

The Klondike Sun

January 30, 2008 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon

Fulda Returns to Dawson City for 2008

by Dan Davidson

The 8th Fulda Challenge saw the popular extreme sport event return to Dawson City after a year away, and use the Klondike capital as a staging ground for an expedition up the Dempster Highway.

Bill Holmes, marketing manager for the Klondike Visitors Association, reports that the Challenge participants arrived in Dawson on Sunday, Jan. 20, and roughed it by setting up tents for their overnight stay in the parking lot across the street from Diamond Tooth Gerties.

"Their event up the Dempster on the Monday was snow shoeing up the side of a mountain and back down again at kilometre 75," Holmes said.

Following this they did some touring around the area in their RAV4s and attended a banquet at Gerties that evening, attended by the 75 participants, support people and



international media.

"There was a great time had by all," Holmes said. "They really, really enjoy Dawson. The media that travels with them love Dawson as do the competitors and the organizers. They always seem to have a positive experience here."

Still, the Fulda presence is less than it used to be in the early years of this event, when they filled hotels for several days and had their closing banquet here.

Holmes is hoping to be able to convince the organizers that Dawson would be the best place to end the event next year.

After the banquet, the Fulda crew put on a demonstration down at the ice bridge that links Dawson to West Dawson across the Yukon River.

"They had an exhibition by this fellow who uses a very small four wheeled device with a jet pack strapped to it. He went back and forth on the ice bridge a couple of times powered by this small thruster jet."

While the thruster pack was only about the size of an oversized thermos, Holmes described the noise it made as being like hearing a 737 taking off.

The next morning the entourage was off by 8 a.m., headed to Carmacks, where they had an ice skating oval set up for a speed skating competition. Other events were planned for Whitehorse and Haines Junction.

The Yukon government supports the German tiremaker's event with a contribution of \$150,000. It is estimated that this generates \$3.25 million Euros in terms of European

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media coverage.

"These events have helped to improve the general awareness of Yukon in Europe, at both the consumer and travel trade level. I am convinced that this success story will continue with this year's event," Managing Director of Fulda Michael Kuhn said.

This year six teams participated, including one from Canada, consisting of Leigh Ann Nevermann and Jeff Alfonsi, both from Ontario.

Holmes had a chance to chat with both of them"

"They were both just blown away by the beauty of the territory and what a beautiful part of Canada they were in. Leigh Ann had been up here one summer when she was 11 with her parents, but neither of them had seen it in the winter time and they were impressed with the beauty, especially on the Dempster."

Dawson Looks for No Tax Increases for 2008

by Dan Davidson

Capital expenditures amounting to \$977,500 help to boost Dawson's proposed 2008 budget to just about one million dollars more than the 2007 version, up to \$5,448,758 from around \$4.4 million.

Topping the list of public works projects is the drilling of a new well along Front Street in addition to the decommissioning of an unused well within the Yukon Energy compound. Jointly, this will cost \$250,000, says city manager Paul Moore.

Another major expense will be \$200,000 for the installation of an air handling system in the chlorine room at the present pump house.

The largest portion of the funds covering those costs will come from the federal gas tax revenue program and a portion of the extra infrastructure funding that was granted to the town as part of council reconstruction package.

Some sewer piping will be replaced along Front Street. This, along with some other lesser expenses, will raise the public works budget line to around \$800,000. Much of this work has been due for some time, and was a subject of constant discussion during the 26 month trusteeship.

Fortunately this spending is supported by an increase in the overall unconditional grant offered to the town by YTG, as announced last spring. Dawson's share has risen to \$1,220,732. The town expects to take in close to \$3 million in taxes and utility fees and the rest in other revenue and grants.

Moore notes that this budget has been planned without any increase in the tax rate or in sewer and water utility fees, although the fee for water delivery to homes not on the system will be increasing.

Recreation costs are expected to be \$845,158 with revenues of \$119,608.

Cable television will bring in \$145,000 while costing \$118,000 to provide to the community.

Waste management should garner \$122,000 while costing \$227,900. The five year waste hauling contract will

be ending early. The contractor had asked to reopen the agreement due to increased fuel costs, and council agreed to that but decided to strike a committee to examine waste management in general and come up with recommendations for changes, so it has set an earlier termination date for the contract.

