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The best of the past 2
by R.A.J. Phillips

Putting technology to work 8
by Russell Felton

A legacy of excellence 13
by Kenneth Bagwell

Rocky mountain high 18
by Sarah Lawley

The moral factor 21
by James Taylor

Land of one's own 25
by Ted Ferguson

In closing 30

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The best of the past

Before this century closes, observers of the passing scene will have some perspective on what our generation has done. What will they see? That we have brought the planet to the brink of destruction? That we have sent satellites to break the surly bonds of earth?

Perhaps, but something else, less noticed, has happened in our time. We have begun to save our past.

The beginning of this worthy trend, the awakening of our historical consciousness, was signaled with a virtual starting gun: the national centennial. In 1967, communities across the land undertook projects to celebrate Canada's 100th birthday. Concert halls, theatres, museums and libraries were built; old buildings were given new life.

Unfortunately, however, it was too late for many of our older buildings; they had been demolished during those post-war years when success was measured by speed and size and few, if any, let our communities be dominated by private and public forces that too often saw the past as an obstacle to the future. Regrettable, this was equally as true in the national capital as it was in any other place. ***

Beyond the Peace Tower and the Parliament Buildings, symbols of this country, lies a city. Like so many others, it began beside a waterway and because of it. The Rideau Canal, whose construction began in 1826, turned the untouched forest east of what is now Parliament Hill into muddy Lower Town. Long before Canada the nation was born, men of substance made buildings of substance west of the new canal. When this area became the country's capital, suburbs spread into New Edinburgh around Government House and east of the canal into Sandy Hill.

Yesterday's suburbs are today's downtown. By 1867, rows of workers' cottages looked like aging and unwanted relatives beside the new commercial buildings. Pretentious old homes, built by officials in the latter half of the 17th century, faded in the shadows of rectangular apartment blocks. It took imagination to see that the Glebe or the adjacent Ottawa South, built in the early 20th century, could emerge as particularly attractive residential districts. The day had not yet come when people would think of heritage conservation as more than saving great public buildings.

And yet, and yet... The federal government's National Capital Commission was beginning to remake the Mile of History on Lower Town's Sussex Drive — not an area of many great monuments, but a place where life could be restored in surroundings of grace and character. The commission had also recognized that a decaying pile on Confederation Square was possibly the finest surviving commercial building in Canada. Built in 1890, it had been gracefully designed by the architect John James Browne to provide office space for professionals.

Today, thanks to the commission, the Central Chambers building (pictured on the cover) is the most sought-after rental property in the city, despite a lack of air conditioning, a shabby elevator and ancient plumbing. People began to look again at their city.

Similarly, in the century, Ottawa had benefited from efforts to make it a fitting capital and a model city for a proud country. The vision, particularly of former prime minister Mackenzie King, had been written in parks and parkways, a greenbelt to forestall urban sprawl. Canada's first pedestrian mall and a host of other projects that proved that a modern city could have a human dimension.

The late 1960s saw the emergence of a new breed of community activists. They came to have a strong influence at city hall and occasionally in the federal corridors of power. These stirrings were scarcely noticeable when one evening in the dying days of 1967, about 20 people gathered in a living room a few metres from the canal that had given birth to the city. They had come together out of a feeling that the momentum of the centennial should not be lost. There were civil servants, a historian, an architect, a student and homemaker. Some had been members of a successful centennial group with the unlikely name of the Committee for the Beautification of Ottawa of the Local Council of Women. Most of the others had not met until that evening.

Seventeen years later, it seems that everyone who was there holds vivid memories of that gathering. "I remember the very chair I was sitting in," says Gertrude Holt. "I remember Mary Anne over there on the chaise..."
longue, furiously talking notes, and Kay in the fireplace talking of her vision of the capital. The funny thing is, even on that evening, no one knew that history was being made.

