HISTORY’S WATERWAY
Every second Wednesday morning in Calgary, Canada's oil and gas industry observes a ritual that is as peculiar to the industry as it is vital to the companies involved.

From the offices of oil companies all over the city, couriers make their various ways, before noon, to the Seventh Avenue offices of a certain government agency. The couriers carry sealed envelopes containing, along with other documents, certified cheques for thousands — and sometimes millions — of dollars. The couriers hand the envelopes over the counter to an officer of the government, then return to their own offices and wait. They wait until the following morning, Thursday, when their companies learn if the projects into which they may have invested months of planning and many thousands of dollars can go ahead or must be abandoned.

It may sound like payoff day at some western Tammany Hall, but of course it's not. What it's all about is land — land acquisition. The occasion is the biweekly Crown land sale conducted by the lands division of the Alberta department of energy and natural resources. The ritual is the submission of sealed bids for the
rights to explore for oil and gas on the Crown lands of Canada's most oil-rich provinces. Land, or more specifically the right to explore, drill and produce on the most promising land blocks, is considered the key to any oil company. "Oil is found in the minds of men," said longtime oil company executive. "Precedent is a major factor in the minds of a few men who believed in it — and most of those men worked for independent oil companies."

Imperial's involvement in western Canadian exploration began in 1912, when it leased 40 square miles of geologists to the Turner Valley, southwest of Calgary, the site of a wildcat oil well. Between 1920 and 1946 the company drilled 133 dry holes in succession. As many as nine drilling rigs were kept on the move. The company spent $23 million and had only the small, remote Norman Wells field to show for it. As Canada's oil industry, of a daily consumption of 220,000 barrels of crude oil a day, Canada imported 200,000. Then, in mid-afternoon on February 13, 1947, on the Dominion Day holiday, Alberta, southeast of Edmonton, the biggest event in Canadian oil history took place. The Imperial Oil well known as Leduc No. 1, a gush of oil into the earth, and the modern Canadian oil industry was born. The landmark discovery of oil at Leduc came as more than a realisation of a long-held dream. Further drilling confirmed the existence of Devonian Reef hydrocarbons and reservoir geological structures — the kind of formations that could contain massive amounts of oil — in western Canada. Now that they knew what they were looking for, geologists and geophysicists could recognize these structures and predict which are oil producers and which are not.
well itself. If the scout could come up with evidence the other company had struck oil, then all that the company had to do was lease land around the producing well, and as fast as possible.

Scouts today may not be the romantic — not to say foolhardy — individuals they sometimes appeared in the wild and woolly days when western Canada was almost totally unexplored and scouting tracks were mere paths through the woods trying to get close enough to a wildcat well to see clearly while staying out of scattergun range. But they still exist.

Dan Jardine, a senior petroleum scientist with Esso Resources who has spent a career in western exploration, says: "A good scout can tell an incredible amount of information just by standing off and observing through a telescope or a good pair or binoculars. He can tell how deep you've drilled, what kinds of rock formations you've been through, what you've found, if anything — even the water content and the rates at which the well flows."

Today, competition in the western oil and gas exploration industry is even more intense than in the post-Leduc years, when huge pools of oil were being discovered and major fields were being brought into production.

The major fields in the Southern Basin have probably all been discovered. In fact it is estimated that as much as 85 percent of all the oil that exists in western Canada has already been found. New reserves may be discovered, but generally speaking, the risk may be greater for minor companies with much smaller operations than for the big players. Higher costs are usually associated with the exploration of deeper strata, and the risk of finding a successful discovery is lower. However, the rewards are greater if a significant finding is made.

The spring winds from the prairie sharpen the edge of expectancy in Shaunavon, Sask., every March. For many families the high point of the year is now — it's mud season, that time when the country is a sea of mud. Every spring Shaunavon is possessed by festival fever. Last year, with a population of 2,700, the Shaunavon festival pulled in 375 entries. Everybody who can make it packs the stands. This year, tickets are $2 each, and the line-up is exciting. In addition to the usual musical events, there are also art shows, craft fairs, and a variety of other activities. Shaunavon's passion for the festival is typical of many communities in Canada's West, where the festival movement in North America was born and remains strong.

Many adult Canadians can hardly recall their childhood without reference to the annual music festivals in the early years of their lives. Some of these festivals were started by local schools and communities in response to the popularity of rock and roll music. Others were organized by local musicians and bands who wanted to provide a venue for their performances. Whatever the personal experiences, most of us grew up with a love of music, and the festivals provided an opportunity to share this passion with others.

The origin of the festival movement in Canada is generally attributed to Governor General Earl Grey, a man who was particularly interested in promoting the arts and culture in the country. Grey's interest in music and the arts led him to support the development of musical education and the establishment of music schools and festivals across the country. His vision was that music should be an integral part of the cultural life of the nation, and he believed that festivals could play a significant role in fostering this cultural inheritance.

The festivals that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s were often grassroots affairs, started by local musicians and enthusiasts who wanted to provide a space for their music to be heard. Many of these festivals were held in outdoor locations, such as parks, beaches, and squares, and were free or low-cost to attend. As the festivals grew in popularity, they began to attract major artists and international tours, and their impact on the Canadian music scene was significant.

Today, music festivals continue to thrive and evolve, offering a diverse range of musical styles and acts. They provide a platform for emerging artists to showcase their talents and for established performers to connect with audiences in unique and intimate settings. The festivals also serve as a catalyst for community engagement, bringing together people from all walks of life to celebrate music and culture.

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me cover story by Deirdre O'Connor

