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An album of nature by Canadian artists
A new light on learning

Cuisine of Canton; studies in Spanish; courses in carpentry. Canadians are back to school. Just for the joys of it.

Our new identity may be as learners. We Canadians have been characterized as a nation of hockey players and earlier as fur trappers, snowshoers, and singers of Rose Marie, I Love You. But developments of the past five years have made obvious yet another aspect of our national character: an eagerness to continue learning.

"Going to school these days isn’t nearly as significant a fact of Canadian education as going back. There is a tide of adults with a new fascination for self-development. University-enrollment figures now show more Canadians attending as part-time students rather than full-time. Further, there’s less interest in gaining credits for degrees. There’s a growing trend to courses that offer nothing more than knowledge gained and satisfaction earned."

Each autumn, large crowds of adults, young singles, and senior citizens alike join longer registration lineups. The nation’s newspapers duly observe these phenomena with stories of grandmothers studying auto mechanics, goldpanning students hitting paydirt, and such reversals as a Scot learning the intricacies of Cantonese cuisine and a Cantonese immigrant taking up the bagpipes.

According to Ignacy Wanieliwicz’s detailed 1976 study, Demand for Part-Time Learning in Ontario, half of the adult population in that province is engaged in a learning program or about to be, the rest of the country is just as eager. Statistics Canada misses many courses (its figures on continuing education are limited to programs offered by formal institutions), but still shows startling increases in recent years.

There has been almost as much growth thus far in the 1970s as there was in all of the 1960s, and the sixties were years of constant growth. In 1960-61, enrollment for all courses in Canada was 570,000. By 1970-71, the figure was 1.45 million, but that was merely the beginning. The most recent statistics reveal about 2.2 million course registrations in 1974-75.

Canada’s enthusiasm for self-development has been felt beyond our own boundaries. We’ve taken a leading role in encouraging adult education around the world, through our membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an association of 24 countries that promotes innovation in science, technology, and education. And we’ve even invited international criticism of our own system. In 1975, OECD education examiners visited Canada and assessed our provinces’ education systems. We got a good report, generally, especially in the section on adult education: “Without doubt, educational institutions in Canada appear to have been exceptionally successful in establishing programs that attract adults and meet some of their needs.”

Then, however, came some mild criticism. "This must be seen," the report continued, "against the background of a rapidly expanding educational system that has caused large gaps in educational levels to open between the different age groups." Our adult-education program still places too much emphasis on developing vocational skills and formal school certificates, the examiners suggested. Too little has been done with libraries, museums, and other public institutions.

The evidence, as seen in a survey of what’s available, from Lord’s Cove, Nfld., to the Women’s Resource Centre at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, suggests that continuing education involves people of all ages and backgrounds who are studying simply for the fun of it. Not that interest in gaining degrees has disappeared completely. At universities, credit courses still lead the way. Statistics Canada estimates that the final figures for 1974-75 will record 396,000 credit
course enrollments (including 175,000 summer courses), compared to last year's total of 296,000 noncredit offerings.

Nevertheless, there is a clear trend toward studying for satisfaction rather than certification. "People are more interested now in human fulfillment, than economic achievement," says the Rev. Charles Forsyth of Sudbury, Ont. "In the fifties, people were caught up in the economic growth of the country and, in their education, they chose with an eye to bettering themselves economically. In the seventies, they are more disposed to see a value in learning other than a certificate that will give them a better income."

That value is discovered by people at every level in continuing education. In Toronto, 75-year-old True Davidson, the former mayor of the borough of East York, will begin writing her PhD thesis in English literature before the snow falls. Davidson was chided by another doctoral student as to why she was seeking a doctorate at her age. "I asked him why he wanted one and he said to get a better job," she recalls. "I replied that I wanted one to get a better education. Which is the better motive?"

Sometimes the joy of learning and the search for a better job meet at Toronto's Dundas Street Adult Upgrading School, a dingy basement classroom where, for the past few months, 60 people have been struggling to meet grade-school levels. "Hey, I got one right," a man in grade five shouted last May. The joy in the face of his teacher, Nomi Petro, signaled the importance of the moment.

For such people, whether PhD candidates or grade-five learners, the discovery of knowledge is more rewarding than a near-perfect score. Sometimes the discovery is about themselves. After her youngest child started school in 1970, Diane Cathcart of North Vancouver, B.C., felt at loose ends. Then she saw an article on a course offered by the University of British Columbia, "Options for Women." Six mornings with six different speakers were all she needed to realize that many possibilities remained for her.

"It was the beginning of my personal growth," she says. "I took courses in such things as 'Developing Personal Potential', which help a person sort out priorities." Then Cathcart and others thought of establishing a Women's Resource Centre at UBC. Today she is a counselor at the centre and this fall plans to take credit courses in sociology and anthropology.

Increasingly, many senior citizens, some of whom dropped out of grade school years ago, are going back to college. Take for instance, Jimmy Costello, 69, of Sydney Mines, N.S., who thought he was leaving teachers behind forever 58 years ago when he entered Cape Breton's coal mines as an 11-year-old. But in the mid-sixties, Costello began working on high-school courses offered by the Northside-Victoria Amalgamated School Board. This year, he completed his first year of studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, his sights finally fixed on a degree.

The Northside-Victoria Board covers 120 miles of Cape Breton and, in 1975-76, 2,500 adults took courses. That's more than twice as many as in the first year courses were offered, 1972-73. New subjects are introduced annually, such as the weaving classes, which relate well to the arrival in Cape Breton in October, 1975, of flocks of Scottish sheep to be bred for their wool.

