A PLACE IN THE HILLS

Where history lives in old log cabins

BY R.A.J. PHILLIPS

It's hard to explain our love affair with old log buildings. It would be easier if you had been there that evening in the late summer of 1961 when we declared our first project duly finished.
The vision had been lurking in the minds of romantics long before our family's decision to mark Canada's centennial by saving a frontier build-
ing. After making this decision, our emotional pendulum began to swing erratically between enthusiasm and despair. We dreamed dreams. We faced the reality of ignorance about how to dismantle, move and reerect a house that a pioneer had built 130 years before and 60 kilometers away. Now, unbelievably, it was done.

I wish you had been with us that evening when the sun, more glorious than in all its history, was setting for the granite hills on the far shore of the Gatineau River in Quebec. Our daughters, Margaret, Brigid and Jennifer — very young then — fussed with the aspers and marigolds on the glowing maple table. They moved the rocking chairs and settled a centimetre this way or that. They straightened and restraightened Queen Victoria in her gilded frame. Then it was time to pin the ribbon in place.

My wife, Mary Anne, and I had been told to perform the ceremony, but as her aging mother was the first official guest and I was the privilege went to her. Her ancestry was as prevels Irish as the cabin made by fugitives from the potato famine — it helps to be Irish when you are sharing an old building with a ghost.

We did not know then about the friendly and unpredictable spirit. We knew only an inexpressible sense of achievement as the heavy board and hewn door swung open on a room that looked as if it might have on the day of Confederation. In this intranscendental peace we found our roots and perhaps the answers to questions never asked.

Many years have passed. Now it is granddaughters who bring us the wonder of childhood. The Log House has been joined by five other pioneer buildings in our corner of the wilderness, in distant sight of Ottawa's Peace Tower. This is the story of how we found our home.

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We do not live in an old log building from the frontier of settlement. It should remain where they began, in melancholy silence, or be given new life and the sound of human voices. But sometimes they are unequal to the fight with time and progress. All the structures that we have removed to restore would otherwise have been demolished to make way for roads or new buildings or to comply with some local regulation.

Our first log building found itself in the path of what was to be a new highway, near the Ottawa Valley village of Carp. We first saw it in 1961 in the gloom of an impending storm isolated, ghostly, the wind tumbling

Constructed in 1819

of cedar and tamarack logs,

the Log House consists of four complete buildings fitted together in the shape of a T
through its broken doors and windows. The floorboards were rotten and the stairs hanging loose. Earth movers had already churned encircling ruts a few metres away. It had only a day or two to live.

The cabin had been built in 1852 by an Irish immigrant who sold it soon after to a Mr. Montgomery, another newcomer to the Ottawa Valley. His grandson Hugh John Montgomery, who later became a great hero in the cabin, guided us through the tangled brambles to the unprepossessing den of the. Our decision was irrevocable: it but it took us perhaps five minutes to find the courage to commit ourselves. Great was the rejoicing that the old family home would be saved.

As we drove away in the breaking storm, we dwelled on foolish details of the distant day when it would live again on a new site. Suddenly there came cold chills with the realization that neither we, nor anyone of our acquaintance, knew anything about dismantling, moving, re erecting or relaishing a log building. Would it ever fit together again? Would the logs break in transit? Would the reassembled structure be strong and safe? Who had a big enough truck? What bridges would it have to cross on route? How much would it all cost? It was a time to keep the faith.

Through a newspaper, we found a jovial, one-eyed Irishman with a crew claming collective experience in the old-style log building construction. Being absent on business at the crucial time, we entrusted them with the dismantling, removal and reerection of the walls. On our return, we found them singing merrily and laughing endlessly, and they had almost finished their work. We were puzzled by technical details. Why, for instance, was one log installed with white ash to the outside and bark to the interior? The explanation lay in the mounting pile of bottles in the cedar thatch. Of course we never corrected that log, nor have we erased the painted numbers on every scrap of wood — they, too, are now part of history.

By midsummer, 1984, while finishing the roof, windows, doors, floors and outhouse, we acquired a self-taught, crash course in rebuilding log structures. We learned how to deal with every angle except the 90 degree one, how to chink, how to lay cedar shingles and how to repair rotten sections of logs, which nice and tummes called home. We found old furniture and stripped it off its garish improve. We were invited into the attics of the redoubled friends, whose junk we restored to life. Sometimes it was more than junk. On a woodshed floor we found a hatchet and signed by Samuel Loui, one of the two Illinois leaders of the 1811 rebellion in Upper Canada. From a relative’s home we were given a child’s commode made by Lady Eaton’s father. And the knot holes of Log House were stuffed with bits of newspaper. We carefully uncashed them and found they recorded such moments of Canadian history as an election speech given by Sir John A. Macdonald at a picnic.

Enthusiasm and determination triumphed over inexperience. The result was spectacular. We became a part of that earlier time when life, though hard, seemed simple.

Our own lives were changed, for this was in every sense a family project. Only Margaret had reached her teens when it all began, but all three girls found interests that would last through their lifetime and which they would pass to their children: the political and social history of Upper Canada, architectural heritage, early furniture, and the pastimes, clothing, household equipment, tools and gardens of that time.

Log House was more stimulating than we knew. It was probably Canada’s remembrance project finished far ahead of schedule. In 1965 we found the Shanty, a modest shelter crafted by an unknown pioneer, probably to protect himself from his first Canadian winter. Later, with skill, industry and some hubris, he probably built something at least twice as large, like Log House. Then the Shanty would typically become home to the hired hand, a tool shed and a refuge for skunks and raccoons. It was Hugh John Montgomery who told us about it and helped us snatch it from destruction. Now that we were a little more experienced and dealing with a smaller building, work went quickly. We marked, dismantled and moved it in a weekend. We reerected it on a granite cliff above the river, where it could stand for centuries. Today it is a guesthouse. Its walls have felt again the whitewash brush and the warmth of an old wood stove, and its simple furnishings are painted in the bright hues that were in

The Shanty (top and right), built by a pioneer, now serves as a guesthouse from its cliff-top perch.
fashion when the Victorian age began.

Meanwhile, our growing collection of early implements was in need of shelter. Thus, in 1870, we acquired the Barn. One Saturday afternoon, we had laboriously laid concrete foundations, about 20 friends came for a barn raising. The spirit of the past was with us, but this did not deter one urban volunteer from performing all day in white shirt.

Before the summer slipped away, the tool and wall ars were closed. The family chinking crew was a little experienced and methodical (I people on low logs, big people on high logs), worked in anxious silence while a portable radio was adding a dark note to our history: the October Crisis.

The Barn new shakers, equipment, and junk dating from the late 18th century to the early 20th century — hags, sleds, fanning mill, mashers, machines, log sled and bits of gatetley that sprang from the minds of inventive farmers or village blacksmiths. And the loft was appropriated in 1973 as a summer retreat for Margot and her much needed book shop.

This was all our life's work was: the Grange, an enormous monument to our ancestors. The redwood, rack and card logs were laid in 1879. In fact, it was four complete buildings put together. The brick walls are the remnant of an Ottawa Valley potters were constricted by the length of local logs and the difference in the span of the spans. Thus, one rare case seems to a log structure more than 12 metres long and eight metres wide. One log unless it is formed by buildings joined together. No site on our full land had ever seen. With the help of our friends, we moved the Piggery, to another site.

Here, generations of pigs had lived out their uncertain lives, entering and leaving through their exclusive pig door, which is heavy and solid now. Our friends John and Nancy Jackson have lived comfortably in this building year round, but now use it only as their winter weekend retreat and summer home. Erecting the Piggery was a project that would have consumed half of that eventful summer of 1974. The Grange was to occupy the next three and a half years.

In May, we decided to cut a new house, a house in the city. First, the city was still not used to the idea of a house, but it is hard to keep the faith.

On Labor Day, 1977, having left the city forever, we moved in, right on schedule. By then our family had disposed. Mary Anne and I wandered the halls in disbelief. We are still awed and astonished.

The Grange is not quite as foolish as it may sound. It has the luxury of space to hold what we have collected. It has a library, a dining room, for activities to suit our extended family and friends.

It can also be small. We live in an apartment on the ground floor; the family of friends who came for dinner weeks to have huge logs, chink or install roof until some other call in the day. Lives moved them on. Rhoda added some class to the crew for a while, for he owned not only assorted vehicles but a private plane. He was the only carpenter we ever employed on the property.