Ironically, the last proposed restructuring of waste management occurred under the council elected in 2003 and the resulting recommendations led to a tendering dispute which became one of the acts in the political drama which led to that council's removal by YTG in 2004 and the awarding of the five year agreement to the present contractor.

Moore says that the town hopes to solve problems in the development in its web site during 2008 and finally have a functional design.

Community development planning will be on the agenda for the coming year, with implementation of the heritage plan, and economic development plan that were developed in 2007.

"One of the things that keeps coming up is a waterfront development plan," Moore said, "and we're keen to get that moving forward."

"We really need to answer questions about the docking area, which is getting more and more complicated. We're hearing there might be as many as three or four major users there next summer."

There is also a by-election coming on March 6 to replace a councillor who has stepped down, as well as a referendum on the sewage lagoon location on the same date.

The draft budget was planned before it became clear that the property assessments administered by the territorial government had increased. In the past councils here have lowered the tax rate to reduce the impact of increased assessments. That has not been a topic of public discussion so far, but acting city manager Norm Carlson indicates it will probably be looked into.

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Uffish Thoughts: Why is there all that Waste Along the Highway?

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

In this land of wood stoves and high priced fuel oil one of the greatest mysteries of the last five or six years has been the incredible waste of wood along the sides of the Klondike Highway.

Immense stacks of felled brush and small to medium sized trees line the highway between the Tintina Trench and Pelly Crossing. They look for all the world as if the giant beavers which roamed the North and stood up to two and half metres tall had returned and had gone on a cutting rampage along the Klondike Highway, leveling everything in sight and leaving behind literally hundreds of three metre high lodges in their wake.

Travelling with a friend once, we counted and found that the piles numbered up to 22 per kilometre for kilometres at a stretch.

While this seemed to begin as an exercise in clearing the route for the Mayo to Dawson Transmission Line, it has continued ever since. I've been told it's about widening sightlines along the highway and also for creating a firebreak.

What disturbs me the most is not the clearing itself. Whatever the reason may be, I can see why some of it needs to happen. The hydro line itself is, after all, easily susceptible to power interruptions caused by wind and ice buildup without adding the possibility of trees falling on it.

No, what gets me is that nothing productive is done with the wood. They simply dump some kind of accelerant on it to overcome the snow and dirt, ignite a torch and set the things ablaze.

"I could see the piles burning from, oh, it must have been 15 kilometers away," a friend told me today, describing a recent trip down and up the highway.

When he passed by the fires, the flames were, in some cases, leaping over ten metres in the air and the heat was so intense he could feel it through the windows of his vehicle.

On other occasions, I have encountered enormous pillars of dirty grey smoke rising, mushrooming at their peaks, spreading out, joining up and creating an enormous artificial cloud over the highway.

If there's an inversion and it's below -35 one often finds that the road crew had placed signs warning of obscured vision due to smoke hugging the highway itself. As the piles often take days to burn down, the haze lingers, and you can pass what seems to be clumps of burning snow for days afterwards.

Finally, the smell is not the pleasant smell of burning wood, but is more like the stench of a forest fire.

Besides being unpleasant and a potential road hazard, it's such a complete waste of a resource. Why not let people haul it away?

Granted that cut felled trees that have been pushed along the ground and through snow and placed in haphazard piles would probably be pretty dirty wood, no doubt crusted with ice and snow, but that would be the problem of the person who chose to take it. After it had knocked about with an ax or a chain saw, it would lose quite a bit of the detritus and would surely be fit for something.

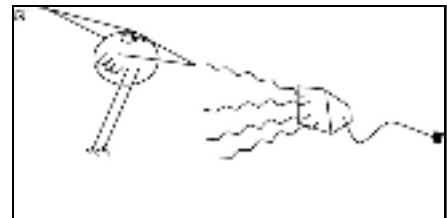
I've heard various reasons why this hasn't been tried. I really don't believe that no one would be interested in the wood if it were offered. I understand that there might be jurisdictional issues to work out between YTG and whatever first nation had land along the right of way, but surely those could be worked out.

It seems quite likely that people would take the best, biggest and easiest pieces to extract from the piles and that some brush burning would still be necessary to clear up what remained, but surely it would be nowhere near the amount that is currently going up in smoke.

As it stands, the sight of pillars of fire and smoke along the highway just seem to me to be a perfect illustration of how mismanaged a potential resource can be.

Vitamin D, Cancer and Depression...