The educational program in Nova Scotia is one of the country's most innovative. "We don't call it adult education," says Ernie Morrison of Sydney, president of the Continuing Learning Association of Nova Scotia. "We stress the continuing aspect, and we're proud of the way we get the different age groups together. In our pre-nursing course, for example, we mix high-school students and older people."

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are 49 Community Learning Centres, each equipped with videotape-recording and viewing machines that make continuing education a practical matter. "We make tapes with the basic information people ask us for," says George Lee, of the extension services of Memorial University, St. John's. "We had the St. John's fire brigade demonstrate fire-fighting methods and make the tape available to volunteer brigades. We have tapes on preparing income-tax forms and tapes instructing women on self-examination for breast cancer. We have tapes in Inuit and Indian languages. We encourage people to come to the centres — we've place in locations other than schools, like church basements or women's institute halls — and make their own tapes on things like the latest fishing methods."

For a fisherman such as Clyde Ploughman of Port au Choix, on Newfoundland's northern peninsula, the continuing-education tape on bookkeeping for fishermen meant not only new knowledge, but increased self-reliance. "It really made it a lot easier for me to keep track of where I am," Ploughman told the field-worker from the learning centre. "Now I'll be wanting more." George Lee's voice has the ring of pride to it when, matter-of-factly, he summarizes his kind of program. "The point, really, is that in Newfoundland we're using the new media and technology more than in any other province."

Sometimes the emphasis is on the area and its requirements. For example, in the Northwest Territories, the stress has been on training heavy-equipment operators, airplane mechanics, and other service-oriented people. Now says Don MacNeil of Ottawa, head of the native liaison branch, department of Indian and northern affairs, there's a new demand among native people for management courses.

The Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) — a private, 800-member organization founded in 1935 — is committed to making lifelong learning accessible to more Canadians. "Over the years," says executive director Ian Morrison of Toronto, "we've had considerable progress and innovation within the provinces. But we need more data on a national scale to avoid the costly duplication from province to province."

Several provinces seem to have their own unique emphasis: Quebec's Education Populaire is recognized for its success in helping people develop their skills in citizen's groups; Saskatchewan makes heavy use of existing community facilities; and British Columbia leads in programs that are specifically designed for women. "The Women's Resource Centre developed in 1973 out of a number of courses we had on the 'Changing World' at the UBC Centre for Continuing Education," says Vancover's Anne Ironside, the resource-centre director. "Now we're finding a great number of people who came out in the past for courses like flower arrangements are coming back for such things as management courses and personal development."

Not surprisingly, language courses are especially evident in Quebec. "Aside from vocational courses, I'm sure the languages French, English, and Spanish — are the most popular," says Paul Belanger, general manager of the Canadian Institute for Adult Education, a wing of the CAAE. "We have private schools such as Berlitz reaching 100,000 a year, and you'll find more than 30,000 in courses offered by the boards of education."

Quebec's Education Populaire is highly respected by national authorities on continuing education for its success in making people more socially aware. The provincial government allocates...
$1.5 million annually in grants to associations offering such courses as consumerism and women’s rights. More than 40,000 attended in 1974-75.

"One problem we share with the rest of the country is including women in all phases of continuing education."

Belanger continues, "because they’re still tending to traditional courses such as nursing, and not plumbing."

The Canadian Institute for Adult Education has enjoyed success in its work with rural farmers, particularly in a project it helped design at Bathurst.

N.B. The rural promotion centre opened in 1972 to train young farmers (selected from the traditionally poor dairy area) in such new methods as efficient feeding systems and in joint action to purchase equipment and deal with the government. Canada Manpower and the department of regional economic expansion funded the administration of the project, which trained two groups of 15 farmers at a time. "We expect them to be leaders in the rural areas," says Belanger. "We chose this approach — intensive training of a few at a time rather than trying to train them all — and our studies suggest it was effective."

The range of courses everywhere, from the very relevant to the just-for-fun, is astonishing. In Alberta, there are courses for the handicapped, the aged, and the chronic unemployed. One may choose between cake decorating, powder-puff mechanics, dog obedience, tanning hides and skins, small-engine repair, and plumbing installation. Or choose recreation: instruction in cross-country skiing is a big favorite every winter now.

Some courses remain popular because they make just plain learning possible. The Adult Upgrading School in Toronto, for instance, is known by educators across the country for its success in teaching basic grade-school subjects to those who were never able to master them. "We take anyone," says Fred Ryan, a former counselor who heads the school. "We have no admittance procedure of any kind, other than to take down a person’s name, address, and phone number."

Graduates of Ryan’s classes speak with deep appreciation. Elizabeth McGrath, for instance, was in her 70s with three children, when she was widowed in 1971. Tests at Canada Manpower indicated she was burdened by an education at the grade-three level. "Well, I couldn’t believe it," she says. "They said they couldn’t train me for any kind of employment. I had no confidence left; nothing to do. It just so happened I read about the Fred Ryan School — that’s what I call it — and it was a blessing because he brought my confidence back and, within a few months, I was able to go back to

Manpower and get work." Now, many night courses later, she has reached the college level. She completed her first credit course (in humanities at York University) this spring and has no notion of stopping now.

"I’ll continue at York," she says, sounding very confident, "but what I’d like to see is all of the school system opened up. We need more schools like Fred Ryan’s, where people are made to feel like somebody, regardless of their difficulties."