Dreams led up enthusiasm. One dominant theme was the setting of the best of the past for a better future. There was a cascade of ideas, some wild, some long since realized. The group formed an ambitious society called the Capital for Canadians, which launched a dizzying array of programs. In spite of, or perhaps because of a total absence of government money, the Capital for Canadians accomplished much in its first year. Unfortunately, the association was short lived but one important part of it survived and grew strong. This was the Heritage Committee, which became the Heritage Ottawa in 1964.

For the young organization, ideals were not enough. It had to begin the long task of persuading people that heritage conservation had practical value. Even before the group was formed, some of its members had been vigorously lobbying the federal government to rescind the death sentence imposed on the famous Union Station on Confederation Square. The National Conference Centre, now in that building, is a lasting monument to the group's efforts. One of the first big projects the fledgling organization faced was the fight to save a modest yellow house of extraordinary historical and architectural interest. Usually called the Ikerman Cottage, it had been the home of the caterer to Colonel By, the man who built the Rideau Canal and founded the future national capital. While this charming house by the canal in Ottawa's Past had many fine interior details, it was architecturally important because it stood as a rare example of vertical plank construction. Its owners wanted to demolish the building to create parking space, so Heritage Ottawa found a new site for the cottage. Just as a year of persuasion, fund-raising and negotiation seemed to be reaching a happy conclusion, the end came with shocking suddenness. One Saturday, the bulldozers came to the rescue. The conservators went back to their living rooms to study the anatomy of failure.

Then came the distinguished house of one of the capital's first settlers, which was still in the hands of the original family after nearly a century and a half. From the fine white clapboard residence, the lawns stretched down to the Rideau River. Willing buyers were ready to demolish it and erect high-rise apartment buildings on the site. At first the Billings house had few defenders. The affluent neighborhood, concerned about the erosion of a historic place might attract, was no more enthusiastic than the family about saving it. Heritage Ottawa had a tiny membership and an annual budget that barely reached two figures. Its members phoned and wrote letters. They talked to developers. They dragged reporters and politicians to the site. They devised plans for the house's future. They persuaded governments to talk to one another. They pursued every avenue that would gain time until some but would produce a rabbit. In this they were helped by Ontario law, which, at the time, did little to preserve the province's heritage but which carefully guarded its graves, and there was on the property a cemetery whose graves dated from 1830. The group had worked to save the Billings house since 1968, and it was a great moment in 1975 when the City of Ottawa, in cooperation with Parks Canada, purchased the building to preserve and use as a museum.

But this was not the only cause that occupied the group during those years. Ottawa is one of the few cities that have preserved their downtown markets intact from the last century, but this almost wasn't so. Developers were asking for the space and the city fathers were licensing Heritage Ottawa and its friends carried the torch until public opinion could be swung. The market was saved and it became the catalyst for widespread revitalization in Lower Town and a spot to the restoration of the downtown core. Larry Greenberg considers the saving of the market a real turning point. He returned as Ottawa's mayor in 1978 to establish an antique store on the Mile of History and to develop heritage properties himself. "Without the conservationists, we could not have saved the nation's capital. The big problem was convincing the city hall. The conservationists persuaded me of the value of saving our past, and gradually we won over most of the council. We marched together."

At the end of 1967, Heritage Ottawa, or the Heritage Committee as it was called then, made its presence felt on Parliament Hill. The Centennial Flame was to be extinguished forever and the fountain removed. But a member of the group persuaded former prime minister Lester Pearson that this spot, where at least 60 heads of state had saluted Canada on its birthday, had acquired a unique historic value of its own. Today, thanks to the Heritage Committee, the flames burn bright.

The Parliament Buildings' East Block was a cause that occupied the group for a dozen years. Sometimes called the most historic building in Canada, it was under threat of total modernization. Enlisting help from across the country, the Heritage Committee lobbied hard for the preservation of its history, obtained permission to run regular guided tours through the building and sold thousands of books recording its history. Gradually it won division-makers to its point of view, and in 1981 the federal government completed a magnificent rehabilitation, with restoration of the building's most historic parts. After the signing of the new Constitution on April 17, 1982, the Queen's first official act was to re-open the East Block.