Melodies of spring

Notes on Canada's music festivals

BY PATRICK DONOHUE
Shocked when she was urged to agree that elimination of competition would result in lower standards. Sir Ernest MacMillan offered his erudite and inclusive approach. "MacMillan's comedy, "Any ambition, teacher or parent will gain or lose according to his attitude toward the experience. . . . He will naturally dote on his own. If he has been wisely instructed, will not make that his sole aim." MacMillan's personal involvement and administrative efforts of festivals was impressive. "In one Canadian city I attended 130 adjudicators' meetings and heard five or six reports. . . . In other words, the success of the festival in the memories of many Canadians, Sir Ernest was the ideal adjudicator, combining wisdom and sound pedagogy with warmth, understanding, and humor. Adjudicator well known for his skill at boasting the morale of students, Margaret Grant of Toronto, says, "You have to take time to show them that you really have them in mind, that you value them." In her book, Your Child's Music: What to do about it, however, Grant warns parents against taking festivals too seriously. "If you merely expect to be heard, you can prepare a piece and play it as planned, she says, comparable to learning to drive a car. "At a child does very badly in the festival, even much worse than expected," says Grant, "this is not an all opportunity for family solidarity, to show that the child is valued in the world." After all, points out Kathleen Keple, executive director of the Saskatchewan Music Festivals Association, when young children perform the judges are looking for potential. . . . "The performance is a Mozart-like prodigy (though the judges would be happy to find one)." The educator becomes a little tougher, however, as the contestants grow older. Adjudicators evaluate four aspects of a performance, explains Keple: adherence to the text, musicianship, interpretation and style. "These last two call for judgment," she says, "and that's why we need good adjudicators. You can't just plug the performance into computer and come up with a mark. Interpretation is also abundant," adds David Sawyer, a prominent Kiwanian who as marshall at the Toronto festival has a chance to observe exciting young people before the performances. "The performers who perform the best are usually the easiest to handle. They have an inner drive, a spark that shows their music." Part of the reason for that the adjudicators are there is because of the performance is competing against others at the same level. This reason, most especially among the top 15 adjudicators, is that the categories based on age and experience. Smyth notes that at the top of the hierarchy are the three different classes for Grade 10 bands alone. Of course, the extent of the competition is not always going to be in the same class. The solo categories are slightly different: there are different categories of different levels, and it's all in the same class. Some of the adjudicators are carefully chosen to suit the performers' level of development. Many prominent Canadian music festivals today treasure their reputation for being friendly. "Festival X," one adjudicator, must make it clear each fact or she's at the same level of development. In addition, the composition is played or sung by the young musicians are carefully chosen to suit the performers' level of development.

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The flow of history

Drifting down the Rideau

BY R.A.J. PHILLIPS

For those who have survived their share of centennial celebrations, there is disquieting news ahead. This summer Canada is marking a 150th anniversary of national importance.

In May 1832, Colonel John By, with his wife, Esther, and two daughters, sailed aboard the steamship Rideau from Kingston to Ottawa (then known as Bytown) to mark the official opening of the Rideau Canal. Their voyage was the climax of an extraordinary phase of nation building and the start of a new era in the development of Upper Canada. It was also the beginning of the old story of a triumphant defence project that withered and almost died at the end of its first century. Well into its second, the Rideau has been reborn as the nation's largest heritage site and an enormously popular summer playground.

Even in the 18th century, imaginative minds were conjuring up a waterway that would join the eastern end of the Great Lakes to the Ottawa River, but these were distant dreams comparable to speculation today on damming the Bering Straits to warm the Arctic. It was the Duke of Wellington who gave the lead the political drive needed to make it a reality.

The plan was simple and bold. During the War of 1812, the vulnerability of British North America to invasion became painfully evident. A small force could easily march north to the upper St. Lawrence River and cut Upper Canada's only link to the motherland. The only safe defence was an alternative water route far enough inland to frustrate surprise attacks. That route would be from Montreal, up the Ottawa River to the present-day capital, then southeast about 196 kilometres to Kingston, where the St. Lawrence flows out of Lake Ontario.

The Ottawa River section was relatively simple; it was within easy access of Montreal on a well-known route, and the few locks needed presented no major engineering problems. The Rideau was another story. Surveys had indicated the probable route up the Rideau River from near its mouth, where Ottawa now stands, across the island-dotted Rideau Lakes, then down the Cataract River to its outlet at Kingston. On a map that looks easy, in reality it meant that vessels would have to climb 84 metres from the Ottawa River to go over a piece of the Great Canadian Shield, then drop 49 metres in Lake Ontario. There would have to be 17 locks, 24 dams and 29 kilometres of artificial channels. Some of the dams would have to be among the largest ever built.

Neither the map nor today's placid landscape gives much idea of the challenge facing the builders. The rocks of the pre-Cambrian shield are a million years old and reputed to be the hardest in the world. But far worse was the seemingly endless series of residential marshes along the whole route. There was no experienced labour force, no local industry, no significant settlements nearby for supplies. Nowhere in North America had such magnitude been seriously contemplated. Historian Wilfrid Eggleston has noted that the work was undertaken "without much more technology than the builders of Stonehenge commanded"; he might have added that the Drudges did not have a bureaucracy in Whitehall to concern with Robert Leget, chronicling "the locks and control dams on a scale previously unheard of," called it "one of
the great engineering works of the last century. It was a great dream but seemingly a foolish one.

Then Colonel John By of the Royal Engineers brought it all to pass.

Never Canada was fortunate in having the right man in the right place, 1856 was the year. By, who first came to Canada in 1862, had spent several years working on the fortifications at Quebec City and canal construction just above Montreal. He was an experienced and uncommonly able engineer, meticulous, forceful, imaginative. He was also an administrator, patient and fair in the handling of the long succession of contracts, claims and occasional attempts at larceny. He was a man of vision, fortitude and remarkable determination. Fortunately many of these qualities were also found in Lord Dalhousie, governor-in-chief of the colonies when work began.

On September 23, 1856, the two men met at Hull and looked across to the future Parliament Hill. It was not a cheering sight. A cliff, thickly covered with beech and hickory, soared 25 meters above the river’s edge. Somehow boats would have to climb it. Beyond it was bush so thick that it would take John MacLaughlin, Colonel By’s clerk of works, eight days to walk the first eight kilometers. Near the end of MacLaughlin’s journey was Dow’s Great Swamp, a deep bog of tangled cedars so large that serious thought was given to cutting it by an aerial canal built on their trunks. Then came the Hogs Back, where the canal would first meet the Rideau River, a deep cascade of rock which could be passed only by building an 18-meter-high dam, unheard of in North America at the time.

And all this was in the first eight kilometers. From the beginning, even the bureaucrats of Whitehall recognized that the project would be enormously expensive. The original estimate was £575,000, but the final cost proved to be £600,000.

That was only a part of the cost. The human suffering was incalculable. No one knows how many worked on the canal, let alone how many died during construction. Possibly as many as 1,000 men and their families may have succumbed to malaria, smallpox, diphtheria, cholera, tuberculosis, and unknown sicknesses. Collectively they were building a lasting memorial, but their own graves were soon reclaimed by the dense underbrush.

In the northern section of the canal, many woodsmen from Quebec adapted their skills to building cribwork for the masts or the massive lock gates. On the whole project, most of the workers were Irish immigrants always living in poverty and never quite escaping it. They swarmed west from the disease-ridden streets of Montreal harbor to take their chances in the wilderness; unprepared, they often lost. Stonemasons of Scottish background were established in the colonies where they had begun to build the lasting beauty of each town as Perth and Kingston; others were brought from Wales. All these workers were in the hire of contractors responsible for given works or sections of the route.