Jane Abramson, a sociologist and professor of adult education at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, sees three groups leading the rush to learning: those who have to stay in pace with technology, those who are well-educated and hungry for more, and those who are searching for a way to become more resourceful.

"What’s changing is the attitude toward education," she says. "It’s becoming much more acceptable as something that continues through life, rather than something preparing one for life."

Alan Thomas, president of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, admits to one worry in all of this. He wonders if continuing education is really accessible to those who haven’t been successful in their earlier education. Are high schools, he wonders, doing all they can to make students realize they have a lifetime of learning possibilities ahead of them? But throughout Canada there are people who believe it accessible because they’ve experienced it. And so each year, more and more Canadians get the learning habit, adding to their own personal growth and to a new international reputation for Canada.
Delicate
When expenses are greater than income,

The numbers are vastly different, but the end result is just as painful: Canada's economy, like any household budget hit by expenses far greater than income, is running up a huge deficit in its balance of payments with other countries. But where the worried householder may have to correct an overdraft of a few hundred dollars (for repairs to that pesky, leaking roof), Finance Minister Donald Macdonald may have to wrestle with multibillion-dollar deficits (principally, for ever greater crude-oil imports) during the years ahead.

To a country as economically sound as Canada, credits from agencies such as the International Monetary Fund are routinely available; credits from immense pools of investment funds in New York, London, and Zurich are regularly tapped by provincial treasuries to cover budget deficits. But, in the final analysis, we have to ask ourselves: as Canadians, do we want to live on credit? The plight of industrial countries like Great Britain and Italy should convince us that we don't.

The consequences of successive, deepening deficits in the national balance of payments fall heavily on the people, as shown among the British and Italians. Aside from a kind of erosion of pride of citizenship, the material repercussions become more painful month by month, year by year.

As the pound sterling and the Italian lira weaken on world money markets, so austerely measures become the order of the day in London and Rome, Milan and Birmingham. Precious foreign exchange must be conserved and, in turn, imports of dispensable items must be discouraged. Today, Canada is threatened with the same problem: if Canada has to import an excessive amount of oil, say a billion dollars more than it produces, and there is no equivalent export growth in other areas, then that's a billion dollars less Canadians have to spend on other foreign products. As the deficit rises, the amount we have to pay for such necessities as oil reduces the money we have available for other items, ranging from Italian sports cars and French wines at the luxury end, to coffee, tea, and sugar in the kitchen.

Canada became a net importer of oil last year, a condition that cannot be reversed for many years to come. It would take a positive combination of events to make us self-reliant within the next 20 years or so; new discoveries on-stream including oil from the Arctic, synthetic oil from a half-dozen oil-sands plants, and a nationally accepted program of conservation.

But the distant future isn't now. And it's now that we face an escalating net dependence on foreign oil that will aggravate our balance-of-payments situation.

For a short period in the early 1970s, exports of Canadian oil more than offset oil imports into Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Today, imports exceed exports and this will continue to be the case in spite of deliveries of Canadian crude oil to Montreal through the extension of the interprovincial pipeline. The line will be carrying 250,000 barrels per day when it reaches full operation early in 1977. Exports will continue to drop in response to the policy of the federal government and will be phased out entirely by 1981.

But in the meantime, we're continuing to export part of our domestic production to U.S. refineries and this is helping our current balance-of-payments situation by bringing in money from outside Canada. The federal government collects a tax of something under $4 per barrel on the exported oil. This tax amounted to $850 million in 1975. The export tax and the 10-cent-per-gallon excise tax on gasoline are used to subsidize consumers of the Middle East and Venezuelan crude that we import for Canadian users east of the Ottawa valley. The amount Canadians will have to pay for oil imports in 1976 will be about $3 billion, depending upon rates of consumption, which in turn are affected by how keenly we take to heart the government's conservation program. Subtract from that the $2.3 billion we will receive from exports of Canadian oil and you have the deficit for 1976 in the oil account in our balance of payments — about $700 million.

The federal government tabled an energy paper last April. The paper assumed that Canada's domestic-oil prices should be allowed to rise toward world levels during the next two or three years. The price of natural gas would also rise to keep a competitive balance between alternate energy supplies. At the higher price, the paper stated, consumption of energy would grow at a slower rate and more revenues would be made available to develop new sources of petroleum energy.

"By 1985," the president of a major Canadian oil company told me, "our economists predict, on the basis of a 3.3-percent annual increase in oil consumption, an oil deficit of more than $6 billion. Assuming we don't play at conservation, but really do it — and that means lower highway speeds, lighter and more economical cars, chiller thermostat settings — that may be cut to the $4-billion level."

The immediate reaction is to blame somebody — federal and provincial governments for grabbing too much of the oil revenues,
thus reducing the money available for exploration, the oil industry itself for lulling us into a false sense of security with optimistic projections of potential reserves, and the greedy OPEC nations that dared, at a stroke, to overturn a half-century of comfortable assumptions about the abundance of cheap energy in the world. But it's a pointless exercise. There are no villains. Only changed circumstances.

The most altered of all circumstances — one that many of us are only now reluctantly beginning to accept — is the new world price of oil. No longer $3 per barrel, but $13 per barrel.

Is it fair, some idealists ask, that a handful of sheiks should have the power to dictate prices to an energy-hungry world? Fairness seems to be beside the point. Facts are facts, and this one fact is unarguable. The oil is theirs. They have every right to charge what the market is willing and able to pay. We sometimes forget that, even in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria — four of the big guns of OPEC — oil is a dwindling resource. Their governments are looking to broader industrial development, not merely fueling other economies with their sole national resource.