The landmarks were not always so notable, but they remain to be remembered. Across the river from the Parliament Buildings, the federal government had acquired a large section of the pulp and paper complex of J.B. Eddy Forest Products Ltd. One moonless in 1982 when some members of Heritage Ottawa watched the bulldozers clearing the site and saw what they were approaching the old stone digester tower, which had the air of a medieval keep. He quickly called a friend in the National Capital Commission, who moved with lightning speed. The blades stopped at the building's foundations. Today, that curious tower is slated to be the centerpiece of the amphitheatre of the new Museum of Man—a delightful juxtaposition of old and new.

Saving Ottawa's first high school was a times-consuming task spearheaded by the Friends of Lisgar College with the support of the Heritage Committee. The school is a splendid limestone building in the collegiate-Gothic style of the mid-nineteenth century. It has a long history of academic excellence and a staggering list of notable alumni, including Naomi Loeb, Elected in the mid-nineteenth century, Ottawa's first high school, Lisgar Collegiate, was splendidly restored to its original collegiate-Gothic style.

The National Capital Commission was responsible for the graceful restoration of the Mile of History on Sussex Drive in Lower Town.
Eugene Forsey and Leanne Green.

After years of struggle, the conserva-
tionists at last saw the completion of a
spledid restoration. And not only
this, but roads were closed so the
playing fields and pool, in the
midst of a busy downtown area, an
oasis for all who pass by.

A dozen years ago there was a
likelyhood that along with Lajoie, its
neighbors on the edge of Carier
Square would be leveled. The archi-
tecture of the Otasca Teachers’ Col-
lege is said to express “the high-
spired, free eclecticism of the Vic-
torian age” with its Gothic and
Italianate windows, Norman door-
way, Second Empire mansard roof
and the kinds of towers and minarets
not built today. Learning of plans to
replace it with a provincial office
towered Heritage Committee coerce-
ved with Ontario’s Premier William
Davis. The provincial and federal
governments found a bargain solution
in a trade of properties that ensured
the survival of the college and its
possible use as a municipal arts
center.

And meanwhile there were sad sto-
ries... Ottawa’s biggest heritage
cause centered on the Sacred Heart
Convent on Rideau Street. The story
began in the late 1880s when a small
limestone hotel of some pretension
was erected to accommodate early vis-
itors to the new capital. When the Su-
ners of Charity bought it, they kept
the original lobby with its massive oak
registration desk and used it as their
parlor. Stoumsens enlarged the
building until it almost filled a large
city block and the history of a century.
The gem of this teaching convent was
the chapel, with its finely vaulted blue
and white wood ceiling. In 1972, it
reached a rare accolade: designation
by the government of Canada as a site
of national architectural importance.

Yet even that designation was not
enough to save the building from
demolition.

The failed effort to save this frag-
ment of our nation’s heritage is a
suspenseful story of high emotions,
the workings of power and the interplay
of government, commerce and the
heritage movement. At the height of
the controversy, the heritage group
went public to explain its quiet work
on behalf of the community. Three
months its membership soared from
80 to 400. The public conscience was
touched at last, and out of crushing
defeat emerged one important victory.
Although it suffered the indignity of
being both dismantled and displaced, the
chapel was saved. The federal go-
vernment bought it, and after metic-
ulous photographmetry by the Na-
tional Research Council, it was removed
piece by piece for storage. Jean
Sutherland Boggs, then director of the
National Gallery of Canada, sug-
gested that it would make an ideal
room in the new National Gallery, the
construction of which was then a
distant dream.

With the drama of the convent over,
Ottawa changed noticeably. The
magnificent centerpiece of the Mile
of History is Notre Dame Basilica,
whose soaring towers have been a
landmark since the middle of the last
century. Adjoining it is the east is the
gaudily built Archbishop’s Palace
and, just north, the former Lasalle
Academy, which housed the first
bishop before the palace was built.