It is quite well known that people living far from the equator are prone to a whole array of illnesses the ones who live close to it are not. It is mainly tied to the lack of sun during the winter; our bodies need



sunlight hitting the skin to be able to synthesize vitamin D.

Vitamin D is a major player in the functioning of our autoimmune system. I went on the on line encyclopedia and found the following:

“Vitamin D deficiency is known to cause several bone diseases including rickets, a childhood disease characterized by impeding growth, and deformity, of the long bones, osteomalacia, a bone-thinning disorder that occurs exclusively in adults and is characterized by proximal muscle weakness and bone fragility and osteoporosis, a condition characterized by reduced bone mineral density and increased bone fragility.

“Vitamin D malnutrition may also be linked to an increased susceptibility to several chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, tuberculosis, cancer, periodontal disease, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, depression, schizophrenia, seasonal affective disorder, and several autoimmune diseases including type 1 diabetes.”

It takes several months to recover from a deficiency. I know that it takes a good half of the summer for my skin to recover from the winter.

It is possible to get your daily intake of vitamin D by watching the food you are eating. Fish has a high content of vitamin D for example. It takes four glasses of vitamin D enriched milk to get your daily intake. But the best, most efficient and natural way to get the vitamin in your body is still through the skin.

But how to do it without any sun??

There are some lamps on the market that can do this. If this is the way you are going to go, you have to careful not to mix two things: the actual UV (ultraviolet) vitamin D lamps and the SAD (seasonal affective disorder) lamps.

The former is a very powerful lamp that you can't look at. If you use it for 10 minutes twice a week you will get all you need in terms of vitamin D. The later is a lamp you should look at for a while and because of the color and brightness of the light you might find that you feel more awake and cheerful. This is the one you can buy at our local drugstore.

The first one will actually improve your health as the second one might make you feel better. I have purchased one of those UV lamps and I can observe a noticeable difference. I have spoken to the drugstore owners about getting the UV lamps in their store. Their price range is about the same than the SAD lamps but it might make a real difference for people. So go there and ask for it, they might be able to help you out. If not, you can order it on the Internet (check the web for Sperti).

hoopla

Ilsey Suffered from Berton House Withdrawal Symptoms

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

In late December George Ilsey was suffering from Berton House withdrawal pains. On the day we sat down to chat about his stay in Dawson as writer-in-residence, he was



finding himself missing the place, which was odd, because he hadn't left yet.

“Berton House has been a wonderful experience,” he said. “I'm kind of sad at this point because I'm on the way out.”

His thoughts about the place had undergone a change during his three month stint.

“It's gone really fast. At one point it seemed like it was dragging. At one point in October I was walking home with groceries and found myself thinking that I was sick of this place. And then, by the time November ended I didn't want it to be December, 'cause that meant I was in my third and final month.

“So it's sort of grown on me. I like the town. I like the experience of being here. It's a whole different place in Canada.”

Ilsey, who grew up in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, and has lived in both Ontario and Quebec, as well as Tokyo and Paris, before settling in Vancouver, has enough experience of the country to be able to say that.

With almost a year to prepare for his sojourn at Berton House, Ilsey had time to do some research and reading, and came prepared for the weather and the relative isolation of September to December, which is Dawson's leanest season in terms of events. Early December also gave Dawson its coldest weather so far this winter.

“People keeping asking me if I'm warm,” Ilsey said with a shake of his head. “I don't know if that's a Yukon thing, like saying 'how are you?'”

Ilsey ended up in Vancouver as a result of a couple of vacation trips where the city played a trick on him.

“It did one of those false things where it was sunny all the time and ... you think well this is really spectacular.”

Twelve years on, reality has set in, though he still sees it as a far better place to be than Toronto where he had gone to law school.

The last straw hit the camel's back on a trip he took to Yellowknife in 1995. That part of the NWT was under a forest fire warning and there was talk of evacuation from the smoke laden air.

“When I flew back to Toronto I realized that the air I was flying into was even worse than that.”

Shortly after that, he moved. Still he worries that all the

things which draw people to Vancouver - the trees, the scenery, the beaches, the lifestyle - are getting ruined by the very influx they attract.

"I think we talk too much about how nice it is."

So his work in progress, which he describes as a sort of disaster novel with connections to earthquakes and the work of Charles Richter, might be seen as a story of "paradise vanishing".

