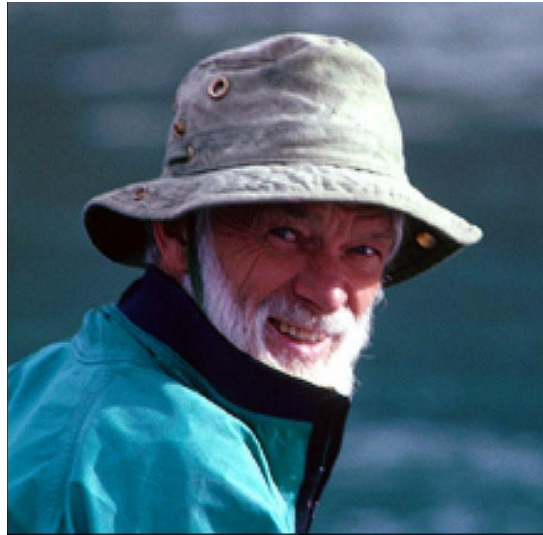


BILL MASON-CANOEING LEGEND

**Dedicated to the Ely wilderness canoe guides and Bill and Barb Rom
who founded Canoe Country Outfitters**

**Sculptor Ron Bayens
Donated by Dr. William and Holly Meeker Rom**



Bill Mason developed a great passion for canoeing and the wilderness very early in life. As a renowned, award-winning Canadian naturalist, author, artist, filmmaker, and conservationist Bill Mason is widely considered a Canadian Canoeing Legend.

Bill Mason's books, paintings, films and environmental advocacy and stewardship have each had a tremendous impact on generations of wilderness travelers and whitewater paddlers, not only within Canada, but worldwide.

From 1950 to 1958, he was the Director of Development at Manitoba Pioneer Camp Canoeing Program. There he developed many of the leading-edge skills, techniques and equipment that were featured in the "Path of the Paddle" series of films and books, many which were adopted by and incorporated into the course curriculums of many Canadian Canoe and Youth Camps, canoe clubs, wilderness expedition companies and provincial and territorial whitewater canoeing organizations.

As the most successful filmmaker in the history of the National Film Board of Canada, Bill Mason is perhaps best known for the "Path of the Paddle" Whitewater series of films. Consisting of four (4) individual titles: *Quietwater Solo Basic*, *Quietwater Doubles Basic*, *Solo Whitewater* and *Doubles Whitewater*, "Path of the Paddle" introduced new skills to canoeists worldwide during the 1970s and 1980s and were influential in increasing the sheer joy and exuberance of a whitewater run.

Bill Mason's influence on whitewater paddling extends far beyond his films, books and publications and into the hearts of paddlers and Canadians in general. So strong has his influence been on the love of paddling and the environmental stewardship of Canadians that his influence continues to be felt far and wide, twenty years after his death.

“He is a man enthralled with the sheer joy of guiding a canoe through challenging rapids in the early spring, awestruck by the beauty of nature as seen over the bow of a canoe silently traversing a mirror-smooth lake in the early morning...” –Pierre Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister

[Bill Mason and Quetico and Boundary Waters](#)

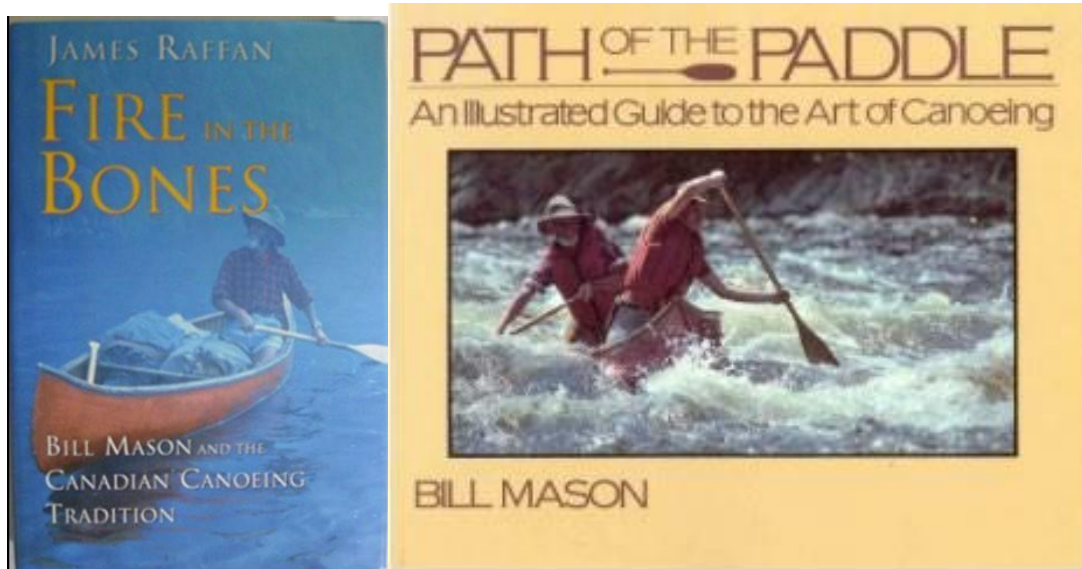
The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Quetico Provincial Park are the world's greatest canoe country. Bill Mason starred in “Quetico,” a movie made by Christopher Chapman in 1956. This was the heyday of Ely's wilderness canoe guides and Canoe Country Outfitters, founded by Bill and Barb Rom. Bill Rom Jr learned to guide from Jeep Latourelle, Gust Walske, Fred McReady, and Don Beland during those years.