We have, much respected Napier Simpson was persuaded to be our architectural consultant. He encouraged us by speaking warmly of barns as an "ancient form that realized an aesthetic experience." Unfortunately, a fatal air disaster in 1977 prevented him from seeing "this beautiful space" come together. The respected poet George Gaills calls it our "wooden palace," but our neighbor Ray Foley, wise in the ways of the land for three

**Philips' young history new life**

more years and 10, uses different words. "How's yer shack coming?" he would ask. Palace—or shack, we suspect; it was the largest private log recycling ever attempted in Canada. Our evidence was the field piled high with hundreds of things that resembled masts, truckloads of fiber glass, mortar and shingles and the nook of our barn. Sometimes it was hard to keep the faith.

We called it Buck House, the Royal Family's abbreviation for Buckingham Palace, though our acquisition was a much simpler one. The tenants were Margaret, David and their two daughters.

The Buckingham farmers of the 1800s might wonder why a late-20th-century family would feel the need to add a basement, sunroom, playroom, laundry and sauna, and three toilets, might have been considered a psycho-

The Grange has not only been removed and the logs just before the deadline, but with

**Buck House had rotted seriously by the time the Phillips family acquired it**

other commitments, it was almost a year before we could begin reconstruc-
tion. Before the spring rains of 1981 had washed away the frost, we were grabbing the new site, bustling the granite folds of the hill and laying concrete foundations, while wonder-
ing if the damaged logs would ever hold together. Adding a large, two-stores wing to give more space for liv-
ing and technology was easy enough. Constructing a concealed inner frame to carry the roof and support the not-
ed logs was a task to be endured only with faith. Young Jeff and Wesley, who live up the highway, performed fears no manial of house building could begin to describe. By late summer, Buck House was ready and could hold several from the elements. Although daily over the next six months I worked on the endless interior details, sometimes alone, sometimes with a young helper. By May, 1982, Buck House was ready for its royal century. The previous tenants were Margaret, David and their two daughters.

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ings, and wood stoves for heating. They might not notice that the stove are energy efficient and supplemented by electricity. They would be baffled by the great piles of fiber glass insula-
tion and plastic vapor barriers, now all concealed, and the various pieces of mechanical equipment piling away with lives of their own.

All this comes from a never ending search for the best of the past to unite with the best of the present. Any sub-urban residence can pamper us with modern comforts. Buck House does more. It gives us back a time when our art was not in our house; it was ours.

Now, six pioneer builders retrieve the spirit of the past, and none more liter-
ally than the first log cabin, the fauned one. That is a rather long story that we would prefer to recount during the deep silence of a winter evening, when the birch logs in the old iron fireplace are warming our imaginations. Let it remain a book of many odd phenomena observed by objective witnesses over some 17 years. The sound of someone walking across a floor, on which no trace in dust or damp is left; footprints on the roof. Where no print is made in new fallen snow; a room brilliantly illuminated for a second or two in the middle of the night; a vague apparition of a long woman.

The best story concerns Queen Victoria, who sent three new of the average immigrant fleeing the famine of her Irish kingdom. Michael Whit-
tington, a political-science professor and author who lived in Log House for about eight years, was awakened by a commotion one night when the floor was quiet. He went downstairs. The pictures on the log walls, all securely held by square nails, were in place — except the portrait of Queen Victoria, which was jumping and swaying vio-

ly. As he stood in wonder, it fell from its nails, the glass shattering on the floor.

Mike had the frame repaired and hung the picture on the wall again. It happened a second time and a third. Wearying of baying new glass, he painted a picture of an innocuous win-
ter landscape over the regal face. The picture was never bothered again. If the spirits do not take kindly to royalty, how will they feel about a place called Buck House? Of course we do not believe in all these stories. But wait — was that the cracking log or the sound of footsteps?

The old folks put around the Grange, walk among the treetops, swim over to a nearby heavy woods, or endlessly gather firewood. The young girls who chinked Log House may not one day establish pro-
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FOR US, FOR OUR CHILDREN...
Esso caring for the environment

BY DANIEL MOTHERSILL

The debating room at the University of Toronto’s Hart House was uncommonly quiet several months ago when John Roberts, Canada’s environment minister, rose to speak. For more than an hour some of the country’s brightest and most articulate students had forcefully argued whether extremism in defense of the environment is a virtue. That the question should be proposed at all is an indication of the growing public concern about environmental safeguards. That John Roberts should have flown directly from Ottawa to address the assembly denotes its importance.

The debate had been vigorous and to the point. The issues were clarified as the arguments were delivered, sharpened by the parries of the opposing sides. And now, in summing up the feelings of the assembly, it was the minister’s turn.

"It is not enough simply to care about the environment," Roberts began. "It is not enough that we should debate. What is really required is that we act." He went on to say that protection of the environment is not a matter of sentiment but of survival. "That survival depends on understanding the balance of nature..."
— the interaction between humankind and nature that we cannot escape.”

The environmentalist movement and environmentalism are among the most important of the social movements of our time. Caring for the environment must continually be brought into the forefront of politics, and that is one of the great challenges facing the world in the years ahead. It’s a strategic part of the way we do business, and there are few who remain indifferent to the consequences of environmental degradation.

The mineral wealth of the earth is finite. There are no reserves of oil left in the world that can sustain the current rate of consumption. As a result, many governments, including those in the United States and Canada, are placing increasing emphasis on renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power.

The road ahead is clear. We must take action now to protect the environment and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

A land we have borrowed from our children

— JOHN ROBERTS

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Far North, the Canadian Chemical Producers’ Association, one of many organizations representing the interests of federal and provincial governments on environmental legislation, and the Canadian Oil Sands Operators Association, which does research on oil-spill countermeasures. And the list goes on.

Throughout the company there is ongoing emphasis on innovation and development. Corey Peabody, who does research on oil spills at Esso Resources in Calgary, has helped develop a new technique, using a computer, for preparing people to deal with oil spills. As I am talking with her, a computer tells her there has been a blowout on one of the artificial islands in the Mackenzie River at Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories. As the designated on-scene commander in the area, she must prevent the resulting oil slick from spreading down the Mackenzie River. Expertly she calculates the direction in which the spill is moving, deploys booms and skimmers, requests weather updates, and juggles a dozen other duties required to keep the oil from fouling the shoreline. The operation requires the concentration of a head chef—there’s no room for error. Within half an hour, if the weather permits, the spill will be under control and Peabody will have trapped the spill. But the prevailing winds change and the results will be in jeopardy.

Finally, Peabody pauses for a minute and smiles at the video screen. She can afford to smile—the blowout was simulated, and besides, she’s captured the spill. Though the simulation resembles a video game, it’s not. It’s serious, its purpose is deadly serious—to prepare people to handle the unlikely event of a major spill. Peabody and her associate, Ron Goodman, spent a year and a half designing a program with which to train the operators. Every minute of the four-hour exercise represents 12 minutes in real life, explains Peabody. “It’s intended to simulate actual time pressures—you have to make the right decisions quickly.”

Peabody’s expertise in environmental issues relating to the oil industry is so impressive that she was recently awarded the inaugural award of the Environmental Defence Fund of Canada for her outstanding commitment to the environment.

Imperial’s expertise in environmental issues relating to the oil industry is so impressive that she was recently awarded the inaugural award of the Environmental Defence Fund of Canada for her outstanding commitment to the environment.

The Exxon group of companies to deal effectively with potential major hydrocarbon spills is being formed. The group and one in which Esso Resources has particular expertise, involves tracking major spills of oil and water. According to Moody Campbell of Pollution Probe, “It’s a momentous initiative. No other government or company in North America, and I have to be ready to offer any assistance.”

Most of his time, though, Goodman spends in the field, studying the way oil behaves in the marine environment, and in particular how it interacts with the environment to find the most effective ways of preventing an oil spill from damaging beaches. One innovative test he’s currently conducting in the laboratory of the research department at Esso Resources involves coating a model of a beach with a nontoxic chemical that will retard the penetration of oil.

Believe it or not, the chemical is just one of a dozen products the company has developed to deal with oil spills. In addition, they have used the products to develop a new technique for cleaning up oil spills on beaches. The technique involves the use of a chemical that is applied to the oil slick, followed by a mechanical removal of the oil.

