Our morning last winter, I was roused from bed before sunrise by a telephone call from someone at the telegraph office. I hadn't received a telegram in years, so obviously the message was of cosmic importance. A thought flitted through my mind that I had won the Irish Sweepstakes or something equally gratifying. The message, however, was this: "Sir. As we are discussing archetypal patterns in Grade 13 CanLit, would you be willing to partake in tape-recorded question and answer session discussing the above at time of your convenience? I thank you for your consideration and time."

The telegram had been sent by a group of students in a suburban Toronto high school. Obviously if they considered Canadian literature important enough to warrant hitting me with it before breakfast and to merit the urgency of a telegram, rather than the convenience and economy of a postage stamp, something was stirring in the nation that I should know more about.

So after warning the students that I couldn't tell an archetype from an orangutan, except perhaps at high noon on a sunny day, I met them. And I was glad I did; the experience turned out to be almost as rewarding as winning a sweepstake. They were very knowledgeable about Canadian writing, eager to learn more, and anxious to test their theories in debate. They were conscious of the fact that we have a literary tradition that is an important part of our cultural heritage and helps
define who we are and how we respond to each other and to the world.

I'd like to think that their interest is typical of the high school students across the country, but unfortunately I know it isn't. There are many high school students where Canadian literature is not taught at all and others where it is taught badly. But there are certainly a number of high school students who are interested in literature and who are attracted by the accomplishments of authors and books.
My friend Willie McLaughlin holds what I have long regarded as one of the most interesting jobs in the world: being paid to fly an airplane at a low level around the countryside every day. It is, however, a job demanding a degree of flying skill and concentration that even experienced pilots rarely possess.

McLaughlin is one of the pilots of a fleet of twin-rotor helicopters used weekly by TransCanada PipeLines Limited to patrol the length of its 2,900-mile pipeline carrying natural gas from the prairies to the towns and cities of eastern Canada. The task involves following every twist and turn of the pipeline right-of-way at a height of about 100 feet, watching for telltale surface dislocation, which could indicate a leak, or for unauthorized construction (a more frequent occurrence) near the right-of-way, which could spell future trouble.

McLaughlin's unusual job serves to underscore a little-known fact. Although the current controversy surrounding the various proposals to move natural gas from the Arctic has led many people with the impression that pipeline construction is a largely new and untested technology, it has, in fact, been a major mode of transportation in Canada for many years.

One indication of just how major is provided by the fact that in 1974, the most recent year for which statistics are available, pipeline transportation of oil and gas in this country generated $1.3 billion. That's 18 percent of the revenue derived from air, rail, ship, and trucking combined.

So pipelines are nothing new, in fact. Canada's first natural-gas pipeline -- a 15-mile, cast-iron structure, which carried gas to light the streets of Trois-Rivières, Que., was built more than 120 years ago. By 1898, a five-inch diameter iron pipe was carrying oil from Petrolia to Sarnia, Ont. (Even then the idea was very far from novel; in ancient China, natural gas had been harnessed in bamboo pipes.) As now, the lure of these early pipelines lay in the convenience and economy they offered. In 1904, the citizens of Medicine Hat, Alta., found it cheaper to leave their street lights fueled by gas piped from a well 30 miles away, burning day and night, than to hire someone to light them on and off.

A modern pipeline map of Canada resembles a chart of this country's major railways, with a couple of important differences. One is that Canada has considerably more pipelines than railway track, at the end of 1975, it had almost 100,000 miles of oil and gas pipeline, compared to about 61,000 miles of railway track.

The other is that Alberta is the hub of the nation's pipeline network. From the oil and gas fields of this province, rich in resources, a complex pattern of underground pipes, like the arteries of a huge vascular system, pumps energy for homes

A pipeline right-of-way is inspected from the air.
and factory to points as distant as Vancouver and Montreal. Other lines move the crude oil and natural gas of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, while yet others such as Imperial Oil's Sarnia-Toronto line carry manufactured products in bulk from refineries to major distribution centers.

It's not only oil and gas that are suitable for pipeline transportation. Such products as jet fuel, gasoline, kerosene, stove oil, tankers fuel, diesel fuel, and various kinds of lubricants are all moved by pipeline — often through the same line at the same time. Nor is pipeline transportation limited to liquids. "Slurrying" — the mixing of a solid with a liquid to permit transportation — is a well-developed technique and has been used to move such diverse materials as phosphate, iron ore, coal, sulfur, gravel, limestone, wood chips, copper, and asphalt. The long-range transportation of solids by pipeline offers such clear advantages that research is being accelerated in this field. Russia is already reported to be moving grain, various building materials, and even garbage by pipeline.

Building Canada's pipelines has presented engineers with some of their toughest challenges. TransCanada's natural-gas pipeline called for much pioneering technology to bridge the muskeg and bedrock of the Canadian Shield, on which the Canadian Pacific Railway enterprise had nearly founded more than a half-century earlier. The Trans Mountain pipeline, which carries oil from Edmonton to Burnaby, B.C., traverses both the Rockies and the coastal range. It represents a remarkable engineering feat; elevations along the 718-mile switchback route range from 3,920 feet at Jasper, Alberta, to see level at the Pacific coast. The 643-mile Lakehead extension of the Intergovernmental oil pipeline, which runs from Superior, Wis., to Sarnia, involved laying a 30-inch pipe through swamps and forests, under five major bodies of water, 38 rivers, and 48 creeks, and across numerous railways and highways. It was completed in 1953 — five months after construction had begun.

But it wasn't only Canada's stubborn geography that posed problems for pipeline builders. As with the construction of the country's railways, there came a time when a pipeline was to lead to one of the most dramatic events in Canadian political history.