Building began in 1857. Thomas Mackay, a Scottish stonemason, had the contract for the flight of eight locks from the Ottawa River to day’s Confederation Square. Mackay had experience building the Lachine Canal, but no one had ever tried anything of this magnitude. This difficult part was successfully, and almost uneventfully, built. So was the reputation of Mackay, who went on to construct many buildings of the future capital, including Rideau Hall, residence of the Governor General.

Next, the incredible rush was methodically tamed, and with enormous effort Dow’s Great Swamp was drained and flooded to become Dow’s Lake. But before the Hogs Back yielded, there were moments of high drama when the whole project seemed in jeopardy. The Hogs Back Dam, well inside modern Ottawa, was to be the third highest in the world. Work started in 1867 and continued throughout the bitterest winter weather. When the spring floods came, less than an hour was needed to sweep away all the backbreaking efforts of a year. Neither the contractor nor the engineers understood the mechanics of frozen clay soils. They started again. On March 17, 1868, Colonel By impulsively reported that the new dam, within two months of completion, was “perfectly out of danger.” On April 3 he was urgently summoned to the site where, from the middle of the dam, he took charge of the frantic efforts to control the wildly mounting flood. Suddenly he “felt a motion like an earthquake, and instantly ordered the men to run, the stones falling under my feet as I moved off.” With a noise resembling thunder, “a third of the dam was carried away.

The third time the dam held, and 152 spring torrents have since smashed ineffectually against it.

Although undoubtedly the most dramatic episode of construction, it is doubtful that Bs would classify it as the most difficult. That distinction might belong to the section of land separating Rideau Lake and Newboro Lake. By and his workers increased the natural channel between the two lakes by blasting and raised the water level by building a dam across Rideau Lake. This is where malaria and the other epidemics were at their worst. Only a generation later, the railway builders would have the advantage of powerful explosives. But Bs’ workers attacked the rock with hand-held
chisels. It could take three men up to a full day to chip out a hole less than a meter deep. It was then filled with gunpowder and blown by inexperienced hands. The loss of limbs or life was commonplace. Then other Irish workers manhandled the fragments of rock into harnessed wooden boats to be dragged haltingly over the rough paths. Meanwhile, the hammering had started on another hole, the constant tapping never ceasing until the canal was done.

When the By's made their final journey down the Rideau, all these major problems had been solved. A great sentimental dinner was rendered on the eve of their departure from Kingston, and their passage was a long and noisy triumph. At Smith's Falls the citizens waited all night for By's coming, but in their enthusiasm they overloaded the welcoming cannon. It blew up. That might have been an omen.

At the end of the journey was the young community already called Bytown. By had been its founder, developer, and manager, an accomplishment for which, apart from all else, he merited lasting recognition. Although he never said so, he may well have expected promotion to a general and perhaps a knighthood in recognition of his empire building. Before he returned to England, he acquired land in Bytown with the evident intention of settling there when his military days were ended. It was not to be. The official inquiry into canal finances produced nothing more damning than a field officer's impatience with the pace of bureaucratic decision making. But it left a cloud, and honors never came. By died in his Sussex village in 1836.

The colonials who had lionized him in florid prose and dashing verse soon forgot. It was 140 years until a statue was at last erected in his honor in Ottawa. It will be much longer until his name is recognized everywhere as a builder of Canada.

Bytown prospered and a generation later became the capital, with the name of Ottawa. The canal was no longer a fragile thread through swamp and bush; it was a link for the widening band of settlements and farms that the canal made possible. It was thick with traffic—one barges and steamboats bringing in supplies or exporting the produce of the farms, log rafts starting a journey to Europe, cruisers carrying passengers in high fashion. In 1850 there were 30 steamers in Rideau service.

The railways, the highways, and the improvements to navigation in the St. Lawrence River changed all that, but the Rideau resisted competition for a surprisingly long time. In 1877 Prime Minister Mackenzie was premature in stating that the usefulness of the Rideau Canal was almost at an end, that it was "neither useful nor ornamental." Just before World War I, 25,000 people annually sailed through the locks. Then began a serious decline; by the 1950s the canal was virtually deserted. With the departure of the Ottawa in 1935, all the passengers were gone.

The centennial of the canal in 1932 had been oddly marked by a debate in the House of Commons in which its closing was urged to save the cost of maintenance. That could easily have happened, but no one was sure what would happen to all the water in the canal and lakes. It might have flooded some constituents.

Rebirth began with mid-20th-century affluence, which added a new dimension to summer recreation. The waterway became the playground of eastern Ontario and of yachtsmen from as far as the Gulf of Mexico. Government responded to this popularity in the early 1970s by making welcome changes. Parks Canada took over the canal with a mandate to protect and enhance its heritage, an objective in which it has been gratifyingly successful. The National Capital Commission (NCC), a federal agency charged with improvement of the capital, got an effective and flamboyant new chairman who awoke the canal from its winter death watch. When the skating rink experiment was about to begin, there was no public hint of nervousness, but NCC staff made discreet pleas to those of us who had lobbed for the venture to get all our friends and relatives on the ice that first Sunday, just to show some public interest in the chairman's irrepressible venture. We did. The only trouble was that, by mid-afternoon, the ice was so thick with skaters it was almost impossible to get on the rink. Ottawa has never looked back.

Soon the short rink became the 7-kilometer stretch from the National Arts Centre to Carleton University, the world's longest skating rink. As in the past, the canal is largely disused in autumn to reduce winter damage and permit repairs. In November the walkways and changing huts are lowered to the surface. By early December all manner of mechanical equipment fans out: plows, blowers, brushes, drills to make holes in the ice and pumps to bring up the water to spout the surface. They work day and night, and in the 10 years of the rink they have never found the canal empty of people. The dark hours bring out lovers in quiet communion and diplomats from warier climes, practicing their uncertain technique in the friendly anonymity of night. As many as 100,000 skaters have used the rink on a single day. And now skating has come to other canal towns.

As with so many others lucky enough to live near the canal, skating gave our winter workdays a new dimension. I could lace up in the house,

Prosperity followed in the wake of the canal, and with it a sense of graceful serenity that still lingers in such towns as Merrickville and Burritt's Rapids.
walk awkwardly a short block to the canal stairway and past other black- overcast bucaniers with briefcases for the two-kilometre glide downtown. We were a large company of all ages and skills, mostly office workers and university students. At the end of the run we sat on the steps or in a changing hut for our transformation: shoes out of the briefcase, skates into it and a short walk in conventional responsibility.

My wife and I have moved out of the city now, into the Gatineau Hills, but others have taken our places. Houses near the canal now have all-season justification for their popularity. John and Nancy Jackson found theirs just in time for last season’s winter skating, and when the ice dissolves under the March sun they can still jog by the canal walls or open up its icy paths for another year. “It’s the only place in Canada to live,” is John’s conclusion.