In the case of a major oil spill, the company would first use its own resources to contain the spill and then call in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for assistance. The EPA would be responsible for overseeing the clean-up operation, and the company would work closely with them to ensure that the spill is contained and cleaned up as quickly as possible.

The company has also developed a number of other technologies to help clean up oil spills, including a device that can be used to insert a tube into an oil slick and then suck up the oil with a vacuum cleaner. This device has been used successfully on several occasions and has proven to be very effective.

In conclusion, the company’s commitment to environmental protection is evident in its actions and initiatives. By investing in research and development, and by working closely with government agencies and other organizations, the company is making a positive contribution to the environment and to the future.
Resources, the federal government and the local Inuit hunters' and trappers' association have been examining the effects of industry boats and barges on whales, the Inuit's main food source. However, Ron Goodman, the program's leader, maintains that industry is not the problem. Another project, in which Imperial has participated in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Edmonton, studied the effects of vessel traffic on the ringed seal. This study, too, found no harmful effects.

"There's hardly a week that passes in which we aren't working on environmental issues with someone from government," says Goodman. "And we intend to continue.

In a company with the record responsibility of Imperial, protection of the environment is an issue that is on the minds not only of the professional staff—the engineers, geologists and other technical experts—but of the men who provide the leadership, like Gordon Thomson, who is president of Esso Petroleum Canada. The division of Imperial that manages the company's refining, marketing and transportation. In meetings and conversations across the country, Thomson doesn't hesitate to make clear that caring for the environment is an obligation to be observed in fact as well as in spirit. Toward the end of last year, he held a meeting with Bob Ferr, Esso Petroleum's manager of environmental affairs. At the end of the meeting, he outlined the principle once again: management's long-standing commitment to environmental protection has not changed.

Later, in his office, Ferr, a chemist who has been with Imperial for more than 30 years, spoke about some of the major changes Imperial has brought to the field of environmental protection. It's a long history, and he has seen much of it since he began work in 1962 in the company's refinery laboratory in Sarnia.

Ferr talks about the marine division's practice of bundling its garbage for safe disposal, rather than dumping it overboard as was once done on many ships. It was something the company's mariners started back in the early sixties. Today, every bit of garbage on an Imperial vessel is bagged on board and picked up on shore by a garbage disposal firm.
much of it supplied by Imperial Oil Limited, to the thousands of fishing boats that dot the sea and to isolated logging camps and mining operations on the islands off the West Coast. And they tow barges of essential cargo to keep small oceanfront communities alive.

But the tugboats’ major customers are the forest companies of the province. They have a symbiotic relationship: when 1500 tug workers were on strike in 1970, 20,000 people in lumber and construction trades were thrown out of work, and when the forest industry slumped last year, towboating suffered its worst slowdown since the Second World War.

Among the few exceptions to this economic canard are the harbor tugs. The fortunes of the forest companies are the last thing Vic Larson is worrying about as he helps nudge the Rust Express alongside the containers dock. Aboard the 18.2-metre tugboat, surprisingly, there’s no sensation of shoving, no roar from the twin 711-kilowatt engines. “Sice has a lot to do with it,” Captain Larson explains. “A little thing like this”—he indicates the German freighter—“if you push full on it, you’ll push it through the dock.”

As the only ship-handling tugs in Burnard Inlet, the white-hulled and black-Cates bears berth about 2400 deep-sea vessels a year, from small Polish fishing trawlers to 125,000-tonne Japanese coal carriers. In an inauspicious milieu with merger and takeover, C.H. Cates & Sons remain a family business—a son-in-law, Terry Waghorn, is the current president and general manager— as it has been since Charles Henry Cates launched it in the last century.

The Cates family has been involved with tugboats almost as long as these vessels have existed on the West Coast. The first true tug in British Columbia was the Isabel, built in 1866 by an English sea captain named Edward Semple, who ran a pioneering lumbermill on the inlet. The long, skinny, steam-driven, wooden boat towed sailing ships in and out of the harbor. As wood, coal and fishing operations grew, and the Canadian Pacific Railway reached its western terminus, towboating boomed.

To reach port, foreign ships set with canvas sails had to survive the Juan de Fuca Strait, between Vancouver Island and northern Washington, with its sudden gales, unpredictable tides and impenetrable fog. In those conditions the barges and schooners depended on big tug, like Larras, which was more than twice as large as today’s harbor tugs and carried a crew of 17 men and a 959-kilowatt, coal-burning steam engine.

Smaller tugs were at risk in the volcanic Galiano Island before the steamer tug Felus, towing an unwieldy scow to pick up stone for the new provincial legislature in Victoria, was caught in a surprise March storm. Just outside Victoria harbor the skipper tried to turn back, but a chain to the radar snapped. Waves flung the Felus onto offshore rocks. When the tug sank, four men drowned and one died of exposure. Charles Cates, a Nova Scotian sailor, arrived on the coast in 1885, the same year as the Canadian Pacific Railway, and bought a scow, Spatt’s Ark, to haul stone for the foundations of the newly incorporated city of Vancouver. He soon had his first tug, the Nunn, and then a second, Stella, which he won in a race. Eventually Cates brought three sons and four sons-in-law into the business (and during the First World War his four daughters helped run the company). By the turn of the century, tugboats—towing rafts of logs from the forests to the sawmills—had become indispensable to the flourishing lumber trade. Of the lastest was the 40-metre Sea Lion, which had a piano in her lounge. More typical were tugs, especially designed for and unique to the West Coast, that ranged in length from 21 to 30 metres and had only about 225-kilowatt engines. An older boat like the Larras had so much power that she would have ripped apart the usual flat rafts that were used to carry logs. Instead, she pulled logs in a gigantic bundle tied with tonnes of chain and cable—the Davis raft. During the First World War she regularly brought Davis rafts of Sitka spruce from the Queen Charlotte Islands 965 kilometres to Vancouver, from where the tough, light wood was shipped to Britain to build warplanes.

In the 1920s, steel was being used for tugboat hulls and diesel for the engines (Charles Cates’ brother John built the first full-diesel tug in Vancouver), and the B.C. towboating industry was pioneering the use of radio telephones. But, with no tides, captains still relied on a whistle to gauge their distance from shore in a fog; a boat was about 150 metres offshore when the whistle’s echo took a second to return.

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY TREGILLAS**

Though small compared with the vessels they pull, tugboats have saved many a stricken ship.
Tugs escort a ship in Vancouver harbor (left) and (below)  
Captain Vic Larsson

on hulls in an effort to find the one that best reduces water friction. The company has designed aerodynamically shaped fenders for barges, which can save tugs up to 35 percent in fuel costs.

The newest tugs are 22.5-meters long and have a 1790-kilowatt engine, giving it the highest power-to-length ratio of any tug in the world. In this $2 million boat, conventional rollers have been replaced with rollers that can swing 360 degrees for maximum thrust in any direction.

“Tugs turn like propellers on an outboard motor,” you'll be able to put the boat anywhere you want,” says Captain Gary Bodenicker, who went to work for Cates as a deckhand fresh out of high school 11 years ago. This crystal afternoon he’s steering the Cates E 2, which, with the ski slopes of Grouse Mountain as a backdrop, is helping move the Russian freighter Pestova out of a North Vancouver container dock.

Bodenicker tries to play down any drama in his day-to-day work. “Our presence here is like an insurance policy,” he says. “A lot of the time these ships could get in and out on their own — it would just take a little longer. But the kick in this job is the couple of times a year when things go haywire. And if you’re watching and on your toes, you can prevent something unfortunate from happening.”

This was the case on the fog-shrouded October night in 1981 when a disabled Korean bulk carrier, being repaired in Vancouver, tore from her moorings as the tide rose and drifted dangerously into the harbor. Cates and Seacan boats spent three tense hours bringing the 100,000-tonne freighter, a floating jenga, safely back to her dock.

But there have been other nights. Captain Bodenicker and two other Cates boats have just finished herding the bulk carrier Gisella in the spot where the Pestova had loaded. As Bodenicker heads back to the company dock, the water is a ruffled pewter and the Vancouver skyline is lighting up. “Sometimes the sunsets are spectacular, the captain enthuses as he takes a sip of tea. “Oh, it’s nice. This is the best workshop there is.”