In some ways, the controversy that surrounded the TransCanada PipeLines project to develop the gas reserves of western Canada for the benefit of eastern Canadians foreshadowed the current debate on the proposal to build a Mackenzie Valley pipeline to transport natural gas from the Arctic to southern markets. The TransCanada debate raised some classic Canadian issues that find an echo in the present: control and development of Canada's natural resources; the pros and cons of north-south continentalism and east-west nationalism; the role of pressure groups in national decision-making; public versus private enterprise; and some constitutional aspects of federal-provincial relations.

The bitterness of the Great Pipeline Debate was without precedent in the Canadian Parliament. In the space of a month, reputations were ruined, old alliances had crumbled, and a government that had looked as if it would endure forever had fallen. Yet the pipeline itself was to prove successful.

In his recent History of Canada's Oil and Gas Industry, author Ed Coult wrote: "Despite the woesy scenes in Parliament...most critics later agreed that the results were favorable. Ontario gained a stable supply of reasonably priced fuel and the pipeline was in Canadian hands, after 10 years of operation, revenues rose from $30 million to nearly $200 million and net income rose from a deficit of $8.5 million to a surplus of $17.5 million. "There was renewed interest and investment in the gas industry as a whole — from exploration and drilling for gas to sales of consumers' appliances. The construction of the Trans-Canada pipeline system made the natural-gas industry one of the nation's largest in terms of total capital investment. The effect on other industries, from the creation of pulp and paper firms in northern Ontario to steel-making and other secondary manufacturing in the urban East, was enormous."

The appeal of pipelines as carriers of liquid and gas has, since their inception, centered in their efficiency, reliability, and safety. It was, in fact, the promise of efficiency that prompted Samuel Van Syckel to build the world's first "long-distance" pipeline in Pennsylvania in 1855. His five-mile length of two-inch pipe transported about 100 barrels of oil daily at a cost of a dollar per barrel — an economy that did not appeal to the wagon drivers who had been charging $5 per barrel for the job. Today, by way of comparison, it costs about 60 cents per barrel to move oil the 2,000 miles from Edmonton to Toronto.

Pipelines are not a particularly fast method of moving oil or gas. It takes approximately six weeks, for example, for a batch of crude oil to reach Ontario from western Canada; a person could walk the distance nonstop in roughly the same time. But the merit of the pipeline lies in its ability to deliver 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This round-the-clock feature allows pipelines to build up some impressive statistics. The average pipeline delivers more than 250,000 barrels of oil daily. The Intergovernmental system alone is capable of moving enough crude oil from Edmonton to Toronto to provide every Canadian with a gallon and a half of oil each day.

Pipeline safety is a subject that is coming under increasingly close scrutiny in a world that is growing more sensitive daily to the environmental dangers that exist. Just how safe are pipelines and what threats do they pose to man and his environment?

Canada's pipeline industry claims that it is the nation's safest mode of transportation and statistics make that claim hard to refute. For example, consider the board of directors of the pipeline division of the Canadian Petroleum Association (and an Imperial pipeline advisor), says: "Considered the volume of oil and gas that are moved by pipelines in Canada, losses are minuscule. Repairing pipeline damage and containing leaks can be done quickly with minimum resulting environmental damage and the hazards pipelines present to human safety are negligible."

Yet pipelines are not immune to Murphy's Law, and accidents do happen. Pipes corrode, material occasionally
proves faulty, not all welding is perfect, unexpected landforms can cause pipes to rupture, and careless workmanship cannot always be detected. In addition, pipelines, although buried, are susceptible to damage from external causes such as overly deep ploughing by farmers along a pipeline route or careless building of an adjacent construction work. To guard against such accidents and to minimize the risk of leaks, pipeline operators employ a variety of safety procedures.

Many pipelines routes are regularly patrolled by low-flying aircraft. Eagle-eyed pilots like Willy McLaughlin maintain constant radio contact with ground stations (TransCanada has more than 320 along its route) and when they report an incident, or one in the making, crews set off for the spot immediately. Where fractures do occur, emergency crews isolate them by closing valves on either side — typically at 15-mile intervals — before repairing the damaged section.

Pipeline companies, however, do not rely solely on visual inspection of their rights-of-way to detect trouble. Routine safety tests are conducted at regular intervals and any suspect section of pipe is replaced. By next year, Trans-Canada Rigelines will have completed a 10-year program of high-pressure testing of its entire original pipeline system.

New technology permits remote-sensing safety systems to be upgraded continually and the science of corrosion protection has made great progress in recent years. The just-completed Alyeaska pipeline, destined to carry oil from Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's north slope 800 miles south to the ice-free port of Valdez, incorporates the newest and most sophisticated safety features.

Keeping tabs on the flow of trans-Alaskan oil will be a unique detection system that will not interfere with normal pipeline operations, but will provide immediate detection of major leaks and the early detection of minor ones. When an alarm signals a leak on the Alaskan system, a central dispatcher will be able to isolate the leak and close down the system within 10 minutes. Aircraft or ground patrols will then be dispatched to pinpoint the site of the leak and other crews sent out to effect the necessary repairs.

Canada occupies a proud and unique position in the world of pipelines. It has been a long-time leader in pipeline technology. According to The Guinness Book of World Records, the interprovincial pipeline and the TransCanada pipeline are the world's two longest oil and gas transportation systems.

As the photographs that accompany this article illustrate, pipelines can be built and operated with a minimum effect on the environment. Most of them are either partly or entirely invisible; only from the air or at times is it possible to follow the slender thread of right-of-way that marks a buried pipeline's progress across an uncarved countryside.

Nevertheless, like any other construction project, pipelines can pose potential environmental problems, and in recent years considerable research has been undertaken by the pipeline industry to ensure that the environmental side effects of pipeline building are kept to a minimum. New construction techniques, more sophisticated damage-detection devices, and improved programs to restore terrain are among developments that have allowed a marked increase in the rate of progress to be made in this area.

The question of environmental protection has assumed greater significance because of the likelihood that new pipelines will be required to transport natural gas and perhaps crude oil from the Canadian Arctic to southern markets to supplement existing supplies.

