Imperial Oil Review
Volume 58, Number 6, 1974
Issue number 321

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Editor: Kenneth Sargent
Assistant Editor: James Hickman
Managing Editor: 16115 Montreal
Editorial Production: Carly Howard
Circulation Production
Published in English and French by Imperial Oil
Leeson, 1111 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario
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the Canadian Periodicals Index
As they would say now, 'It all came together on Christmas Eve.'

I remember the day before Christmas and Christmas Eve when I was a child better than I do the actual day. That's probably because I happened to be raised in a country general store in western Ontario.

One Christmas Eve my grandfather's brother Paul appeared after fifty years' absence. Once, just as my mother started to make up parcels for the Kelly children, their father came home from the lumber woods. He came all the way from Bay City, Michigan, because, as he said, 'A man's got to be at home for Christmas.'

There was the year I had measles and the church choir stood out in the snow and sang Christmas carols before they went to midnight mass. And, there was the year father 'lit' up with the new gasoline lamp and changed everything.

First, let me tell you what it was like in our country store and how we anticipat-ed Christmas. St. Augustine was merely a corner with a store, church and school and four houses. We were seven miles from the CPR in Auburn in one of those small valleys that winter kept wrapped in snow from early November to April. There were some spindly-wheeled cars but these were put up on blocks at the first sign of snow to save the tires.

Winter-locked? We certainly were, but it was a comfortable isolation. Before the trucks stopped running my father stocked up for the siege. Flour, oatmeal, sugar, bran—all kinds of bulk goods that
wouldn’t freeze filled the warehouse he had built on the side of the great old white L-shaped brick building. The downtown front part of the L was the store. We lived upstairs and in the back of the L, stern. The wing was the varnished Victorian ‘front parlor’ with the heater which we really only used on Christmas Day.

The store had everything from legs of nails and boxes of bolts to a small counter with overalls and smocks. Fleece-lined and pure wool underwear for men was piled on shelves on the dry goods side next to a range of drugs including Burdock Blood Bitters, Sloan’s Liniment, Epson Salts, Zam Buk Salve and Pink Pills for Pale People.

Buggy whips still hung to a revolving rack of the ceiling of one of the front windows where white initials, committed on, proclaimed the virtues of Salada Tea.

The other bay window had white initials W. A. Boyle, General Merchant, St. Augustine’ courtesy of the tea salesman. Periodically, that window was decorated with signs and colored tissue for a product such as soap. This was the grocery side but it had the till and the sliding box of individual boxes for access to salt and barter of such things as cream and eggs and poultry.

The grocery side had a scale, a glass case for penny candy goods and the counter top was polished by daily trade to a sheen. A banana stalk hung overhead in summer. Beneath the counter were great barrels of white and brown sugar and oatmeal on casters that rolled. The shelves held everything from canned goods to caddies of plug chewing and smoking tobacco. Below these were fold-out bins with oranges, if illegible, lettering. They held bulk tea, raisins, dates, currants and glazier salts, a favorite of farmers reluctant to call a veterinarian.

The entire place had an incomparable aroma. Imagine, if you can, a pile of old cheddar cheese, plug tobacco, steed muscat raisins, barrel oil, a bundle of B.C. cedar shingles someone ordered for patching. There was the occasional spill from a can filled in the warehouse with raw lined oil or turpentine. A coal-oil container always splashed a bit when it was filled in the cramped quarters under the verandas of the hall, quaint building – we used a gum drop or a piece of potato to plug its pouring spout. And every time the inner door opened one whiffed the tang of the salt herring in winter.

In summer the smells were more diffused. In winter when the stove glowed and customers sat around with damp clothes streaming and pipe smoke wafting in the heavy air, the store was as odorous as an oriental bazaar.

The first anticipation of Christmas came with the arrival of the special goods ordered the summer before. Boxes, barrels and crates were marked Christmas Delivery. I knew that the ones swaddled in blankets were crates of oranges. The others were a mystery and while it seemed to me that snow on the ground was justification enough for opening them, father was adamant. I peeled and pried but the woodens pallets and boxes were secure. It was maddening to read Christmas Mixture XXX and not be able to see, let alone sample.

Then on a stormy, late November afternoon, father and mother would begin the preparations. First the floor was oiled. It was told firmly to mind my younger brother. The overall counter was a vantage point until one year I neglected his underpinning and we had to have a special sale on Cartwright’s overall size 40 and 42 because of discoloration.

The next step was to string streamers from the hooks holding the large coal-oil lamps that hung over the counters. Fuzzy garlands of red and green, flat tasseled things that unfurled into bows, thin streamers of sparkling stuff, a string holding letters that spelled out ‘Merry Christmas’, all went up but not in a day. The trouble was we never got finished. A customer would come tramping in out of the blizzard for tobacco or sugar or tea and father would stop and mother would take my brother back to the kitchen. It might be three or four days before work was resumed.

Decorating for Christmas was finally accomplished but the goods were set out in drifts and drabs. It made me frustrated but, as I now know, it was because the place was so crowded, something had to be moved to make room for the Christmas goods. The boxes and barrels of candy were fried in, prominent enough to be seen and not too close for customers to sample indiscriminately. We sold jelly beans, lozenges with snoopy sayings in red letters, slim sugar sticks with genuine tin rings, fat chocolate drops with violet-colored filling, mixtures of assorted creams, gum drops, bulls’ eyes that made your mouth water while you sucked them down to a mysterious yellow seed, red and black licorice pipes, whiskies, and whips and a few boxes of chocolates including ones with dripping centres and marasmic cherries.

Mother made room on the dry goods side for boxes of toilet water, comb and brush sets with ornate handles, silky ladies’ underwear unlike the woody ribbed cinnamon vests and blouses we normally carried, and a few brilliant pins of shiny stuff with glittering stones. The fact is that most customers looked at the Christmas stuff but they didn’t pay much attention. I tried to find ways to call their attention to it but they smiled and muttered that Christmas was a long way off.