Mickey Balati, a tug captain who retired 10 years ago, shoveled coal as a deckhand on the steam tug Bronte in 1921. A deckhand had to sit humbly on the bottom rung, below the cook, second and chief engineers, and the captain — the Old Man. “Later on, when the diesel came out,” Balati recalled a few years ago, “the same boat would need only three men: the skipper, the mate and a cook-deckhand.”

Working conditions, never delightful, worsened with the Depression. As a veteran towboater told the historical journal Rivincoast Chronicles, today’s tug crews get a day and a quarter off for every 12-hour shift (the harbor tug crews get almost half a day off for every eight-hour shift they work). “We used to work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year…take a couple off for Christmas. You might get a night in town once every three or four weeks.”

During the thirties, James Byrn, later president of the Seacan subsidiary Gemstar Marine, worked as a deckhand for a dollar a day. “$90 per month for 30 days worked,” he laughs.

C.H. Cates & Sons had become the Vancouver specialists in ship herding. In 1938, one of the sons, Charlie, was running a tug in the harbor when a large pier caught fire. Turning the boat’s fire pumps on himself and his crew, he rode boldly into the blaze to rescue three trapped firemen.

While business flourished in the Sound and Willapa bays, many of the wood-boat tug owners went out of business. The 2000, 1200, and 800-HP Wood-Boats, which were frozen, and the men faced new threats. After an enemy submarine sank Estevan Point lighthouse, the west coast of Vancouver Island, lightships were cannibalized, and even ships like Esquimalt Low, which were at night somewhat tricky. “They put machine guns on some of the rigs we worked out there,” Mickey Balati remembered, “but that made you an armed vessel, and the subs had a perfect right to shoot you out of the water if I didn’t want any machine guns on my boat.”

He did, however, accept the extra dollar a day that members of tug crews earned when they went beyond Estevan Point into the official war zone. The Pacific tugs were being constantly towed and towing. Union activity brought better wages and working conditions. Pulp mills, multi-million dollar projects were now using such swivel wasses as wood chips, which had to be handled by a large crane, with a tug that had to go out to the mill. These wooden tugs, which required strong tugs to tow them. And light, high-speed diesel engines made small tugs much more powerful.

Some companies bought war surplus tugs from the United States and Britain, behemoths like the Sudbury and the Island Sovereign, which together towed four tanker ships in a row the 8000 kilometers from Venezuela to Vancouver Island. This astonishing voyage in 1955 announced that B.C. towboaters had dived headlong into the deep-seas tug business.

A year later the Sudbury performed what Ripley’s Believe It or Not called “the most amazing salvage tow in history.” The Makenzies, a 750-tonne Greek tramp freighter, became stranded between Japan and Canada with a broken tail shaft. The November weather was cold; it took the Sudbury nearly two weeks to reach her 5800 kilometers out in the North Pacific. Through blizzards and hurricane-force gales the tug dragged the freighter — losing her once for long hours when the Makenzies’ anchor cable sheared, releasing the towlines. Fourteen days after leaving the West Coast, the Sudbury arrived safely in Vancouver with the crippled ship in tow.

With British Columbia’s Bonita of tugs growing old in the mid-fifties, their owners began building new all-steel boats. Some of them had 1500-kilowatt engines in hulls only 30 meters long. They were fitted with radar, advanced communications systems and special moorings that would increase the thrust of a tug’s propeller as much as 30 percent.

Living conditions on the boats started to improve. Insulated quarters on the coastal tugs became quiet enough for the crew to hear the television set that was usually on board. There were washers and dryers, private cabins with washing facilities, and decent beds were provided for each man — and the occasional female cook (currently about five percent of the tug crews are women).

But it was only during the last decade that the tugboat industry embraced technology and innovation with the abandon of a true believer. Seacan International has even experimented with different types of paint on hulls in an effort to find the one that best reduces water friction. The company has designed aerodynamically shaped fenders for barges, which can save tugs up to 35 percent in fuel costs. Rivincoast Strants Limited, the second biggest company in the business, recently launched one of the largest tugs ever built in British Columbia: the $7 million, 1550-kilowatt Captain Beth, which was built to tow a 15,000 tonne log barge.

C.P. Rail Coastal Marine, which carries rail cars and truck trailers between Vancouver and Vancouver Island, now has among its tugs one that pushes barges instead of pulling them, the first to be used on the West Coast. The system is more fuel efficient because the tug’s propeller wash doesn’t show the barge. The boat has a tall wheelhouse tower so its crew can see over the barges, and to ease berthing, the barges themselves have three television monitors in their boxes.

C.H. Cates & Sons has had to keep up with the increasingly voluminous vessels arriving in Vancouver harbor. It had tugs built with binnur bows, so they could push moving ships more efficiently, and twin propellers and four steering rudders for crab-like manoeuvrability. The company calls these 1550-kilowatt hour super-tugs. The newest Cates tug is 22.5-meters long and has a 1790-kilowatt engine, giving it the highest power-to-length ratio of any tug in the world. In this $2 million boat, conventional rollers have been replaced with rollers that can swing 360 degrees for maximum thrust in any direction.

“Tugs turn like propellers on an outboard motor,” you’ll be able to put the boat anywhere you want,” says Captain Gary Bodenicker, who went to work for Cates as a deckhand fresh out of high school 11 years ago. This crystal afternoon he’s steering the Cates E 2, which, with the ski slopes of Grouse Mountain as a backdrop, is helping move the Russian freighter Pestova out of a North Vancouver container dock.

Bodenicker tries to play down any drama in his day-to-day work. “Our presence here is like an insurance policy,” he says. “A lot of the time these ships could get in and out on their own — it would just take a little longer. But the kick in this job is the couple of times a year when things go haywire. And if you’re watching and on your toes, you can prevent something unfortunate from happening.”

This was the case on the fog-shrouded October night in 1981 when a disabled Korean bulk carrier, being repaired in Vancouver, tore from her moorings as the tide rose and drifted dangerously into the harbor. Cates and Seacan boats spent three tense hours bringing the 100,000-tonne freighter, a floating jenga, safely back to her dock.

But there have been other nights. Captain Bodenicker and two other Cates boats have just finished herding the bulk carrier Gisella in the spot where the Pestova had loaded. As Bodenicker heads back to the company dock, the water is a ruffled pewter and the Vancouver skyline is lighting up. “Sometimes the sunsets are spectacular, the captain enthuses as he takes a sip of tea. “Oh, it’s nice. This is the best workshop there is.”
FAR AWAY RETIREMENT
A way of the future?

By Sarah Lawley

OTTAY von Bismarck, architect of the German empire, no more masterminded many things in his life, not the least of which was the modern concept of retirement with pension, which he introduced to his countrymen in 1884. His plan was hailed as one of generosity and foresight, and while it helped the Iron Chancellor’s public image, he could also smile with satisfaction, knowing that his scheme would actually deprive the Prussian coffers of very little: in those days the retirement age of 65 exceeded the average German’s life expectancy at birth by 28 years. Were we to adhere strictly to Bismarck’s idea, the retirement age today would be about 100.

But the trend today is toward early retirement. Once the financial burdens of raising a family and buying a home have been overcome, many people welcome the opportunity to exchange a little income for the chance to pursue activities other than work and sometimes a second career. In fact, a survey taken in 1978 by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion revealed that, of those Canadians who had made retirement plans, 50 percent wanted to retire before their sixty-fifth birthday. And more and more these days, employers are encouraging this trend, which initially might appear incongruous as senior employees are usually rich in experience and training. One reason for this move is that early retirement presents a humane way of reducing staff in times of economic stringency. As all Canadians know, a sizable portion of industry is doing less business, and consequently profits are down. And reduced profits dictate reduced expenditures. Companies across Canada, large and small, are having to make major cutbacks in order to survive the crunch. Wages are being restricted and hiring reduced, frills are a thing of the past, and in some cases employees are being laid off.

"The forestry market has been in a slump for two years now," says Gordon Towill of Vancouver, senior vice-president of human resources at MacMillan Bloedel Limited. "We’ve had to close down some of our operations and reduce our staff quite a lot. And for many other companies this story is grimly familiar. We expected long-term demand for electricity to be greater than it’s turning out to be," says Bill Buhman of the employee benefits department at Ontario Hydro in Toronto. "But with industries closing and reducing their output, combined with greater energy conservation on the part of our customers, it has become necessary to reduce our staff."