At Lacooche Lake, Alta., pipes parallel the water's course.
The past is now... and then

Heritage Canada presents our history, living and lasting

by Peter Destaixats

In the course of assuming that we had no history, Canadians almost lost it—not the history of dates and political events, but the living crust of buildings, artifacts, and man-made landscape scattered thinly over this vast country. Until the last decade, many Canadians paid attention to this distinctive accumulation only when it got in the way. We were too anxious to escape the crude discomfort of our past for the style, colors, and temperatures of modern life. Long after older and more developed countries had second thoughts about cherishing away a valued past, Canadians continued to fill their houses with chrome and empty their cities of character. It was almost too late when we realized that, even as we lapse into our lack of national identity, we had been doing our best to destroy it. In Centennial year, 1967, we focused our attention on what was happening, what we saw both disturbed and enhanced us. We were appalled by the destruction that had already occurred; we could hardly recognize ourselves reflected in the glass wells of new buildings that looked the same in Halifax or Vancouver. But, at the same time, we were also fascinated by glimpses of a past that we had never had the time, money, or wisdom to enjoy.

We began to study ourselves in histories of all kinds: academic books, popular magazines, tapes, and films. We ransacked antique stores and filled our homes with stained glass and stripped pine. Finally we discovered that the past still lies dormant within our cities and towns, often concealed in mellow, neon tubing, and aluminum siding. Slowly we're learning how to bring it out, with colors and patterns intact, as alive as butterflies on cornsilk.

Heritage Canada is at the centre of that discovery, although many Canadians have never heard of it. A comfortable, unremarkable 1967 house hidden between apartment blocks in central Ottawa serves as headquarters. The house is an anomaly, which is also what Heritage Canada appears to be amid Ottawa's interlocking structure of government departments, crown corporations, and regulatory agencies. The organization was started by the federal government in 1973, but officially has no connection with it. There are only 19,000 members, whose membership fees don't even cover the cost of servicing them with publications. And there's a staff of only 19. Most astonishing of all, this tight little group was created and is directed by a retired Ottawa mandarin who was once second-in-command of one of the best-known misunderstandings in the history of the federal bureaucracy—Information Canada.

When he was deputy director-general of Information Canada, Bob Phillips was widely known as the only senior official in the capital whose office appeared to have been designed and furnished by Charles Dickens. If the medium were the message, Phillips' office stated that he felt more at home in the 19th century than in the

Wedged among Toronto's glass and steel towers is a remnant of another era
McLuhanesque world of modern communications. Now he can happily spend most of his time back there, surrounded by rickety rocking chairs and a collection of framed inspirational samplers in a dark study at the rear of the old house at 276 MacLaren St.

Lean, with dark hair, he looks more like a young dean of liberal arts than someone who has a 35-year civil service pension. The whole house has a pleasantly academic air that is just as deceptive as Phillips' loafers and loose sweaters. But only an experienced veteran of Ottawa's bureaucracy could have persuaded the other members of the old-boy network to sidestep the time-consuming legislative process of starting another government agency and create Heritage Canada almost with the stroke of a pen, endow it with an annual revenue of a million dollars, and permit it to make its own way.

At the start, in 1973, Phillips also had a clear sense of direction for Heritage Canada. As a collector of antiques and pioneer log buildings and, as a member of local heritage groups in Ottawa, he was convinced, as he wrote then, that "heritage conservation in Canada is an idea whose time has come."

The first objective was to create a national community of concerned conservationists. Today its members represent 120 local organizations that use Heritage Canada as a central source of information, expertise, and practical support. Every group has different requirements. The 300-member Newfoundland Historic Trust proposed a St. John's conservation area in 1975 and sought financial help from Heritage Canada for a feasibility study. Quebec groups affiliated with Heritage Canada have been among the most active in the country: Save Sauvons Montreuil, a 500-member federation of citizens' groups, demonstrated recently in the streets in a vain attempt to save the Laurentian Hotel. Smaller, quieter, but no less effective, the 30-member Huron County branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario received Heritage Canada's support to complete a traveling exhibition of photographs and written material entitled "New Life for Old Buildings in Huron County."

Heritage Canada's second objective was to bring about stronger legislation to protect heritage buildings. Governments have been slow to accept the idea that the heritage value of a property belongs to the whole community.

In 1972, Quebec adopted the most comprehensive heritage legislation. Since then, new legislation has been passed in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. In most other provinces, improved heritage laws are being considered or existing laws activated to provide the three "pillars" of heritage legislation: listing of heritage properties, protection, and financial aid. The federal government passed its own Historic Sites and Monuments Act in 1953, but only 700 properties have been brought under the law's protection since then and only 80 have been acquired by the government. According to a computerized list started by the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings in 1970 — a list that will eventually include everything built before 1900 in eastern Canada and before 1914 in the West — there may be as many as 280,000 heritage structures in Canada.

The third objective that Heritage Canada set for itself in 1973 was to acquire some of these properties, but
not as isolated monuments or museums. By the seventies, local heritage groups had discovered that it often did little good to save a fine old house or public building if everything around it disappeared. Restorations such as Le Vieux Montreal, Vancouver’s Gastown, and Halifax’s downtown waterfront had shown that it was more effective to conserve whole areas by enabling governments and private enterprise to recycle old buildings.

The first conservation project encompassing a whole area that attracted Heritage Canada was in the community of St. Andrews, N.B. The initiative came from a local group, as is always the case in programs of Heritage Canada. In this case, the St. Andrews Civic Trust suggested in 1974 that Heritage Canada purchase two derelict houses in this loyalist district on the Bay of Fundy.

Both buildings, the Pagan-O’Neill House and the Gladstone-Smith Saltbox, had been built in Maine in the 1780s by loyalists who believed that they had traveled far enough north to be on the British side of the new American border. When they discovered their mistake, they dismantled the houses and shipped them by barge to St. Andrews.