One cabinet minister began the fashion of paddling to work, an idyllic arrangement that would have become popular had it been possible to stuff a canoe into a briefcase. Canoes and rowboats, moving in lethargic circles, decorate the water in spring and summer. On a weekend in Dow’s Lake, once the unspeakable swamp, sailboats are almost wall to wall.

For longer trips through the canal, motorboats are overwhelmingly the most popular. They range from small outboard to yachts looking self-consciously expensive and houseboats looking unrealistically shabby. My wife and I prefer the canoe, and over the years we have spent many contented hours on the canal’s waters.

Paddling along the Rideau is one of this country’s great adventures. In places of congregation, like the locks, the show is Canada at play, as on any water where city dwellers work so hard for two weeks to escape working so hard the other 50. It is boats with foreign flags from distant places and lovingly tended outboards from a few locks away. It is rich fields and complacent cows matching the stances of those who pass by. It is cottage country stretching between villages where, in the reign of the young Victoria, houses first clustered around that church and the now-abandoned grist mill. It is the sound of young voices in abandoned places. This summer the main waterways will be even busier, as each community celebrates the canal’s 150th birthday with every kind of event imaginable: regattas, craft shows, picnics, plays and a reenactment of Canada’s last fatal duel.

But the best of the passing scene is in the wake of Colonel By. Even at the height of the summer we found long and deserted channels resting in another century. Sometimes the shores were still untouched by man. Then, in a clearing, a limestone farm cottage appeared. Beyond the unchanging sounds of nature came, from somewhere, a faint echo of pensioned British engineers hurrying down the elm and maple to build their own hope and image of Canada.

In the locks, above all, the past was always present. If we came across a lock station with one of those magnificently arched dams, we would invariably hear the canoe to start at splendid architectural forms once lost in the wilderness. We would reverently read the stones painstakingly chiseled by Welsh stonemasons and numbered in place by British workers. In some places we found a dam built by contractors for whom the canal was a foosle to further fame: Thomas MacKay or Thomas Phillips, who donated Phillips Square to Montreal, or John Redpath, who founded a sugar empire with his profits. The walls of every lock are lined with sandstone or limestone blocks weighting up to a tonne apiece, each skillfully fashioned as for a medieval cathedral.

As the water rises in the lock we see more of the lockmaster’s house, now surrounded by manicured lawns and obedient gardens. The lockmaster’s life has changed with the canal. No longer sitting through harges, rafts, freighters and cruisers by night and day, they have become amateur historians, guide and friends to all who have problems or who simply pause to chat. Roger Galliau, a 20-year veteran of the canal, remarked: “I’ve never had a better job. I like the people I meet, the fresh air and the people I work with, what more can I say?”

The people he works with each summer now include young men and women. They toil at the grudging iron wheels that pull the heavy chains across the stone. The gates open like the curtains on a stage set, a new vista of the Rideau Canal.

Each lock is different and memorable. Some, like Jones Falls, are overpowering in their concept and execution, more like sculpture on a grand scale than works of engineering necessity. Others, such as Kingston Mills or Merrickville where blockhouses still survive, evoke the monotony of garrison duty on the frontier in the days when the Union Jack seemed sometimes to fly uncertainly over Upper Canada.

At one time or another we’ve floated through all of these locks in our canoe. Our mode of travel has its inconveniences, compared to the gracious steam travel of earlier days — sleeping bags inside rather than elegant staterooms, sandwiches munched between strokes instead of sumptuous meals by candlelight. Yet for us the canoe is the most direct route to the past, endlessly following in the wake of Colonel By. We will go up and down the Rideau a hundred times. Someday we will find him.

A sombre reminder of the fate of so many of the canal’s builders

at Newboro, as the waters of the Rideau drift and tumble to their final release at Kingston

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The spectacle of a blast furnace being tapped always inspires a note of awe among visitors to the Steel Company of Canada’s Hilton Works in Hamilton, Ont. White-hot iron cascades like a waterfall of fire, splashing and dancing, transforming the waiting crucible into a whirling cauldron. The radiated heat can be felt 50 metres away.

One afternoon in November 1980, a group of visitors — wearing hard hats and safety glasses provided by Nelo — stared into the bright heat. Now and then one of them would point toward an arc of fire. But mostly they were silent. Dressed in business suits, they looked for the most part like any other group of visitors — perhaps a service club or a government delegation. But they weren’t. Here and there in the group of 48 men was a gleaming clerical collar, the only visible sign of what the group actually was: a delegation of clergymen, spending part of a day seeing firsthand what takes place in a steel mill.

"It’s like watching Mount St. Helens erupt," remarked one man, mesmerized by the iron pouring like glowing water.

"It’s like staring into hell," muttered another.

The visit to Nelo was arranged by an organization called the Confederation of Church and Business People, with headquarters in Toronto and 900 members across Canada, which was created in 1977 in the wake of growing tension between leaders of Canada’s churches and corporations over the policies of the business community at home and abroad. The confederation includes on its board several senior business leaders (such as James W. Kerr, former chief executive officer of TransCanada Pipelines Ltd., and Karl Wildi, a vice-president of Warner Lambert Canada Inc.), as well as some church leaders (such as Canon Duncan Abraham, an Anglican minister in Toronto, and Dr. Robert McClure, a former United Church moderator). The confederation aims, in part, to help church leaders in their efforts to understand more fully the complexities of modern commerce. At the same time, it hopes that through the dialogue, business leaders will better appreciate the legitimate role of the churches in social and economic issues. "I believe in building bridges," says Robert McClure, the former missionary and moderator, who is a staunch confederation advocate. "That’s what the confederation is to me — a bridge to understanding between the churches and the business community."

The division Robert McClure speaks of bridging may be a temporary problem, which time and wisdom will cure. But the conviction that the church has a role in society and should pursue social justice has a noble history in Canada, one that will not and should not go away. A concern for the welfare of others, especially the weak, is part of the essence of the Christian faith. This concern, of course, can take on a variety of expressions, all the way from traditional pastoral work, such as visiting the sick, to more controversial involvement in political affairs. Recently in some parts of the world, notably Latin America, it has carried church workers into political activity of a provocative, sometimes violent kind, which has created deep differences of opinion among Christians everywhere. In Canada in the past decade, it has meant that corporations — banks, mining firms, petroleum companies — have been challenged, often in public, by task forces and coalitions within the churches, who feel the companies aren’t living up to the ethical standards such groups envision for business. The business people, a large proportion of whom are churchgoers, have been hurt by some of the more vitriolic criticism.

