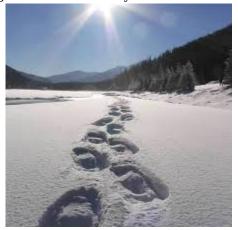
## The First Day on Snowshoes

by Con Chapman

The first day on snowshoes is hardest of all; the legs sink and wobble, hips and knees creak in new-fallen snow, ankles bend and I recall last winter's walks. I have grown weak,

I think, but soon my strength returns. I stop for breath. I can hear my heart in this empty field; I feel it burn against the wall of my chest. I start



once again; up the hill, how many more winters, I ask, do I have ahead? I subtract from ninety—maybe two score, if I'm lucky. Then, I think, when I am dead

I will have walked here fifty years; it puts in perspective a moment's fears.