In Canada, holding the wellhead price of oil below world prices would be an invitation to continued wastefulness. Freezing gas and heating-fuel prices may be popular now, but won't cure bad habits in the long run. Why turn down the thermostat if oil is cheap? And why switch to a smaller car and drive it more slowly when nobody is worried about the cost of driving?

For the sixth year, we've drained off more oil than we've discovered. We're consuming oil faster than drilling rigs are able to locate new reserves. In 1975, Canada added only about 57 million barrels of proven reserves to what we still had underground. But we extracted 550 million more barrels of oil than we located through exploration.

One oil-company executive says that, with a single exploratory well in the Beaufort Sea costing as much as $25 million now, it's clear that the industry will need — and must have — a greater cash flow, if it is to search for the oil we'll need.

Imperial Oil's own investment in supply development is typical of the industry. In 1975, the company spent $188 million on exploration and development of new supplies of crude oil and natural gas, including the company's interest in the Syncrude project. On various other capital projects — needed to keep pace with Canadian demand for petroleum and chemicals — the amount was $138 million for a total of $326 million.

According to Imperial's estimate, total expenditures by the oil industry for new petroleum supplies could be $50 billion to $60 billion (in today's dollars) between now and 1985. This level of activity assumes that investors will receive a reasonable return on successful ventures, that significant discoveries will continue to be made, that the required technology will continue to be developed, and, of course, that there is a market available.

Governments made modest moves to provide more incentives to exploration companies in 1975, and estimates by Oilweek and Oil and Gas Journal indicate that drilling and exploration expenditures are expected to jump by 25 percent this year to about $1.25 billion.
"The economic climate has improved, no doubt about it," says Peter Bawden of Calgary, whose Bawden Enterprises Inc. does contract drilling for oil companies around the world. "But still many regulatory uncertainties, especially in the northern territories, continue to plague our industry."

Despite increased exploration, the chances are such that Canada might be importing a million or more barrels of oil daily by 1985. Demand for gas will be about four trillion cubic feet annually, and this could not be met without finding, developing, and delivering new gas supplies. And, in 1985, Canadians will consume about twice as much imported coal from the United States as we do today.

"Are we still masters of our destiny?" muses Ches Barratt, manager of Imperial Oil’s corporate planning services department. "Some of Canada’s trading partners are beginning to doubt it and to doubt also the solidity of our dollar. I think the government should curb its spending, in line with restraint guidelines for the rest of us. And it should encourage investment and productivity, so as to improve our export performance."

One economist who isn’t unequivocally opposed to deficits in the balance of payments is Dr. Caroline Pesteau of the C.D. Howe Research Institute in Montreal. "As long as a country’s balance of trade in goods and services is basically healthy," she says, "it doesn’t matter that occasional, temporary deficits are covered by borrowing. But when, as is threatening to be the case in Canada, our deficits continually worsen, then to go repeatedly to foreign money markets for huge loans — bond issues and the like — is akin to papering over a wall with structural weaknesses in it. It means the mounting debt will have to be serviced with more Canadian dollars each year. Which in turn means that, year to year, our national options narrow and the ownership of our own industrial and natural resources is jeopardized."

Explaining the economic sequence of events, as deficits mount, Pesteau is plainly worried. "Life becomes expensive for everyone and economic activity is slowed down," she says. "It’s a vicious circle. To keep investment money flowing in, the Bank of Canada is obliged to attract it by keeping domestic interest rates high. In so doing, business and industry find it prudent to borrow as little as possible. Which means that productivity falls. Lower productivity, coupled with high interest rates and an over-par Canadian dollar combine to make our exports that much less attractive in our major U.S. markets. And, as our export performance weakens, so our deficits mount and we have to borrow more to balance our national accounts. While our foreign earnings are undermined, ironically Canadians have an incentive to import more with strong dollars, which buy more than they would under less distorted circumstances. In a sense you could sum it up in one phrase: living beyond its means will ultimately bankrupt a country."

The economy is an intricate machine in which each cog meshes with every other and no lever is independent of any other. Ultimately the machine must be in balance as to the function of its parts. Intelligent management of our oil reserves is more important than ever. That management requires a commitment by Canadians to voluntary conservation, realistic pricing, and an increased rate of supply development.
The image is fixed: two white-throated Canada geese stand at the base of a tree staring out over a recently frozen pond. A light cover of snow obscures all but the longest strands of brown, straw-like grass. The day appears gray and filled with nature's solitude. Canada Geese is a magically realistic painting by Canadian wildlife artist Robert Bateman.

With nature art like Bateman's, it's detail that's important: the attention given to things such as muscules, color, and environments. To deal with the subject properly, nature artists must be students of wildlife, studying animals the way other artists observe human models.

American ornithologist and artist James Audubon was the first to gain public acceptance for wildlife art. In the mid-1820s, he took his drawings of North American birds to England and Europe where they met with acclaim. After publication of many of Audubon's works, the birds of North America became known to people around the world. And Audubon's painstaking detail gained him the respect of naturalists, who had mistrusted artists, feeling that they painted animals without any real knowledge of them. Audubon's contribution was twofold: his art stood its ground esthetically and proved to be a document of nature in its pristine state.