It was different with children. They clutched pennies and stared and tried to figure out which purchase gave the greatest variety and amount. Parents were preoccupied, and now and then one father gave in by showing his penny change back for candy. Then there would be the great deliberation. To take a chocolate-covered marshmallow Santa Claus, a licorice pipe and jelly beans for the three cents or else – and it went on until finally the parent had to threaten to leave to hurry up the process. Young men downdreaded around fancy boxes, pretending to look at something else. Then there would be the surreptitious deal – a box would vanish, put away by my father with a name on it. These were usually lands known to be ‘going steady’. It gave me a vicarious thrill, knowing that Jean or Mary would be getting ‘Rais de violette’ or a fancy apron from Jack or Pete, but I was under strict orders not to mention a word to anyone.
As they would say now, 'It all came together on Christmas Eve.' The store was full of customers doing a kind of ritual dance in the pale, yellow light of coal-oil lamps. One parent would lead the children over to the church for confession while the other bought oranges, nuts and candles to be hidden in the house for Christmas morning. A few would make a sheeplike visit to where my mother was in dry goods and point to something which she wrapped quickly and stuck under her overcoat or Mackinaw. Soon afterwards her husband would appear and, as if by magic, mother would have a parcel for him. It was usually a new suit of woolen long johns or fleece-lined combinations or a 'good dress shirt.'

The store was warm. Beyond the pools of light from the fixtures there were shadowy places where the ordered gifts could be passed to the buyer. Sometimes in the shadows men would even buy ladies' undergarments as presents for their wives. They were not too specific. 'Ah, Mrs. Boyle, you know what my wife would like.'

Braving the regulars who sat around the stove, young men made mysterious signals to my father who could play a box of chocolates or a fancy jar of perfume, powder or toilet water as dexterously as his third. He wrapped it in his office.

The bell of the church rang at 1:30 p.m. to mark the end of confusion and mass would start at midnight. Of course, there were more than mass-goers in the store. The United Church people from Dennybrook were just as much a part of the occasion as anyone. The continuing Presbyterians did their more-limited buying earlier in the week. There was also a big run on ribbon and shoe notions and wine.

At the time I merely thought people needed more medicine over a holiday. Years later I discovered that the high alcoholic content of the medicines made them very popular in a county afflicted by the Canada Temperance Act.

Everyone seemed taeky and happy. Normally reticent neighbors shook hands without embarrassment and wished each other 'Merry Christmas' as the clock struck twelve o’clock as they too.

At the first stroke of the midnight bell, father turned down the lamps, checked the stoves and we walked in the frosty snow to the church. The big hanging coal-oil lamps spread soft light on varnished pews and limousine aisles. There was the fragrance of green cedar boughs hung around the altar, the crib with its bright stars illuminated from the center of the church. There was a sheeplike visit to where my mother was in dry goods and point to something which she wrapped quickly and stuck under her overcoat or Mackinaw. Soon afterwards her husband would appear and, as if by magic, mother would have a parcel for him. It was usually a new suit of woolen long johns or fleece-lined combinations or a 'good dress shirt.'

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This zoo is like no other

Lions and lizards, mandrills and mongooses. A zoo is a home when it's one of the world's finest. And Canadian

by James Hickman/photos by Barry Dursley

A zoo is often a place that debases nature, where iron and concrete are moulded into prisons, and where man's superiority over animals is always evident. But at its best, a zoo can be a pillar of conservation where animals are at ease in their surroundings, where people appreciate the earth's creatures, and where researchers study animals to learn more about man. The new Metro Toronto Zoo is this kind of place.

Lionless lions and morose monkeys don't peer out from behind bars in the zoological garden. Bears don't rollover and beg for food. In fact, much of the stereotyped behavior animals acquire in captivity is missing at this zoo, and rightly so. Thanks to eight years of planning and design by the Metropolitan Toronto Zoological Society and interested consultants around the world. The beasts have been blessed with environments designed to match those of their native lands. The result is one of the finest zoos in the world.

Nestled in the Rouge River Valley, the new zoo is an area of beauty and peacefulness, a mere 26 miles northeast of noisy downtown Toronto. Everything about the 710-acre site manifests nature, from the green, undulating hills to the thick woodlands. In keeping with this undisturbed setting, the zoo is full of wide-open spaces. Enclosing a grove is a path creating a border around the zoological park.
jungle,' one boy tells a friend.

Leathery-skinned crocodiles bask in sunlit streams; pythons slither through sand, and colorful oriental birds fly with comparative freedom. Two gorilla-like orangutans, with shaggy chestnut-colored hair, climb on huge monkey bars. Walking catfish, ape-like gibbons and Indian porcupines are all here. People walk on dirt paths, climb hills and view foreign creatures from many different vantage points. A subterranean system of mesh, glass and wood separates man from beast. Everywhere there is something new to see, be it plant or animal; but it’s time to move on, back into the southern Ontario landscape, for a short hike to the African pavilion. On the way, a small group of people stops to admire a cluster of maple, beech and oak trees, something they can examine anytime, but probably never notice in the city.

A wooden bridge spans the tree-covered ravine in front of the entrance to the zoo’s largest pavilion. Inside the one-acre building it’s hot and humid, just like an equatorial rain forest in Africa. Streams ripple over plant-covered hills and trickle into ponds. A congregation of motley birds wades in a pool with 10 miniature antelopes from the Congo, almost unaware of the people around them. In a large glass enclosure, two year-and-a-half-old gorillas play like small children. Black and white colobus monkeys, dwarf crocodiles, lizards, mandrills, pygmy hippos, mongeese and other unusual creatures now live in man-made environments similar to their natural habitats.

Outside the African pavilion, there’s an even greater sense of freedom for both visitors and animals. Huge outdoor paddocks have been built on the savannah (grasslands). Wood, rocks and glass form barriers to keep the animals in (and the people out). Here, elephants roll around playfully in the mud together.
and, when they get curious, wander over to have a close look at people. Farther along the path, three zebras graze on a hill ignoring the visitors. Their striped coats clash like some weird op-art design. Fascinated, a woman stares through the glass. "Look, dear," she says to a companion, "don't they look different than zoo animals?" But then, this is no ordinary zoo.