Each house was purchased for $25,000 by Heritage Canada. The Pagan-O’Neill House has now been restored at a cost of $100,000 and converted into two modern apartments leased at rents that are competitive locally. Rehabilitation of the other house will begin this year.

Heritage Canada hopes eventually to sell these houses and invest the money in new properties. But it will do that only after New Brunswick passes covenant legislation, which protects the heritage character of such houses forever. New Brunswick is among the provinces that are close to adopting it. Covenant legislation is essential to Heritage Canada’s central idea: a revolving fund for continual investment in derelict or threatened heritage properties that are later restored and sold to private buyers.

In Prince Edward Island, Heritage Canada has worked closely with the Charlottetown Area Development Corporation (CADC), funded by all three levels of government, to enhance the heritage character of that historic city. CADC itself purchased about a dozen properties during the past year and suggested that Heritage Canada buy the Haertz-O’Halloran houses on Great George Street.

In 1964, tenants of these row houses

This stone dwelling in Quebec is typical of many 18th-century houses

This large old Ursuline convent is in Quebec City
had watched the would-be Fathers of Confederation travel past their front
doors on the way from the Charlotten-
town waterfront to the colonial build-
ing, known today as Province House.
After a fire gutted one end of the row
last spring, Heritage Canada decided to
respond to the CADOC proposal, buy the
houses, and spend about $200,000 con-
verting them into 11 apartments.
In western Canada, turn-of-the-
century communities such as
Edmonton's Strathcona district, once
the most northern point in the Cana-
dian railway system, are living it
displaced record of the beginnings of
white settlement. Until a few years ago,
they were generally considered to be
ripe for demolition and high-rise de-
development. But everything happens quick-
ly in the West, particularly in Alberta.
Strathcona, with a million-dollar com-
mitment by the Alberta government,
support from the oil wealth of the
Devonian Foundation, substantial con-
tributions from the city of Edmonton,
and $500,000 from Heritage Canada, is
now one of the most heavily funded
conservation areas in the country.
Here, Heritage Canada has pur-
chased five houses on 104th Street and
another on Saskatchewan Drive. Only
the last one, built in 1910, has any
claims to being a heritage home, but all
the purchases were necessary to pre-
vent high-rise development and pre-
servate the character of the whole
district. As in New Brunswick, the
houses will probably be sold as soon as
Alberta passes covenant legislation.
Like Edmonton's Strathcona, the
Winnipeg district now known as the
Historic Warehouse Area was, until a
few years ago, a deroiled neighborhood
of cheap hotels and empty industrial
lofts only a short stagger from the
corner of Portage and Main. Heritage
Canada provided $25,000 as its share of
a feasibility study of the area,
undertaken with the Manitoba
Historical Society.
"The process of creating a feasibility
study should educate the community
about the possibilities that exist in an
area," according to Jim Knight,
Heritage Canada's director of pro-
grams. "That, in fact, is the principal
value. Secondly, the report can be
used for program development and to
encourage investors."
Restaurant owners and merchants
were already returning to the area
when the feasibility study showed that
many of the turn-of-the-century build-
ings could be rehabilitated for as little
as $10 per square foot compared with
as much as $50 per square foot for new
construction. Now the district seems
designed to be unique among prairie
cities. And Heritage Canada is among
the growing list of prospective
investors.
Another $25,000 has gone into a
study of an area suitable for conserva-
tion in the downtown core of St.
John's, Nfld., where handsome five-
bedroom houses can still be bought for
$6,500 and put into mint condition for
as little as $15,000.
And in Nova Scotia, Heritage Canada
begins a feasibility study this year of a
community with some of the most
beautiful buildings and one of the
highest unemployment rates in the
province—Annapolis Royal. Today, in
the centre of town, there's an 18th-
century hotel that houses a taxi dis-
patch office. On the main street, a
three-story commercial building estab-
lished in 1878 was almost sold recently
for $5,000 to make room for a used-car
lot. If experience elsewhere is any
guide, now that the feasibility study is
going ahead, Annapolis Royal has
already been saved.
With this kind of call on its services,
Heritage Canada expects to double its
membership well before the end of the
decade. Then, with widespread support
and a strong track record, it will
probably make its first national appeal
for funds.
"The world is our art gallery," Bob
Phillips, the creator of Heritage Canada,
has written. "It would not make much
sense to remove the paint from all the
canvasses in an art gallery every 20
years to provide materials for contem-
porary art. It scarcely makes more sense
to destroy buildings, furnishings or
landscapes of merit."
A new day for dealers

Times change. So do service stations. But good service remains

by James Hickman/photos by Yuri Dajc

Go back in time, if you will, to when the people running gas stations were like Murray Westgate, the friendly-faced actor who played an Esso dealer in numerous commercials during the sixties. Then you depended on your local dealer, as you did your postman. Those years, the fifties and sixties, were the era of the full-service station in the neighborhood, where you could buy tires or get repairs. Loyalty to a brand, location, credit, promotions, and knowing your "local guy" were important.

They still are for many people, but in general those days have gone. And so have a lot of those dealers.

The reason lies in the great changes motorists have made in their buying habits over the past 20 years or so. One of those changes has been an increased consciousness of the price of gasoline and willingness to shop around in the gasoline market. The automobile has changed too. It's no longer necessary to change the oil every thousand miles or worry about flat tires. And the tow truck isn't needed as much on cold mornings when the car won't start. So the motorist no longer has the same loyalty to a dealer or brand. Most of the time, a visit to the service station is for buying gasoline. Other factors have had an influence on this change too, among them the trend away from main-street shopping to the convenience of suburban plazas.

These changes in consumers' habits have had an effect on the selling of gasoline. As one example, the public demand for inexpensive gasoline, whether from self-serve stations or private branders, has resulted in a decline in business for the traditional stations. The result: some dealers have gone out of business and some others are having a tough time.