A few, unfortunately, left their churches, a response that did little to help resolve the problem, either for the churches or the individuals. A much larger number, while convinced that some of the criticisms were often ill-informed and unrepresentative of opinion even among most church leaders, decided to take a more constructive approach. Thus, in February 1972 several helped form the confederation, which aims to deal with the tension in a calmer way. "We believe," its statement of purpose says, "that all Christians should be committed to furthering a major mission of the church in society — seeking to reform the world’s injustices and to replace discord with harmony . . . ." It went on to say that it hoped to offer expertise, through dialogue with church leaders, in those areas in which it had competence. In its early months it had a hard time with some church leaders, who saw it as an emotional, perhaps reactionary movement out to silence some of the more outspoken church
leaders. "In the beginning," conceives one of the leaders of the Chicago congregation, "a few of our members seemed to be looking for a communist underground, but we have to realize that the movement has now largely passed, as the confederation — now chaired by Ronald Willoughby — is a more realistic and a United Churchman — works hard at becoming an asset to church and society. We cannot just sit by and watch as the situation develops, and then take it as an attack on his ethics and character.

"The churches have benefited greatly from corporate people"

In the spring of 1981, for example, Russell E. Harrison, chairman of the Bank of Commerce and an elder in the United Church, hired a senior management consultant in the bank's Toronto headquarters. The visit took place at a rather tense time in the relationship before the Toronto Conference of the United Church had voted to withdraw its membership in a criticism of the bank's policy. The Commerce, bound by its own principles of confidentiality, was unable to reveal publicly its loan policy toward South Africa. Harrison did not try to hide his in- dignant reaction to the event. "I was a bit angry," recalls one of the visiting ministers, Rev. Robert Murnum of St. George's United Church in Toronto. Harrison said in part: "The financial impact of this decision worries us less than the potential damage to our reputation as a responsible, trustworthy and ethical institution, should these actions go unchallenged." In part, Harrison was also distressed because the bank had just completed a lengthy study of entitled Social Responsibility and Corporate Conduct — on which several of the church boards collaborated.

The problems are made deeper by the differences of the generations and by the fact that the United Church is a mono-cultural group and women of equal integrity may have on the role of the church in society. A third problem is the way in which the churches, believing that, with good faith on all sides, the ten-
The whys of the

An organization with a difference

BY ANTHONY TILLY

When Dick Davis started his first job with the YMCA more than 60 years ago in London, Ont., he noted that some of the teenagers he was working with had musical ability. He asked the logical question: "Why don't you fellows start an orchestra?" Guy Lombardo and his friends took the advice.

By the time the Y transferred him to Montreal in 1929, Davis' advice was a bit more controversial. He organized weekend retreats, discussion groups and lecture series with topics, opinions and speakers that worried many of the Y's leading members. Davis had to face the music at board meetings and private conferences, where he defended his programs and, with a poker player's instinct, offered to resign - an offer that was never accepted.

Today, in his study in a small, countrified pocket of Toronto, Davis sits back, props up the leg that kept him from active service in World War I and enjoys the memory of his 25 years with the Y. "I was, I suppose, something of a maverick," he reflects, "and it's a wonder that they put up with me for so long." Then comes the real explanation of the respect that kept an innovator working for an occasionally exasperated employer: "After all, the Y throughout its history has been a progressive organization, often disturbing the status quo. And so the skirmishes I got involved in are really a normal part of the way it operates."

This comes as a surprise to many Canadians, who, as another Y employee puts it, "picture the Y as a place to bounce basketballs." But if you take a good look at the YMCA and YWCA in Canada, you find a fair number of Dick Davies who have explanations of how two associations older than Confederation have managed to renew themselves and mean a lot to us.

I found one 1980s explanation not too far from where Davis had worked in the twenties. In the West Island, a group of suburbs west of downtown Montreal, an expropriated, decrepit-looking building stands between a highway and some empty fields. At one end its two storied hold a few offices and multicolored rooms; the rest looks like a large garage. But on borrowed time until the highway expands, after school and on Saturdays, the fields behind turn into an oval, humpy track. On wet days the earth is not just soft; it is pushed, sprayed and splattered on riders hunched over whimpering motorcycles.

The program is the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project, and the riders are 12- to 17-year-old kids who have had trouble - usually with the law. The kids are organized into eight clubs (the motorcycle clubs are the most popular) with 14 members each, plus leaders from the Y staff and program graduates. Russ Williams runs the project. He realizes that the idea is as controversial today as were Dick Davis' Young Men's Forums in the 1920s. Says Williams: "Some people complain, 'Why do you give these bad kids all this fun stuff?' But I answer, 'Show me a way to get to these hard-to-reach kids and I'll use it.'"

Besides, the "fun stuff" leads to discussions that encourage club members to talk out - rather than act out - their problems.

While running the clubs, plus alternative learning, restitution and prison-visiting programs, Williams covers a lot of ground in his Maude. He drives to all seven communities served by the project and consults with teachers, police, parents, kids, social workers and municipal officials. He meets regularly with Bill Pigott, senior manager of operations for the West Island Y and the man who wants us to know that the Y doesn't just bounce basketballs.

On a trip to the downtown Y, I ask Williams how he got involved in his work. "By mistake," he laughs. "And I haven't been smart enough to get out of it." When Williams graduated from Concordia University in Montreal (formerly Sir George Williams, a university that the Y initiated in 1926), he got hooked. "It's not a job," he explains. "It's a lifestyle. And that's exciting to me." Shades of Dick Davis.

Once we reach downtown, I wonder whether I'll meet more people like Dick Davis, Russ Williams and Bill Pigott. There are some, but the names have changed in the last few years, and I meet Constance Rasmiciére and François Goulet, two people who probably wouldn't have stepped into a YMCA building 10 years ago — even by mistake.

When it first came to Canada, the Y seemed as British as the Union Jack. The movement had started in England as an antidote to the Industrial Revolution's dislocation and socialization. The idea traveled to Lower Canada in 1851, when the first Canadian YMCA was established in Montreal. It soon spread across the
country. By 1867 there were 21 Y's in the Canadian areas.

But the idea didn't spread to French-speaking Canada. The Y seems exclusive, but possibly a Protestant threat to Ca-

hoicism. So in Montreal the first Canadian Y was a French-speaking, English-speaking area and run by — and mainly for — anglophones.

Berenice Bonk was a more effective French-Canadian branch director for "le YMCA" in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, where 38 per cent of the people were French. She explains the change: "In 1975 she staff made a commitment to work hard at learning French. We can’t change — dramatically fast." As a result, "the clientele we weren’t teaching are now coming in to us," says Constance Ramacére who has watched the same trend in the St. Louis and downtown branches of the YMCA.

