‘Wenonah’
(Fiction)
By Bill Williamson

The mountain was majestic and tall. The ruggedness of the crags was evident even at this distance. Snow still lay in the deep crevices of the northern slopes. Far below the peak lay the tree line where the Alpine Firs grew short and twisted because of the lack of good soil and the mixture of cold temperatures and high winds. But here, far below the tree line, on this still mountain lake, the ruggedness and harshness only shimmered in reflection on the glassy water just ahead of the canoe. How many times had Judith and I done this? At this early hour the mist came off the water as the sun’s first beams graced the banks and danced across the water.

Not a sound could be heard except the occasional slight sound of a paddle slipping into the shimmering lake. Then off in the distance, a Grebe called out, announcing to its mate the awakening of another day. How I loved these times with just the two of us slipping along unnoticed through this wonderful creation. Stilling our paddles to glide silently along as a Whitetail deer pulls the tender shoots from the water’s edge, its coat, golden brown in the early sunlight.

We glide past the small isolated island where we had discovered the soft ‘down’ nest of the Canadian Honker with her two clumsy, tiny, yellowish babies squawking at us while mom faked a retreat to draw us away from her precious ones. She would have only a few short months to train them up for the long journey to the south where they would winter before returning here next spring.

Montana could offer these special moments to us, and do often. Our only real possession, this moss green Wenonah canoe, had escorted us past many beavers that were working or playing through their runs they had constructed. Curious about what we were. They sometimes paddled alongside with only their heads and backs out of the water. They would then turn and retreat, still wondering what we could be. We treasured each of these moments. A family of turtles lines up on a half-submersed limb of a fallen tree, soaking up the warmth of the sun. And overhead, a beautiful bald eagle soars in search of fish to take to the large stick nest in the top of the old Ponderosa Pine at the base of the far hillside, her mate sitting in a tree snag much closer to the lake observing the hunt.

And suddenly, Judith would turn to me and point quietly into the water off the port side while the smile upon her face indicated some treasure deep below. My glance in that direction would reveal a sizeable trout gliding lazily along the bottom in search of one more morsel to eat before gliding into the dark shadows for the day away from the eye of predators such as us. The sun shone through Judith’s hair that highlighted her beautiful olive skin. She outshines all that I’ve described here. She too loved these moments in our Wenonah.

It was a hard choice for us initially. Sell the canoe! How could we? God spoke to us about
relocating to Mexico for his glory, and now was he asking us to sell the canoe? We stood hand in hand in the kitchen of our beautiful log home God had provided us. We began to pray, ‘Father, is it your desire that we sell the canoe along with the other things we plan to sell?’ We had determined it was his will that we go and that we were to sell all and raise the money for the journey to LaPenita some 1000 miles south of the border. The Wenonah had traveled atop our ‘ole green bean’ van for nearly five years. It had provided so many wonderful outings with a picnic lunch from early spring into late fall. Now as we prayed, our answer came in a phone call that interrupted our prayer. The voice on the other end of the line asked, ‘how much did you want for your canoe?’ I answered, ‘$500!’ The voice said, ‘I’ll take it!’ That settled it! Our answer had come even before the end of the prayer.

As we gave up our only prized possession in obedience to Father, He poured out his blessings upon us richly. The following several years would reveal his storehouse doors opened and riches poured forth on our behalf. As He lavished his love upon us, we did not know the trial that lie ahead for us.

As I pour this story out years later, here in the Colorado Rockies that are covered in a foot of fluffy white snow, I gaze upon the photo of the lone person canoeing across a small mountain lake shadowed by a magnificent craggy mountain. The lake has the various fall colors crowding the banks and the stillness of the water’s surface projects them in my direction. The glimmer of the canoe reflecting also toward me is trailed by a tiny ripple of a wake that barely disturbs the peace. There is a loneliness apparent in the picture as the lone figure appears to have his meager belongings loaded slightly forward in the canoe for balancing his own weight. Although the direction seems uncertain, it is surely into virgin territory where human plans have not been made. Paddling these new waters is necessary to determine what lies beyond the wilderness directly ahead. It seems appropriate that this photo should hang near the one of Judith taken all those years ago alongside one of those beautiful lakes as the sun shone through the crisp fall air into her hair, again highlighting her beauty.

As I paddle on, looking intently at the bow of the Wenonah, I question, ‘where are you Judith?’ Although I know the answer, the question nags on and on, sometimes lying dormant for days before resurfacing. And then as I increase my ‘J’ stroke to make a subtle turn toward the far shadows, I catch a glimpse of something in the bow that alerts me. Could it be? Someone is there! I know I saw Him! He is with me, - in the bow! He is my guide, making a gentle stroke with the paddle gently moving the bow away from danger lurking below the darkened, glassy water. The mist floating across the bow highlighted by the first rays of sunlight this cool fall dawn has magically highlighted his presence. I paddle the canoe faster now! I sense a purpose, a direction, He is taking me somewhere. I long to complete the journey. I gaze at Judith’s face in the photo and sense her approval. I now look with anticipation at the uncharted waters ahead. What lies there? Something Father wants me to see! Something He wants me to do! I say, ‘yes Father’, as I paddle strongly. The Wenonah cuts sharply through the water now, still little disturbance, but quickly gliding toward that distant shore. There is a strange excitement in the air as two Loons dip into the cold water and rise again, shaking their heads into the fresh morning air. The pair swim alertly ahead of the canoe and out of it’s way unafraid with a look of ‘bravo’ to them. Almost as though they are escorting the Wenonah to the Father’s intended purpose.

I turn from the two photos and stare out the tiny window of my Colorado cabin. The snow continues to come as the inches pile up along the hillside. ‘Thank you for this journey Father, continue with me.’