How did this situation come about? What happened to shake up the gasoline-retailing business so thoroughly? If there is a villain in the piece, it's competition. In the constant struggle to attract customers, oil companies are continually experimenting with new selling methods. As the price of gasoline rose, come-ons like sets of dishes, free car washes, contests, and gimmicks began to give way to marketing methods that could shave a cent or two off the price of a gallon of gas, and customers responded. The self-serve station grew out of this set of conditions; many customers didn't mind pumping their own gas if they could save some money on a tankful. Gasoline-buying habits have changed as a result, and oil companies can no more make customers go back to their old ways than they can unboil an egg. They had to change or risk losing their brand on the market.

There are a number of things an oil company can do quickly to try to help its dealers when changes in buying habits cause severe difficulties. But these can only be short-term palliatives. The most effective long-term response to the changed buying habits of motorists seems to be fewer and more efficient — and so, more prosperous — dealers.

Some dealers see the situation in a different light: themselves as pawns in a game played by the major oil companies. In late 1974, the Automotive Retailers' Association of Alberta presented a brief to the provincial government claiming that major oil companies were starting self-serves to gain complete control of gasoline selling, thus driving their own lessee operators out of business. In Vancouver, independent service-station operators complained about oil companies discriminating against them. During March, 1975, when Imperial Oil announced increased rents to its lessees, the Ontario Retail Gasoline Association branded it "the biggest miscarriage of justice ever. The oil companies are trying to drive lessees out of business." Actually, Imperial's basic formula for rents on service stations had not changed since 1968, although costs of maintenance, repairs, real-estate taxes, and depreciation had all gone up. The revision in 1975 was made to recover some of these costs but, even where the revised rent schedule is in place, the company does not recover them all. Even so, Imperial is phasing in the new rents gradually so that no individual dealer's rent will increase more than 10 percent over the previous year.

The dealers' main complaint has been that rents were based on the amount of business they did, so that as their revenues went up so did the amount of rent they had to pay. If business declined, so did the rent. A new proposal under consideration by Imperial would eliminate this part of the old formula. The new proposal would establish a fixed rent that would cover actual station costs and allow dealers to estimate them more accurately in advance. The proposal is being discussed with dealers now.

In November, 1975, a Liberal member of the Saskatchewan legislature pressed the government to limit the number of gasoline outlets operated by oil companies. In Prince Edward Island, the situation is somewhat confusing. Government controls set the dealer's maximum margin on gasoline at 10.5 cents per gallon. In most other major centres, dealers make about eight cents per gallon. Despite this, the Retail Gasoline Association in Prince Edward Island said, "We are receiving the lowest profit margin on the sale of gasoline in Canada." Lately though, things have quieted down somewhat.

"There has been an improvement," says Charlie Martyn, "but dealer relations is still a sensitive issue." Martyn is dealer-relations advisor in Imperial's marketing department. "For a while, dealers were afraid that self-serves would kill service stations with repair bays. They won't. In the future, such stations are bound to be fewer, but larger, more efficient, and able to offer a wider range of services to the motorist. I think a lot of dealers realize this now, so things have cooled down."

Perhaps it's natural for some dealers with full-service stations to see their livelihoods threatened by self-serves and to blame the oil companies. The dealers' plight is real but, in the long haul, the ones who remain will be better off. They will have a solid business with larger incomes.

The situation in gasoline retailing today is a classic example of the market system at work: consumers have shown by their
actions what sort of service they want. The industry — oil companies as well as dealers — is trying to supply it. The plain fact is that the old ways of selling gasoline, which developed over a period of about 25 years, no longer meet present consumer demands. A painful restructuring is taking place, and Imperial’s Charlie Martyn and other oil-company marketers suggest what some of the changes are likely to be. “I think people are going to be more price-conscious in the future when they buy gasoline, not less,” explains Martyn. “Prices will continue to increase as the Canadian price of crude oil rises toward world levels and this will result in even more self-serves on the market. One thing is for sure: self-serves are here to stay. So are unattended stations with discount prices. But despite this, it doesn’t mean an end for the full-service stations. There will always be room for efficient dealers with full service and self-serves with repair bays.”

In Ontario, a royal commission on the pricing of petroleum products studied, among other things, whether oil companies should be prohibited from operating self-serves. The commission’s conclusion last year: it is in the best interest of consumers that the oil companies develop more efficient methods of petroleum distribution, including the operation of self-serves. In a brief about gasoline retailing in British Columbia, prepared by Imperial, the benefits to the consumer were pointed out. Right now, the brief stated, motorists want “the option of being able to choose between private and major brands, between self-serve and full-service stations, including such facilities as servicing, credit, car washes, etc.” Some consumers are quite willing to pay the extra few cents per gallon for convenience and full service; for others the choice of type of outlet may vary with the seasons.”

“That’s fine and dandy for consumers. But what about dealers? What about someone who has been in business for 15 years in a highly competitive area and finds his profit margin on each gallon of gasoline isn’t any larger than it was during the 1950s, while his operating costs have increased with inflation? And not only that, but what happens to his business with discount stations, self-serves, and car washes cropping up in the neighborhood?”

“Imperial is concerned and sympathetic about what’s happening to its dealers,” says Martyn. “We’re switching some of the better lesser-dealers to different locations. For others, we’ve got what we believe is the severance plan: it pays as much as 12 months income before taxes. In addition to severance pay, if a lesser-dealer goes out of business, Imperial will buy back all of his equipment at the station for the appraisal market value if he is unable to dispose of it.”

In any event, for example, a dealer with a new Esso service station can move the station competitive. In Toronto last October, a gallon of regular Esso gasoline was priced anywhere from 77.9 to 91.9 cents. Some dealers don’t go on consignment because they’re in areas where their customers don’t worry about the price as much or where they don’t face competition across the street. These owners and lesser-dealers usually make more than eight cents on each gallon.