In fact, she herself is part of the trend. Montreal Y has increased its fran-

chise staff from 10 percent in 1977 to about 60 percent today.

In Montreal the Y’s community work is more deeply linked to the nearby neighborhood. At the same time, though, there are across the country, only 21 Y’s, which is not much considering the size of the individual. What’s life all about? Bill Owen, general secretary for the Y’s of Canada, says: "I think what we’re inter-

ested in is the Participation board and a firm believer that Canadian

lifestyles are being impacted by the Style Inven-

tory and Fitness Evaluation. It’s a test

first developed for the YMCA by Dr. Donal G. Brown, professor of health at the University of Saskatchewan. The test combines the individual’s "lifestyle" — factors such as weight, age, habits — with the "health factors" such as health history and alcohol intake — with a fitness assessment. The results are a health plan for each individual, which Owen says is part of the strategy. Then comes a statistical moment of truth: the LFE data sum up the individual’s present health status and predict his or her life expectancy.

Not surprisingly, the LFE predic-
tion is not very high for most exclusive establishments. But Owen speaks enthusiastically of its value: "We use it," says Owen, "primarily as an educational tool to create awareness and motivation. We encourage our subjects to take their complete stock of health data home and pin

them up on their office walls." Owen is such a good salesman for LFE that he’s written a book on it, The Fat Calipers and Electrocardiogram. My appointment brings me to Jim

Bonk, the assistant physical director of the YMCA’s central branch in Toronto. When I arrive, Bonk looks me over like a tailor who can tell a customer’s measurements simply by looking over — discouragingly fit and lean.

One hour later I’ve been thoroughly brushed. But he’s measured my fat flex-

ibility, strength and lung capacity. Three electrodes have checked my heartbeat. Most of all, Jim Bonk is encouraging, patiently using his graduate-school expertise to provide the best possible help for his clients. Then comes the motivation. Bonk

reminds me that if I’m not only running out of oxygen but also running out of plugs and points: "People don’t know enough about their bodies. They tend to take more care of their cars than o

themselves. You can buy a new car, but you only get one body!"

Fortunately he’s in the business of helping men and women keep that body from depreciating — or going to waste. Nowadays, says Owen, squash, racket-

ball and weight training are all popu-

lar means. And in Vancouver, old,

fashioned softball leagues are again a big hit. Last year, kids eight to 14 years old and 350 between 14 and 19 make room on the ball parks for close to 500 men and women who also play on Y teams.

Perhaps the most dedicated of the Y’s athletes are the marathon runners. Jonny McKee, a 27-year-old Vancouverite who ran in a World Record event, says: "There is a lot of dedication and commitment. The only thing that is breaking down is 30 per-

cent women, 50 per cent men.

At the other end of the athletic spec-

trum, the YMCA has another clientele — the youngest members arrive at the impres-

sive new North York Y in suburban Toronto. The program began operating completely in 1980. As they are Aquatic Directors Lianne Hubbard and

physical activity. Word has spread, says Copp. "We’re well known by the po-

lice, the community and the community, to some extent, has just a lot more women with children. They know we’re here, and they’re not afraid to use the program condi-

tions they were a few years ago."

Meanwhile, next door to the resi-

dence, about 1,000 Osaka women come and go each week to the Y’s new-

ner building. In the same hour, in one small room, music fills the air. Legs are

only 12 pairs of preschool hands turn paper planes into turtles while mothers help to take a break together. In another, 12 adults from around the world make slow and steady gains on the elusive English language.

The Osaka association is one of 28 Canadian YMCAs offering such programs. Add them to the 29 joint YMCA-YWCA’s and you’ve got some idea of the movement’s dimensions today.

When they consider that their pro-

grams range not just from juvenile
discipline to dance class but from day camps and employment counseling to intercontinental

by the fact that there might be a minor problem of some kind. In some cases the

Oshawa mansion features dark oak paneling, leaded windows and stained-

glass windows. The place is filled with antiques. Outside, the lawns roll gently and the livin’ looks easy.

Yet the gentle surroundings can be deceptive. No one is there for a holiday, explains Executive Director Barbara Copp: "We have three catego-

ries of people who live here. We have working people, students and people, referred by agencies, who need a pro-

tective, nurturing environment. For the third group the residence offers a valuable halfway house. Some of these people have been homeless for five years. They could not survive in the community — they’d be too frightened by it. It’s a better environment for certain patients."

In recent years the Oshawa Y has quietly set up emergency and longer-
term accommodation for women — and children — seeking shelter from

historical record than you can believe when you consider how many Y’s in the world. The YMCA in Toronto has been in operation since 1862, and the YMCA in Toronto has been operating since 1862. The original YMCA in Toronto was founded by a group of young men who were dedicated to the concept of providing a safe and wholesome environment for young men. The original YMCA in Toronto was located on King Street West, and it was a small wooden building with a small gymnasium and a few classrooms.

The original YMCA in Toronto was very different from the YMCA of today. The original YMCA in Toronto was a much smaller organization than the YMCA of today. The original YMCA in Toronto was not as concerned with physical fitness and health as the YMCA of today. The original YMCA in Toronto was more focused on providing a place for young men to socialize and to learn about the world around them. The original YMCA in Toronto was not as concerned with providing a place for young men to learn about their health and fitness as the YMCA of today. The original YMCA in Toronto was not as concerned with providing a place for young men to learn about their health and fitness as the YMCA of today.

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LAND OF LAKES

The poet's corner of England

BY DOUG FETHERLING

In the Lake District, that part of England made famous by William Wordsworth and the other Romantic poets, there's a flyspeck village called Rydal. On its outskirts, on a high hill, stands Rydal Mount, the house where Wordsworth lived for nearly 40 years with his sister, Dorothy. Preserved in an upstairs bedroom is a letter Dorothy wrote expressing her apprehension about the future: "I fear what will become of this house;" she wrote to a friend, "when the two of us are gone." She needn't have worried, of course. The Wordsworths may have been a long gone (the poet died in 1850, Dorothy in 1855—both in their eighties), but their whole environment—not just their home and its furnishings—survives intact, despite the encroachments of time and the incursions of governments trying to preserve it and tourists desperate to absorb it.

Lake District, as with any great national park, is_end product of the country, of its climate, and of the fact that the River Lune flows through it. The Lake District is also something entirely apart from the rest. It's often been called the most beautiful piece of England. This would be the case even if you were to drive through the coast in a few hours, not-withstanding the narrow, serpentine roads. The drive is a real adventure, a true journey into the heart of the Lake District. The Lake District is divided into three main areas: the north, the south, and the west. Each area has its own unique character and charm.