Roaming in one of the largest paddocks are a dozen rhinoceroses and white rhinoceroses. Up close, their thick skin, tiny eyes and large snouts, they look like prehistoric monsters. Passing baboons and cranes, the winding walkway leads to the lion exhibit. But a group of prideful lions sits patiently in cages, waiting for their paddock to be redesigned. It was discovered prior to the Aug. 15 zoo opening that the lions might be able to jump over the moat around their enclosure.

Farther along, a crowd gathers around an exhibit of fur seals and South African penguins. Built into the side of a hill, this enclosure is a treat for viewers. The seals and penguins can be seen from above, by looking down on their large swimming pool, and from below, where a flight of stairs put visitors in a small viewing room. Here, the playful seals and penguins can be observed swimming underwater.

Before leaving Africa, and heading to the North American pavilion, hunger strikes. Just off the main path is an eating area designed like the pavilions. There are two restaurants and three snack bars at the zoo. All of them are run in low-key style by McDonald's, the winner over BO firms invited to bid on running the food concession. Ronald McDonald, the clown, never comes here, and the twin yellow arches and enormous signs McDonald's is famous for are missing at the zoo. Inside the wooden restaurant, lots of plants are growing, disguising this hamburger emporium even more.

Screened by a small forest, the North American pavilion blends with the scenery around it. In fact, the building itself is integrated into the landscape, with the public path making up the roof of the pavilion. Downstairs, there is an underwater view of some animals. All manner of North American wildlife is represented here, from fish and snakes to birds and mammals. A few hundred yards north of the pavilion is the polar bear exhibit, one of the largest in the zoo for any single species of animal. Imperial Oil contributed $180,000 toward the building of this exhibit. Through glass, visitors look down on 10 fluffy white bears that wrestle and play, taking little notice of the human spectators around them. Their enclosure is filled with and surrounded by mammoth rocks, creating a natural barren setting for the amphibious bears. Here again, underwater viewing is possible by walking down stairs to where glass windows have been built into the sides of the bears' huge pool. It is a short stroll to the Eurasian pavilion, the fourth and last one on the journey. Reptiles and birds predominate inside, but in the outdoor paddocks, a wealth of larger old-world creatures abound: Barbary apes, small monkeys from Gibraltar, race around the rocks, looking up now and then at captivated humans. An elderly monkey, with a gray beard, washes its feet in the moat surrounding the enclosure. Close by is another rocky paddock belonging to small cats, horned mountain sheep standing still as statues on huge slabs of stone.

The most majestic-looking creatures at the zoo, Siberian tigers, pace around their pit, occasionally glancing up at spectators leaning over a concrete wall. Nearby, a tawny female with four cubs is separated from the others to protect her young. With their legs three sizes too large, the awkward cubs prance about, taking advantage of their mother's tail.

Also out in the open at Eurasia are camels, gazelles, yaks, European bison, and Chinese water deer. The settings are so natural, it's not like a zoo at all. Everything stresses and illustrates ecology in this man-made wilderness. This is a park for animals, as well as man.

Now, it's time to leave the zoo. But one last image remains. A single white swan glides along one of the small rivers while some European bison casually look on from the bank. The autumn sun, almost ready to set, emerges from behind a cloud, throwing a silver shimmer over the water. No sound breaks the stillness. The freedom and tranquility of this scene exemplify the spirit of the new zoo. Ecology is what it is about. Here, the balance of nature is presented in a way that bridges man's conflict with it.
This attitude, typifying man’s superi-
ory over animals, continued well into
this century. People still visit zoos
where bears are in deep pits without
sunlight, placed there by people uncaring
of them. Toronto’s old three-acre Ri-
verdale Zoo had its beginnings in 1887,
with the present buildings constructed by,
ironically enough, Don Jail inmates in
1900. Some of its concrete walls are
three feet thick.

This attitude is diminishing. Von
ex
Voss ex-
plans. The pendulum is swinging to the
other side. There is a trend to estab-
lish a happy medium for captive ani-
imals. Still, we shouldn’t be too critical
of other zoos because so many of them
were built long ago.

There will always be people who
question the humanness of any zoo
which keeps animals, regardless of
the concept or design. Is it cruel to keep
creatures enclosed for man’s viewing? Dr.
Voss, who has worked in zoos throughout
Germany, as well as being former director of Assiniboine Park Zoo
in Winnipeg, reacts to this question
quickly. ‘Listen,’ he says, ‘around the
world, there is hardly any piece of na-
ture left untouched by man, even in
Africa or South America. Parks and
wildlife reserves are managed. They
have predator control, weed control
and pavement. Zoos try to propagate
dangerous forms of nature, usually in
an urban setting. I don’t think it is any
more cruel to move an animal into a zoo
like this than to encroach upon its habi-
tat with highway development or strip
mining.’

Also, there is another aspect to man
looking at animals. A zoo isn’t only for
entertainment; it’s a research centre
where biologists study how animals
fight, eat and love. To learn more
about himself, Dr. Voss says, ‘man has to
observe animals.’ To the general pub-
lic, the zoo can be an educational experi-
ence illustrating the geographic group-
ings of animals around the world, and
displaying their environments. And
more and more, for spectators, the zoo
can help to develop a respect for life by
showing the role of animals in the eco-
logical balance.

Like Voss, Walter Gray has an office
in the administrative building that’s
tucked away in the side of a hill beside
the admission gates. There is a large ink
drawing of a hippopotamus bound
Gray’s desk. As development director
and secretary for the Metropolitan To-
ronto Zooological Society, Walter Gray
promotes the zoo to the public. A pleas-
ant man, Gray has a wide knowledge of
what’s going on at the zoo. He talks about the 215 employees who
keep the zoo running. At the animal
health care centre, for instance, Dr. Bill
Rapley and Dr. Kay Mehren, two of only
six zoo veterinarians in Canada, make
sure 3,000 creatures are healthy. And
a few months from now, there will be
another 2,000 animals brought to the
zoo. Rapley and Mehren take care of every-
thing, from an elephant to a guppy.