Imperial Oil Limited is also feeling the effects of the long recession. The company had planned a five-year, $7.5-billion capital investment program to begin in 1982. By late 1981, however, it became evident that we could not do all we had intended.

Don McIvor, Imperial’s chairman and chief executive officer, explaining that a combination of the effects of the National Energy Program and the recession have resulted in the company’s having to cut the program by more than $3 billion. Several major projects had to be shelved, including the full-scale Cold Lake project and Petatea, a joint project with the Alberta Energy Company Ltd. to build a new petrochemical plant near Bruderheim, Alta. "Our staff, directly and indirectly, had been built up to accommodate our investment program," says McIvor. "Cutting back on the program meant we had to cut back our staff accordingly." In 1982 Imperial Oil Limited and its subsidiary Esso Resources Canada Limited reduced their staff by about 1000. "To say this presented a major problem for the company is an understatement," says Bob Wilson, who was manager of employee relations at the time this reduction had to be made. "The relationship between employer and employee here is one of mutual respect and support. We believe that if people are dealt with fairly and are happy and fulfilled in their jobs, it will benefit the entire company — employer and employee." His philosophy is reflected in the broad range of progressive benefit programs Imperial offers its employees, among them: an employee financial program, through which the company matches an employee’s savings to a maximum of five percent of his or her salary; scholarships to colleges and universities for the children of employees; merit-based salary increases; and several substantial life insurance and health care programs. "It was important to us that the reductions be made in the way that would prove least damaging to our employees, to the company and to the relationship between the two," says Wilson reflectively. "Early retirement seemed, for the most part, to be the best solution."

Still, there were painful decisions. Like scores of other companies all over Canada, Imperial discovered in the early months of 1982 that, as a result of the cutback to the capital expenditure program, a substantial number of staff and operating jobs had to be eliminated, and with that came the inevitable departure of some imperial employees, competent in their work, but whose jobs no longer existed. "It was as tough a period in our employee relations as I can recall in my years at Imperial," says Wilson. Nonetheless, in terms of support, Imperial has been able to retain its employees, the company was more than merely fair — it went the extra mile.

In March 1982, a task force made up of representatives from various departments within the company was set up to study the various ways to make early retirement attractive enough to appeal to a sufficient number of employees. On July 1, on the recommendation of the task force, early retirement, with various pension enhancements, was offered to all executives, most management, professional, clerical and technical staff and some wage earners, 50 or over, who had been with Imperial for 10 years or more. Employees were given until September 30 to make a decision; those who wanted to retire were asked to do so by the end of 1983.

Under the program retirees receive 1.6 percent of the average of their last three years’ income multiplied by the number of years they had been with the company. As an added bonus, those 55 to 58 are credited with seven extra years of employment, and older retirees are credited with sufficient years to qualify them for the pension they would receive were they 65. On top of this was added a monthly supplement, which will cease once the retiree becomes 65 and is eligible for the standard government pensions. Also offered was a leave of absence program, through which employees could take up to three years off while maintaining many company benefits. "We hoped that 500 people would opt for early retirement," says Wilson, "and that we would be able to reduce our staff by 500 through attrition and leaves of absence."

Imperial’s decision to offer early retirement on a voluntary basis was a major one. By making the program voluntary the company hoped to continue its good employee relations, but at the same time, it realized it would run the risk of losing many seasoned and valued employees. In the end, Imperial decided its employee relationship should take precedence. Says Gordon Towill of MacMillan Bloedel, which last year reduced its staff by 1400, 300 of them through early retirement: "We would have liked to have made our program voluntary, but we would have lost valuable employees we simply couldn’t have replaced from within the ranks of the company." Instead, MacMillan Bloedel retired 300 employees on a selective basis.

Fortunately Imperial’s succession program had prepared the company to deal with the loss of good people. What this program ensures is that there is always a trained successor available from within the company to fill any position. It’s an intricate program that involves the careful planning of employees’ career paths and a lot of training and development, so that throughout the company, all the way to the chief executive officer, no one is indispensable.

For example, explains Bill Moher, who administers the program, a man who took early retirement last year was Bill Keough, a highly regarded veteran who was at the time vice-president and general manager of refining at Esso Petroleum Canada. He was succeeded by a man still in his thirties, who had been with the company 15 years, Brian Fischer. Though young, Fischer had the skills and training that were necessary to mark him as a potential successor for
Kleugh’s position. As Don McAllister told some of his managers who worried at first that the company might suffer heavily from the loss of too many top employees: “If our succession program is as good as it ought to be — and I think it is — we’ll have competent people ready to fill most positions that become vacant.”

By September of last year 687 employees (64 percent of those eligible) had announced that they would take early retirement under the pension enhancement program offered the previous July; a further 102 people decided to take leaves of absence. The response had exceeded the company’s expectations, which was fortunate as normal attrition was less than expected as a result of an extremely sluggish job market. “The reason the program worked so well,” says Bob Wilson, “is that it was attractive at a time when early retirement was becoming a very popular idea.”

Wilson, who joined Imperial 34 years ago after training as a chartered accountant, took early retirement himself under last year’s program and may now be found, more likely than not, talking to people around the world from his shortwave radio station at his home in Don Mills. Ont. Asked why he decided to retire under the program, he says: “Quite frankly, I found it irresistible.”

Joyce Watmore’s life is a whirlwind of activity these days. She takes courses in calligraphy and hypnosis, tends the large garden on her acreage near Calgary and goes to a multitude of cultural events and educational seminars. Early this spring she went to New Orleans for a few days, and she spent June in the Soviet Union. And this September she’s beginning a full-time, 10 month hairdressing program, which will give her a skill she plans to use either as a volunteer at a hospital or in part-time work. Until last December, she was a senior stenographer at Essco Resources Canada Limited, Imperial’s subsidiary in Calgary. She’d been with the company for 30 years when the pension enhancement program was announced in July 1982. “It took me three months to decide to retire,” she laughs, explaining that she’d always wanted to retire early so she would have the time to do all the things she never had time to do while working.

Claire Belliveau worked for Imperial in Halifax for 37 years before retiring at 58 under last year’s program. “I couldn’t afford not to retire,” she says emphatically, echoing the sentiments of many retirees. “Financially I’m better off than I was when I was working.” She adds and explains that retirement allows her to take advantage of various tax opportunities and receive a generous return on an annuity she bought through Imperial. Having administered the employee financial program during her final years with the company, Belliveau knew how she would handle her retirement income, but there were many other things to learn about retirement, so she enrolled in one of Imperial’s retirement planning seminars. “It made me realize that it was better off financially than I had thought,” she says.

The retirement planning seminars deal not only with the financial side of retirement but with the social aspects and involve both the employee and his or her spouse. “Basically they were designed to let people understand all their options,” says Bob Leigh, who taught the seminars in Calgary before and after taking early retirement last year. “The program helps people sit back and look at retirement, how they’ll fill their time, what it’ll mean to spend so much more time with their spouses and the different financial needs they’ll have. Most people found them extremely helpful.”

For many of the retirees the decision to leave the company before their sixty-fifth birthday had been made long ago. The pension enhancement program was simply an added bonus. “It was a little gift,” says Ruth Linstead, 57, who retired from her position in the comptroller’s department at Tour Eso in Montreal after working with the company for more than 37 years. “I’d always wanted to retire early, to have more time to devote to the volunteer work I do with the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed and with various organizations I’m a member of.”

For some, like Bob Leigh, retirement provides the opportunity to utilize skills in businesses of their own. Before retiring at 57 Leigh had been the manager of the organizational effectiveness division of human resources in Calgary. He now runs a consulting firm of his own, which offers assistance to companies in the area of strategic management and decision making. For others, retirement offers the freedom to do things they hadn’t enough time for while working — volunteer work, hobbies, travel and further education. “I rented an apartment up north near Ste. Adèle so I could ski three or four times a week last winter,” says Bernard Lepage, who was TM credit manager of the Montreal Home Comfort Centre before retiring at 56 at the end of last year. “I’ve got family and friends working in lots of other companies that offered early retirement programs, and I can tell you Imperial’s was the best.”

Perhaps one reason the pension enhancement program worked so successfully to reduce staff was that the option for early retirement has always been open to employees — there had been time to contemplate the possibility. While the terms for general early retirement are not quite as inviting as those offered under last year’s program, they are indeed attractive. The pension program is noncontributory, and any employee is entitled to retire with a pension at 55.