Ilsley was interested in writing early on in life, but was persuaded to try a more stable career path. He went to law school, studied criminal law, finished, and articulated, but didn't take the bar exam.

While working as an intern he noted that he was doing a lot of writing; he estimated 50,000 words a year in briefs and research.

He recalls thinking that was enough to turn out a novel and that he could channel his work into creative writing instead.

"I was young and naive - and foolish, really, so I did that"

Since then he's churned out many stories and articles, published a book of short stories (*Random Acts of Hatred*) and one novel (*ManBug*), but he admits he's never actually achieved his word count.

Sometimes he wonders if he made the right choice. On the other hand, most of the lawyers he knows don't seem to be happy or have much time for their lives.

"The thing with writing is that people don't generally make a living at it. Other writers that I know have some other job: teaching, working in a book store, something.

"I've found jobs that didn't distract me from my writing. Some of them are blue collar, some are good research.

"I compare myself to Kafka, who worked in an insurance office much of his life."

Currently Ilsley makes a living working part time at the fringes of the legal profession, working for economists who work for lawyers. He's editing, proofreading and being a sort of bridge between his employers and the lawyers, making sure the jargon of the profession doesn't run away with itself.

December's good news for Ilsley was that a delay in the arrival of the next writer, Monica Graham, meant that someone was needed to look after Berton House for an extra two weeks, until January 14. For George, deciding to stay was simply a case of sorting out some additional leave time with his regular employer. He was only too happy to spend another fortnight in Dawson.

Dawsonites to Vote on Lagoon Location

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

It's taken some months and there were several hiccups along the way, but the City of Dawson is now prepared to ask its citizens whether they approve of the location that the territorial government has selected as the site for a sewage lagoon.

The bylaws authorizing the referendum, setting out the procedures and defining the questions to be posed were passed in third reading on January 24, and the polling date



has been set for March 6, which will also be the date when council fills the position vacated by the resignation of councillor Adam Morrison.

The referendum is the result of a petition organized by Jorn Meier and Marcia Jordan, who spearheaded an effort to oppose the site selection for the lagoon which YTG would like to build on the tailing piles at the junction of the Klondike Highway and Dome Road.

Meier says the petition came about as a result of discussions he had with a number of Klondike residents, some of whom were Dawson citizens and some of whom, like himself, lived outside the town boundary. Opposition to the government's selected site generally focussed the potential hazards of having a sewage treatment lagoon upstream from the town's water supply and the aesthetics of having such a facility at what amounts to the entrance to the town.

In addition, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in objected to having the lagoon located so close to their new residential Tr'ondëk Subdivision (or C4, as it tends to be known).

Meier works for the first nation, but is adamant that this has nothing to do with his decision to spearhead the petition. For him the decision was the outcome of the research he did into the powers of towns under the Municipal Act when he was part of the Dawson City Citizens' Action Committee agitating for democratic government to be returned to Dawson almost two years ago now.

Working with Jordan and others he collected the required number of signatures to force the town to hold a referendum on the chosen location, only to have that first attempt turned down on a legal technicality. Undaunted, the organizers began again, and presented the new sheaf of petition papers to the city office just before the Christmas holidays.

The questions on the referendum are concise and unequivocal, and take into account the fact the the lagoon is actually a YTG project at this time.

"1) The City of Dawson shall not construct or further construct, not shall authorize construction, of any part of a sewage lagoon on either of lots 1058 or 1059 located in the City of Dawson.

“2) The City of Dawson shall not issue any development permits or either lots 1058 or 1059 which permit the development of any part of a sewage lagoon.”

Meier now intends to back off his own public activity and feels it is time for others who oppose the lagoon location to take the lead. He is not opposed to the idea of a lagoon as such, but just to this location. He feels that a recent review of the project so far by an engineering firm hired by TH supports his view that the engineering on the project has not been complete enough to satisfy his concerns about safety.

There are other possible lagoon locations, he says, and he would prefer a lagoon to the mechanical treatment plan option.

More important to him, however, is his sense that the town and its citizens have been railroaded into this particular situation by the court case facing the town and by the fact that many of the initial steps towards this project were taken under the trusteeship before the council was restored. He feels that Dawson's citizens have not really been consulted about this.

He says that if the referendum questions are rejected and the project goes forward, he was still be satisfied, as the townspeople will have made the choice.