The chief nutritionist, Serger Oyar-
 zun, is from Chile. He’s at work every
morning at 6:30 preparing and dis-
tributing food with his six assistants.
In addition to the thousands of pounds
of vegetables and meat given to animals,
8,000 to 10,000 worms are fed to the
birds every week.

Zoo employees are in a close circle,
explains Dr. Gray. ‘You have to have
confidence in your zookeepers, the
incident of misbehavor, when someone
threw three armodillos into the alligator
pond.’

The potential is here for the Metro To-
ronto Zoo to become one of Canada’s
national educational institutions,’ Walt-
ter Gray claims. ‘Not only that, but Cana-
dian will be a world leader in zoological
parks. Around the globe, people will
look to Canada when improving their
zoos.

But what about other Canadian cen-
tres that cannot afford something on
the scale of the Metro Toronto Zoo? Is there a chance for animal-watchers there? Dr.
Gray thinks so. ‘They could adapt the
concept of our zoo, but on a lesser
scale,’ he says. ‘Calgary is preparing
to develop an open-style zoo on some
property the city owns.’

Dr. Gunter Voss feels the same way.
‘Yes, of course smaller cities could have
zoos like this,’ he says. ‘The only reser-
vation would be that the zoo could not
be on a world scale. Places like Ham-
ilton or Halifax could pick one continent
or area of the world, then stock it with
native animals and plants.’

In other words, it’s the idea behind
the zoo, not size that makes it important.

The polar bears; rock and water and a barren setting

Dr. Gunter Voss

Walter Gray

‘This is one of the finest zoos on earth, if
to the finest,’ says Dr. Gunter Voss
proudly. He has been zoo director and
studied zoos throughout the world. ‘He worked
with the landscape architects designing
the plan. A multitude of foreign consu-
tants helped create the most modern
concept for zoos in the world,’ he ex-
plains. ‘Animals and plants of specific
regions are together. This cannot be
compared to regular zoos with cages be-
cause we tried to copy nature.’

Voss likes to talk about the zoo. His
words are precise, tinged with an
accent from his native Germany. Deeply
set into his ruddy face are penetrating
brown eyes. I’ve seen zoos around the
world, he says, and used their ideas to
make ours better. The staff did a
remarkable job. They are from every
kind of place aquariums, wildlife reserves,
zoos—all over the world. Also, we
have two horticulturists who look after
the plants.

Talking about animals, Voss is en-
thusiastic, almost excited. To him, ani-
mals don’t ‘breed;’ they ‘make love.’
‘It’s not enough to buy a male and
female animal, and put them together in a
cage,’ he says. They may not like each
other, for one thing. Also, they may not
be happy. According to Voss, boredom
and stress are the worst factors in zoos,
creating stereotyped behavior in ani-
mals. At the Metro Toronto Zoo, large
and small pens alike have private quar-
ters where the creatures can escape
from curious spectators if they wish.
‘I am convinced the animals at this zoo
are happy,’ he says. ‘I predict this will
be evident by the number of animals
born here.’

Creating places that are for animals,
and not just for people is a relatively new
aspect of zookeeping. Throughout his-
tory, beasts served and entertained
human masters. Before the time of
Christ, there were zoos in China (called
‘gardens of intelligence’), Egypt and
Peru. The Roman and Greek empires
used animals as spectacles fighting
each other or people in the arenas.

da, our staff is from the U.S., England
and Europe.’ It takes more than a love
of animals to work at the zoo. Usually,
vet-
nerinarian training or a degree in zoolo-
gy is the prerequisite, but practical ex-
erience with zoo animals is the most
important factor.

Walter Gray glances out his window
at people streaming in to see the zoo. He
knows how important it is that crowds
come, because the Metro Toronto Zoo
has to be self-sustaining. It costs 4.5
million annually to keep the place run-
ning. Money will come from admission
fees ($2.50 adult, $1 student and senior
citizen, and $5 family), parking fees
and the food concession.

This is a zoo for all seasons. Except for
Dec. 24 and Christmas Day, the park
will be open from 10 a.m. until one hour
before dusk. By Jan. 1, it is expected
to serve 1.5 million people will have
visited the zoo.

‘We were very fortunate that construc-
tion started in 1970,’ says Gray. ‘With
inflation now, it would be impossible to
build a zoo like this for the price.’ The
Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto
provided $22 million to design and con-
struct the zoo. The Metropolitan Tor-
ton Zoological Society raised $16 million
for animals.

The value of the zoo right now would
be $60 million, due to inflation during
the past four years. A further $13 million
from Metropolitan Toronto will be used
to complete the monorail ride over the
Canadian animal domain.

‘An auditorium, a world of oceans,
exhibit were planned,’ Gray explains,
‘but we had to phase them out for now
until the Canadian animal domain and all
outdoor paddocks are completed. Infla-
tion has cut our plans short.’ In the fu-
ture, senior levels of government will be
approached for grants so more can be
added to the zoo.

The concept requires respect from
the public. ‘People have to change their
ideas about zoo,’ says Gray. ‘Most peo-
pel do, and enjoy the new experience.
Some complain because of the long
walks. It is not possible to have a zoo like
this without open spaces, strep-
moats and winding walkways. Visitors
are showing a genuine respect for the
surroundings. Continuously new cases of
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threw three armodillos into the alligator
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the zoo, not size that makes it important.
Getting the lead out
Cleaner air and a cleaner car

Unleaded gasoline may sound like a new idea. It isn’t. In March, 1914, the board of directors of Calgary Petroleum Products Company drove out to see their new well, which had just struck oil in nearby Turner Valley. There, at Dingman’s No. 1, the gentlemen of the board filled their automobile tanks directly from the well, then drove back to town. Like all gasoline in 1914, the wellhead vintage was unleaded.

As the causus belli at Dingman No. 1 suggested, pre-World War I engines made fairly simple demands upon the fuels that made them go. But over the years, needs improved. Cars got bigger, and soon there was a need for more power.

One way to make gasoline work harder is to squeeze its vapors more tightly in the engine’s compression chamber. This is called boosting the compression ratio. Just as a steel spring bounces out farther the more it has been compressed, tightly-packed gasoline vapors expand with more force when ignited by the spark plug. Trouble is, if the vapors explode instead of burning evenly in the cylinder, the piston is forced down with a clunk. This is called engine ‘knock’, and sustained knock can damage an engine.