There is no discounting of this pension for those who retire at 60 or later, and there is only a five percent discount for each year a person a retirement before 60. This discount is waived if the employee has been with the company for 30 years or more. “In actual fact,” says Bob Wilson, “the average age for retirement at Imperial is 61.”

When Wilson took early retirement, he was succeeded as manager of employee relations by Bill Mann, a youthful Imperial executive who graduated from the University of Toronto and Harvard in the sixties and, while still in his thirties, served as a vice-president of Essco Resources in Calgary. “I think,” he says, “that early retirement as a social trend will probably grow in popularity. After all, people have an easier time adjusting to changes such as retirement when they are in their forties, rather than their mid-sixties. Their ability to adapt is stronger, just as their health is probably better. And those I know who have taken it are generally so keen on it that they will influence others in the future.”

The government, too, views early retirement very positively. While an industry sees it, in part, as a way to reduce manpower, the government sees it as a means to reduce unemployment — two rather disparate views. When people take early retirement they generally don’t join the labor market again, says Ken Gelok, manager of a sector of the Manpower Consultative Service in Ontario. Their financial burdens have diminished and with their pensions they don’t need to find paying work. “Sometimes it’s impossible for companies to make reductions through early retirement,” adds Gelok, “but we encourage it whenever possible — if more companies did it, it would make a difference to the unemployment rate.”

Why then, if early retirement is viewed favorably by employees, employers and government, is it not a more common practice? The answer is twofold. First, there must be a sufficient number of employees eligible for early retirement. If a company has a particularly young staff, either because of the nature of its business or because it has recently offered an early retirement program and lost a lot of older employees, reductions through early retirement are probably not possible. And second, as Ken Gelok says: “It costs an awful lot of money.” This is especially true if early retirement is implemented on a voluntary basis and employers have to offer particularly generous terms in order to make it attractive to employees. But a growing number of companies, including Petro-Canada, Bell Canada in Montreal, Ontario Hydro and the Montreal Gazette, are joining Imperial in taking this creative approach to staff reductions. As Imperial’s Bill Marin says: “It makes sense, in human terms and in economic terms.”
HOME AT THE OFFICE

BY LAIRD O'BRIEN

It's just after eight o'clock on one of those bleak March mornings. I'm sure you know the type — drizzly, soggy gray and just chilly enough to put down a thin sheet of ice where you least expect it. Buses are running about 20 minutes late. Main roads are backed up, and in the words of one traffic reporter up in a helicopter, "traffic hogs are a dime-a-dozen this morning. It's a tough, rough day to get to work." And to add to the gloom, it's Monday.

I smile, lean back and prop my slippered feet on the corner of the desk. I confess listening to early morning traffic and weather reports is one of the mildly perverted but harmless pleasures of working from home. Each morning, my friends and neighbors set off for work. I do not. I carry on like a writer and communications consultant from an office in my home. I am certainly not alone. Many Canadians work this way — farmers, basement inventors, designers of clothes, books and furniture, archi- tects, music and language teachers, investment counselors, artists, dog breeders, insurance agents and researchers of this and that. We live in big cities and small towns, apartment towers and log cabins. What we have in common, I think, is a tendency to be a little strung about our working lives one day and decidedly defensive the next. We have heard rumblings about a computer revolution that will soon mean thousands of new people will be working at home (will we then be a movement?); but in the meantime, we're still something of an enigma to the world around us.

From my own early days at home, I recall the morning a neighbor stopped by to see my wife and met me instead. She clapped her hand to her mouth on the doorstep and asked, "Tai?" When I assured her I wasn't sick, she looked embarrassed and said hesitatingly, "Oh, well, I hope you got a good set- tlement. The important thing is to keep smiling. Something will turn up." Prejudices and cultural conditioning suggest that unless you're running a farm, resort or rural general store, you have no business hanging around the house or apartment. If you're serious about work, you should be doing it where there are bosses and elevators and cafeterias and punch clocks and such. There are some who find it difficult to imagine that one might work from home by choice.

To establish a frame of reference, let me take a moment to describe my office. Around me are the usual tools of the writer: a wall of bookcases, a large desk settled under the windows, a long cherry-wood side table for my typewriter and papers, filing cabinets, telephone, chairs and a door to keep me in and everybody else out. Only the location is unusual — the view from my window is of a blue spruce, to the left of which is a flowering crab.

What are the rewards of working this way? Well, some are obvious: the gift of almost two hours each day, hours that used to be spent journeying to and from an office; more efficient use of time, in a quiet setting; the freedom to juggle one's schedule and take off for an hour or an afternoon; tax deductions in April for a home office, plus a daily saving on gas, parking and nerves. Other rewards are more personal: working in moose sweaters, throwing a frisbee in the cat on a Friday morning in summer and scooting out of the city; watching my son and his friends book- ing with a football on their way home from school.

With the exception of farmers, who are usually born to the land, and the occasional artist or writer, most of us come to or at home careers from jobs elsewhere. With fear and trepidation, we walk away from a downtown office or production line and settle ourselves in a basement studio, closet office or workshop in the garage. Cast adrift from much that is both familiar and protective, we set sail on a journey into foreign territory, which is not unlike a permanent move to another country. Some culture shocks are inevitable.

For example, when we stay home it usually means we're starting a new business, free-lancing or working on commission. There is no longer an automatic bank deposit every second Friday. Income is sporadic and usu- ally arrives at the whim of Canada Post. Unsettling, to say the least.

When we stay home, there is no handy, whirring machine down the hall to deliver crisp, clean photo- copies. Now, copies of anything call for a trip to somebody's copy shop and a cash outlay.

When we stay home, there is no cof- fee secong with its tempting assort- ment of sticky buns. Frankly, it can be a lonely journey to the coffeepot in the kitchen, highlighted by the prospect of tripping over the dog. Also fondly recalled during those first weeks at home: secretaries, typists, lunchtime- bull sessions, yard vacations and foot- ball pools. Oh, yes, and the occasional bit of gossip. We are now far removed from the drama of research break- throughs, departmental reorganiza- tions and international visitors. Here, the big question is will the city works department patch the road before or after the ducks head south?

Personally, I found the first two months at home the most trying. Once I had passed through this withdrawal phase, I began to have a deeper appreciation of why I had made the switch. Of course, it would be unfair to sug- gest that working at home doesn't have some continuing perks. Over the years — eight, at last count — I've wrestled with most of them. The morning newspaper is a particular nemesis because no one will ever know if I stop a second, or even a third, cup of coffee over the editorials and the sports news. There is no boss, no time clock, no confederate to point the finger. Eight-thirty, nine, nine-forty- five... it is 10:30 when I walk down to the garden shed.

One under way — finally — the doorknob becomes the enemy. I have coped with charity canvasses, Girl Guide cookie sellers, Boy Scout cat washers, asphalt contractors, snow shovellers, grass cutters, leaf tiders, terted neighbors, meter readers, furn- ance cleaners, lawn dog owners... in the same general category of unset- tling interruptions are blown hoses,
SUMMER SYMPHONY
Our youth orchestra, our national treasure

BY WYNNE THOMAS

The open air concert that the 97 members of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada gave at Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park last July was not, from all accounts, an unequalled success. The performance suffered from more than its fair share of snags.

For a start, there was the less-than-perfect sound amplification system. And the situation was not improved by the cloud of mosquitoes that, as dusk fell, descended on orchestra and audience alike. Afterward, one percussion player counted 13 bites.

But worse was to come. It was in the middle of the program’s main work, Prokofiev’s enormously demanding Fifth Symphony, that the lights went out. Rising to the occasion, Otto-Weininger Mueller, the conductor, without missing a beat, pealed off his jacket and, white-shined, became sufficiently visible to the players for the performance to continue. Improvement triumphed.

The Winnipeg performance, which provided the young musicians with a sharp object lesson in coping with the unexpected, constituted the only setback in an otherwise triumphal eight-province tour undertaken by the National Youth Orchestra last year to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Canada Council.

Often overcoming inadequate halls and indifferent acoustics and maintaining a dauntless schedule, this remarkable group of young Canadian musicians, ranging in age from 15 to 24, charmed audiences from Halifax to Lethbridge, Alta.