“By high competitive areas where gasoline prices are really low we have consignment to keep our dealers in business,” says Charlie Martyn. “Across Canada last year, Imperial’s dealer price guarantees were more than $26 million. That’s one of the many examples of just how much competition there is in retailing gasoline. That eight cents on each gallon of gasoline doesn’t meet all the costs of operating a full-service station profitably. So Imperial has been urging its dealers to emphasize the service, portion of their business — car repairs and maintenance. Ralph Ruffo and his two brothers, Pat and Frank, lease three Esso stations in western Toronto. One day recently, Ralph said, “We down in the cramped office of his biggest station to talk about business. “I’m happy with Imperial Oil except for the gas margin,” says Ruffo, a blunt, affable man. “When we first went into business 12 years ago, we were making more than eight cents a gallon. Now it’s eight cents and costs have sure gone up since then. About two years ago, our price was too high with discounts and self-serves around, so we had to go on consignment because we just weren’t pumping as much gas. Now I’m pumping more gas again, but I’m just not making money on it. My profit comes from service work, and pumping gas just draws people into the station.”

“The Ruffos’ biggest station is at a busy suburban intersection. Across the road, there’s a self-serve gas station. Up the street, there’s another. A car wash station is on another corner. And not too far away, there’s even a discount station. Ralph Ruffo seems unperturbed. “I think I’m representative of most dealers,” he says. “The guys I know run good stations and aren’t worried because they know there’s still a market for stations with service. I think a lot of the people who do all the complaining aren’t very good dealers; they didn’t increase their service productivity. Good dealers shouldn’t have to complain except about the gas margin.”

Out of the margin of eight cents the Ruffos receive on each gallon of gasoline, they pay 1 cent to Imperial Oil in rent. That leaves seven cents on each gallon sold to run the stations, which includes replacing broken parts at the pumps, paying for electricity to light up the place, and paying the people who fill up the cars. It’s not enough to meet the Ruffos’ costs. “We might be making more dollars now, but we have less for ourselves,” explains Ruffo. “Everything else has gone up so much, like wages, insurance, taxes.”
My father \ the store keeper \ was an unusual man.

He didn't think that keeping a store was a profession. But I think he was wrong.

My father was a firm man, almost strict, with an edge of gentleness. He worked very hard as the storekeeper at St. Augustine in western Ontario, a typical crossroads of store, church, school, and four houses. He didn't have a commanding physical presence. Of medium height, prematurely bald, he would have been feisty if he had let up on his work. Corrective lenses all but disguised his penetrating eyes. He moved through the crowded store in a way that reminded me of how I thought a captain would act on the bridge of a ship.

But W.A. Boyle was more than a general merchant. He somehow found time to be secretary of the school board, township treasurer, notary public, and unofficial counselor at one time or another to most people in the community.

I grew up with a certain confidence that my father was satisfied. I had been more perceptive, I would have sensed his frustration because he'd had to leave college after a year. I might have noted that farming had scarred his confidence and a depression overtaking his storekeeping had also touched him. He resisted all these, but during hours of restlessness he gave loud praise to the necessity of having a profession. It was praise tinged with sadness.

"The world has changed," he would say. "It's simply no longer a place for a man to get satisfaction out of long, hard days of work and sweat and a good night's sleep. You must have a profession. Mark my words, there'll be a time when people will only respect the ones who have professions." I knew later that he often said this for my benefit. At the time, it didn't affect...
me. As a matter of fact, I didn’t think my father had a profession. He wasn’t like Docter Wes, Father Paquette, or the lawyer, Bushfield.

His routine was regular. In all seasons, he came awake long before dawn, before the alarm clock had a chance to buzz. He swung out of bed, not letting tiredness clench him back to sleep. The stairs creaked as he went down in his stockinged feet. The store blinds thumped up. The bolt on the front door was drawn back before an early customer might appear.

The cistern pump squawked, filling the basin for a wasp. In winter, he kindled the kitchen range and put the kerosene in the big stove. In the massive store heater was poked into a hot bed for maple or beech logs. Soon the smoke pipe tingled and ways of warmth struggled up through the floor grates feebly hating the chill around our beds.

The rapping of the brolle handle on the heater pipe signaled the kettle was boiling and we must get up. Mother responded, directing a litany of weary commands to her children as she dressed.

We struggled to wash and dress and appear for a breakfast that was invariably interrupted by the jangling of the bell suspended over the store door. Father went himself because the first customer usually provided a challenge.

“I see you’re up, Billy.”

“Been fishing hours,” replied Father.

Farmers tended to rise early rising more important than the amount of work done in a day. They also felt that chores, taxes, accidents, and a scarcity of cash were occupational hazards that far outweighed any problems a storekeeper might have. They did not realize that, while they had been chattering and passing time in the store the night before, my father worked filling orders, totaling books, candling eggs, or testing cream until the last straggler went home.

Sunday provided his only relief. In a community half Catholic and half Methodist, he was a diplatist. Protestants had a strict code for the Lord’s Day. The rituals who went to Mass in the morning fees they had a right to shop and have a social hour. W.G. Boyle honored the Protestant ethic by keeping the store door locked and the square-backed Essex, glad to be out of school, and went on our way to an appointment with McGrocan. For my father, it was a mission. For us — even for Mother — it was a holiday. I suspect she never regarded it as serious.

Mount Carmel turned out to be almost a duplicate of St. Augustine, as was Mount Joseph, and the year before that, St. Columban. School, store, and houses. Matt McGrocan was a lean man who wore a cap and when he talked leaned forward like a strong sapling bent by the wind. Mrs. McGrocan and Mother sat and talked without concern about the weather and scraped for mutual acquaintance-talks to discuss. Father and McGrocan inspected the premises and then sat down on egg crates for a confessional about the problems of country storekeeping.

“Don’t you think it’s time to be going?” suggested Mother in mid-afternoon. She dreaded driving after dark.

We started back anticipating the packed lunch. In a study grove by the Maitland River we ate the sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, pickles, and cake, and washed them down with triple lemonade. Father was in no hurry. I sensed a certain calmness.