Getting to the Lake District is easy enough, but the psychic shock of going from black to white with little or no intervening gray can be something of an emotional inconvenience. We landed in Manchester, never a particularly pretty place and never less so than in recent years. But then, as we began driving northward perhaps 120 kilometres, the traces of deforestation industries were replaced by green fields, and suddenly we felt that we had driven into a different time, a different world almost. For aside from its period as a literary centre (and that consisted largely of a tight circle of friends being introspective together), not much of an earthshaking nature has gone on here since Tudor times, and mercifully it shows.

Logically, it's a terrible region for farming, for instance. The land is hilly beyond endurance and the ground only a thin covering of soil on layers of limestone, sandstone, granite, slate, and lava. But the farms have persisted through the centuries: neat little settlements with irregular whitewashed cottages and long stone walls, more than a metre high, which wind around the contours of the land, segregating the sheep from the goats and both from the crops. And because there are farms, there are also what historians call "garth" market towns but are now general hubs of commerce and centres of tourism. Kendal, Windermere, Penrith and Keswick among them. Even for England, where everything seems compressed by North American standards, it's still a wonder to think that it's all contained in a relatively small corner of the country, tucked out of the way on the rocky coast of the Irish Sea.

Even the area's name is charmingly vague. Until just a few years ago, "Lake District" meant an imprecisely defined stretch of Cumberland and Westmorland, with perhaps a small corner of Lancashire thrown in, but now it is known as Cumbria—a combination of the two main counties. In addition, there is the Lake District national park, which was created by the government in 1951 and incorporates, as far as possible, most of the natural scenic highspots but few of the villages and towns. The lakes themselves (36 large ones and nearly 50 smaller) and the mountains which ring them (180 in total, all over 600 metres) fit into an area of fewer than 1,800 square kilometres, meaning that you can drive throughout the region in a few hours, notwithstanding the narrow, serpentine roads. We, for our part, decided to take our time.

Our destination was Ambleside, a village we selected for two reasons. For one thing, it's absolutely in the geographic middle of the region, providing easy access to all other points of interest. What's more, it's on the shore of Lake Windermere which, though only 17 kilometres long, is by far the largest of the lakes, as well as one of the most famous. The hotel, about which we knew nothing, turned out to be two 17th-century houses knocked together: a charming jigsaw of oddly shaped rooms, corridors with sudden right angles and steps leading nowhere in particular, for no reason. Outside, Lake Windermere, which at times is unbelievably blue, lapped at the shore just a few steps away, surrounded on three sides (all but the south) by some of the famous mountains, such as Nab Scar, Fairfield, High Pike, Red Screes and Wansfell. The lake itself is deep, cold and ancient; it's full of Arctic char whose ancestors were trapped there by the melting glaciers during the Ice Age. It is, in short, a very peaceful body of water, one dotted with sailboats gliding across it like white dragonflies. Only the large, diesel-powered passenger boats carrying tourists and the occasional jet trails from RAF planes stationed nearby break the calm or the illusion of time passing more slowly than it does elsewhere.

"Aye, there's not much happens here," said a townsman whom we fell into conversation with. "And that's the way folks prefer it to be."

The far shore of Lake Windermere is virtually uninhabited, but the shore nearest the rollercoaster village of Ambleside itself has become a sort of beehive for tourists. It's for that reason that it interests us. We knew from our schooldays what the Lake District was in history, but we wanted to learn what sort of place it had become. Who are the tourists and what's the Review Number 3 1982
their relationship to the local people? The attitude of the past generation seemed obvious enough from listening to accents and talking with people. We had expected that the Lakes, being in the north, would be primarily a holiday spot for northerners. But even Indians were on holiday, and not in the least was this the case at all. Both northern and southern England seemed represented on the lakes, though one sensed this was a national, not a regional, place of relaxation. As for foreigners, the majority were on holiday, too. The Britons strolled along together, photographing the swans, kicking ice balls, and playing in the snow.

Such are the demographics of the Lake District tourists. As for the cause and effect of their presence, we found it necessary to go further afield for answers — which suited us just fine, since such are common excursions up our collective sleeve. It was only a six-kilometer trip to the Windermere house, for example, with its relics of the poet and his circle, its nicely proportioned rooms, its view of a great valley below and, most memorable of all, its hidden garden — one of the most immediately restful spots I can ever recall wandering into.

Castles were another diversion. A Norman castle, a medium-sized fortification, even a Mamello tower, have always exercised a strong pull on my companion and me. But we foresaw Pencrath Castle, which is well preserved and displays limitless numbers of visitors, in favor of Kendal Castle just 90 kilometers away. It was here that Catherine Parr, one of those unfortunate wives of Henry VIII, was born. It’s a proper 12th-century ruin but easily visible atop a prominent hill. Such at least was the information we received from various publicans, butchers and tradesmen, who were unable to agree on any particular lays. Well, we found it but only after getting ourselves mislaid a few times as we drove a crawl through suburban tracts and one old fount and machine shop, whose foreman expressed profound surprise at seeing us. And indeed the castle did stand shrouded on top of a hill, one which made a good climb and presented a few obstacles, a long thin path. But we made it, only to learn that its present occupants are a herd of cows. They mooed impatiently until we began to picnic under what was once the castle keep, when they retreated all at once, their bellies ringing faintly as they descended the hill.

Having taken in a castle, of course, we also had to sample the stately homes. To the British themselves, the Lakes are thought to be poor picking for such shrines; compared with the south, this area simply never produced the routine great fortresses on which stately homes were built. But to a North American, the Lakes are practically virgin territory, not just for sunbathers but also for Elizabethan houses and other architectural treats. The one we chose was Holker Hall, previously an extra residence of the Dukes of Devonshire and now home to Hugh Cavendish, a 10-year-old relative of the present duke. It stands with its formal garden in a hazy set of grounds near Grange-over-Sands at the northern extremity of the district. Getting to it meant going south along roads high above the Solway Firth and being slowed down occasionally by shepherds practicing careful control on their flocks with a switch of local elm.

It was well worth the drive. The house goes back to the 15th century but through later additions consists of a bit of everything: Tudor, Georgian, Victorian. It is only the most recent parts, unfortunately, that are open to the public, but these are remarkable enough. All one’s notions about what such places ought to look like are easily satisfied, what with the great hall, the elaborately carved staircase, the immense library of what are now rare books. Among the art treasures is a piece of needlepoint executed by Mary Queen of Scots, a frequent guest or prisoner in an astonishing number of stately homes; it shows at a glance that needlepoint was not where her energy lay.