Since then, wildlife art has had a place in galleries and collectors homes, holding its own among the latest trends of the art world, but remaining in the background. This could be changing. During the last couple of years, there has been increasing popularity in wildlife art.

Canadian Nature '74, a two-year touring exhibit that concluded in Ottawa.

Mink on Flooded River by Winnipeg artist Clarence Tillenius, whose work has been shown in Europe and the United States.
last January attracted much attention. At the Royal Museum in Toronto last October, there was a two-month show called Animals in Art, billed as the first major exhibition of international wildlife art. More than 300 works were on display, by 150 artists from 24 countries.

Last November, the Beckett Gallery in Hamilton, Ont., opened The First Canadian Wildlife Gallery and, for its premiere, held a major exhibition by 22 of the best-known nature artists in this country. The paintings and carvings reproduced on these pages were shown at that exhibition.

Arnold Plezer, a former wood patternmaker, carved Sparrow Hawk

Ducks in Flight, by A.J. Casson, last living member of the Group of Seven

This wood carving, Common Loon, was done by Bill Walton from St. George, Ont.
"I think there are a few reasons why there's a resurgence in wildlife art," says Tom Beckett, the gallery owner. "The environmental concern of a few years ago had something to do with it. People wanted to get closer to nature. The growth of nationalism is partly responsible too. Collectors want something very Canadian, and what could be better than this country's wildlife? Also, I think realism in art is in vogue again and nature art is nearly always treated realistically."

Capturing nature's realism, says the wildlife artist, requires more than skill; it involves hard work. Winnipeg's Colleen Hedges Nelson, who has a master's degree in zoology, spent 14 years studying the downy waterfowl of North America for an illustrated book she is preparing. Nelson's paintings are in the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pa., and in the provincial government...
Young Raccoons is a brush drawing by
Jan Sharkey Thomas. Her animal
sketches capture warmth and humor.

Charlie was painted in casein by George
McLean, who started his career in art as
a magazine illustrator.

Winnipeg's Colleen Helgeson Nelson
used watercolors to paint Red-billed
Whistling Duck, a one-day-old bird.

Blow-Fish, collage and needlework, by Miriam Simpson from Hamilton, Ont.

buildings in Winnipeg.

"I began studying downy waterfowl
at the Delta Waterfowl Research Centre
about 75 miles from Winnipeg," she
says. "In that hatchery, I spent
many hours drawing and photograph-
ing day-old birds from a specially built
observation pen. Most of what I want to
know about them comes from watch-
ing, although I have consulted other
people's research. I also study museum
specimens. But most important are
sketches and measurements I make
while holding the bird in my hand. I'd
say my work is both scientific and
artistic."

Robert Batemen, who lives in Rock-
wood, Ont., taught art and geography
for 20 years, but is now a full-time
painter. Last year he had a one-man
exhibition in London; right now he's
one of the most popular nature artists
in Canada. Batemen looks at his animal
studies scientifically. "I don't feel a
sentimental attachment to wildlife," he
says. "For me, painting such subjects
represents an opportunity to approach
something living its own life independ-
ent of man, to portray an existence as
an entity unto itself. To capture the
animal on canvas I must intrude into its
world."

Most wildlife artists find it necessary
to relate to their subjects' worlds.
Clarence Tillenius is an example.
Tillenius, who lives in Winnipeg, is a
past president and member of the
Manitoba Naturalists' Society and he's
also a member of the Explorers Club.
He has worked as a farmer, trapper,
lumberjack, and construction hand, in
addition to sketching and painting
animals since youth. When he's not in
the wilderness studying animals, Tille-
nius writes and lectures. "Art that is
to endure must always derive its strength
from nature," he once wrote. "The artist
must have a profound understanding
of, and a feeling for, the elemental
sources of things, the rhythms of life
that are not affected by passing fash-
ions."

And that's what wildlife art is all
about: it knows no trends. Modern-day
nature artists still aspire to what James
Audubon described 150 years ago:
"Nothing...could ever answer my
enthusiastic desires to present nature,
except to copy her in her own way,
able and moving."
Auction on the prairie

For years, a form of entertainment. Now a tradition that remains and grows

by Ted Ferguson / illustrations by Huntley Brown

Thomas Sharp was, as his name suggests, a clever fellow. He was losing customers to a new auctioneer and realized he had to offer something extraordinary if he were to lure them back. So in September, 1921, the good folks of Estevan, Sask., were advised that Sharp's weekly sale at his outlying farm would feature an item they couldn't get anywhere else: One Farm Wife, Hard Worker At Harvest Time.

The authorities rushed in and stopped Sharp from selling the wife—his own, as it turned out—and although a large crowd gathered to bid on what might have been a crop-time bargain, all they saw was a yardful of old furniture and some farm machinery.

Nobody dares to try selling a spouse at a country auction now but, on the Prairies, in the villages and towns, among the grain fields and poplar groves, you can get almost anything else. Indeed, while the community quilting bee and the outhouse are vanishing, the country auction is a rural tradition that's not losing popularity. In bone-numbing cold spells, in choking dust storms, even when the hail babbles like angry fists thumping on the roof of the pickup, a farmer will drive to the local auction hall.