One solution was to blend small amounts of a lead compound into the gasoline. This made the vapors burn smoothly and reduced engine knock. It also acted as a lubricant for the valves.

That’s a highly compressed history of how lead got into the fuel tank of the family car. Now, in more and more cases, it’s coming back out. Beginning with the 1971 models, government regulations restricted the amounts of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons that cars could emit. Also, in the United States (but not in Canada) maximum amounts were set for exhaust particulates such as lead. From 1971 to 1974, the regulations became progressively more stringent, but manufacturers were able to comply by making relatively minor modifications. One such change was to lower compression ratios. This reduced emissions and also allowed cars to run on lower-octane gasoline containing little or no lead.

In time for the ’71 model year, Imperial brought Esso 2000 onto the market in August, 1970. It was Canada’s first low-lead gasoline. Other companies were introducing new gasolines at the time, some of them completely lead-free. But most pre-1971 cars needed an additive such as lead to protect the exhaust valves. Lead-free gasolines needed another valve lubricant, such as phosphorous. In later models, valve design was changed to eliminate this potential problem.

Then came the rise in world prices for petroleum. Several European governments, whose clean-air controls had demanded gradual reductions of lead in gasoline, now faced a disturbing reality. The engine modifications that reduced emissions also reduced gasoline mileage. Also, it takes more crude oil to make high-octane gasoline without lead than it does with lead.

As crude oil prices continued going up, some nations changed plans and halted further reductions in lead content. Sweden, with an acute oil shortage, increased the permissible lead level.

Car makers in the United States, who had been appealing to the Environmental Protection Agency for more time to meet the 1975 emission standards, were granted a one-year extension for all states except California. There, to meet the new restrictions, all new cars are now equipped with a device called the catalytic converter. It fits between the engine and the muffler and, as the name implies, it acts as a catalyst, creating a chemical change in the unburnt hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide leaving the engine. The catalyst converts them into water vapor and carbon dioxide. Like any catalyst, the converter gets the job done without undergoing any change to itself. That is — and here’s the catch — unless the car has been fueled with leaded gasoline. Though a few gallons once or twice might not be permanently harmful, repeated use of leaded gasoline will destroy the converter’s ability to convert.

To prevent this, cars with catalytic converters will take only the smaller-diameter nozzles that have been installed on all unleaded gasoline pumps.

In Canada, catalytic converters are standard equipment on all new General Motors cars except those Vegas, Astre and Monza 2 + 2s that have GM’s 140-cubic-inch aluminum engine. Some other GM cars are available without catalytic converters, but these are optional models. After Dec. 31, Ford is putting catalytic converters on only its Bobcats, Mustang 2s, and Pintos that have the optional 2.0-litre engine. American Motors will not have converters before Jan. 1, 1975. After that, the converters may be available on some cars with V-8 engines. Chrysler does not plan to install catalytic converters in its Canadian cars.

Quite aside from its environmental values, unleaded gasoline has benefits for the owners of most cars built since 1971. As a general rule, if your car runs well on regular (not premium) gasoline it should get along line with unleaded fuel. Mileage will be about the same. And although unleaded gasoline generally sells for more than regular grades, there are savings to consider. Since there are no lead deposits to work their way into the oil pan, oil and oil filters could last longer. Mufflers could last longer since there are no lead scavengers to corrode them from the inside. Spark plugs will not only last longer, they’ll perform more efficiently between tune-ups. So although unleaded gasoline itself won’t give better mileage than leaded fuel, it will leave behind a much cleaner engine, which can.

Though it hasn’t been required by law to do so, Canada’s petroleum industry has made unleaded gasoline available across the country. According to a federal government survey, by mid-1975, unleaded gasoline will be available in major centres at every second outlet where brand-name gasolines are sold.

Making unleaded gasoline this widely available on such short notice has been no easy achievement. Apart from the heavy research and development costs, some tricky (and expensive) problems with transportation and storage had to be overcome. Unleaded gasoline is easily “contaminated” when exposed to traces of leaded gasoline. As little as three gallons of leaded fuel can contaminate a thousand gallons of unleaded gasoline.

Tank trucks equipped with several drainage taps will be able to switch from leaded to unleaded loads after the interiors have been thoroughly drained. Others, with intricate traps and meters to complicated drainage, will have to be flushed first with unleaded gasoline. By the time Imperial introduced its new Esso 2000 unleaded gasoline on Sept. 16, 1974, it had already spent $10 million in marketing and distribution costs. Another $25 million had gone into additional refinery facilities.

For the independent dealer there are other expenses in adding a third line of gasoline. It costs about $15,000 to install a 3,000-gallon tank and new pump. This is one reason unleaded gasoline will be unavailable in smaller communities where the volume of business may not be high enough to justify the expense.
A first attempt to get together with Clark Blaise in Montreal hadn't worked out. He had had to go down to Ohio to give some readings and talks at his alma mater, Denison University. The visit was a deferred payment of a debt of honor incurred when his first book of stories, A North American Education, won him the Great Lakes Writers' Prize for 1972. So now I was calling him to rearrange our meeting. He immediately answered the phone.

How had the trip gone?

'Oh it was fine,' he said, 'but hard work. I suppose because I'm a graduate of Denison, they got the most out of me. Seven talks or readings in three days.'

I mentioned that I'd just been reading a review by Margaret Atwood of St. Lawrence Blues by Marie-Claire Blais in that Sunday's New York Times.

'Well, when you've read that, turn on,' Blaise said. 'There's a review of my new book.'

It was agreed that I should come down to Montreal a few days later and, when I'd rung off, I went back to The New York Times. Sure enough, there was a review by Martin Levin of Blaise's second book of stories, Tribal Justice. A short review but, like the Times' review of his first book, enthusiastically favorable.

There was, it struck me, something uncannily appropriate about the appearance of reviews in the same issue of the Times of books by Canadian writers of such similar name.

