A sweep of timber in the centre of a large city, the park acts as a tranquilizer, stimulant and the inspiration of poets.

STANLEY PARK

The great green heart of Vancouver

BY PAUL GRESCOE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY TREGILLAS
canine fanciers. Runners hold an annual marathon on the meandering roads, and each New Year’s Day people join the Polar Bear Club by jumping into the raw ocean off Stanley’s beaches. Cyclists pedal around the park to raise money for worthy causes such as the Royal Ontario Museum, and community groups walk the seawall circling the park to earn financial pledges (as many as 8,000 boy scouts and their families have hiked 10 kilometres on a Sunday in spring). While perhaps a couple of hundred locals regularly tread the forest trails, most casual strollers use the popular 9-kilometre seawall promenade along the shore—many with binoculars in hand to observe the world’s ships waiting offshore amid an abundance of migrant waterfowl.

To see marine life up close, three-quarters of a million tourists and residents each year patronize the park’s Vancouver Public Aquarium. It’s Canada’s finest, with exhibitionaria beluga and killer whales and 5,000 other specimens, which include voracious porpoises and primitive lungfish, in a $2-million tropical river exhibit opening this year. Close to four million people annually walk through the modest main zoo—monkeys and kangaroos, polar bears and penguins—and through the children’s zoo, where lambs, kids, calves and piglets run free to be fondled by charmed youngsters.

Oh, there’s the Nine O’Clock Gun, a naval muzzle-loader electronically fired at 9 each night (when it hasn’t been stolen by pranksters). And the miniature railway which carries 80 passengers past seals and deer. The Lumbermen’s Arch, an immense cedar log resting on two tall stumps. The Hollow Tree, perhaps eight centuries old, with a burned-out interior big enough to hold an automobile. And the grove of towering Haida and Kwakwakawakw totem poles, the 5,000-plant rose garden, the 211 hectares of trees.... As west-coast naturalist Bruce Hutchinson wrote of Stanley Park in The Unknown Country: “It was one of the few sensible things done in our youth, the preservation of this sweep of timber in the centre of a large city, with its beaches, rocks and cliffs, undisturbed.”

The decision that prevented loggers from leveling the rain-forest peninsula was taken not by civic officials but by the pioneering Royal Engineers. They set the land aside for the government of the colony of British Columbia in 1865, when bear, cougar and wildcat prowled through its woods. It was a military reserve when Vancouver was born in 1886. Enlightened self-interested businessmen—aware of parkland’s penchant for raising nearby property values and attracting tourists—to recommend that the city acquire the site from the federal government. And the petition to Ottawa was the first resolution of the new city council. In 1887 Ottawa agreed to relinquish the park temporarily, with the provision that the military would eventually have to use the reserve again. In fact, after strenuous lobbying Vancouver was allowed in 1908 to take a 99-year renewable lease—strictly for park purposes.

Throughout the 19th century the peninsula had been home to the once-dominant Squamish Indian tribe that in 1792 showed feathers of greeting on the English explorer Capt. George Vancouver when he sailed near their coastal capital of Whoi-Whoi (where Lumbermen’s Arch now stands). When the land became a park, only a few Indians and white squatters remained on the site. The last to leave her home there was Aunt Sally, the widow of an influential Indian named Hose Woman Jim, one of their daughters married an alderman on Vancouver’s first council. Old Aunt Sally went into a decade of legal pressure to evict her from the park, and only in 1930 did she agree to sell her ramshackle hut for $17,500. Years later the Squamish Indian chief who became a Hollywood actor—Dan George—would lament: “I was born in an age that loved the things of nature and gave them beautiful names like Treeshell-o-wit instead of dried-up names like Stanley Park.”

The park is named for Lord Stanley, the Canadian governor general who dedicated it in 1889. The first park ranger, Henry Avison, cut the original trails and grew the first gardens. He lived in a cottage on the peninsula with his wife, who opened the first zoo: a bear on a chain which once clawed the skirt of a minister’s wife when she poked it in the ribs with her umbrella. Other wild animals continued to roam the forest until that ran amok after their Indian keeper died and a cougar that was hunted down and shot in 1911. That year the park board reported some of the accolades the young park was receiving in the international press. Elbert Hubbard, the distinguished American author and publisher, wrote: “There are parks and parks but there is no park in the world that will exhaust your stock of adjectives and subdue you to silence like Stanley Park in Vancouver.”

Among its admirers was Pauline Johnson, the daughter of a chief of Ontario’s Six Nations Reserve and his English wife. A popular poet, she came to Vancouver in 1895 and was smitten by Stanley Park. The city archives tell the charming story of how she named Lost Lagoon: “She lived in the West End, and on sunny summer afternoons was accustomed to go to Coal Harbour, then an arm of the sea to paddle her canoe. One afternoon she went for her favorite pastime, but the tide was out and the shallow shore was mere mudflats. She was distressed to be denied her pleasure; her lagoon was lost. In her chagrin, she went home and composed her beautiful poem, ‘It is Dusk On the Lost Lagoon.’ ‘The lagoon is now locked in by a causeway. When Pauline Johnson died, her ashes were buried near Siwash Rock, a high pinnacle off Stanley Park which bears a plaque recalling a legend about an unselfish Indian who was preserved in stone. Vancouver’s passionate affair of the heart with Stanley Park has a long history, as demonstrated by the traffic statistics recorded there on a summer Sunday in 1911: 191 cars, 567 rigs, 523 hitches, 58 saddle horses, 148 bicycles, 173 dogs and 21,700 pedestrians. At the time there was no convenient way...
to walk the shoreline in the park, but three years later planning began for a seawall promenade, a project that would take master stonecrafter James Cunningham 32 years to complete.

The public and its elected park board have routinely protested any threat — real or perceived — to the sanctity of Stanley. In 1906 the Vancouver Moral Association tut- toried about the one-piece bathing suits seen on the park’s beaches. When a dog killed a live-in pelican in 1926, the board fearlessly billed its master, a local magistrate. The board had less success in its opposition to the road to Lions Gate Bridge that sliced through the park in 1938. As humorist Eric Nicol noted in his book Vancouver: “It was freely predicted that motorists who used the swath of concrete desecrating the natural forest would bear a curse — a prophecy which proved entirely accurate. The three-lane cut was to be the most unkind of all, to future commuters caught in traffic backups.”

The controversies continued. Sea- wall strollers have long objected to bicycles on their promenade, and a couple of years ago the park employed a quartet of students to make the cyclists dismount. More recently there was a similar uproar over roller- skaters, who were finally given their own paths. Any attempt to charge a fee for the tennis courts is met with organized resistance by the regulars, who use the park’s facilities so religiously that they’ve established an unofficial pecking order that puts the best players on the courts closest to the Beach House.

The most inconsequential details of park administration can become matters of public debate — exemplified by the furor over the mounted policemen’s horse mane. When the five city policemen patrolling the grounds on horseback were asked last year to report the exact locations of their animals’ transgressions, a Vancouver Sun editorial bemoaned: “If the policeman is indigent enough not to report his mount’s indiscretion, what then? Is he stripped of his saddle, forced to walk behind the horse or what?”

The Stanley Park staff has to worry about more than one kind of dung. The families of great blue herons that secure themselves high in a few Douglas firs near Theatre Under the Stars are slowly killing the trees with their droppings. Man’s carelessness is another concern: thoughtless picnickers, for instance, have thrown glowing barbecue coals at the base of trees and caused fires. Yet there have been no major blazes in the park. “I don’t think a fire would ever get away on us,” says forestry foreman Herb Johnson. “The people themselves, the regulars, are firewardens.”