He compares the situation to the history which led to the construction of the flawed Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Centre, a facility which still needs hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs and retrofits from foundation to roof to be made truly useful, which was hurried into existence by the terms of territorial government financing arrangements, and constructed based on plans which were apparently less than perfect.

Dawson doesn't, he says, need another failed project, especially not one critical to its infrastructure.

Steins worried about Possible Referendum Outcomes

by Dan Davidson

Even as the City of Dawson prepares to offer its citizens the opportunity to block the construction of YTG's proposed aerated sewage lagoon in the controversial location at the foot of the Dome Road, Mayor John Steins is worrying publicly about the implications of a yes vote in the referendum.

If the taxpayers and citizens of the town vote in favour of the propositions stated in the two question referendum, then the town council will be forced, under the referendum provisions of the Municipal Act, to withdraw its approval for rezoning the land to allow construction of the project.

How that would be perceived by the Yukon court which ordered the town to proceed with secondary sewage treatment by the end of 2008 (a deadline which YTG already allows it cannot meet), and by the federal departments of the Environment and Fisheries, which began this process by taking the town to court in 2002, is something very much on the minds of the town councillors.

The territorial government sums up Dawson's situation

on a web page dedicated to the project.

“Why does Dawson have to treat its sewage?” the heading asks.

“In 2002, Dawson pled guilty to violating the Fisheries Act. The town is under court order to construct a new sewage facility by December 2008. It is anticipated that a new sewage facility will not be completed until 2011 and Dawson will have to request an extension. There is a risk of additional fines and penalties should Dawson not abide by the requirements of the Court Order for secondary treatment.”

On his Mayor's Blog at CityofDawson.com, Steins worries about the impact of not completing the project as currently proposed.

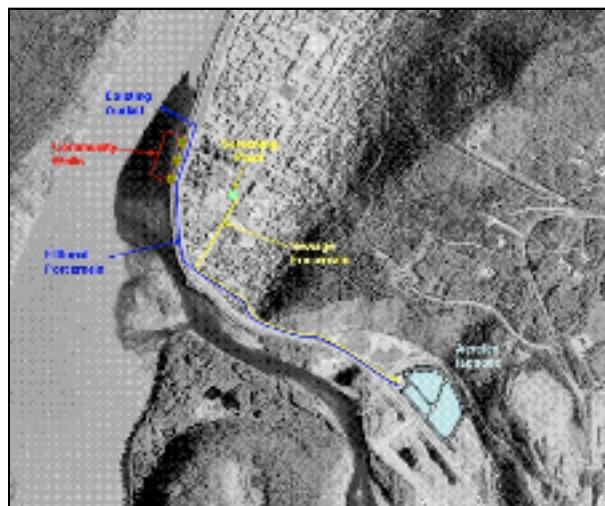
“Preliminary work and funding is in place for an aerobic lagoon to be built on lot 1059 next to the Dome Road. Under current Federal rules and regulations this appears to be the best option for Dawson. Especially when it comes to absorbing the operation and maintenance costs every year, which are of course passed on to the users of the service. This technology and location may increase water and sewer charges by a couple of hundred dollars per connection every year.”

That's bad news enough for Dawson rate payers, but it could be worse.

“If for some reason the pending lagoon project is delayed or postponed, Environment Canada will likely ask the Court to set time-lines for the construction of a waste water plant using Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) technology. This has been identified in court as a backup option for Dawson's requirement to obey the court order, mainly because it can be built relatively quickly and it doesn't require an environmental review by YESAB.”

Steins asks his readers “How much are you willing to pay?” before reminding them that the SBR costs for O&M were priced several years ago at \$800,000 per year, while the current proposal will cost around \$290,000.

“I'll ask again, how much are you willing to pay for water and sewer to your house or business? Dawson rate payers already pay up to three times more than anyone else in the Yukon, \$1200 to \$1700 per year for residential



connections. Are you prepared to pay \$2400 to \$3000 for an SBR plant when there is a more reasonable solution available? Probably not.”

Councils over the last two decades, mayors from Jenkins to Webster to Everitt to Steins, have been in agreement that the federal approach to Dawson's water use has been more about power than about science.

Steins sums it up in these words:

“Environment Canada has long ago targeted Dawson as an example to the rest of Canada to demonstrate their clout and determination to enforce their interpretation of federal legislation.

“Regrettably, Dawson's predicament is the laughing stock within Canada's municipal waste-water community because some see this as a sledgehammer being used to swat a fly.”