In the mid-seventies the academy was
 slated for demolition and its site
was to be used for office towers. Heri-
tage Ottawa mobilized an unprece-
tented campaign to block the rea-
soning. The federal government
then bought the property and restored
it lavishly, using it for offices. Ironi-
cally, the academy stood only a few
meters from the site of a heritage trea-
sure called the Goolden Hotel, which,
just a dozen years before, the federal
and municipal governments had
allowed to be demolished.

The Carleton County Courthouse
and Nicholas Street Jail received
justice for more than a century and
then were almost lost. The courthouse,
built in 1871, is a stolid limestone building
in the Italianate style favored for
such institutions at the time. The jail,
considered a model penal institution
when it was built in 1862, has high
stone walls, massive iron doors and
vaulted stone ceilings and would have
cost a fortune to demolish, but many
people were anxious to try. Finally
they were dissuaded, and it was a
prideful day in 1974 when Prince Philip
officially opened one of the Canadian
Youth Hostel Association’s most
distinctive overnight accommodations.

Those were some of the larger pub-
lc events. But equally important were
the educational campaigns about re-
cycling old buildings for new use.
“Every fine old street or house that can
be brought to life makes the city bet-
ter,” says Jennifer Roddick, president
of Heritage Ottawa. Restaurateurs,
professionals and business people
looked again at long-ignored houses,
stores and even warehouses surviving
from the early part of the century and
before. Areas emerged from neglect
and decay; near-shuns became sought-
after neighborhoods. It was a trend
that was spreading across Canada.

“I doubt that anyone knows how
much Heritage Ottawa has done to
enrich the nation’s capital,” Mayor
Marion Dewar has commented. “It’s
not just the irreplaceable buildings
they helped to save. It was their pio-
nering work, when it took courage
and determination to teach a doub-
ning public about the value of the past
in a modern city.

Fifteen years have passed since the
late Gladys Blair ran to her phone to
sound the alarm when she spotted
disгарgs ripping out what remained
of historic John Street in New Edin-
burgh. In imminent danger of being
demolished was the charming Fraser
Schoolhouse, which, built nearly a
century and a half ago, was Bytown’s
first stone schoolhouse. Today, the
building serves as Heritage Ottawa’s
office and as a gallery to carry on the
work of public education.

Now there is a new generation of
conservationists. Nelson Edwards is
one of the newest members of Heri-
tage Ottawa. He was in Grade 5 when
it began. “I grew up with the value of
historical conservation was already
accepted,” he says, “and people no
longer assumed that the new had to
displace the old. But you still have to
work to save the past, and it’s doing
something like this that makes life
worthwhile.”

With wide acceptance of its once
radical ideals, Heritage Ottawa, like
other such groups across the country,
might be expected to sit back in quiet
satisfaction. But that is unlikely to
happen. Sometimes discussion turns
to the future: Which are tomorrow’s
heritage buildings? The National Arts
Centre? Perhaps the National Gallery
and the National Museum of Man,
whose foundations are now being
built? Certainly the new railroad sta-
tion, a few houses and an occasional
commercial building, but even in the
most charitable mood it is hard to
make the list very long.

No generation has a surplus of quality. That is why Heritage Ottawa
and similar organizations will always
be needed to shape a better Canada.
PUTTING TECHNOLOGY TO WORK

IMPERIAL AND THE MICROCHIP WORLD

We have called it, in our need to identify what's happening to us, the "technological revolution."

The term is apt. Webster's dictionary defines a revolution in this sense as "a complete or drastic change." Without question, the new technologies are changing, completely and drastically, not only our physical world and our ways of doing things, but our society, our culture and even our ways of looking at ourselves and our future.

An exaggeration? The American futurist writer Alvin Toffler, in his best-selling book The Third Wave, writes of a "new civilization" taking shape. "So profoundly revolutionary is this new civilization that it challenges all our old assumptions," he says. "Old ways of thinking, old formulas, dogmas and ideologies, no matter how cherished or how useful in the past, no longer fit the facts. The world that is fast emerging from the clash of new values and technologies, new geopolitical relationships, new lifestyles and modes of communication, demands wholly new ideas and analogies, classifications and concepts."