Nature herself has done more de- vasion: storms in 1954-55 felled several thousand trees, including some of the finest firs, cedars and hemlocks, and in 1962 Hurricane Frieda uprooted 70,000 more and forced forestry workers to comb out the thick underbrush and rotting stumps that gave the rain forest so much of its wilder- ness character. The following spring, more than 22,000 Douglas firs were planted to reforest the park.

Old trees fall naturally, and Herb Johnson likes to show people the huge, rusty-looking trunk of a red cedar, four metres in diameter, at the junction of Tallow Walk and Levers Trail. An even faster cedar — with its diameter of nearly six metres, the largest of any species in the park — still stands on the Third Beach Trail across from the Hollow Tree. “This is a natural forest,” Johnson says. “It would be very easy to cultivate and nurture it. But I work with nature; she does the work, and I just help her along. It’s been a partnership.”

His philosophy sounds remarkably like that of gardener Alayne Cook, who says: “It’s got to look wild; it’s a garden based on untamedness — na- ture.” With only a wheelbarrow, shovel, fork, rake and snippers, Cook creates an artless splendor in his gardens in and around the golf course. His specialty is the rhododendron — there are about 200 species in the park — and he is a world expert in that diversified plant. (“Expert?” he laughs. “X is an unknown quantity and ‘spark’ is a drip under pressure.”)

He takes a visitor to a secluded hol- low off the 13th hole of the golf course. “This was a swamp,” he says. “I dug it by hand over three winters and wheeled in five truckloads of garbage and put good soil on top.” Now it is a magnolia-and-billy-bush oasis with a pond overhung with four kinds of ferns and the claret-colored leaves of a Japanese flowering maple. The fatted root systems of two upended cedars, embrowned with salal, sit in the background like pieces of sculpture. “This is the most beautiful spot,” Cook says as a duck shoots over his shoulder and lands in the pond. “And nobody knows about it.”

The park is abrim with such hidden delights. The pair of bald eagles is back, returning to nest in their treetop nest each March. The little-used Miners Trail, heavy with fern and fat, fallen logs, which runs about the seawall and offers seascapes of freighters with a West Vancouver backdrop. The forgotten totem pole carved in a five tree and crowned with vines on a path beside the polar bears.

Of all the seasons in Stanley Park, spring seems the most inviting, as the sun reappears after a winter’s rain and the people of Vancouver still have the park to themselves. The elderly men in their many straw hats are back play- ing tire-sized checkers on a giant out- door board. Businessmen in T-shirts and shorts run off their lunches. On the lawn near the zoo where artists display predictable landscapes and still lifes, an old Chinese woman who paints charming floral miniatures is slowly peeling an orange. She can hear the bark of a big black wolf, sounding off like a semitrailer’s horn while he nuzzles his lady. And beside a popcorn wagon in the zoo a tall, aged boy is feeding peanuts to two pigeons that are perched competi- tively on his hand.

Always, everywhere, there are the children, who in the end take the true measure of a great urban preserve like Stanley Park. Children such as this exultant five-year-old named Aman- da, who one silken spring evening is disguised in a red Superman cape and cantering along the shore of Lost Lagoon as she tries to run and purse even fly as fast as the 28 Canada geese fleeing calmly ahead of her.

Nearly a century later, the acquisition of the park is still “one of the truly sensible things done in our youth.”
IN September 1978, as dignitaries from across the continent gathered for the official opening of the vast Syncrude oil sands plant, fire broke out in a 20-storey fluid coker. Several days later, as an indirect result, production came to a halt. Old timers in nearby Fort McMurray nodded sagely. They had seen it all before. Since the turn of the century men had tried to dig treasure from the famed Athabasca oil sands, only to become mired in frustration and tar. The newcomers would learn that nothing was won there without a titanic struggle.

Syncrude learned. That opening fire was only one in a series of setbacks that plagued the operation for nearly two years. The consortium, of which Imperial has 25 percent, risked more than $2 billion on the first full-scale assault on the oil sands, using machines and processes that had never been tried in a grueling northern Alberta winter; some had never been tried anywhere. Every new plant has problems. At Syncrude, everything was on a gigantic scale— including the problems.

Full operations began in the early spring of 1980. That was when everything came together, all four mining trains and both cokers worked in unison, and the mammoth operation was truly in business. Everyone believed it was technically possible, but no one dreamed it would be easy. The Syncrude partners had studied the long, discouraging history of attempts to mine the sands.

Scientists had been studying the sands themselves for generations. They are among the best known of Canada’s natural wonders—a trillion barrels of oil in the form of bitumen trapped in sand. Sixteen times the oil wealth of Saudi Arabia, but untested times harder to get.

The oilmen knew how to extract the oil. The doubt (which caused one major partner to withdraw) was whether an operation so enormous, costly and complex could be a technical and financial success. Syncrude was a risky venture. And despite the cold computerized calculations that went into it, it was also a romantic one.

There is nothing intrinsically romantic about a lump of tar sand, more officially known as oil sand. You can crumble it in your fingers like dry blackish-brown dirt. If you warm it in your hand it gets sticky. It’s called black gold, but you can’t picture it adorning the neck of a duchess. The romance stems from the heroic tales of the Athabasca adventurers who found it and the pioneers who risked their lives and fortunes for it.

Peter Pond, an aggressive Yankee fur trader who had killed a man in a duel, drew the first map of the tar sands in his winter cabin at Fort of the Forks (Fort McMurray), which he established in 1778. He later presented the map to the infant Congress of the United States.

Alexander Mackenzie, who took over Pond’s trading post, wrote of “bituminous furnaces into which a pole, 20 feet long, could be inserted without the least resistance.” Mackenzie’s “fountains” became a legend of the North. More than a century later, when the value of oil had become recognized, men arrived in Athabasca to read pools of it on the surface. Promoters who had obviously never seen the six-cabin Hudson’s Bay post of Fort McMurray distributed brochures picturing it as an industrial centre spouting factory chimneys and surrounded by a network of railway sidings. (The railway finally reached McMurray in 1942.)

Count Alfred von Hammerstein arrived there on horseback in 1906. His Kaiser Wilhelm mustache bristled when he found no pools of oil, but he drilled holes to various depths, hoping pools would form. All he found was salt water.

Sidney Ellis, a young Canadian government mining engineer, began investigating the sands in 1913 and continued for 35 years. He was, he wrote, “ennobled” by them, and he devoted his life to finding uses for them. The Athabasca Indians used the strange dark substance, mixed with spruce gum, to seal their canoes. Ellis persuaded the civic leaders of Edmonton to try paving streets with it. He shipped 54 tons of it south from Fort McMurray on scoops pulled by teams of men with ropes. He led them and hauled with them as they struggled for backbreaking weeks along the swamp and muskeg of the river’s edge.

The Edmonton politicians couldn’t agree on which street to pave, so Ellis had to make a second trip from McMurray. He walked 400 kilometres through the wilderness, with his cooker spaniel, carrying a pack stuffed with technical books and pork sandwiches. It took him seven days. He arrived, blistered and bleading, on a farmer’s doorstep and gasped, “I’ll give you a dollar for a drink of whisky.”