“I guess everybody has troubles these days,” he commented as we neared home. “Seed has been slow, but McGrocan expects it to pick up. I think we’ll talk again.”

When we arrived home in the early dark, the usual group was sitting on the front steps of the store. Father lit the gasoline lamp and opened the front door. They straggled in to buy and to try finding out why we hadn’t been away. In bed, as Father came up the stairs after locking up at 11 o’clock, I relaxed. I knew the crisis had passed; it would be a year or so before we had another
crisis.

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 McGrocan, like my father and all country storekeepers, was burdened by“The things. This was the colloquial expression for what our customers owed. They brought their cream, eggs, butter, and even wood, which the storekeepers sold to buyers from the city. Somehow, no matter how hard they tried in those gray days, the ledger always seemed to show the customers owing money to the storekeepers.

My father was usually patient, but his tolerance could be strained when customers who owed him large amounts started buying in other places. He knew they had come into some cash; he would go to see them. I remember one conversation. After briefly talking about weather and crops, he came to the point.

“Jack, you haven’t been around to the store lately.”

“Well, Billy, we’ve been busy and the wife has been doing chores so we’ve had to go into town.”

“They don’t put anything on ‘t’ick in town, Jack.”

There would be a long pause.

“I sold the pigs.”

“I know.”

Again, a long pause.

“I can give you a few dollars on account.”

Then my father explained. He didn’t want all the pig money. It was the first cash Jack had seen in some time, but a little cash would help
Father kept doing business.

"I'm caught, Jack, between the wholesalers and my customers and, as long as I can keep some money flowing to my suppliers and the bank, I can keep going. I know you can't pay off your bills now, but a bit helps. If all my customers stopped coming because they were ashamed of what they owed, I'd have to close up."

Jack went into the house and came out finally with $15. He had learned. With or without money, his family kept buying from us. In the pre-1959 days, when the economy eased and a group of locals clubbed together to get a discount on a freight-car load of B.C. shingles, he refused to join. He was being loyal to the man who had carried him on credit when he didn't have any money.

I admired my father because the Indians had respect for him. I played with their children and knew that these semi-naked men who pulled flax and trapped muskrats did not feel too kindly toward white men. When the chief of the band that arrived each year to pull flax admonished one of his group for spending his money in the town of Winthrop instead of Boyle's Store, I heard him say, "Mr. Boyle is a good friend who is honest and when we don't have money he is still our friend."

Gradually I began to realize that my father was an unusual man. During the seeding and harvest season, he was up at five a.m. to load his Model T truck and travel the back roads delivering orders to customers. He brought back the eggs and cream and, while the loungers talked around the stoves on the front veranda, he tested cream, graded eggs, and waited on customers. I longed to go to bed, he came up the stairs warily.

There was more than work and worry in his weariness; there were other pressures. I detected an increasing insistence by the drummers, the men who dressed well, smoked cigars, drove shiny cars, and appeared to have the world by the tail. Many began to urge, even plead for orders. "Don't you think you could stand at least a few cases of scotchi?"

Father would point to a full stock in the warehouse. The men who took orders for notions and dry goods were in a more difficult position than the ones who sold staples such as tea and sugar. When Father yielded, Mother reminded him:

"Well, we'll never sell all that elastic in a lifetime."

"But it was kind of desperate," I told my father once, "but I noticed he drove the same car for several years. His elegantly tailored suits became shiny. A glittering ring and diamond ring vanished and then one day when Father was away I heard the travelers make a confession to my mother when she had refused to order anything.

"It's Thursday, Mrs. Boyle, and I haven't a single order. They took Joe hard off the road last week."

Mother turned and fused behind the dry-goods counter. She finally did order some thread and cards of pins. It was the first time I ever saw a man kiss a woman's hand. She blushed and I knew she kept an eye out for the delivery. When it came, she tucked the small parcel out of sight. Father didn't mention it. The man never came back. Eventually we heard he had a job clerking in a store. His firm notified us that they were not replacing him, but would appreciate mail orders.

A very clever man," said my father. "He could have made a banker or a doctor. Told me once he wanted a profession, but it wasn't possible because he was . . ."

He didn't finish the sentence. At the time, I thought it was because the man's family couldn't afford to send him to college. I knew my father had been to college. In a wooden chest there were textbooks that he looked at on Sundays if we were not too tired or could spare the time from the accounts of the store, the township, or the school board.

His favorite was a Latin reader, but he had a preoccupation that I should study Greek. "When you go to college you'll find Greek is indispensable. It's a root for Latin."

That suited Mother because she knew her choice of a profession for me made Latin indispensable. Their joint concern led to my being tutored in Greek by the pastor, Father Paquette, a retired teacher. The alpha, beta, gamma's were painful and I was helpless to keep up by having access to the priest's library, which ranged from Plato to Zane Grey.

I'm not certain that the final year of college would have assured me of the profession. The relentless ups and downs of survival in the thirties was a more pronounced experience than any number of years within the security of college walls. An inconstant, boisterous newspaperman gave me an immersion in the classics. A city editor with a grade-10 education sharpened home the importance of precise word usage. A farm-broadcast supervisor with deep social concerns helped engender me with regard for individuals.

My regret is that my father was not alive when I dedicated a book to him. I would like to have seen his expression when he read the dedication. He probably wouldn't have said anything, but I know he would have enjoyed showing it to people. He might have said, "This was written by my son, the writer." At least that would have had a professional sound to it."

He was a generation that didn't regard writing or broadcasting as a profession. He didn't think of storekeeping as a profession either, but I think he was wrong. No academic institution could have prepared him for the profession he espoused. He was a general mirechit, at a time when we
In one of the many recollections of The New Yorker, perhaps the most urbane magazine of the century, there is a sentence describing the writing of E.B. White and its deep influence upon the style and tone of the magazine to which he contributed for so long. It appears in The Years With Ross, a book written by White’s colleague of many years, James Thurber. In a chapter called ‘The Talk of the Town,’ Thurber quotes another member of the staff, who said of White: ‘He brought the steel in music to that magazine.’