Perhaps more importantly, Holker Hall preserves some sense of the economic role which the industrial muscle for the region, towns like Kendal here and in his North,5 were understood to demand. We saw those now still hayracks and mills and factories, they’ve become more automated, and this, combined with the general economic slump, has meant that there aren’t many jobs for young people any more. So the younger folk are leaving the Lakes at the same time as tourists are coming in and also older persons, who retire here. The result, in any case, is that the sale of houses to outsiders. The truth of the matter is that as people move, it is a great extent off the tourists. With this thought, I came away from such diversions as castles and gazing at the shoreline and my search for answers about the future of the Lake District.

The answers lay in Kendal, the nearest appreciably sized town to our temporary house in Ambleside and one of the southernmost in the entire region. We had already been there quite a few times to shop or to dine at the fine restaurants (about 150) or simply to wander the maze of streets and wonder that the place actually had 25,000 volunteers for tradition-guaranteed guidebooks and tourist office swept the case. This time my mission was to see the offices of the local newspaper, The Westmorland Gazette. It’s a historic weekly in every way. One day it was Thomas De Quincey, the author of Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, who was a regular contributor. Wordsworth’s suggestion but fired a short time later for attacking the local paper’s structure: "At daybreak it’s especially fascinating," said Matthew Hall. "The mist is rising in the valleys and off the lakes, and everything is silent. Edna Hall then piped up: "It’s nice now, as you see, but the fire is really not burning. The autumn, when the rhododendrons are out, is what many people like, but you really should see it in the fall as well, when everything’s rustling..."

But we persisted in this vein for some time, and then it came to an end. It’s not simply that the Lake District once more lacks transition, but that it made, and makes still, poets out of people already there.
In Closing

Our summer a long time ago, around 1945, my parents sent me off to summer camp to spend two weeks with other boys my age, in one of a dozen tents pitched in a field set among giant spruce trees and sloping slowly to the shore of the Bras d’Or lakes in the highlands of Nova Scotia.

The camp was about five hours by train from our home — beyond a quiet village called Orangedale, along a country road that ran beside the shore — and along with the tents there was a log frame building, white and rectangular, which held the dining hall, the kitchen and at one end a plain, rustic room that was used as a sort of office for the camp director. As such camps go, it was modest in size, only about 50 boys and half-a-dozen leaders, who were mostly ministers, teachers and, now and then, a Mountie who would take his vacation at camp time and serve as the exercise leader or swimming instructor.

The camp was called Aite Brough, which is a Gaelic term meaning “beautiful place,” a description no one could deny it, located as it was on a point of land overlooking the blue and mirror-smooth water of the Bras d’Or lakes. In its day-to-day life it was a sunny and happy place, not exactly free and easy but not rigid and formal either, a blend of the optimism of the YMCA of the time and the moral tone of the United Church of the day, which, along with a number of other denominations, had set up such camps all over the Maritimes and provided the leaders.

My parents sent me to Aite Brough to have a good time but also, I’m sure, like all parents of that time and place, with the hope that I would benefit in other ways — making some new friends and getting a good start on growing up. I did have a good time. But neither my parents nor I could have imagined then the infinite value of that summer, and others that followed it, and how years later, as each summer approached, they would come back to me, an ineluctable part of my life — the sunsplashed water, the cathedral stillness of the forest, the scent of woodsmoke floating upon the silent and descending dark. But I remember my summer camp for more than that, because, for me, it was a turning point in life.

It is customary now to question the whole notion of summer camps — they are too upper class, too middle class or have no class. Or else they are too free or too formal or the counselors have not got doctors or have not played in the NHL. Whenever I read articles along this line, suggesting that summer camp is a “wrenching experience” or a “traumatic period,” I wish I could take the author back in time a bit, sit him down on a log outside the dining hall at Aite Brough and let him see what was really going on. He would find the sons of coal miners, ditch diggers, doctors and office workers, all getting to know each other on an equal basis and finding a new sense of confidence in themselves and, along with it, a sense of the joy of life.

I know I did. I was not, as a boy, all that active in sports, perhaps because I wasn’t heavy enough to do well in rugby, which was very popular in school, or tough enough to do well in boxing, which was most popular of all in the town itself. As a result I was not a shining example of self-confidence. One afternoon, just a day or so after the camp opened, the sports director read off a list of names of boys who were to compete the following day in a half-mile run. My name was included. I was sure I could not finish. The next morning, just before noon, I pumped up my courage and, along with several others, trudged down the road outside the campground to a point that, we were told, was exactly half a mile from the entrance. We rested awhile beneath the shade of huge trees and then — certain that everyone else was thinner and faster — I lined up, and suddenly, more quickly than I expected, we were off. I do not remember at what point it was, but there came a moment when I was astonished to find I was running all alone, over the patches of sun that fell through the trees, past the clearing by the lake and on to the finish. I was to run other races through my youth, winning some, losing my full share, but no sports event would ever mean as much as that half-mile run at a summer camp.

They say that the unrest way — perhaps the only way — to help a younger person to a happier and better life is through the influence of someone else. I think this is where the summer camp, provided it is a good one, really comes into its own, giving youngsters the chance to mix in a special setting, not just with other youngsters but with adults outside their own families. At Aite Brough, back in the forties, there were no manicured lawns or cruises on the lake or even cabins. But there were leaders who were, in my opinion, exceptional. They had character.

One of them was a man named Ralph Young, then in his middle thirties, dark, with a warm voice and a build that was compact and lithe. He was a former YMCA worker who became head of the interfaith council that conducted camps like Aite Brough in the Maritimes; many of them were directed by Young himself, who was the kind of youth leader you never forget and often wish your own children might have known. He was blessed with that gift — personality, manner, wisdom — that made others, men as well as boys, turn to him as the natural leader, certain there was nothing he could not do and that he would do it with modesty and style, never with vanity.

The esteem in which we held Ralph Young was no mere youthful sentiment, for in time, years after he had left the Maritimes, he became the head of lay work for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, where he still lives. But at Aite Brough, as he led us through crafts and study and campfires — where he would sometimes recite long poems in a way that captivated us all — he left everyone the better. And he did so not simply because of his personality, but because he believed, sincerely believed, in the worth of every one of us. One day, a long time after he had left that camp, a friend met him and asked if, in his work with young people, he had come up against many bad apples. His reply was quick and brief: “None I’d care to give up on.”

There were only a few hundred of us who went through Aite Brough. But untold thousands have gone to some Aite Brough of their own summers and now, in advancing years and chance moments, remember with wordless gratitude the field and the lake, the first scent of sunrise on clear mornings, the laughter of childhood, the footprints of our pilgrimage.
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