They also won rave reviews from the critics. The opening concert of the tour at Ottawa’s National Arts Centre was judged by the Ottawa Citizen to be “as impressive as any concert heard in that hall in recent months. Indeed, the performance itself was of a caliber that would have made any fully professional orchestra proud.”

The Regina Leader-Post reached the conclusion that “the NYO [National Youth Orchestra] sounds better than many of Canada’s leading regional orchestras at their best.”

The same thought was echoed by the music critic of the Halifax Chronicle-Herald after the orchestra performed in that city at the midpoint of its tour. “The temptation is to lump the National Youth Orchestra in with every other youth orchestra in the country, where, in fact, there is no comparison. There are professional orchestras in Canada that would trade their union cards to sound as polished as the NYO.”

In Montreal, the respected critic for the Gazette, Eric McLean, thought the orchestra had given a splendid performance of Prokofiev’s difficult Fifth Symphony. "I have no hesitation," he wrote. "In describing their playing of the Prokofiev
The orchestra’s concerts (left) draw lavish praise from international critics, and (above) musicians tune up in preparation for a performance.

symphony as first-rate."

Over the years, international critics have been equally lavish in their praise. Clearly, Canada has something unique in its National Youth Orchestra: a seasonal assembly of young musicians who have somehow managed to transcend the summer camp status of most such institutions to become not only a serious and significant part of the national orchestral music scene but, in the steady opinion of some international conductors, the world’s best youth orchestra. How on earth have we managed to produce a national phenomenon like this?

It all began in 1980 when James McIntosh, a Toronto businessman, established a two-week summer workshop in Stratford, Ont., to train young orchestral musicians. Originally intended to provide promising players with (in the words of the youth orchestra’s brochure) “primarily an inspirational and social experience,” the workshop has developed into a major educational institution, offering more hours of instruction over a summer session (generally between six and 10 weeks) than most university music facilities provide in an academic year.

Over the years, the shape and purpose of the annual workshop has undergone significant change. Whereas in the early period the emphasis was on touring, the last 10 years have seen a shift of focus to a more concentrated training curriculum, with tours taking place every four or five years. The early fare of basic orchestral training has been supplemented by such innovations as specialized training sessions for the strings, and “sectional” rehearsals, in which each instrumental group practices individually before coming together as a complete orchestra.

During its lifetime, the National Youth Orchestra has met for its annual workshop at various regional venues across Canada. But for the past seven years its home, for at least part of the summer, has been on the campus of Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont., an attractive and generally convenient central location offering excellent facilities in a pleasant and relaxed environment. If the students are exclusively Canadian, the faculty is markedly cosmopolitan, and over the years a string of international conductors, teachers and performers from the United States, Europe, South America, Asia and Australia has augmented the distinguished Canadian musicians who constitute the mainstay of the workshop’s teaching staff. The list of musical directors and guest conductors includes such well-known names as Kazuyoshi Akiyama, John Ainslie, Franz-Paul Decker, Victor Feldbrill, Georg Ti现象, Walter Susand, Aaron Copeland and Seiji Ozawa.

For those occasional critics who inquire why Canada should have to look overseas in enlisting talent to train its young musicians, Eugene Rittich, co-principal horn of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, who has been a teacher at the National Youth Orchestra since its inception, has a ready and convincing answer: “Music,” says Rittich, “is an international language, and there is no reason why we should lean on North American thought in developing Canadian talent. The bulk of western music originated in Europe, and we have a responsibility to expose students to the highest international standards.” Rittich, who has watched the quality of the orchestra increase steadily over the years, adds: “I know of no other similar organization that has such a high level of competency among the faculty.”

Admission to the National Youth Orchestra is open to all students 14 years and over. There are no academic requirements, members being chosen purely on the basis of their performing ability and potential as professional musicians. But competition is fierce, and up to 1000 aspiring members apply each year for about 100 full-scholarship and a few partial-scholarship places.

It begins for the student with a 15-minute audition at one of the many regional centres across Canada. The student performs a piece of his or her choice, some specified excerpts from the orchestra’s repertoire and some technical exercises. For many students these auditions are a traumatic experience, but even for the unsuccessful they provide valuable experience in preparing for and undergoing an audition.

Although adjudicators, chosen for their ability to put students at ease as well as for their academic qualifications, are always present, all auditions are taped for further assessment and comparison, for which the opinions of many professional musicians may be solicited.

But the fortunate musicians who are selected for the orchestra get the bargain of a lifetime. Those on full scholarships receive musical tuition from the finest teachers, food, lodging and travel — worth about $5000 — for a registration fee of $50, and those on partial scholarships receive free tuition but pay their own food, lodging and travel expenses. The cost of the entire program is underwritten by the federal, provincial and municipal governments and by contributions from corporations and individual donors throughout Canada.

For many students, of course, admission to the orchestra also provides them with their first taste of trans-Canada travel and, for some of them, their first experience of meeting students from all provinces in the country. It turns out, happily, that musical talent is, on the whole, evenly distributed throughout Canada, and the percentage of players from each province is roughly proportional to its population. Thus, last year, John Buckley from Quispamsis, N.B., found himself playing the cello alongside David Wright from Edmonton, while Marina Piccinini of St. John’s and Susan Foster of Lemberg, Alta., were neighbors in the flute section.

Generally, students remain with the orchestra for three years (although passing the annual audition is obligatory for re-election), and as a result the orchestra operates on a kind of three-year cycle, with the average age of a season’s players varying from 17 to 19. In less mature years, the training period may be lengthened to compensate for a lower level of experience, but the standard of the program itself makes no concessions to inexperience. No matter how difficult the piece (and the orchestra tackles some notoriously difficult compositions), you practice until you get it right. Getting it right, getting it perfect, is a preoccupation of the students, not only in formal rehearsals and training periods but during unscheduled practice sessions that go on at virtually all hours of the day and night.

In a quiet corner at the music school at Queen’s, Dominique Laplante, a 20-year-old Montrealer who is studying music at the
University of Toronto, is struggling with a fiendishly fast set of scales on her violin ("it is very patient with me") in preparation for a performance of a Bruckner symphony. "There are two ways to handle a difficult passage in orchestral playing," she says. "You can learn to play every note or you can take it. I'm not taking it anymore." Laplante, one of the few seasoned travelers in last year's orchestra (she has lived in New York City and Thailand), explains that a young musician does not have to be committed to an orchestral career to derive immense benefits from the experience with the youth orchestra. Leaning herself to chamber music, Laplante says: "Here, you gain experience by playing in a different context, and you have an advantage over people who haven't taken this kind of training. It forces you to adopt different attitudes to your playing."

Michael Bakan, a 19-year-old percussion player from Vancouver, agrees. An experienced jazz performer, he views participation in the orchestra as a means of widening his potential as a musician. "I want to have a varied musical career," Bakan says. "A special-education teacher, the percussion teacher here, is very versatile. He's a timpanist with the Hartford Symphony, and he has also played music for many movies and television shows. What he has done is what I aspire to. But I really enjoy playing in an orchestra, and if I had the opportunity to play timpani, I wouldn't pass it up."

The organizers and faculty of the orchestral school go to considerable lengths to ensure that hard work is balanced by an appropriate amount of relaxation. Prebreakfast calisthenics, an afternoon recreation period and rest days are all carefully built into the schedule to allow the students to get their minds off music once in a while. Except that few seem inclined to want to escape the deep immersion atmosphere that pervades the program. Music, music, music. Tomorrow's a day off? Then how about organizing a string quartet or a chamber music concert? An hour to spare between classes is just about enough time for a session of madrigal singing. And no one need run short of pocket money when you can round up a band of street musicians to entertain the local populace. It's probably illegal but it's certainly a lot of fun!

But learning to play in an orchestra also means learning to deal with stress. And there's plenty of that, too. "You really get to appreciate the social aspects of the program," says Mark Rodgers, a 22-year-old cellist from Winnipeg. "If they weren't there, I just don't know how we'd cope." "There's a lot of stress," agrees Michael Bakan, no stranger to performing in public. "I find myself asking, 'What am I doing here?' I want to sleep for the rest of my life. Being a performer is a scary thing." And Dominique Laplante adds: "After playing hard, when you rest you rest with a great deal of energy."