As early as 1915 Ellis used hot water to float bitumen free from the surrounding sand. This method was later developed and patented by Dr. Karl Adolf Clark of the Research Council of Alberta and used by entrepreneur R.C. Fitzsimmons. It turned out to be the secret that unlocked the tar sands. Each grain of sand is covered by a thin film of water and, as everyone knows, oil and water don’t mix.

Fitzsimmons, a flamboyant optimist, built an extraction plant at Bitumount, 80 kilometres north of McMurray, in 1922. He tried, and failed, to sell the bitumen by steam and pump it up— the basis of the system to be used at Imperial’s $9-billion Cold Lake project—then used hot water flotation to produce 200 barrels of bitumen. This was sold to roof houses until the Depression struck, and he was unable to sell any more.

Fitzsimmons struggled along, built a refinery, and by 1936 he had produced 2,500 barrels of asphalt and 2,000 of fuel oil. Still he could not find a market. His plant was eventually taken over by the Alberta government. It closed in 1949.

In 1936 Denver developer Max Ball produced diesel oil at his Abasand plant outside McMurray. But he, too, had marketing problems. World War II brought a flurry of business, and Ball was selling diesel to U.S. military contractors in 1941 when Abasand burned down. It was rebuilt but burned again in 1944. There were rumors of sabotage by enemy agents, but the fires were probably caused by carelessness, abetted by the bad luck that dogged tar-sands enterprises.

In 1947 the Leduc well 435 kilometres south of McMurray roared into life, spewing forth conventional crude that didn’t cost an arm and a leg and an aching back to produce. The stubborn sands were left in peace, not for long.

In the 1950s Cities Service, Athabasca Inc., the forerunner of...
Syncrude, built a small pilot plant to produce 1,000 barrels of synthetic crude a day at Mildred Lake, 40 kilometres north of McMurray. Four companies became involved: Royalle Oil Co. (now Gulf Canada), Imperial, Cities Service and Richfield Oil Co. In 1962 they applied to the Alberta government for permission to build a full-scale plant one hundred times the size of the pilot. They were told to come back in five years. The world was luxuriating in Arab oil at $2 a barrel.

The Mildred Lake consortium, which became Syncrude in January 1964, foresaw that this blissful world of cheap, plentiful oil wasn't going to last. The sleeping tar sands must be aroused. They were. In 1964 Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd. (now Suncor) got the go-ahead for a plant with less than half the capacity of the Syncrude project. This was completed in 1967. Its first five years of operation were horrendous. In winter the sands turned to rock, wearing out machinery and tearing conveyor belts. Its one coker kept breaking down. It lost $90 million in five years.

Syncrude watched, undeterred. It applied again in 1968, then in 1969, when it received permission for an 80,000-barrel-a-day plant, providing it did not go into production until 1976. Not until September 1973 did the consortium and the government reach agreement on royalties.

By December 1974 the $1-billion project had become a more than $2-billion venture. On December 4, 1974, Atlantic Richfield withdrew from its 30-percent ownership, bringing the financial problems to a crisis. The remaining investors set a deadline of two months; if new investors were not found by then, Syncrude would fold.

With Imperial's Jack Armstrong taking the lead, the search began. Finally, on February 3, 1975, after a grueling round of negotiations at a hotel just outside Winnipeg, an agreement was worked out. The new partners were the federal government with a 15-percent share, Alberta with 10 percent and Ontario with five percent. Ironically it was mainly the soaring world price of oil, on which Syncrude relied for eventual profits, that sent construction costs skyrocketing.

"We anticipated the crude price increase — at least a big chunk of it," says Imperial's chief executive officer, Jack Armstrong. "We could see it coming. You couldn't build a tar sands plant on crude that was selling for $3 or $4. By the same token, we hadn't planned on costs going up to that degree. The inflationary factor caught us, but at the same time the crude price moved — fortunately. Otherwise Syncrude would not be operating today.

From the start, Syncrude sought the world price for its crude. And it stipulated that its plant not be ordered to reduce its output if there was a surplus of oil. (Conventional oil wells are cut back when supply exceeds demand, but tar sands production is too costly to halt.) It also fought for, and received, permission to turn out 125,000 barrels a day, since a rate of 80,000 would not be economic.

By 1977 almost 1,000 workers had moved onto the site of one of the biggest construction jobs in Canadian history, all at the last minute. This was the last single investment to date. "Certainly it was a risk," Jack Armstrong admits. "We made a good call on the whole thing, including the heavy oil, to put it in a coker to upgrade it."

The first of four giant draglines took its first bite on June 24, 1977, scooping up a hundred tonnes of dirt in its bucket. These electrically driven marvels, weighing more than 6,000 tonnes and costing $30 million each, are Syncrude's most dramatic tools. Swinging their 100-metre booms and walking on two giant flat feet at the dignified speed of 225 metres per hour, they shift more tonnage per day than all the iron ore mines in Canada.

They began by moving the "overburden" — the surface layer of scrub, moss, earth and rocks that covers the tar sand. Then they began mining and stockpiling the tar sand.

By the following winter they had piled up 4.5 million tonnes of tar sand into a "window" three kilometres long. It was ready to be scraped up by revolving scoops on bucket wheel reclaimers (which cost a mere $15 to $20 million each in the early 1970s) and dumped on conveyor belts.

Problem One: The tar sands refused to budge. "That window was subject to the wettest fall we've ever had in this country," says Jim Guthrie, Syncrude's senior vice-president of operations, who retired at the end of 1980. "It froze into a solid mass like steel. The bucket wheel reclaimers were built to handle sand, and they couldn't do it. We crushed the window by driving tractors over it, but we were left with hard lumps.

Syncrude's bucket wheel reclaimers and draglines: giant machines for a titanic struggle.
weighing tonnes that could stick in the conveyor belts and cut them. It took all that winter and spring to get the machinery repaired and operable." The bucket wheels were modified so that they didn’t pick up big lumps. As the plant got into operation, windows were demolished before they had time to solidify and turn rock-hard.

Meanwhile — Problem Two: The twookers, largest in the world, refused to start up in 35 below temperatures. “Instruments and lines froze, and we had to operate them almost manually. That’s like flying a 747 with no instruments or hydraulics,” says public affairs director John Barr. “That first year was just one thing after another.” Jim Guthrie continues. “In 1978 we had both cokers running, but in February 1980 we had to shut one down for maintenance. Then we lost the other and were down to no cokers for one month. Everyone cooperated magnificently. We took miners from the mine and put them inside a coker to clean it out. They were mining coke . . . One even arrived with a miner’s lamp on his hat.”

“We got both units going in March and they’re going great.”

Problem Three: The overburden wasn’t strong enough to support the giant draglines near the mine face. They had to sit well back, where they couldn’t operate efficiently. And the hills of overburden they piled up tended to collapse and slide down into the oil sand. So the overburden had to be stripped by earthmoving equipment, adding another stage to the mining operation. The draglines were put to work on the oil sand itself, moving along broad, smooth roads like asphalt highways.

By the fall of 1989, with all systems go, Syncrude was pumping between 100,000 and 120,000 barrels a day along the pipeline to Edmonton. After

“bottlenecking” — industry jargon for fine-tuning those systems up to their maximum capacity — it should average 130,000 barrels or nearly seven percent of all the crude produced in Canada.

Jack Armstrong was delighted. “Everything came on stream pretty well according to plans. There were bumps and questions and people holding their breath, but the people who engineered it, constructed it and got it into operation have my highest praise.”

Jim Guthrie, an Imperial veteran who saw Syncrude operations through their tough start-up years, retired at Christmas, content with the outcome.

