacle course in the dark?

Need a break? Okay. For the next nine to 12 hours, we'll give you six breaks. You can jump out of the canoe, climb up cement walls and 40-foot hills and scurry down 60-foot slippery slopes on six portages. Don't forget to keep up the average stroke rate of 60 per minute between portages.

Want some more fun? Deal with temperatures as low as 32 degrees with snow in the air. Or how about 90 degrees with stifling humidity to greet you as you try to finish 120 miles of nearly non-stop paddling? Fierce rainstorms may be a factor. The wind usually is. It can blow large waves at you as you try to cross large ponds. A stiff wind in your face can sap any remaining strength you have.

Not difficult enough? Throw in some thick fog during the night and early morning on a river with hidden logs and backwaters you can become lost on even in the daylight.

If paddling doesn't appeal to you, perhaps you'll want to follow the race as a spectator. For the most ardent fans, that means driving more than 160 miles, possibly standing in rain or 90-degree heat and staying up all night.

If you're getting a sense of the difficulty of the AuSable River Canoe Marathon, perhaps you can begin to understand that this is exactly why it is alluring to many canoe racers and fans.

Join us throughout these 176 pages as we pay tribute to the first 50 years of the AuSable. River Canoe Marathon and attempt to explain what makes the race so compelling to so many people.

***\*This book has sold out and is no longer available.***