

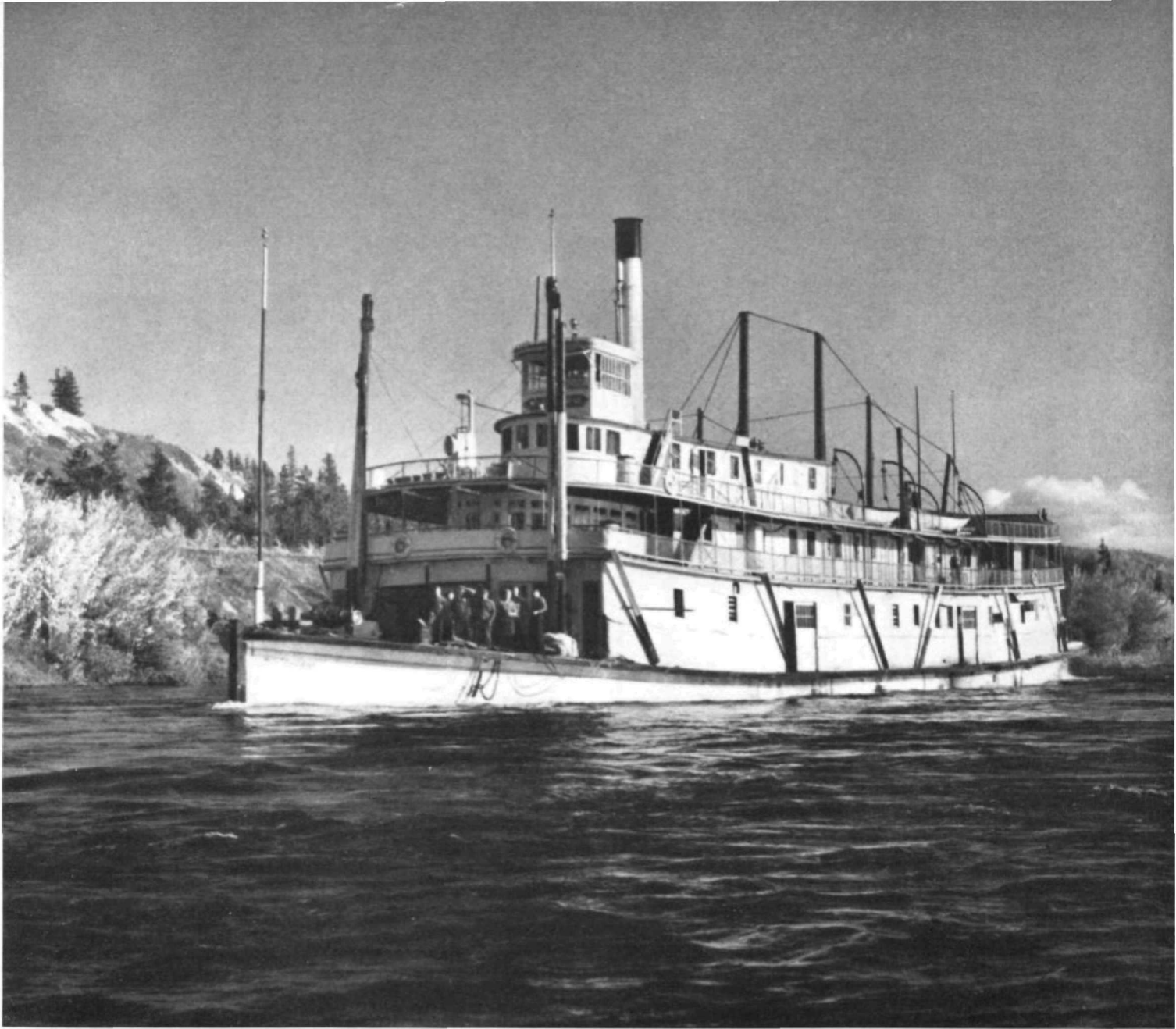


The stern wheel of a Yukon River steamboat in the shipyard at Whitehorse.

STERNWHEELERS of the YUKON

by Rosemary Gilliat

Rosemary Gilliat has done photographic assignments for British newspapers in India and Ceylon. She is now living in Ottawa.



The S.S. "Whitehorse" has been plying the Yukon for fifty-three years. Here she floats away from the Whitehorse jetty and begins the three-day downstream voyage to Dawson. The upstream voyage takes two days longer.

THE day of the sternwheeler in the North is near its end. The *Distributor* and the *McKenzie River* have gone from the Mackenzie; the *Northland Echo* and the *Athabasca River* have gone from the Athabasca. With their gleaming white hulls and their big red paddle wheels they made a brave sight as they went splashing up and down the great northern rivers, pushing their strings of laden barges as far down north as the Arctic Ocean.

They have gone from the Peace, too. On the Yukon only, one tall-stacked sternwheeler remains in service—the *Whitehorse*, seen above as she starts on the old familiar Whitehorse-Dawson run. The rest have been hauled out on the river banks, where they now stand like monuments to a picturesque era that will never return.



A passenger aboard the "Yukoner" in 1898 told how when she stopped to take on wood, the captain (who was something of an exhibitionist) would send her at full speed straight for the shore, whistle blowing and flags flying. Then in the nick of time he would ring for full astern and bring her up neatly alongside the bank. After the wooding-up was over, with the band playing and girls dancing on deck, he would invite the wood-

cutters on board the boat for champagne.

The "Yukoner" was brought in sections from Victoria to the Yukon's mouth where she was rebuilt and christened with a bottle of champagne by "a beautiful blonde damsel en route to the dance halls of Dawson." Now the old boat lies, a mouldering, grey hulk, on the river bank at Whitehorse. All her paint has been weathered away except for her name, and that too will soon disappear.



Sternwheeler graveyard on the river bank below Dawson—the “Schwatka” (barely visible), a lower-river boat; the “Seattle No. 3,” and the “Julie B.” of the upper river.