Of course Marie-Claire Blais is by far the more prolific and precocious of the two writers, with eight novels, two collections of poetry and a play to her credit; compared to Blaise's two books of stories. But within a year of each other in age, the early thirties, both are notable in being outsiders to their respective literary cultures in Canada; and both are now exiles returned.

For most of her 15 years as a writer, Marie-Claire Blais has chosen to live outside Quebec; at first in New England, later in Britain. It is only in the last year that she returned to live near Montreal, and, as her latest book shows, she still maintains an objective and critical distance from her cultural roots.

Clark Blaise's relationship to Canada and to Montreal is even more tenuous. Although his father is a native Quebecker and his mother an English Canadian whose family, root and branch, encompass British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario, he was born in the United States and largely educated there. Before the ninth grade, he attended a succession of schools scattered throughout Florida and the northern border states. And a succession of American colleges similarly traces his own later and wayward search for a vocation. As the perceptive New York Times reviewer noted, 'The best of the stories have the fresh, if apprehensive, vision of a new boy in a new place.'

Two earlier encounters with Clark Blaise, during fleeting promotional visits, for his books, had implanted an impression of elusiveness, of transience. When eventually I arrived in Montreal to see him, that impression was reinforced. The Sir George Williams campus of Concordia University, where he teaches two courses in creative writing, consists of a vast new multi-storey building on downtown de Maisonneuve. The department of English was reached by riding a relay of escalators, washed over by restless tides of students and teachers, to the fifth floor. There a message awaited me that he would be found elsewhere. A descent through echoing stories of the main building, a short walk round the corner to a shabby apartment building on Mackay, brought me to a door which buzzed open when I had pressed the mailbox button. I had toiled up three flights of stairs when Clark Blaise called.

Sad, funny, beautiful. Even touching. A coming writer. A future that matters

by Val Clery
nearby McGill University.

Stocky, of average height and with broad shoulders that he tends to slouch, Clark Blaise moves and talks with an alert energy. Although his light-brown, finely-textured hair is thinning already, he looks younger than his 35 years. The impression of youthfulness derives perhaps from a smile that usually betrays about his beard-framed mouth and light-blue eyes, the kind of tentative smile that is almost the badge of shy persons who have had to condition themselves to dealing with many strangers; of the new boy on many new streets.

When we had settled ourselves in the restaurant and ordered drinks, I mentioned that I had since read The New York Times' review of Tribal Justice. Had the other reviews been as favorable? Yes, so far they'd all been good. But interestingly enough, reviewers this time were more discriminating in their praise than they had been in their response to A North American Education; they tended more to measure some stories in the collection against others. Perhaps a sign, I suggested, that reviewers were beginning to see him as a writer who had arrived.

While obviously pleased by the range of response to his work, Clark Blaise doesn’t seem overly flattered by it. Unlike most Canadian writers of fiction, he seems to see writers as made rather than born, and reviews as measures of growth rather than prizes. He himself emerged as a writer only after years of apprenticeship, at Denison, at Harvard (under the encouraging tutelage of the novelist Bernard Malamud), and at the University of Iowa. And now in Montreal he applies himself to passing on the same critical sense of craftsmanship to his own students.

Just as I am about to ask him about the novels of his wife, Bharati Mukherjee, she arrives. As she sheds her fur coat, newly out of storage, they joke about the odor of mothballs. She is small and gracefully slim, her face a delicate oval within an aura of dark wavy hair. It is the first time we have met, so initially talk is hesitant and exploratory. Although she is less talkative than Clark, she seems less shy; her air of alert self-possession is carried with an engaging sense of humor.

To have escaped from a closely-knit Bengali family in Calcutta into the daunting unfamiliar freedom of American campus life, to have decided to marry a non-Bengali, to have published two novels and established herself as both a writer and an academic away from Montreal in India and the Near East. Clark had already told me a little about his fascination with the inescapable woe of human closeness in Calcutta. 'There's so much about life in India that you just can't like,' he had remarked, 'you have to love it. And I loved it. I'd like to be able to stay there another two years.' Bharati admitted that she too would like to have stayed longer in her native Calcutta. Amidst all the other demands on them, both were struggling now to shape the journals they kept during their Indian visit into a book that is due to be published in 1973. Although Clark admits to being unable so far to transmute his experience of India into fiction, Bharati's writing has dealt with her experience of India and North America. Both her novels have been as favorably received in the States as Clark's stories, but so far, despite the fact that she is a Canadian now, her work is virtually unknown in Canada. Clark insists that she is the more important writer of the two.

And for all their differences in background and personality, and for all the pressures imposed by their simultaneous roles as parents, as marriage partners, as teachers and as writers, they show a warm, open affection for each other and an ability to enjoy rather than resent the complicated schedule they have to survive every day.

When Bharati has finally negotiated the ordering of lunch, with us in English and with the waiter in Bengali, she and Clark make an amusing attempt to explain how they do survive. Because Clark's teaching commitments free him early on all but two afternoons a week, he

Among his students, an aura of fellow writers, alive and candid
is able to be home when their two young siblings get back from school. On his two busy afternoons, a babysitter (or Blaise’s mother, who is living with them at the moment) fills in. Bharati, because she is required to administrate the graduate English program as well as teach, is rarely able to get home before 5:30 pm. But Clark, experienced as a short-order cook during a truant year from college in the States, does all the food marketing and cooking. Except, he adds, when they have Bengali food.

H ow, within such a frantic life-style, I ask, do they ever find time to write? Clark explains that he manages to get his writing done late into the night, but that Bharati can’t do that because she’s ‘‘at’’ 10 p.m. and has to go to bed. Nevertheless, he goes on, she is the sort of accomplished writer who, whenever she has a day free, can sit down at a typewriter and turn out a completed short story. And when she has a month free, during vacations for instance, she can sit down and turn out a novel, with scarcely any revision needed. He’s much slower, he admits, has to follow a ritual of transcribing all the notes he’s made, has to draft his stories in longhand, to revise and rearrange and polish every sentence. So he needs those long hours in the night.