As Suncor and Syncrude solved their problems and settled down, so did Fort McMurray. It solved perhaps the biggest problem of all by transforming itself from a sleepy community of 1,100 to a city of nearly 30,000 inside 20 years without falling into chaos, crime and anarchy. There were a few difficult years, but nowadays it’s rather sedate.

Judi Dicks, community editor of the daily Fort McMurray Today, lived through eight of the boom years, in which construction workers swarmed in by the thousands, followed by thousands of permanent employees. There were stresses and strains, long lineups at banks and stores, jam-packed restaurants and bars and perpetual traffic jams as the streets were blocked by construction. “But nothing terribly awful happened. People had the feeling this, too, shall pass.” And it did. Looking back we felt we were part of history and wished we’d done more to record it. When a town suddenly grows like this the human energy produced is incredible. It’s exhilarating, vibrant.

The newcomers came from all over the world, so McMurray now has 56 ethnic and cultural groups. From Newfoundlanders, the biggest, to Chinese, Australians, English who play soccer and Welsh who play rugby. The city celebrates them with a folk arts festival. “We don’t have a National Arts Centre,” Dicks admits, “but we do have an interesting cultural life. We have a brand-new theatre, now producing Oklahoma!, an almost first-run movie theatre and an art-film society. And 300 racquetball players, 1,200 curlers and 4,000 young hockey players.”

She punches out a story on her computerized video display terminal. It’s not about shoot-outs or barroom brawls. Fort McMurray will host a round in a national contest for the champion taster of vintage wines.

The city, now the largest north of Edmonton, is preparing for a new influx of people if the Alisan megaproject goes ahead.

After the success of Syncrude not even the most skeptical of old-timers doubts that it and the other megaproject, the Cold Lake oil-sands plant, are technically feasible. The oil sands have been conquered and can be again. They are the key to Canadian self-sufficiency in oil. But future projects face the same economic and political uncertainties Syncrude did.

“There is no question that Canada can be self-sufficient by 1985, through oil sands, northern resources and other oil,” Jack Armstrong declares.

“But before new projects can go ahead, there has to be a consensus among governments, the oil industry and the public. At this point in our history, Canadians have a unique chance to eliminate the need for risky foreign supplies. The choice is ours.”
The first thing you might wonder about, when you hear that Canadian families: Yvon and Simone Carrier and their two children, who live in the city, and Jake and Penny Sturgess and their baby, who live on a small farm. It shows how they go about trying to save energy, and the interesting thing is that the film provides almost as much entertainment as it does information.

Gordon Hinch explains: "We don't just want to tell people how to save energy. After they see this film, we would like them to come out of the auditorium feeling as though they ought to rush home and insulate the attic. So we don't lecture or preach. We try to entertain and charm. We hope people will find the families in the film attractive, engaging people, and the theory is that if you like them and enjoy meeting them, you'll be motivated to follow their example."

The importance of the film's conservation message is evident even at the earliest stages. The script for Leaving Something Over, unlike those of many films, has to meet a number of requirements beyond simply telling a good story. In the first place, it must be informative. In the second, it must be meticulously accurate in every detail. It must give Canadians the best possible advice on how to save energy in their heating, insulating, cooking and driving.

So Gordon Hinch sends the script out to the federal and provincial departments of energy, to give experts in each area a chance to make comments and suggestions, and Imperial brings in its own battery of experts to check out all the facts. Building Products of Canada Limited, an Imperial subsidiary, lends its expertise with insulation materials and techniques. Esso Home Comfort sends a representative who knows all about furnace maintenance. Imperial provides its senior technical specialist on gasoline consumption to take a look at the scenes that deal with buying and servicing cars.

What with one thing and another, the script goes through five rewrites before all the experts are happy. And this is only the beginning. When the script is finally ready, Hinch assembles the group of people who will actually make the film, and the questions begin again. The script has Jake Sturgess asking his furnace man, "Can you tell me why the soil builds up here?" and the art department asks, "Where?" It needs to know precisely where the soil builds up so it can make sure that the furnace in the scene has soot in the right place.

You get a good idea of the way the film works from the scene in which Yvon Carrier, played by Marcel Sabourin, takes his car in for a tune-up. As most people know, a well-tuned car uses less gas. The idea behind this scene is that Yvon will look aghast at the cost of the tune-up, and then the mechanic will explain to him just how each step saves energy. But to make the scene more entertaining, the mechanic is played by a magician, Jefferson Mappin. When he talks about changing the spark plugs, for instance, he conjures the plugs out of thin air.

Weeks before the filming begins Joe Hampson, who's in charge of props, sends a set of spark plugs to the magician so he can practise with them; at the same time he makes a note to check with Imperial's automotive specialist — he wants to be sure the spark plugs that appear in the film are the right kind for Yvon's car. In the end, however, special miniature spark plugs are used; the normal size are too large for the magician to work with.

Later in the same scene, the magician is supposed to pull a rabbit out of a tire (while he explains how radial tires save energy), and Joe Hampson is a little concerned by the fact that the magician doesn't have his own rabbit. Hampson is an old hand at scouring up unusual props, but this is the first time he's ever needed a rabbit.

The job gets more complicated when Gordon Hinch and Peter Rowe, the director, decide that the scene just doesn't have enough zip. They change things around a bit, and Rowe explains the changes to the crew at a production meeting: "We're going to have the magician produce the rabbit earlier in the scene and put it down on the floor. Then, at the end of the scene, the camera will pan down to the floor, and we'll see about three dozen rabbits there." Hampson gasps.

Leaving Something Over is a special problem because it's actually two films, one English and one French. Michael Malby, the associate producer, explains: "Usually when a filmmaker deals with the problem of
other languages, he films entirely in one language and then dubs in the others. So you end up with two or more sound tracks for one film." That system, Matityahu explains, creates the problem of "lip flip" — lip movements that don't match the words on the sound track.

"In Leaving Something Over, however, we're actually shooting in two languages. With a few exceptions, the actors will perform each scene twice, and we'll film it once in English and once in French. Naturally, this makes it an expensive film — the budget is about $270,000 — because right off the top it doubles the performers' budget. And it takes incredible organization and stamina to be able to give two good performances back to back." Matityahu spent several years with the public affairs department of CBC Television before leaving to form his own film production company. Since then he's made films in several parts of the world — including an orientation film for Bell Canada employees who were going to work in Saudi Arabia — and he points out that Canada is the only country in the world where filmmakers use this approach: "In Europe, when they make a film with actors who speak different languages, they just ignore the problem. They don't record any sound during the filming; they dub it in afterward, in the studio. The way we're doing it may be more difficult, but I think it's the best way.

Fortunately the film's director, Peter Rowe, has some experience in this process. Last year, for example, he directed two pilots for a series of historical dramas called The Spirit of Adventure, which were shot in both languages. "As a matter of fact," Rowe adds, "I recently directed a film in Swedish and another in Slovenian, even though I don't speak either." Leaving Something Over includes a song-and-dance number which focuses on saving energy around the house, and Rowe says it was a particular treat for him to direct this part because musical numbers are rare in Canadian films. A director usually has to move to Hollywood before he gets a chance to work with song and dance. "Also, I like the high style of the scene," he says. "The singing and dancing have no basis in reality — normal people just don't act that way in their homes — so it's pure show business, and it's a lot of fun."

