

Stage North

# ROY MINTER

Number 21, Coal Harbour Wharf, 566 Cardero Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6G 2W6

## THE HIGHWAY by Roy Minter

1 MUSIC

UP - fade to BI

2 Narrator

This is the story of a highway - the story of vision  
and the fulfillment of a dream. A  
story that starts at the turn of the century and  
still lives on today. This is the Alaska Highway

### THE HIGHWAY

On April 1, 1946, the Canadian Government accepted the Canadian portion of the Alaska Highway from the United States, having arranged for its purchase at the end of WW11.

The maintenance of the highway and its facilities were made the responsibility of the Canadian Army, and on April 3, 1946 the army formally received the Alaska Highway and all of its installations.

The author felt that the 10th anniversary of this event should not go unmarked. As a result he wrote this radio play which was subsequently produced and broadcast by the army's radio station, CFWH, in Whitehorse on April 1, 1956.

Subsequently, the play was produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to mark the 15th anniversary of the Highway's takeover by Canada and the Canadian Army.

We now approach the 50th Anniversary of the completion of the highway, thirty-three years after the play was originally written. To mark this anniversary the author has made a few revisions and added material to bring the life of the highway up to date.

The speeches at Soldiers Summit are excerpts from the actual words spoken on that occasion. The rest of the play is based on historical fact.

10 Major Noody

Thank you sir.

11 Commander

Major, you have had a lot of  
experiences. You know the terrible  
winter cold - the Indians and the  
days. Right!

12 Major Noody

Well, ah - yes sir. The heat of summer and black  
flies too.

13 Commander

Well I'll be brief and to the point. You are to  
command an expedition to the horse trail from  
Fort St. John, north, to the coast.

14 Major Noody

I see! Well how do you feel about that sir?

Roy Minter  
May 17, 1989  
*[Handwritten signature]*

48  
31.2 / 16 1/2

THE HIGHWAY

by

Roy Minter

- 1 MUSIC UP - fade to BG
- 2 Narrator This is the story of a highway - the story of vision courage, skill, and the fulfillment of a dream. A story that starts at the turn of the century and still lives on today. This is the Alaska Highway story - a monument to the ingenuity of man.
- 3 MUSIC UP - fade to BG
- 4 Narrator There have been many famous highways; the Roman Appian Way, born of conquest and trade - built before the birth of Christ and still used today. The Roman Roads of Britain, the Autobahns, the Burma Road - all great roads - but the Alaska Highway, conceived and built during the second world war, is numbered among the greatest engineering feats in the history of the world - including the Panama Canal.
- 5 MUSIC Fade out
- 6 Narrator The year is 1896. Major Moody of the North-West Mounted Police reports to his commanding officer in Edmonton, Alberta.
- 7 SOUND Footsteps, door knock, door opens.
- 8 Major Moody You sent for me sir!
- 9 Commander Come in! Oh, come in Major Moody. Sit down please.
- 10 Major Moody Thank you sir.
- 11 Commander Major, you have had a great deal of northern experience. You know the land, the damndable winter cold - the Indians and their ways. Right!
- 12 Major Moody Well, ah - yes sir. The heat of summer and black flies too.
- 13 Commander Yes, well I'll be brief and to the point. You are to command an expedition to blaze a horse trail from Fort St. John, north, as far a practical.
- 14 Major Moody I see! Well how far north is practical sir?

- 15 Commander (Sternly) Practical, Major, is as far north as you can drive yourself and your men.
- 16 Major Moody What is the purpose of this venture - ah - trail, Sir.
- 17 Commander Major, this is the start of an All Canadian trail through the northern jungles to the Lewis River Valley and the Yukon River and its tributaries. There is talk of gold up there - and gold means prospectors, miners, people. Soon a road will be needed so these, ah - gold seekers can get safely in and out of the country without leaving their frozen corpses along the way. At least that's what I've been told!
- 18 Major Moody A road. a - a proper road to that country sir!
- 19 Commander Yes Major - a road. Our masters in Ottawa see the need for one, so we had better get on with it. Now you have a great deal to do. You must be ready to start from Fort St. John in six to eight months, completely equipped. See my adjutant about men, horses, material, and supplies.
- 20 Narrator Almost a year later, on September 4, 1897, Major Moody, with three constables, a cook, and an Indian guide, set out into the unknown - to blaze a trail from Fort St. John to the Yukon River Valley.
- 21 SFX Sound of horses on the trail - the shouts of men. Sound Under.
- 22 Narrator Overnight, they vanished into the deep shadows of the north - struggling, camping, fording streams, living off the land. Thirteen months later, scourged by ice blue arctic cold, forest fires, starvation, and a diet of butchered pack horse - they arrived at Fort Selkirk, after traveling some 1600 miles north. There they rested, regained their strength, and then returned to Edmonton.
- 23 Commander I have read your report with a great deal of interest Major Moody. I congratulate you on your achievement. Have you anything to add.
- 24 Major Moody Only to reiterate the conclusion of my report Sir - that a road to the north is completely unfeasible. Out of the question!
- 25 MUSIC UP to punctuate - fade to...

- 26 SFX Trail noises - men, horses, dogs.
- 27 Narrator Just one year later, in 1898, the world was shaken from a soul-searing financial depression by news of gold in the Klondike. Men and women surged north to the dip their fingers into the gleaming pots of Midas.
- 28 SFX Fade
- 29 Clerk Superintendent Constantine - Commissioner Bowen Perry will see you now Sir.
- 30 Commissioner BP Come in Superintendent.
- 31 Supt Constantine. Good day to you Commissioner.
- 32 Commissioner BP Come over here Superintendent; I want you to look at this map. (Voice sound change as they approach map) Now, here is Fort St. John - and here is Dawson City - the Klondike - the gold fields. Now I have received instructions from Ottawa to start constructing a wagon road from Fort St. John to the Yukon district - right to the gold fields I expect! A devil of a job, what!
- 33 MUSIC UP and fade to BG
- 34 Narrator Day and night the work went on - as Superintendent Constantine's builders came to grips with time and distance. And when Commissioner Bowen Perry arrived in 1906 to inspect progress, he was able to traverse 375 miles of completed road, graded hills, bridged streams, and corduroyed muskeg. But, the project was discarded and the trail-worn Mounties left what was described as a "Monument to Courage" - later called "The Road to Nowhere".
- 35 MUSIC UP and fade to BG
- 36 Many male voices talking in US Congress Voices fade on crack of a gavel.
- 37 Speaker The delegate from Alaska is recognized.