Which makes sense, really. Farmers are by nature the greatest gamblers on God's gray earth. Season in, season out, they jeopardize all they've got in a bout with the weather and a mortgage-holding banker. One nasty drought, one early blizzard, and they could be sent packing to the city and dreaded nine-to-five serfdom. Given their gutsy gaming instinct, it stands to reason that a cherished off-tractor pastime would be risking dollars in the next best thing to a casino the Prairies can legally offer.
This allusion to gambling is derived from personal experience. You take a chance with the gold miners. You make no refunds — and, as evidence of this, I have on my back porch a gleaming coffee percolator with tiny holes. I paid $8 for it after an auctioneer testified, "It works fine; I made coffee in it last night morning." I've also made triumphal bids on a clock that won't tick, a table lamp that never will light, a brandnew model aircraft that refuses to fly.

The farmers obviously thought that, for every item that went on the block that didn't sell at the gold miners' price, they would make their first buy — a 100-pound sack of potatoes for $5 — and I have been an auctioneer for ever since, often traveling hundreds of miles to attend a promising sale.

The best kind of country auction occurs during the fall when the sales are heavy. The farmers have watched the terrain's swollen with crops, there are no mosquitoes, and there's frequence. The only thing that calls "filter dialogue" in this crowd is too. Each has his own style. Some are superstitious, apparently emulating Voltaire, but these are few. Even the symphony, while others are belligerent to the point of accusing an audience of being a bunch of retrograde skates. My favorite is Pete Steaustik, a charming purveyor of rural humor. Holding the remote to a husky client in a crowd it's a mighty fine picture frame. Steaustik is a sheep farmer and a member of the most popular runs a Wednesday-night auction in an old Legion hall at Clyde, Ala. He goes through 50,000 pounds of local goods from car tires and leftover bakery buns to Canadian collectibles, 1920's tobacco tins, and the like. His biggest sellers are round oak tables and brass beds, the only regular item he has sold is 100,000 pounds. You can buy a Shedsomeone comes in with another host to sell.

He charges clients five percent of the sale price on each item. If he's selling farm machinery and the price is more than $5,000, he lowers his fee to three percent. He earns $15,000 per year, but has to pay a fee to attend out of this sum. The assistants are two "ring men" — the fellows who show the bidders around — and a clerk who keeps track of the sales.

The auction business is highly competitive. "The buyer has a little as one percent just to get the merchandise," he says. "I compete with a dicker who was selling at $1 a toy." Pete Steaustik's brother, Mike, a former Vancouver advertising salesman, became the first owner of Alberta three years ago to work as his clerk. Mike also helps find salvageable antique tins, and is well versed in the value of antiques, admissions he has been fed at least once. He has been asked at least once that telephone-ope insulators are hot items, he says, smiling broadly. "So go and collect those insulators — thinking they're bringing a $1 apiece, like the books said. Nobody was there. The whole lot went for $1."

Pete Steaustik learned his craft at the Reisch Auction College in Mason City, Iowa. Since he took the course six years ago, Canada's only auctioneers' school has opened at Lacombe, south of Edmonton. For $650, 15 minutes all the way for a two-week course that includes voice projection, bid-calling, bookkeeping, antique appraisal, and auction law lessons.

The school operates only in April, August, and December. Farmer and auctioneer, he also started the school in partnership with auctioneer Murray MacKenzie, says it is important to have a local crowd because all of the facilities are rented and it's too expensive. (Students are put up at a local hotel.) Not only that, but the school doesn't want to flood the market.

"We've turned out 500 graduates in the three years we've been operating," he says.

As live entertainment, the country auction may not have the appeal of the big city variety. But rural auction halls have their regulars, mostly senior citizens, who never make a bid; they get to see who the buyers are and usually sit at the back, chatting about crops, tractors, and the goings-on of the town.

The serious auction-goer, the one who spends money, must observe rules of behavior if he is to increase the odds in his favor. The bidder should always reign from an excited response to the bidding. If you persuade the people around you to bid on it and never leap at the auctioneers' opening figure, it is to your advantage. Never ask the price. You should know the market value of the object you want (people often pay more than a new article costs). Whatever you do, don't talk to friends along with identical tastes of friends can collapse should two people crave the same item and one get it.
The race is real

Oil companies claim they’re competing, says this skeptical writer. Really?

As the son of a prairie free enterpriser, I grew up believing that competition was one of the Canadian virtues, as fundamental and everlasting as John G. Diefenbaker, six-month winters, and the national inferiority complex. In particular, the oil business of the 1950s and 1960s in western Canada seemed to epitomize business competition, with every company fighting tooth and nail for land and spying on each other’s exploration wells.

In the 1970s, it is harder to believe. If the companies really are competing as they claim, why do gasoline stations look and act the same, like groupies at a rock concert? Why do they hoist identical placards announcing prices of “77” or “89” always with that “9” in infinitesimal print, hoping we won’t notice the extra nine-tenths of a cent? What’s going on out there?

A lot of others are asking the same questions. In a 1975 study of Canadian consumer attitudes, 67 percent of the respondents listed “monopolies” as one of the main suspicions relating to discontent over gasoline prices. They complained that “Our company leads and they all follow” and “We have to pay the increased prices because we need the gasoline or heating oil and have no alternative to which we can turn” and “They only care about acting together to increase their unfair profiteering; they don’t care about our
needs as motorists or about competing to meet our needs.

How will these charges? The companies deny them, of course, but business' credibility all over North America could take a hit if they don't produce attitudinal surveys to back me up on this," writes journalist Alexand- er D. Putter of the Corporate Reality, "but it's my impression that never before (except in the extreme case of such things) have Canadians felt so much distrust, disillusionment and disenchantment with the large and powerful institutions that control their lives."

So, rather than simply talking the word of business spokesmen about the condition in the oil business, I decided to examine it from a more independent angle.