That doesn't change the fact of the court order or the possibility of more extreme solutions being imposed if the project on the table is delayed beyond what the court feels is a reasonable length of time.

Uffish Thoughts: Getting all Google-eyed on the Web

by Dan Davidson

Some time last fall a satellite took a really detailed photo of Dawson City. I know the year of the photo because of the copyright date that appears when you drop your cursor on it. I know it was the fall because some of the leaves on the trees had begun to turn. Besides, our trailer is still in the back yard behind the house and we moved it to Whitehorse in October.

Yeah - you can see that much, that clearly. You can make out the shapes of buildings, count the streets, and move the images so that you seem to be flying above any of them. .

The focus loses its sharpness well before you get to rooftop level, but you can get a pretty good sense of the neighbourhood, and that rectangular blob on our back lane parking pad just has to be our trailer.

The program that allows you to surf the planet like this is called Google Earth. When you launch the program you find yourself looking at a view of the planet from space. Key in the place you want to see and you descend into the atmosphere down to as close as you can get before the image loses clarity.



Key in another destination and you zoom out as the planet rotates and you then descend to your new coordinates.

The images come from different sources and have been stitched together digitally to give you the feeling of a complete picture. You can come in from an aerial perspective or rotate the image to a landscape setting that almost makes you feel like you're flying over the region. There's a limit to what you can do here. Past a certain angle the buildings all go flat on the horizon, reminding you that it's all really two dimensional, but at the right angle it's a bit like a video game display - a virtual projection on your monitor.

The photos used for Fort Nelson, for instance, are really quite sharp, and it is possible to make it seem as if you're flying over the town. Using such landmarks as the museum, which is quite easy to spot as you move along the virtual Alaska Highway, I was able to pinpoint the locations of the hotel where my son is living as well as the other one where he's working. I think he found it a little creepy, but he was then able to tell me which of the annex buildings of the hotel he was living in as well as which side of the “U” shape he lives on.

I thought this was all quite neat, so I typed in the location of my aunt's home in Nova Scotia and soon found myself “driving” along the familiar route of Highway 101, turning left to exit the main drag at a clearly recognizable hotel, and carrying on to English Mountain Road, down Mountainview to the Hayes Crescent cul-de-sac.

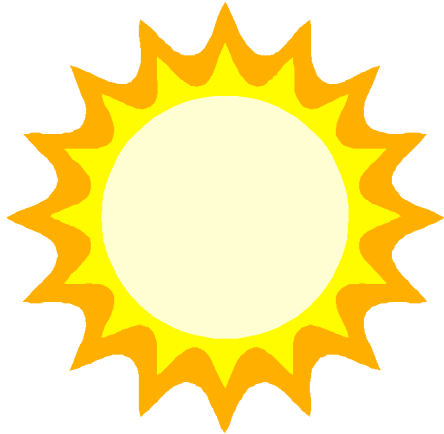
Google Earth doesn't have street names on it, but a quick look at the web-based Google Maps service confirmed that I was looking at my uncle's house with the little screened gazebo in the backyard.

It was while cruising Nova Scotia that I became aware of the differences in image quality. The grey or brown tinged images are quite clear and allow for viewing lots of detail,

but the yellow and green tinged photos come from a different source or a different satellite and get blurry long before you can make out details. On the map program I can follow Highway 1 right past the pie shaped triangle that was the block I grew up on in a little place called Hantsport. On Google Earth all I can do is make out the basic shape of the town. Any attempt to move closer is futile - like wearing the wrong prescription lenses - and the image rapidly pixilates.

The same is true of the Klondike. The Europa Tech. image for the Dawson townsite is crisp and clear, while the Terrametrics images of West Dawson and Sunnydale are greenly out of focus.

Of course all of this is just cyber-surfing and all of these places are better served by really going there, but these programs do make trip planning a much more detailed process than it ever could be in the past. Besides, it's a lot more fun than digging out road maps and atlases.



Sunburst by Dan Davidson

The sun burst on Queen Street today
and a lone, parka'd man
bounded across the street in the beam,
flung himself at a snow bank,
flipped over,
and bared his face to the sky,
delight in his upturned smile,
expectation flashing in his eyes,
spreadeagled in the light.
All this beside the boardwalk
at the Midnight Sun.
Even at 20 below, it was
like a promise of things to come.

Jan. 26/08