It is a striking tribute. And it is apt, recalling in a precise way the strength and the beauty of the writing of E.B. White, whose work, whether an essay bidding farewell to the Model T or a story for children about a spider, has become part of the grateful memory of several generations of readers. For White is a member of that small and charmed circle of writers who seem incapable of a clumsy phrase.

It is just past 50 years now since his first essays began appearing in The New Yorker and, from the beginning, they had a telling effect upon the expression of the magazine — its casual approach, its stylistic modesty. His work was graceful, but it was also restrained, almost diffident. No matter how large the subjects he dealt with over the years — the need for world unity, the shape of television, the value of a free press — he was able to keep them from growing larger by treating them in words that were rarely heavy and never windy. Some of his essays brim with fact but, in their style, they have all the weight of a summer breeze.

Most of White’s pieces were written on a farm in Maine, in the small community of North Brooklin, where he and his wife (a former editor of The New Yorker) have spent most of their lives since 1937. There, set beside the shore, he has a small, sparse cabin with a table, a chair, and a woodstove. He wrote two of his children’s books there, Charlotte’s Web and The Trumpet of the Swan, along with thousands of essays on topics he found interesting, inspiring, or distracting. He still lives on the farm, though his age (he is 78) and his health (he has never been robust) keep him from regular work.

Now, Harper and Row, the publishers, have brought out a book, The Letters of E.B. White. It contains hundreds of White’s personal letters, some of them brief notes, others long musings, that he had mailed to relatives, friends, colleagues, and readers during a period of over 60 years between October, 1908 (a note, when he was nine years old, to his brother), and May, 1976 (a letter to a stepson, a New Yorker writer, commending him for a piece on baseball). The book opens with an essay by White himself, one that outlines with grace and generosity the years of his youth in the quiet suburb of Mount Vernon, N.Y., where he was born in 1899, the youngest of six children. His father started out wrapping parcels in a factory that made pianos and in time became the company president. ‘If an unhappy childhood is indispensable for a writer,’ says White, ‘then I am ill-equipped. I missed out on all that and was neither deprived or unloved.’

In a sense, his book is an autobiography, because his letters are a window on his life; in some ways, a clearer window than a real biography, which is always tinted by the vision of the biographer. White’s letters are candid and natural, for they were written as private messages not public appearances. Some were written in times of happiness, others in periods of distress (he seems to have been prone to depression), a few in moods of indignation, and a number of the finest in moments of sorrow when he sent his feelings to some old friend who had lost a relative. They have not been touched up or toned down for the public; they are as he wrote them.

He seems, from many of them, to be a man of iron principles, no matter if the issue is small or large. Once, in the winter of 1961, he received a letter from a small girl, asking him why he had not written another children’s book along the lines of Charlotte’s Web and Stuart Little. ‘Dear Cathy,’ he replied, ‘I would like to write another book for children but I spend all my spare time just answering the letters I get from children about the books I have already written. So it looks like a hopeless situation unless you can start a movement in America called “Don’t write to E.B. White until he produces another book.”’ White’s reply offended Cathy’s librarian, who apparently interpreted it, returned it, and rebuked White.

About a month later, White wrote the librarian. First he asked for the girl’s home address, so that he might send her the letter; after all, he said, it did belong to her. ‘She might like to have it about twenty years from now when she can fully understand what it is all about.’ He then went on, in some detail, to explain that the practice of encouraging children to write to authors had consequences that sometimes overwhelmed the author, especially if he lived in the country and had no help. ‘When I was a child,’ he continued, ‘I liked books, but an author to me was a mythical being. I never dreamed of getting in touch with one, and no teacher ever suggested that I do. The book was the thing: not the man behind the book.’

All his life, White has been interested in ordinary people and ordinary things, subjects that might strike some people as inferior but that, in his vision, are the treasures of life: the railroads around him, the volunteer fire department, the fall of early snow. Once, in the winter of 1964, his publisher brought out a book of his essays along with an introduction that had gotten into print without White seeing it. He took issue with some of it, feeling the man who had written it. ‘You say that nowhere will one “catch me showing a book- learned city man’s contempt for farm and frontier ways . . . .” This sounded to my ears as though you felt I did feel such contempt but was careful to gongaze it, for literary reasons. I not only never feel contempt for my country neighbors, I feel deeply envious of their skills, their savvy, their self-reliance, and their general deportment.’

White has been very fortunate in that early in his career, when he was still young, he found just what he wanted to show in his writing. In 1939, when only 30 years old, he wrote a letter to his brother in which he set it out: ‘I discovered a long time ago that writing of the small things of the day, the trivial matters of the heart, the inconsequential but near things of this living, was the only kind of creative work which I could accomplish with any sincerity or grace.’ More than a dozen books and a half-century of essays testify to his youthful wisdom.

There may be some who, reading his clear and natural prose, conclude that because it reads effortlessly it must have been written effortlessly. They are wrong; in fact, White found writing so difficult it was a burden to his spirit and his health. Many of his letters make mention of his frailty, and running through a number of them is his feeling that writing was too painful. ‘A doctor told me last spring,’ he wrote in a letter 30 years ago, ‘that I would be alright if I quit writing. He said most writers were neurotics — if they weren’t neurotic, they wouldn’t go to the trouble, the enormous trouble.’ And then in 1969: ‘Writing, which is my way of serving, is hard work for me and usually not attended by any joy. It has its satisfactions, but the act of writing is often a pure headache and I don’t kid myself about there being any joy in it.’

But for more than 50 years, no matter how hard the strain, he has stayed with it and achieved a prose style that, in the opinion of his many admirers, approaches perfection. He has chosen to live, as he chose to write, quietly and modestly, far from the limelight he might have had. He has shunned the fame that often accompanies writers who seek it in the age of television. But for generations to come, those who have known him will esteem his name, for the honesty of his convictions and the unadorned splendor of his written words.