I applied some of the measurements economists use in testing the extent of competition. Their yardsticks include: Does price respond to changes in demand and in costs of supply? Are new firms able to come into the business? Does the buyer have a sufficient range of choice? Do the practitioners of the business operate efficiently? Is there any evidence of collusion? We shall make a trip into Darkest Service Station Economics to see if competition really is lurking there.

What about those identical prices? Are they arbitrarily fixed or do they respond to changing situations? Could there be any given intersection, gasoline prices generally are identical, but I find it hard to believe that the company presidents get together at the racquet club and say, "Tomorrow let's all charge 81.9 cents." In other words, the consumer is fighting for every nickel of a cent of business.

The prices you and I pay at the gas pump result from several factors. The refiner delivers gasoline to the dealer at a certain wholesale price, taking into account the cost of crude oil (which is rising), refining costs, delivery charges, etc. The dealer then refines a retailer to attribute an exact cost to gasoline, and thus pinpoint its level of profit from it, as an indication of what to charge for a meat packer to say precisely what it costs to produce sirlion steak. Refineries can produce different products from the same barrel of crude oil, and the cost of an individual product can't be accurately isolated. Absolute accuracy, obviously, if the refiner is to stay in business, the prices charged must exceed the cost incurred. The market prices of commodities, along with supply and demand, at the time, are the major factors in setting a price for products. So company sales executives feel that if this price must be added a federal sales tax, a federal excise tax, and a provinc- ial sales tax, or any other tax, the regional price can be set at a provincial to province to province. The dealer adds from about seven to fifteen cents mark up to the retail price of gasoline. A cent or two.

Within this framework there is room for maneuvering. For example, an efficient refiner, with a certain amount of spare capacity to handle peaks in demand, is cheaper per barrel of crude to operate a refinery and has a larger capacity. Of the products coming out of a refinery, gasoline is the one best known to the public. When the normal outlets such as the refiner's own service stations are supplied, there is generally more gasoline still to be sold to operators who retail it under their own private brand.

In many of these buyers do not have name-brand products, credit-card ar- rangements, or any of the other services and facilities of major com- panies. Their sole interest is in buying gasoline at the cheapest available price and in volume, with no frills. The competition among refiners for this fringe market is lively, and the competition among service stations, or "mom and pop," to offer an attractive wholesale price. Price cutters in turn sell the gasoline more cheaply than most name-brand dealers.

But the name-brand dealer has elbow room within his markup. He may trim a cent or two off that price, even though it cuts his profit, to increase his volume of sales. If one dealer cuts his price, the competitor across the street certainly will match it. Sometimes the oil companies may get involved by soaking up some of the price reduction to protect their dealers. Eventually the dealers may edge up again to the prevailing market level. The net effect is to reduce competition, so long as we allow the point, that identical prices are caused by one thing: competition. Without competition there are the forces of supply and demand.

Furthermore, prices are not identi- cal in all major cities or com- munities. In Edmonton late last winter, the gasoline price ranged from 65.9 to 80.9 cents per gallon. Depending on whether you bought from a regular name-brand station, a self-service, or a discount station, you were charged between 75 and 85 cents. (Of course, the nine-tenths of a cent; where would we all be without it?) Motorists who had their daggers in their hips and shopped around more stubbornly than ever before. Retailers have to choose whether to keep prices to the bone to keep business coming in.

This kind of shopping around is changing the patterns of gasoline selling. Twenty years ago incomes were rising, gasoline prices were fairly stable, and the average motorist's main concern was finding a trustworthy dealer to service his car. "Now," says Hayles, "mechanical services are a less concern, partly because I can change the oil, wash the windshield, and always asks to check under the hood. He provides good mechanic points with him so I can count on reliable repairs when I need them. Even so, I have to keep another such station on my second team, because Mr. Wonderful's garage is so popular that it's sometimes booked solid."

All this choice is available for my changing moods and needs, and I don't even bother with self-serves. Surely this is competition of the highest order. All those ingredients of price, facilities, service, and dealer personality are what the companies call "market mix."

"Competition really comes down to providing the consumer with what he wants," sums up Charles Hayles, Jim the Oil's assistant general man- ager of marketing. For Hayles' benefit, I'd say that what we really want is high quality and all the service, as good the old days. But lacking utopia, and, in view of the energy crisis and high prices of everything, I suppose we must settle for life circa 1976. For whatever small consolation, the econo- mists' graphs assure us that it can he worse: the increase in petroleum- product prices has been consistently and considerably below the increase in the average weekly wages during the last 15 years.

Sometimes we consumers do get our own way, which is further evidence of competition. In November, 1975, Canadian Auto-Wheel and tire companies, facing a glut of steel, started to cut prices on petroleum products ended. The press predicted an immediate rise in retail prices to 85 cents for regular and 95 cents for premium gasoline. It didn't happen. Three weeks later, prices for regular gasoline were lowered between 75 and 85 cents. (Plus, of course, the nine-tenths of a cent; where would we all be without it?) Motorists had dug their heels in and shopped around more stubbornly than ever before. Retailers had to choose whether to keep prices to the bone to keep business coming in.