The number begins with a scene in the Carrier living room. Yvon Carrier has spent the day insulating, caulking, sealing and weather-stripping, and now he and Simone are relaxing over a drink. Yvon begins to brag. "A fine day's work," he says. "I have saved us incredible amounts of energy — with the training of an engineer, anything is possible." Simultaneously, played by Yvonne Lafleurance Tremblay, decides to teach Yvon that you don't have to be an engineer to conserve, so she pulls him up to his feet and then propels him through the house, showing him how she saves energy in each room. (In the kitchen, for example, she points out that when she has the oven on to cook a roast, she bakes a pie at the same time.) The fun part is that she does the whole thing in song, set to a tango beat.

"It's a nice bit of fantasy," Rowe says — and when you see the final version, you have to agree. But the process of filming the number is exhausting. The first scene of the sequence, when the actors move from the living room to the kitchen, is on the screen for only about 30 seconds, but it takes the better part of two hours to shoot. Part of the trouble is the actors' movements: they look smooth and straightforward, almost rehearsed, when you see them on the screen, but an immense amount of effort goes into making each step perfect. Another problem is that it's a long shot — the actors walk across the room and the camera moves with them — and it's almost impossible for the fellow who holds the microphone to stay with the actors and still keep off camera.

Rowe and Brian Macdonald, one of Canada's best-known choreographers, work through the scene a dozen times, and finally the effort pays off. The scene is perfect. Then they start all over to do it again in French.

On the whole the film is light-hearted, but among the chuckles it packs a lot of information about how Canadians use energy and about how we could use it a lot less. The sad fact is that we consume more energy per person than any other country, and a startling amount of this energy goes not to business or government but to individuals. Heating our homes, running our appliances and driving our cars uses up more than a third of Canada's energy. With conservation we could save a large portion, and we'll take a chunk out of our energy costs.

You have to remember that conservation doesn't necessarily mean cutting back; it means cutting down on waste. It's the sum total of a lot of little things that take good sense: insulating your home and sealing the cracks around doors and windows could save almost 40 percent on heating costs; replacing an outdated burner on your oil furnace could save up to 20 percent; driving at 90 kilometres per hour instead of say, 110 saves a dollar out of every $5 you spend on gas, and you'll save another nickel on each gallon if you drive with properly inflated radial tires.

Gordon Hinch is producing a brochure that includes these suggestions and the other energy-saving tips in the film. The brochure will be available for schools and other groups that want to show the film. "Film is a very good medium for motivating people," he explains, "but we really don't have time in the course of a full-length film to show people how to do everything — how to make a craft detector, for instance. So the broad message is to leave out the detail about some of those things, and it also tells people where to find more information about conserving energy."

The film came out early this year and will be shown publicly across the country, in cooperation with building supply companies and the energy and conservation branches of the provincial and federal governments. After that it will be available for television, and schools, libraries and community groups can arrange to borrow it free of charge through one of Imperial's regional film distributors (see box). If you were to follow all the energy conservation ideas in Leaving Something Over, you might be surprised to find that they'd make very little difference to your style of living — just a big, big change in the amount of energy you consume.

Obviously this has an immediate payoff in savings. But on a broader level, it's worthwhile to consider the long-term benefits of energy conservation. As the film's director Peter Rowe says, "Without doubt, the most important thing is to save energy because you never know what the future holds. We've seen the world change in the last twenty years, and it could happen again in the next fifty years."

Leaving Something Over is only the latest addition to the surprisingly large collection of Imperial Oil films. They range all the way from The Great Canadian Energies Saga, an animated film which documents the history of energy in Canada, to The Loon's Necklace, one of the best-known short Canadian films, which tells the Indian legend about why the loon has white stripes around its neck. You can write for a catalog or arrange to borrow the films (at no charge) by contacting the Imperial Oil film distributor closest to you:

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Eight years ago journalist Barry Broadfoot quit his job with The Vancouver Sun. He was determined to try a risky, demanding project that had tantalized him for years. Broadfoot never regretted his decision, for not only did it change his life, it soon affected Canadian publishing, theatre, television, teaching and history. With his project, Broadfoot established oral history in Canada.

Barry Broadfoot’s work started with a journey that would take him all across Canada. He traveled about 24,000 kilometres in nine months, by bus, plane, car, train and ferry. He stopped in farm kitchens, offices, bars and hotels — wherever he could record another story of Canadian life in the Dirty Thirties.

This long journey uncovered hundreds of anecdotes. Some tales were grand, polished after years of retelling; others were painfully and reluctantly told after years in hiding. Some were humorous, others sad. But most were vivid, personal and memorable.

A farmer in New Brunswick recalled the year when the province’s farms seemed to revert to the barter system. That year the average annual income for farmers there was $20. A woman from the Prairies told Broadfoot how she fought the drought, hoeing her sandy, dried-out garden with an improvised shield against the dust-filled air: “I’d put a dish towel soaked in water around my mouth, like I was a hank robber, and then I’d rub Vaseline into my nostrils.”

Still another tale spanned the Maritime provinces and the Prairies. A young man from Saskatchewan found work loading cattle in Halifax: “I was on the dock helping the dockers get their aboard and I got to talking with the foreman and I told him I was from the Prairies. Where? Well, all over, I said.”

Oral history. The term sounds suspicious to Canadians schooled in treatises and tallies, leaders and legislation. But the recipe for a successful oral history is not hard to understand. With apologies to the old formula for a successful marriage, we can say that oral history needs four elements: something old, something new, something borrowed, something colorful.

But the success of Ten Lost Years may have been a factor in the resurgence of oral history in Canada. The project was so well-received that it inspired other projects across the country, including several in the United States.

Tend not to lose sight of the fact that oral history is a valuable tool for understanding the past. It provides a unique perspective on events that may have been forgotten or overlooked in written history. It also highlights the importance of preserving the stories of ordinary people, who often have the most interesting and valuable insights into historical events.

The success of Ten Lost Years has also led to the creation of other oral history projects. One such project is the Remembering the Farm project, which seeks to document the experiences of farmers during the Great Depression.

In conclusion, oral history is a valuable tool for understanding the past and preserving the stories of ordinary people. It is a valuable resource for historians and researchers, and it is a valuable experience for those who participate in its collection.

By Anthony Tilly
Illustrations by Muriel Wood

The Review, Number 2, 1981
He followed Ten Lost Years with Six War Years: 1939-1945 and The Pioneer Years: 1899-1914. Both did well. Then he added an oral history with less popular appeal — a story that he felt should be told. Years of Silence, Years of Shame chronicled the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II. It seems unlikely, however, that Broadfoot will add a fifth oral history to the four already published by Doubleday. For now he has stowed away his tape recorders to write a weekly column for The Nanaimo Free Press.

Canada's other well-known oral historian, Allan Anderson, has published two oral histories so far and is currently wrapping up a third, Remembering the Farm (Macmillan, 1977) recorded the experiences of farmers and ranchers across the country; Salt Water, Fresh Water (Macmillan, 1979) collected the stories of fishermen and others who make their livings from Canada's oceans, lakes and rivers. Anderson's third oral history, due for publication in the fall of 1981, chronicles the risks and rewards of searching for oil under Canada's soil and waters.

Like Broadfoot, whom he freely credits with establishing oral history in Canada, Anderson emphasizes that the work behind oral history isn't as easy as it looks. It can be grueling, involving long days driving, interviewing, then transcribing the day's invaluable pieces.

Another difficulty is that interviews don't always come easily. The interviewer must be able, says Anderson, "to sit down with people for two or three hours and know how to keep them so excited and so stimulated that they reach down into the well of their memories and bring up cold, clear water that has been down there for God knows how long.