They confess to a shared longing for a time when they might abandon teaching and write full time. Unfortunately, because influence and the need for more living space forced them to invest in a house, they can see no way of giving up teaching in the near future.

It’s time for Bharati to return to McGill. They make a tentative arrangement to meet at home before she goes to some faculty function that evening, and Clark has hopped away. We continue to talk for a while. He discusses his belief (on which he and Bharati have agreed to disagree) that the novel as a literary form has been burnt out by the genius of such writers as Joyce and Proust. But he points out about his books what some reviewers have tended to overlook, that they are conceived organically, not as anthologies of individual stories, but rather as explorations from many viewpoints of a specific human theme. "People tend to think of short stories as miniatures," he adds, "but in fact, in their true form, they’re magnifications."

The stories in Tribal Justice focus upon confrontations between the individual outsider and the rough ambiguous justice meted out by the various ethnic, geographic and religious ‘‘tribes’’ that populate the fictional world of the book, these confrontations range through the small towns and cities of Florida and as far west as the middle west with which Blaise is so familiar, and are seen through the eyes of boys and young men who become the victims of that tribal justice.

Some of the stories are fairly direct adaptations of his own experience, but he points out that some others are rather extrapolations into experiences which may not be his, yet to which he can relate.

In a story called I’m Dreaming Of Rock-et Richardson, convincingly inhabiting a young French-Canadian boy from the slums of Montreal who witnesses the humiliation of his unsuccessful father. In another, longer story, The March, he explores his own ambiguous feelings toward the youthful activism of Quebec through a protagonist who returns to his roots and becomes an activist, very much in tune with the universit y, but who in the end retreats to the vaster and less-demanding activist scene in the States in which one of his other central characters experiences a given situation ‘‘is just one of an infinite number of ways in which he might have seen that situation and reacted to it.’’

It is time for Blaise to return to campus for his afternoon session in creative writing, and as we meet, he climbs to his extramural office. It is a small apartment, sparsely furnished. A desk almost covered by the piles of handwritten notes that are the basic materials of his writing. A couple of cheap easy chairs set on either side of a small plastic table, perhaps for tutorial companionship. A broad tan wall papered in rich dark colors portraying a scene from Indian mythology. And a bookcase covering one whole wall and including several handsome books of short stories. A telephone too, which when he tries it, is still dead. He collects some books and we set down our glasses of wine and look out across the rainy city and up the populous four sets of escalators to the department of English.

On the way he remarks that he prefers teaching at Sir George Williams than at the more prestigious McGill. He finds that almost all his dozen students serious ly intend to become writers, and indeed several of his past students are already publishing stories and sustaining themselves in journalism.

He encourages his students to submit work for open contests, which the titles of the whole class. ‘‘I make it clear,’’ he tells me, ‘‘that when they hand in a story, their personal attention ends. It will be studied candidly and rigorously by the whole group for what it set out to do and how well it achieves that end. Even by the writer, who isn’t required to reveal that it’s his or her work. There’s no other way to learn creative writing.’’

The hour-and-a-quarter session passes quickly. As they sit around their table there is a striking visual contrast between the five women and four men students, uniformly casual in their dress and way of sitting, and Clark Blaise who wears a smart check business suit, a neat cream shirt and an ornately-decorated silk tie. Throughout his fluent extemporaneous, discoursed on the chosen aspect of writing which he blanketed forward, very much in tune with the response of the students, and it is obvious that there is no difference between them in their dedicated interest in the topic. He reads apropos examples from published writers. He probes them for their reactions and they answer candidly with the air of being fellow writers rather than students.

At the end of the session, two of them submit manuscripts for future discussion and criticism.

We drive across the city into lower Westmount, through streets brightly festooned with fall leaves, a locality heavily populated by English-speaking Montreal realtors who teach or broadcast or write. He gestures, proprietorially but bravely, as we pass the sedate suburban house in which has become their financial stone and which will occupy them in the spring.

We pick up Bharati at their home. There’s time to glimpse the professional unifiniteness of their rented house, their two lively sons casually watching television, and to meet Bharati’s mother, a slim white-haired woman obviously and contentedly an integral member of their fleeting way of life. We hustle through the early evening traffic to the rim of McGill campus, where Bharati says good-bye and gets out, then drive on into the city’s east end, to a popular inexpensive criterion which

Clark recommends. Although again his form of dress contrasts with the casual and trendy clothes of the other patrons, he shows no self-consciousness, orders dinner carefully in impeccable French and wonders about the arrival of another writer who hopes to join us, the English-born Montreal novelist John Metcalfe. We are almost finished eating when Metcalfe, who had to play truant from a friend’s poetry reading, arrives. They are old friends, having both been members of the Montreal Storytellers’ Group which used to give readings in the city’s English schools. Soon we are deep into talk about the scattered writers who had composed the group, one gone to ground in the Maritimes, another lost in a love affair, a third immersed fatefully in the preparation of a memoir among autobiographical novels.

What stikes me about Blaise as we talk and laugh and exchange gossip is his capacity to talk fluently and freely about his craft at every opportunity, his alert ability to show interest in everything that is said or that can be seen about him, and still manage not being an essential disappointment at a distance from what is being said or is happening. Just as he is part of the warm relaxed humanity in this unpretentious restaurant, so, at the same moment, in his neat suit, he is apart from it.

It is time for me to catch my plane back to Toronto. Blaise insists on driving me out to the airport. As we race across the city out along the expressway, the roar of the engine allows only a wayward minimal conversation. We arrive with only a few minutes to spare before my flight leaves.

‘‘Why,’’ I ask him as I prepare to get out, ‘‘when you could obviously work and travel and live in almost any city in North America . . . or elsewhere, for that matter . . . why have you chosen to settle in Montreal?’’