Price has become a major concern for motorists; they shop around more choice that in itself is evidence of competition. If there were no competi- tion, we would still be paying the same price for the same brand of gasoline. During the last 20 years, the costs of refining, transportation, and selling (including advertising) have risen by about 0.2 cents per gallon of crude oil. The rest of the 35- cent increase would be profit in the cost of crude and higher taxes. That may not mean much to you or me, but we all pay the same price for gasoline than in 1965. But it is essential to a company's health as measured by return on investment. The market is full of hundreds of oil companies. There are about 4000 oil producers in Western Canada, many of whom own no refineries. Those who don't own refineries account for approximately half of Canada's oil production. There are about 500 principal distributors of petroleum products and about 5400 dealers. During the last 20 years many newcomers have gone into gasoline retailing, including department stores, automobile supply chains, and independent firms. New brands now account for 14 percent of the market and Canadian competition is increasing. Somewhat to my surprise, the major companies say they welcome it.

"Welcome of course, because, if we didn't have competition, we'd have government regulation," insists Imperial's Charles Hayles. "We don't want to play in a league without other teams.

But to take that sporting analogy a little further, we don't want to lose either. If we do, it's going to affect not only the company's profits but the individual in it. It could affect share- holders' dividends and my salary. So naturally we'd like to win.

That makes sense. And even if it didn't, there's another test for competi- tion: It's called the half-market test. In 1975 the Federal Trade Commission Investigation Act, competitors must not collude or make tacit agreements as to prices or markets. There has never been a prosecution of refining companies in Canada in the 20 years since this act was passed. The market is not unduly easy on the oil companies.

This is no way an apology for the oil business; it has its well-known flaws. But the marketplace is giving us efficiency and a variety of services that we didn't have before. We have a great choice. And that's what competition is all about.
For 20 years now, the word "pornography" has drawn responses from two groups in the community, each clearly defined and distinct from the other. Traditionally, one group, usually including artists, academics, and writers, has argued persuasively that pornography is too illusive to be defined and that, in any case, the erotic is a natural, valid area of expression for those who work in books and films. The second group, often policemen, attorneys-general, and conservative clergy, has claimed that much of the material dealing with sexual themes is not art but smut and, as a threat to community standards, should be banned.

One of the most publicized incidents in this continuing disagreement happened in Toronto during the spring of 1965. That May, officers of the Metropolitan Toronto Police raided a gallery owned by a respected art dealer, Dorothy Cameron. They seized several paintings and charged the owner with exposing obscene pictures to public view. That November she was found guilty and fined $350.

It was a disturbing event; the work displayed in Dorothy Cameron's gallery was serious art by serious artists. After the court decision, Mayor Moore, who had just been appointed director of Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre, took exception. Speaking to a Sunday-morning congregation, he said, "In the field of art, the search for truth is always going on and we must not stifle it any more than we would scientific endeavor." Obviously Moore's opinion was a reflection of a widely shared view in the artistic community at the time.

But during the brief span of 10 years, the discussion of this emotional issue has taken on a new shape. There are no longer just two groups — exponents of free expression on one hand and oppressors of obscenity on the other. There is now a third group, committed to the principle of freedom in the arts, but worried that, at the same time, we are being subjected to an epidemic of pornography that has real social danger. Such people are not the ultramoralists of an earlier day. They include many men and women in the field of human behavior — psychiatrists, sociologists, anthropologists, and feminists. Most of them agree with the position taken by Mayor Moore. Yet many are ambivalent. For as the Era of Suppression passes, we seem to have embarked on the Era of Porn. Films that celebrate the perverse, magazines that cater to aberration, and whole city blocks that are given to pornographic shops.

"Many who oppose censorship," said Time magazine this spring, "now wonder if the mounting taboo for porn is a symptom of decay, of corrosive boredom, of withdrawal from social contact for obsessive personal pleasures. Even those who argue that it is not harmful to the user, and that people ought to be free to do what they please in private, have begun to fear that the porn plague is in fact invading the privacy of those who want no part of it."

There is no hard evidence, as the more hysterical opponents of pornography suggest, that it leads directly to sexual crime. "What it does produce," says Alexander M. Bickel of Yale University law school, "is a moral atmosphere, and the moral atmosphere is the ultimate regulator of conduct." Bickel and others argue that films such as The Story of O — in which women are ritualistically whipped — pose a subtle threat to human values. "The danger," says Toronto psychiatrist Daniel Cappon, "is that the massive dosage of pornography spreading everywhere will inure people to sexual deviation, leading them to feel in time that the abnormal is normal. If society is steeped in it, it becomes subliminally incorporated."

There is a view, of course, that pornography is harmless escapism and that, for some who have fared poorly in sexual liaisons, it may be a positive good. But to a growing number of researchers into human behavior, this is superficial. As Masters and Johnson, the well-known American sexologists, are finding, impaired sexual responses are restored, not by mere physical depictions, but by deepening human relationships.

Among some scholars, there is an even suggestion that some form of control be imposed on pornography, a recommendation that could dangerously close to censorship. But Irving Kristol of New York University points out the difference between repressive law and simple regulation. "We have not made smoking a criminal offense. We have, however, and with good liberal conscience, prohibited cigarette advertising on television." He suggests some such control upon pornography, limiting it more deliberately to those who want it.

Ultimately, pornography's most formidable opponents may be those who are most exploited by it — women. Feminist Susan Brownmiller, whose book Against our Will is a current bestseller, sees pornography as viciously antifemale. "If the porn houses were devoted to the lynching of blacks or the gassing of Jews," she has bitterly observed, "you would not find so many civil libertarians rushing to their defense." Perhaps that forceful view among women, who see pornography not so much a moral offense but a sexual insult, will be the most effective campaign against it.

Kenneth Baggel