Ironically, when Anderson is himself interviewed in his home in Totemham, Ont., the interviewer hardly needs any skills at all: Anderson — the old pro — checks the tape recorder, anticipates questions and talks nonsense about his craft. He is a man of many metaphors, and they tumble forth as he explains his tech-
The one-room schoolhouse stands inconspicuously just off a rural road in Heidelberg, Ont. The white frame building gives no hint of its purpose, no external signs, such as slides or swings or monkey bars. Nor are there any bicycles parked under the shade of trees. Indeed, the only evidence that there are children inside is a cluster of tiny shoes on the doorstep. The shoes are plain, old-fashioned and sensible leather, without bright colors or frills.

But possibly what seems oddest of all to the outsider is that the one-room schoolhouse is new — not old and run-down. And its occupants are there by choice, not for lack of opportunity.

The youngsters inside are children of Old Order Mennonite farmers, and the Heidelberg Parochial School is the product of a way of life that's inspired by religious idealism, nourished by religious discipline and very nearly self-sufficient.

Old Order Mennonites have been an object of growing interest in recent years because of their 19th century style of dress, their buggies and their stubborn refusal to accept the universal creature comforts of 20th century technology. The impression made by Old Order Mennonites is so vivid that to the outsider what is in fact a minority within the larger fold of the Mennonite community has come to stand for the whole. In fact, in Ontario there are 15 different Mennonite groups, including several distinct kinds of Old Order Mennonites and various different progressive groups, which each represent some alteration of the basic Mennonite social and cultural fabric. But the cloth of Mennonite doctrine itself remains intact, and no splinter group tears so far away as to rent that cloth.

These divisions are mostly the products of the last hundred years, and the history of the Mennonites in Ontario goes back far beyond that, beginning in the late 18th century when, shortly after the American Revolution, Pennsylvania Dutch farmers began to resettle in what is now Waterloo County. They had first arrived in Pennsylvania from Switzerland and South Central Germany in the 17th century, invited by William Penn himself, a Quaker who shared their pacifism and sought to give them refuge as fellow victims of religious persecution.

The causes of that persecution date back to the origins of the Mennonites in the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century. Even as the Protestant Reformation was taking hold in Germany, a group of young Swiss intellectuals were turning to Biblical fundamentalism, seeking a church free from state control and questioning the validity of infant baptism, pointing instead to the early church fathers, whose adult baptism was a matter of individual choice. This doctrine of Anabaptism was denounced as heresy by both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Lutherans. As a result the early Swiss founders were martyred, their leadership filled by, among others, a former Catholic priest from Holland named Menno Simons, who joined the movement in 1556. While neither the founder nor the sole leader, Simons' prolific writings and moderate leadership helped unify the Anabaptists, many of whom became known as Mennonites.

Even as the movement gained followers among the rural peasants of Switzerland and south Germany, it lost thousands at the hands of persecutors, most were forced to flee for their lives. Some escaped as far away as Russia, and some of their descendents eventually immigrated to Ontario in the 1920s. The earliest Mennonites to come to Pennsylvania, beginning in 1883, became known as Pennsylvania Dutch, even though they were mostly Swiss-Germans speaking a German dialect, not Flemish or Dutch.

Their linguistic difference from the rest of the settlers was the first crucial element of what was to become a distinct and coherent culture, linked to church tradition and critical to the survival of the Mennonites as a group. Indeed, in recent years some Old Order church leaders have been criticized for being more concerned with maintaining tradition than preaching salvation. That criticism — even as voiced by fellow Mennonites — underlines the church's role in preserving and defining the distinctive cultural aspects of the Old Order Mennonites. And it reinforces the observations of other Mennonite commentators who distinguish the Mennonites from other Christian sects, such as Methodists or Presbyterian, because they live apart in society and culture peculiar to themselves. Of course, the Old Order church leaders did not themselves create this culture; they merely preserve it. Like any other cultural phenomenon, it was born
To the outsider, the visible differences of clothing and transportation are all cultural and social, but they have an underlying religious significance. The Old Order Mennonites sometimes seem preoccupied with preserving appearances, but their reasons are based on doctrinal interpretation. And even among Mennonites themselves (even various Old Order Mennonites), the interpretations are subject to dispute. For a people so historically cohesive, the political security of the New World in turn came to threaten their social integrity and cultural order.

As a result of differences within the Ontario Mennonite Conference, a body dating back to 1820, the Old Order Mennonite group was formed in 1889. The issues that brought about its formation included evening services, religious education, and Sunday School (potentially offensive because it had the effect of removing responsibility for Christian instruction from the home). It was at this time that a distinctive dress code was adopted and frozen. Thus, the clothing of Old Order Mennonites represents a late 19th century version of a dress that has been adopted and frozen. Both religious and social non-conformists, Mennonites throughout their history have renounced worldly vanities as a symbolic gesture. For example, mustaches had long been associated with the military, and these were consequently forbidden. Collars and lapels were a stylish excess of cloth that likewise flaunted the austere edicts of "plain dress." But even so, the finer points seem almost incomprehensible to the outsider. Why is a watch acceptable in the pocket but not on the wrist? Why is a phone in the house unacceptable, while using a pay phone or keeping a phone at work does go unremarked?

Some question these traditions, and those who disagree sometimes part company with neighbors or even families. Dave Brubacher is the youth minister at the St. Jacobs (Ontario) Mennonite Church. As he recalls, "My grandfather was a farmer and drove a horse and buggy. But on my mother’s side of the family, due to a split that occurred in the forties, the farther drove a car. My father was never a farmer; he worked in the feed-milling industry, and he quit driving the buggy when he was counting my mother." But the Brubacher car was still painted black, while now Dave’s own car is red.

The modern-day Mennonite groups coexist amicably, having more in common doctrinally than their visible cultural differences might suggest. All of them still abide by the principles of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith, adopted in 1632. And no matter how they travel to market, the principles of pacifism and nonresistance are still intact.

The St. Jacobs Mennonite Church is representative of the relatively progressive Ontario Mennonite Conference, yet it is still quite austere in appearance, with plain wooden pews and an unadorned interior. An upright piano stands in a corner, while its presence marks a difference between progressive and Old Order groups, it is nonetheless used spar-ingly, for preludes and postludes rather than to accompany singing.

If frills in the church are frowned upon, then higher education has long posed the question of learning for purely pragmatic purposes versus learning for its own sake. For Old Order Mennonites education ceases at the age of 14, in Grade 8. The Old Order groups do not oppose formal education, but they do object to many of the directions and pursuits of modern education. On principle they seem to distrust a superficiality of education; reading, writing and arithmetic — the basic skills to run a farm and conduct business — are enough.

In a society that regards movies as corrupting, radio and television go unheard and unseen and reading material itself tends to be relegated to a basic minimum in the average Old Order household. The bookshelf might contain a copy of the Bible, and a few periodicals, such as Mennonite Mirror (a 17th century Dutch compendium of Christian martyrology), and a hymnal, but precious little secular literature such as novels or poetry.