Last year's program was a particularly tough one. First, there was the orchestra's grueling Canadian tour, with performances in 11 cities in 14 hot summer days. Apart from the sheer fatigue engendered by constant travel ("If it's Thursday it must be Regina") and the inevitable logistical problems associated with transporting 97 musicians and their instruments across eight provinces, the repertoire was a demanding one. Then, on the orchestra's return to Kingston, in addition to its other training activities, it went into rehearsals for what was the major artistic challenge of the entire summer program: the first North American performance of the original version of Anton Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, a monumental work of immense complexity.

Even though the National Youth Orchestra was fortunate to be able to draw on the unchallenged knowledge and expertise of its musical director, Vienna-born Georg Tintner, an international authority on Bruckner, for its performance of the original score, it still faced a formidable task. But after 18 hours of concentrated rehearsal, the symphony was coming together. A couple of days before its public premiere in Kingston, Maestro Tintner assembled the full orchestra for a complete rehearsal in Queen's University's Grant Hall.

A striking, dynamic figure with flowing white hair (but clad, for this occasion, in extreme informality. T-shirt, beach shorts and sandals), Maestro Tintner in turn chides, cajoles and prays the players into giving the performance of their lives. "The whole thing is too loud!" "That was good."

"You are not playing together." "That was better. Now without the strings, please." "Not too soft."

Until, finally, "That was very good. That was really very good." "They really are extraordinarily good," says Tintner when the rehearsal is over. "In fact — and I speak as someone who has conducted youth orchestras all over the world — Canada is really in the forefront."

"Such enthusiasm! It's a pleasure to rehearse a bunch of musicians who are not looking at their watches after the first 30 minutes. Such delightful unfamiliarity with the orchestral repertoire. Can you imagine an orchestra that has never played Beethoven's Fifth?"

"The Bruckner is very complex, and they look to it like fish to water. I wish we had a lot more rehearsal time but I think we can do it."

Maestro Tintner's confidence in the orchestra turns out to be justified. The Kingston performance goes well. The following evening, in a concert at Toronto's Massey Hall, it goes even better. "Even had the performance been a disaster," wrote the Globe and Mail's music critic the next day, "they NYO would have merited praise for the rendering of a great musical service. As it turned out, the musicians...were thrilling and inspired from first to last."

It was a fitting finale to another good year for Canada's National Youth Orchestra. "It was something to remember, this experience," says Mark Rodgers. A visiting American teacher, Alice Callioux, a harpist, puts it another way. "Canada," she said, "is very, very good to its young people."
In Closing

There is a street in this city, well to the south and close enough to the lake so that you can smell the water or else imagine you do. It is a short, climbing sort of street and at the bottom to the left is a tall brick building, reddish and fading, on which someone has painted a sign that runs from top to bottom and begins with the proud words: "Welcome to Market Street."

Beyond it, you pass — as I did one day some weeks ago — the Old Fish Market, the Market Grill and the Shellfish Bar. Then, a few steps north and across the street, you come to the St. Lawrence Market, a building to which I was headed that day to take in the Antiquarian Book Fair, sponsored by the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada and attended by men and women from Canada, the United States and Britain who deal in old maps and manuscripts, but particularly in books — books that are often very old and very expensive.

It was the middle of the afternoon, and Steven Temple, a bookseller and an organizer of the fair, was standing in his booth (it was one of about 35 located on the floor) but was able to take a break from business to give me a bit of history that interested me — his own and that of the fair, which was being held for the fourteenth year.

Temple, a mild-tempered man who strokes his chin as he gives an answer, came to Canada in 1970 from Florida and now, in his early thirties, he owns his own antiquarian bookstore on Queen Street West in Toronto, between University and Spadina, which is sometimes referred to as bookstores' row. "I had a degree in English literature when I came to Canada," he said softly amid the hum of talk that floated around the fair. "But my first job was making sandwiches in Mr. Submarine. Then I drove a taxi. One day I saw an ad for a job as a clerk in a bookstore, and I applied and got it. That was the beginning. A bit later I wandered into the Old Favourites Bookshop, the largest antiquarian bookshop in the country. I was astonished at what I saw, really astonished: thousands of books centuries old for modest prices. I gave them my name and address and that was that — I began working there. Soon I was up early in the morning haunting the Goodwill stores — the ones people donate carosell books to. I was fascinated by what I was sometimes able to find: books that were not just books, but real objects of art."

About a half an hour later (after he had spoken of how complex it can be to set a valid price for a book that is genuinely rare) he began to show me around the fair and, before going back to his own display, pointed out some of the notable booksellers who had come from as far as California and London to exhibit — this man with perhaps the most expensive books, this man with a noted scholar on Charles Darwin, this man and wife with a collection of old books on maritime history.

"The mood of the antiquarian book fair — at least this year's fair in Toronto — is less sedate and stiff than most people would probably expect. One exhibitor was wearing what seemed to be a baseball cap and another sported a number of buttons and pins on his jacket lapel that said he supported not just democratic reforms in various parts of the world but an organization I hadn't heard of until then: the Canadian Irish Horse Federation. I stopped by the booth of Michel Brisebois of Montreal, a pleasant and serious collector, and when I noticed he was eating a hamburger and sipping a soft drink I asked if I could come back later, and he said by all means, please do."

The president of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada just now is John Townsend of Halifax, whose store, Schooner Books, had a large display of books on the Atlantic provinces. "If I hear of a library being auctioned off," said Mr. Townsend, a man with bright eyes and a reddish beard, "I race right along to it, in Picton, in Yarmouth, N.S., or up in New Brunswick. Anywhere in the Maritimes. Not long ago, for example, a general wholesaler went out of business in Shelburne, N.S. I went there to buy a book and found it was a very nice collection of 20th-century books. I also have here with me an illuminated book by George Heriot, 'Tours Through the Canadas,' published in 1817, I bought it about a year ago at the sale of a personal library in the Maritimes. It's priced at $3000.

Most of the booksellers are a bit hesitant to talk about prices for fear that money may appear to be their motive. In fact, dealing in old books is certainly not a sure fire way to your second million, or even to your first fifty-thousand. Far from it. "One has to be interested in books more than money," said Helen R. Kahn of Montreal, a woman who speaks precisely and well. "And many of our customers are young people who simply cannot afford our older and more expensive books."

She gestured toward the glass display case and said: "But as a collector I've come upon some works that are very old and quite valuable. Here is one I'm very proud of, a book from the early 1500s by Louis de Baille, a leading French author whose writing contributed much to the Reformation. The press that printed it was the leading humanist press of the day. A small slip of paper Mrs. Kahn gave me, containing a bit of history on the writer, listed the price at the bottom: $800. I was turning to move on when she made a point worth remembering: 'I'm leery of referring to my books as rare. After all, they are on the market so I tend to think that most are scarce, but not rare. Terminology, after all, is important in any field. If you use the word rare too often, it loses its value.'"

"For awhile I stood looking at the people — librarians, dealers, buyers — who were talking with one of the biggest men at the fair, M.E. Korn, who had come from London, England, to exhibit. He is not only a collector of reputation but a man of gentle wit who, when asked how long his firm has been established, told me that it wasn't a firm and it was hardly established. 'I started in 1930,' he said. 'Before that I was a teacher, mostly in universities, including the University of Toronto, in physiology. Now, I do this all the time, traveling to fairs like this.'"

"Mr. Korn was happy to show me his most prized exhibit, a small, beautifully bound book published in Italy in 1857 and containing, near the centre, a poem of 20 lines by an apparently unheralded English poet — Peter Constable."

It seemed clear that the booksellers had each come with a special book from their collections, which they liked to show, if not to sell. When I strolled over to the showcase of Michel Brisebois of Montreal, he told me that — with rare exception — he collects only French European books, about 80 percent of them acquired in Paris, which he visits twice a year. Then, he reached into the glass case and brought out one of his exceptions: a book that must have been one of the rarest in all of Canada that day, a Catholic missal printed in Italy in 1515 when the church was on the verge of the Reformation. He said nothing. We looked at it and then, as he put it, he said, 'For us, this is not a job, it is a vocation.'"

I said goodbye to Michel Brisebois and left the hall and went down Market Street in the early evening light. I watched the crowds come hurrying from all the offices. I thought of the book fair and the men and women I had met there. It seemed to me that the most important thing about them was that whether they were buying or selling or trading what they were really doing was conserving something universal and worthwhile.
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