The main impetus for this revolutionary wave of technological development and change has come from the extraordinarily rapid advancement of the computer sciences — both the machines, or "hardware," and the programs, or "software." This more than any other factor has spurred the equally remarkable growth in such fields as engineering, robotics, biotechnology and genetic engineering, satellite and fibre-optics communications, space technology and so forth, which in combination are bringing unprecedented changes to our world.

The development of the electronic computer since its invention shortly after World War II has been truly astonishing. On the hardware side, the glass vacuum tubes and metal switches of the original machines gave way in the late 1940s to the solid state transistor, which in turn gave way in the late 1960s to the integrated circuit. This major technological advance allowed hundreds of miniature transistors to be etched, through the process of photolithography, on a single 10-centimetre square wafer of silicon. This not only dramatically reduced the size of the computer, but allowed for highly efficient and very economical mass production. The
“New technology can provide immense scope for employee creativity”

breakthrough can hardly be overstated. By the early 1960s, the power of computers had increased 10,000 times, while the cost of each of those performance boosts had fallen by a factor of 1000 times. Today, a more powerful computer could be put in a room in the 18th century, where it was used on an electronic board measuring little more than one centimetre by one centimetre. It can be installed in a huge range of products and used for almost any purpose.

Even more significant, however, was the fact that the microprocessor, unlike the integrated circuit board, could be programmed in countless ways. Merely by changing its instructions, a single microprocessor chip can be used in thousands of different ways, putting the power of the computer into the hands of scientists, engineers and innovators in virtually every field and discipline.

The surge of technological innovation, adaptation and improvement driven by computer technology is moving on at an increasingly rapid pace. Tom Thomson, a senior vice-president of Imperial Oil Limited, recently told a faculty audience in Halifax that “this process of rapidly developing technology and rapidly expanding knowledge is proceeding at a pace because it’s rooted in man’s creativity and imagination. It’s continual search for bigger, better and different things. The process snowballs. It builds and feeds on itself at an ever increasing rate.”

Every revolution meets with resistance, and the technological revolution is no exception. Many concerned observers fear a dehumanized future of robots in the workplace, a coterie of control and computer experts drawn between those with computer knowledge and access and those without. Like the Luddites of the 19th century, they see the new technologies as enemies of man and call for a return to simpler methods and simpler values.

Others, however, see the new technologies as opening up new vistas of human achievement. Dr. Samuel Smith, head of the Science Council of Canada, had this to say at last year’s Couchiching Conference: “If we can just raise our sights for a moment from the notion that the microsophates substitute for routine human judgment and recognize that the main thing it does is augment human intelligence, then I think we’ll see why the view of some of us is that we’re about to enter a golden era of humanity. What is happening now is that other developments in knowledge are being sped along by the fact that we have the microchips available.”

Similarly, Donald Johnston, a former minister of state for economic and regional development, and for science and technology, had this to say in a statement to the House of Commons: “Technology is changing many dimensions of our lives at an unprecedented pace. Communications, automation, new materials and consumer electronics are all having a profound effect on our livelihoods and our view of the world. Some of these changes we welcome, some we resist. But either we resist them or do not understand them. Change is always upsetting and can often be painful. However, we must recognize that we have no choice but to change with the changing world.”

Change is the only thing changing the world -- especially keeping abreast of or ahead of technological change -- has always been acard of Imperial’s corporate philosophy, and the new technologies have led to its being given even greater emphasis today.

“New technology presents management with a tremendous opportunity to refocus its organizational emphasis on entrepreneurial risk-taking.” Imperial’s president, Arden Haynes, said in a recent public address. “Given that jobs are properly designed, new technology can provide immense scope for the expression of employee creativity. Indeed, it’ll go further. This type of entrepreneurial work environment is necessary to ensure that companies expect to attract and retain highly qualified and motivated personnel.”