Mathias Martin, a Mennonite hat-maker in Havelock, Ont., is something of a local character, and he readily relinquishes his workbench to chat with strangers. His shop is on the main street of the local chamber of commerce’s guided tour. The latter is tactfully promoted in a brochure at the Meetingplace information centre in St. Jacobs. And so in spite of self-imposed isolation, the Mennonites have almost become a tourist attraction. The best-known local feature is the Kitchener farmers’ market, which offers a common ground for Old Order Mennonites and fashionable city folk to mingle. Meanwhile, the Meetingplace uses films, audiovisual displays, a cheery farmhouse kitchen and a walk—in model of one of the Swiss cases that housed the 16th century Mennonite fugitives to tell the Mennonite story to an attentive audience of interested visitors. It’s all done with restraint and good taste, and there’s not a hint of commercial exploitation. The Old Order Mennonites have no objections to letting people know who they are and who they live the way they do. After all, the Mennonites have proved that a society can practice cultural separateness and still be good neighbors with the surrounding community. And most remarkably, their separatism from the norm both endures and prosper, even while it offers the possibilities of various degrees of assimilation. It seems to have accomplished so peacefully that “the quiet in the land,” as the Old Order regard themselves, might be best expressed for the clop-clop and sizzle of a metal-rimmed buggy on a country road. Or the uncanny sight of an Old Order mother and daughter strolling down the main street of Elmira, justa—pos with the town women wearing pleated tops and shorts. If they feel any self-consciousness, it’s well under control. And if it weren’t against their church teachings, they might almost appear proud.
The last time I saw summer

BY DICK BROWN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HUNTLEY BROWN

The rain came down all night and soaked everything. It soaked the tent and the firewood and a couple of jackets and some towels we'd left hanging from the branch of an old, dead birch. We'd put our shoes and a box of groceries beneath the big camp table, but a stream of water had flooded around them and they were soaked. We were up early to catch the ferry from Saint John to Digby, and when we crawled out of the tent, the rain was still streaming down. In a moment we were all soaked, too.

There were five of us — my wife and I and our three children, the youngest seven and the oldest 12 — and we all pitched in and worked as fast as we could, but it still took three-quarters of an hour to get the tent down and load it, along with our soggy belongings, into the car. When we finally pulled away from the camp, we were drenched, chilled, tired, hungry, angry with one another — and it looked as though we'd miss the ferry.

Looking back over the past 10 years of holidays, that day stands out as the worst — but it also sticks in my mind as one of the very best days. Most importantly, it illustrates a couple of truths about holidays that more of us ought to think about when we go out crisscrossing the country and trying to get a look at the Peace Tower or Peggy's Cove or Lake Louise.

The first truth is that the highlights of holidays — the Peace Towers and the Peggy's Cove — are not true highlights at all. The things that matter, the points we'll remember years to come, are the little bits and pieces of the traveling day, the discoveries and adversities and the minor triumphs. Learning that every hotel in Quebec City is jammed, then winding up in a little rooming house that gives you the best rooms of the entire holiday and at the lowest prices. Losing your way in Calgary and coming across a little drive-in that makes the best hamburgers in the whole country. Getting so hot on the highway heading across Manitoba that you're sure you'll die, then finding a picnic ground beside a deep, cool swimming hole.

The second truth about holidays (which is closely related to the first truth) is that the most enjoyable moments come in the course of overcoming some problem. Miserable is the best word to describe our situation that morning as we drove the dozen or so kilometres to the ferry dock in Saint John. It was four years ago, but I still remember our utter despondency, edging through a thick, oozing fog along a slippery highway. Cars seemed to pop out of the muck right in front of us, and we had at least three dangerously close calls.

But we reached the ferry in time — and wished that we hadn't. The stormy crossing took two and a half hours, and my wife and two of our three children were sick. Then, when we got off at Digby, we began the 240-kilometre drive to Halifax. I had to be there that night, because I was working on a magazine article and I had an interview in the city right after the following morning. We were so tired that we could barely keep awake. At lunch, which was a culinary disaster, I fell asleep against the side of the booth in the little restaurant.

We were about 80 kilometres out of the way.
Halifax when the change began. First of all, the weather cleared. One moment we were driving through the downpour that had been pelting us all day, the next moment we were in a gentle drizzle, and a minute after that, a bright, afternoon sun burst out, and the highway suddenly was dry. The orchards of the Annapolis Valley sparkled, and a guy on a tractor waved at us from the shoulder of the road. Our spirits began to perk up.

The second thing that cheered us was that we were nearing the end of the day’s journey and we were looking forward to the luxury of baths and soft beds and a good dinner—all the things we’d missed during the past four days of camping. We picked our way through the streets until we reached a downtown hotel, where we inquired about rooms.

Down went our spirits. The desk clerk told the fellow ahead of us that he was sorry; not only was this particular hotel full, but he couldn’t think of a single hotel anywhere in the city that might have a room. There was a convention and . . . The fellow ahead of us left—and just at that moment, the phone rang. A cancellation. A pair of newlyweds had called—wanted. Away went our spirits.

We were so hungry that we left our bags and walked up the road in search of a restaurant that the desk clerk recommend-ed. It looked sort of shabby, but it turned out to be absolutely great. Wonderful food. Friendly people. Inexpensive. We all had spaghetti, and the sauce was thick and rich, the bread fluffy, and there was plenty of butter.

We went back to the hotel and wallowed in the rooms. They had thick shag carpets, and the TVs were worked, and the showers were hot. My wife and I had bought some magazines, so we lay back on the beds to read for a bit—and dropped right off. I woke up about 4 a.m., and had to get up to turn off the histifying TVs in both rooms. My family looked as though they’d been zapped on some ray gun, dropping in their tracks. My wife still wore her glasses; they were askew across her nose. The three children hadn’t even made it under the covers; two were sprawled across beds, and my youngest son was asleep in a chair. On every face there was a smile.

We saw Citadel Hill the next day, but my kids barely remember it. Halifax will always mean thick shag rugs and gushing showers and sleep at last. We told the fellow ahead of us, “Remind New Brunswicker that there is a large dog, sitting there with a certain easy nonchalance, leaning casually into the turn.

They recall the models of the sail-ing ship. They remember that the park at Marriott, Que., on the south coast, was not the most memorable for many reasons. The one that stands out is the sinister-looking lookout tower.

He rolled into the camp late, about 7:30 p.m., and his big hub of a safety helmet striking the wall a bit, the drinky darkness, and the body in P.E.I. seemed to know a good place to dig for clams, but every spot we located turned out to be either inaccessible or dug out. We’d heard, naturally, about how clams spit water up through the sand in tell-tale spots. We kept looking . . . and looking. No spoons. No clams. Finally we gave up and went down to the cottage, when we came across a couple of girls on bikes and we couldn’t help but ask, “Hey girls, do you know where Clams? Sure. In the beach half a kilometre down that road.

Then he set the table for dinner, laying out a soup, a fork, a large hunting knife, which he slipped in its leather case, and a tin mug (the kids you see in old movies about pirates). They were squished quite a bit, but they knew they were delicious. They were served with homemade blueberry pie, both from a farmhouse nearby. I asked my daughter just the other day if she could describe Anne of Green Gables’ house near Cavendish in P.E.I. (we visited it twice), and I found she’d forgotten most of it. But she still recalls the white farmhouse down the road from our cottage, the one with the big yellow shutter that opens up the sun, the woman who can sell you those hot loaves of bread, and pies and cakes and muffins, too. “I even remember when the bread was ready to be used,” my daughter added. “Eleven-thirty. Just in time for lunch.”