In 1963 he and Tom “Ropie” Mackie competed in the International Canoe Derby paddling from Atikokan, Ontario, to Ely, Minnesota, and back. Quetico Park has not changed a great deal since the film was made, and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area became a federal wilderness in 1978. The movie “Quetico” captures the spirit of canoeing and wilderness through the experience of a single canoeist. The Boundary Waters, Quetico, and Voyageur's National Park comprise approximately 2.7 million acres located at the west end of Lake Superior. The waters of the wilderness areas drain into the Arctic Ocean westward through Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lake Winnipeg, and into Hudson Bay. “Quetico” introduces Bill Mason, one of Canada's leading canoeists and conservationists, as a young man. He became fascinated with filmmaking, and began his own quest into film, along with his passion for canoeing.



Feature Photo: Chris Chapman's *Quetico*

Micheal Peake refers to Bill Mason as “the patron saint of canoeing” in his review of James Raffan’s biography of him. His favorite canoe was a 16-foot red canvas covered wood canoe Chestnut Prospector that Mason claimed was the most versatile design ever manufactured. After Bill Mason’s death in 1988, this canoe was donated to the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario.



Bill Mason was featured on a Canadian postage stamp in 1998. After his death, a Warden at Nahanni National Park Reserve informally started calling the dramatic rock spire, in the midst of Virginia Falls, "Mason's Rock". His films can be viewed for free on the internet through the website of the National Film Board of Canada. The very first film he made for the National Film Board of Canada, *Paddle to the Sea*, won eleven national and international awards and was nominated for an Oscar (Best Short Film) in 1968. One of life’s little ironies: he lost to his mentor, Chris Chapman, *A Place to Stand*. Love of the land, so well expressed in his films—*Paddle to the Sea*, *Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes*, *Wolf Pack*, *Death of a Legend*, *Path of the Paddle*, *Face of the Earth*, and many others—became a part of the Canadian psyche.

Bill’s influence as an artist and film maker was not confined to Canada. Several of his films have been translated into several languages. Queen Elizabeth showed *Paddle to the Sea* at one of Princess Anne’s birthday parties and wrote Bill to express her pleasure at how well the film was received by the children. Bill retired from film making in 1986 to pursue his first love—painting. With his very high-profile success as a film maker, it was easy for people to forget his first love was painting. He had been experimenting with a new technique—oil applied to paper with a palette knife—and he was ready to strike out on a new career as a full-time professional painter. He divided his time between writing and painting for a few short years. But Bill’s career as a painter was cut short by his untimely death in 1988 at the age of fifty-nine

Films

1963: “Wilderness Treasure”
1966: “Paddle to the Sea”
1969: “Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes”
1970: “Blake”
1971: “Death of a Legend”
1973: “Cry of the Wild”
1975: “In Search of the Bowhead Whale”
1977: “Path of the Paddle : Doubles Whitewater”
1977: “Face of the Earth”
1978: “Song of the Paddle”
1978: “Wolf Pack”
1983: “Path of the Paddle: Solo Whitewater”
1986: “The Land That Devours Ships”
1989: “Waterwalker”

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 1984: Award of Merit by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association “In deepest gratitude for your very meaningful contributions to the growth and development of canoeing in Canada.”
- 1984: National Parks Centennial Award by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Canada “In grateful recognition of the special contribution made by Bill Mason to the celebration of the National Parks Centennial”.
- 1988: The Bill Mason Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies Centre opens in Ottawa
- 1989: Canadian Parks Service Heritage Award by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Canada “Presented on behalf of the Canadian people to Bill Mason in recognition of your exceptional and significant contribution to Canada’s heritage.
- 1989: Interpretation Canada Distinguished Service by Interpretation Canada “for excellence in the field of interpretation.”
- 1990: Paddle Canada establishes the Bill Mason Memorial Scholarship Fund
- 1998: Bill Mason was honored with a Canadian Postage Stamp depicting him in a white water canoe. Eight Million stamps were issued
- 2003: The Canadian Heritage Rivers Society creates the “Bill Mason Award” and presents it to a Canadian Citizen who has made an outstanding contribution to the canoeing heritage in Canada.