He smiles, ‘‘Well it’s the least North American city on the continent, it’s the most American television station, and to most British Canadians think it’s the most French city in Canada, and French Canadians think it’s the most English city in Quebec. So I decided to stay, despite the place for me.‘‘

We trade farewells and he is gone. It was an answer that seemed complete, and utterly characteristic of Clark Blaise.
In the moon of wintertime

The land and its lore come to the Christmas imagination with special freshness. Here, the land as seen by fine photographers. And the lore - a special part of it - is the hymn of Father Jean de Brébeuf, the Jesuit who came from Rouen to meet a martyr's death in this country in 1649. Not long before that, he had written the words of Jesous Ahatonhia and taught them to the Indians of the Huron nation. The written version was lost. But the Christmas carol became part of the Huron tradition so that some hundred years later, a priest who came after Father Brébeuf heard the words being sung by the Hurons and wrote them down for history.

'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
When all the birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead;
Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:

Jesus, your King, is born, Jesus is born.
In excelsis gloria.
Within a lodge of broken bark,
The tender Babe was found.
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped his beauty 'round:
But as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang loud and high:

Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born.
In excelsis gloria.
The earliest moon of wintertime,
Is not so round and fair,
As was the ring of glory
On the helpless Infant there.
The chiefs from far before him knelt,
With gifts of fox and beaver pelt:

Jesus, your King, is born, Jesus is born.
In excelsis gloria.

O children of the forest free,
O sons of Manitou,
The holy Child of earth and heav'n
Is born today for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant Boy,
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy:

Jesus, your King, is born, Jesus is born.
In excelsis gloria.
A group of us, teenagers and the new middle-aged, were having a happy conversation one evening, when a woman—she could I'm certain give spontaneous readings from The Decameron—made the observation that we are, all of us, on the brink of utter chaos. The economy is not good, the environment is spoiled, and, according to available research on the subject, politics may not be what it used to be. Everyone agreed. In fact, they seemed to feel that we are alive in the worst of times, one almost perversely suited to the familiar line from the thirty plays, Green Pastures, ‘Everything nailed down is coming loose’. Look at families, institutions, professions, governments. All under fire, and some it seems, in the middle of nervous breakdowns. Of course, historians blame and remind us of earlier, more inhumane times. But no matter; we are a disconsolate people.

And so, Christmas. What can you say about a festival that has so much to do with faith in an age that seems to have so little? ‘It is an age of no religion at all,’ writes one of the fashionable theologians. ‘It no longer looks to the religious rules and rituals for its morality and its meaning.’ To those who still sit regularly in church or synagogue, that seems simply one more exaggeration of the superficial age. But is it? At least to anyone who looks at the world mirrored in the media and the university. It’s a conclusion hard to ignore.

If so, what then? Obviously, we have said goodbye to certain restraining picies of the past, but thoughtful people worry that in doing so, we are also shedding values that we must retain if we are to be a humane and compassionate society. Like it or not—and many don’t—we are in one of history’s transitional periods, and the pendulum has far from finished its swing. Already though, growing number of people, including the thoughtful young, sense that it is foolish sentimental to believe that general pessimism is the doorway to a better social order. ‘Liberty,’ wrote a wise European of an earlier day, ‘is the luxury of self-discipline.’

There are some of course who are simply not of a mood to think of such issues. Better to take the easy, perhaps more pleasurable way, and enjoy the tobaggen. Still others are so discouraged they have yielded to a sense of resigned pessimism. The result of all this is a prevalent malaise that has prompted one philosopher to describe us as the most morally confused generation of the century.

At such a time, Christmas will seem to some, more irrelevant than at any time in their lives. Within all our memories, it has been attacked for its commercialism, tastelessness, superficiality. But now, there seems in the air a newer and deeper skepticism, not just of its lighter traditions or its historic divinity, but of its very humanity.

Perhaps it is because we are isolated from each other; perhaps because mobility has taken us from our past; perhaps because we are growing old in a world that affects us more deeply and decisively than the place we once knew with a general store, a main street and an outdoor rink in the schoolyard. ‘We are now so isolated from each other,’ says one sociologist, ‘that unless you make intentional efforts to involve yourself and your children in human relationships, it won’t happen.’

But why so pessimistic? Christmas, after all, entered history in a world that was filled with more than our current frettfulness. The city of Bethlehem was in a conquered land, there was devastating cruelty, and the threat of revolution. Still, the message was one that overcomes fear and restores brokenness. It was about love—and define it as you will—the love of a man for a woman, a child for a mother, the faith of a friend. It is the rebirth we need among people and between nations. ‘He thows me a rope,’ runs an Indian translation of the twenty-third psalm, ‘and the name of the rope is love.’

Love is not mere emotion, though at times it is partly so, and properly. It is the enduring foundation of existence. Without it, life is generally lonely, empty and finally crippling. Indeed, most of the fear that claims us, fear of failing, or aging or dying, could be better faced, perhaps banished, were we able to give—and receive—the gift of love. Not that such fears disappear, but in a life in which love and goodwill prevail, fear is pushed from the con to the very edge. So the century-old words of Phillips Brooks: ‘The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight . . .

It is not just the religious traditions of Christmas or the Chanukah Festival that suggest this. Our best literature has said it as well. Dickens, he shows Scrooge shackled in his lonely fear, who on Christmas morning, throws high the window, summons the boy, and the gift and receives the keys of the kingdom.

And there is room, much of it, for the lighter joys, which somehow would have us discard as mere frivolity. If Christmas is to be recovered, without one terribly earnest clogged man from the American business, we must get rid of most of its current atmosphere, trim, candles and old meaningless carols. ‘Why so serious? Is there no place for laughter, for vagueness, for the symbols which summon memory, and warm the chill of life? We are in danger of such purists, who in the name of restoring meaning, would simply make life dull. The trees, the carols, the myth, are not trivial deco ration. They have both place and meaning.

May all of us, no matter what our discouragement, sense something of Christmas this season, its light, its warmth, its timeless mystery. We may share it in the expectancy of the child, the devotion of love, the words between friends. We may find it in some words of Dostoevsky in Brother Karamazov. Father Zasimov is speaking to the brothers: ‘Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world, with all its embracing love.’ And so this year, I shall write a letter to a friend who rarely receives a letter; I shall phone a man I have not spoken with in years and send a gift to one I know to be distressed and, perhaps, like you, I shall find a moment, a thought, a memory, and to appreciate the man, the gift which Zasimov gave.