“Right. And you’d be amazed at how well they remember the Cabot Trail. Not the splendor of the scenery, with the extravagant vistas of cliffs shoot-ing up from the ocean; not the great road that winds and soars and dips. They remember the couple on the motorcycle (it had a Manitoba licence) who had a flat wooden box attached to their bike, above the rear wheel, and in the box was a large dog, sitting there with a certain easy nonchalance, leaning casually into the turn.

We saw the Golden Boy atop the Manitoba Legislature, but my kids have a much more vivid picture of the province. They remember that, an overheating engine that plagued us for a couple of days and that we had to fix, and they also recall that the stove was really hot and that the stove was really hot and that the stove was really hot and that the stove was really hot. Then, near Portage la Prairie, we stopped at a service station where they really cared. The fellow said, sure, he could fix things. And his wife said we ought to let her make us a sandwich while we waited. And he did fix the car. And she did make us some chicken sandwiches. When my kids saw a licence plate today with that slogan, “Friendly Manitoba,” they say, “Remember the people at the garage?” Indeed I do.

Our family remembers the moun-tains of British Columbia, but ask our kids about Vancouver and you’ll hear not a word about the beauty of the peaks that surround the city. Instead they’ll list for you every single item you can order from room service at one of the downtown hotels. They know because all three of them bought some bug spray in Vancouver, and they had to spend two days in bed in the hotel. While their mother and father took in Stanley Park and Blooded Conserv-a-tory, the kids hung there in on cho-colate sundaes. My daughter also remembers Vancouver for Nancy Drew books, which she received three of, and then she tells us that everyone ships something in less than 15 minutes.

We saw the Peace Tower in Ottawa? I ask, “Sure,” my younger son replies. “Ottawa is where those swim flipperers.”

The best days for holiday memories is in the middle of winter. One day last January, when there was a bit of a chill in the house, my wife reached under the bed and brought out the old, beaten-up jacket she wears in the summers. She put it on and showed it to me, and we both knew it was a child’s jacket, and in that moment before we laughed, I swear we heard the ocean.
In Closing

The other evening, just past dark, while I was alone in the house listening to one of those damp winds that always come at this time of year, I turned on the radio in my study and picked up a faraway station where they were talking about friendship, how it's on the way out because nobody bothers any more. I began to think I should call them long distance to tell them about the Bellette Club in Toronto, a group of men who, more than 50 years ago, began a club that's been going strong ever since, doing a lot of interesting things, the most interesting of which is keeping up their friendships with each other through the good and bad times for more than half a century.

"We started as teenagers," one of the very first members, James Grand, has said, "and are now what we would have considered old men at that time. I doubt if any organization we belong to stands so high in our esteem. And the bond is friendship."

A while ago I phoned Grand, who became the head of his well-known family firm, Grand & Toy, the stationers, and I asked if I might spend some time with him — especially since he is the club historian as well as an original member — to hear about the club. Not just how it began but how it managed to survive so many years, even through the war, based so much on something so intangible as friendship.

Grand is a big man, with large, cheerful eyes, and when he took me to his study and sat me down amid all the folders and photos of the Bellette Club's past he seemed a man ready to talk of a lifelong love, and also a man who, as he looked at me, might well have regarded me as a bit of an oddity, a writer hoping to have something revealed to him — the source of friendship — that is indefinable, just as it is priceless.

"It was in the autumn of 1930," he said, "and a number of us — four or five, I guess — were members of a Sunday school class in a church here in Toronto, and the time came when we were old enough to move up from Sunday school to what used to be called the Young Men's Bible Class. Well, the leader, whose name was Jim Plaxton, got the idea that we might form a literary club, and he suggested holding a meeting to discuss the formation of a club. Seven boys turned up. A sample constitution was read, and we were under way as the Rosedale Young Men's Literary Club. This was changed a couple of years later to the Bellette Club, whose objective, stated in the constitution, has remained to this day: 'the fostering of friendship among its members, the mutual improvement of its members in literary knowledge, public speaking and debate.'" From the desk behind him, Grand picked up the book containing the minutes of that first meeting on October 22, 1930, signed by himself as secretary. The last sentence reveals something of the rather serious teenage boys, some just past their 15th birthday, who gathered that evening: "After the business was finished the meeting adjourned to the upstairs room, where there was an impromptu debate contest." Since last year's friendship is the first purpose of the club, it has always been a bit selective in admitting members, though only in order to keep things compatible. Thus, even in its peak years of membership, in the late thirties, there were only 25. In those days and later, a member could invite a visitor to a meeting, and at the next session they've been held every two weeks except during the summer; the rest of the members could, by unanimous consent, invite him to join. "It is somewhat difficult," says Grand, "to become a member of the Bellette Club, but after becoming a member it is vastly more difficult, in fact almost impossible, to resign." Now, after 50 years, the club membership has settled at about 20, some having moved, some having died. But only two remain of that original group that met in October 1930 — James Grand himself and Les O’Brian, a former company president now retired in Aurora, Ont. When Grand talks about what the club "has accomplished" he says, quite modestly, "I'm sure, that it is very little if you mean credits that can be listed on the wall in the form of plaques or trophies, but in terms of the things immeasurable the accomplishments are of "inestimable value." He means friendships that have accompanied boys into youth, youth into manhood and manhood into old age. Here, he says, is a group photo taken when they were in their teens, another photo of them as young men on the way up, another of them when they were in mid-life and now, finally, the most recent, of a group made smaller by the years, men with silver hair and the dignity of age.

Still, deep friendships don't deepen in thin air. They require — almost the way a vine requires a trellis — something to grow upon. In the case of the Bellette Club that hasn't been bowling or squash or euchre, but the play of the mind and the wit, mostly through visiting speakers or debates between their own members. On the evening of February 26, 1956, Sir Frederick Basting was their guest, speaking on Russia. But an even more provocative and historic meeting must have been the one on February 9, 1959, when the club (joined for the evening by members of a companion group called the Cameron Club), by then young men on their way into business and finance, invited Tim Buck, the fiery spokesman for communism in Canada, to give them a lecture. The minutes of that meeting leave much to imagine: "The President called on Mr. Tim Buck, the secretary of the Communist Party in Canada, who addressed the meeting for an hour and a half on the principles of communism as described by Karl Marx ... . There followed a period of discussion in which Mr. Buck took on all comers for an hour ... ."

Perhaps, however, even that evening wasn't as filled with sparks as the one held a few years earlier, when the members staged a debate on a resolution that must have set off a controversy at home if not in the club: "Resolved that women have attained too prominent a position in the present social and economic system." Then, of course, there was that night in the thirties when, while still youngsters, they held a debate on free trade in the British Empire. "There was a mix-up," says the minutes of that night, "and both speakers argued for the same side. All the members joined in on the subject, and after a long discussion the affirmative won."

I think we ought to be grateful for groups like the Bellette Club. A few years ago, when time and age began to thin the ranks of the club, the members decided that their president should be authorized to acquire a bottle of vintage wine, setting it aside for that day — a year or many years hence — when only two members are still alive. As it happened, the president chose a bottle of brandy circa 1900. Then, after serious deliberation among parliamentary lines, the members decided that it should be left unopened until (a) the first meeting in the autumn of the year 2000, when the club will be 70 years old and the brandy 100 years old, or (b) before that year, if the days come when only two members remain. Whenever the evening comes and the members of the Bellette Club raise their glasses, they will do it. I'm sure, with rare and special gratitude for what the club has meant to their lives. Still, I like to think that, in a way they may not realize, their club has meant something for the rest of us. For in keeping their friendships with each other so deep and so long, they have helped to keep friendship for us all. ❑

Kem Breull