Haynes also makes another vital point: “There’s nothing magic about using new technology. The real value is when the new technology really boils down to be better and more efficient ways of producing goods and services. It offers us the tools we badly need to stimulate economic growth and to maintain our role in a competitive corporate competitiveness.”

Imperial has long been a leader in developing technology for the petroleum industry. The company maintains three full-scale research laboratories, the oldest and largest being the Esso Research Centre in Sarnia, Ont., which carries out research not only on petroleum and chemical engineering, but also on research by another feedstock for refining. Imperial has accomplished much in the areas of refining and production technology. Imperial’s refining department.

There were two areas where we thought there might be an economic benefit. One was in monitoring and controlling the refining process and the other was in controlling the movement and storage within the refinery. We felt that there were opportunities to use computers in controlling production quality, conserving energy, making maximum usage of the capacity of our refineries and producing more high-value products from a barrel of crude oil.” The experimental computer program that was applied to process-control systems at the company’s refinery in Cold Lake, Alberta, and at other refineries, was expected to pay a huge payoff.

The computer is changing the world. The impact of this spectacular revolution in technology and the new science of microelectronics is expected to produce what is called the microprocessor. In effect, the entire central processing unit or "brain" of a computer, which in the early 1960s was the size of a refrigerator, cabinet, was put on a silicon chip roughly one centimetre long by one centimetre wide.

"The impact of this spectacular revolution in technology and the new science of microelectronics is expected to produce what is called the microprocessor. In effect, the entire central processing unit or "brain" of a computer, which in the early 1960s was the size of a refrigerator, cabinet, was put on a silicon chip roughly one centimetre long by one centimetre wide.

"the Cold Lake project, and artificial and cairson-retained island fortification for drilling in the frigid waters of the Beaufort Sea. The petroleum projects and the operation of the refinery have contributed enormously to Canada’s energy security and to the company’s success, especially by developing new and improved products and by finding ways to reduce energy consumption and operating costs in refineries. For example, they have contributed to developments that significantly reduce the consumption of natural gas in oil. In 1891, the refining of one barrel

The Refining Process

The refining process takes place in a sequence of operations designed to remove impurities and other components from crude oil and to convert it into a variety of products, including gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, lubricants, and other petrochemicals. The process involves several steps, including desalting, deasphalting, and fractionation.

Desalting

Desalting removes salt and other inorganic impurities from crude oil. This is achieved by adding water to the crude oil at high pressure and temperature, which causes the impurities to form a suspension that can be removed.

Deasphalting

Deasphalting is the removal of the asphaltene fraction from crude oil. This fraction consists of high-molecular-weight hydrocarbons that are insoluble in common solvents. Deasphalting is typically done using a solvent such as kerosene or gasoline.

Fractionation

Fractionation is the separation of crude oil into different fractions based on their boiling points. This is achieved by heating the crude oil and then cooling it to condense the different fractions into liquid streams. Fractionation is generally done in a distillation column using a reflux system to control the temperature and pressure of the separation.

The resulting fractions are further processed to meet specific product specifications. For example, gasoline fractions are further refined to meet octane and other quality requirements before being sent to customers or used as feedstocks for downstream processes.

The refining process is a critical component of the oil and gas industry, as it enables the conversion of crude oil into a wide range of valuable products that are essential for meeting the energy needs of society.
have the potential to find substantial external markets. A computerized catalogue, CMCS has 80,000 parts and materials items, each individually described and with a unique catalogue number. Within seconds, using a computer terminal, one can locate any item and learn where it is used in the company.

This system provides the data base for PASS, which stores information regarding about 7000 suppliers and can generate purchase orders to fill specific needs and maintain inventory levels. Both systems are totally on-line, which means that data can be manipulated through a keyboard-and-screen computer terminal from a local or remote location.

A new observance and accessibility have been brought to vast quantities of purchasing data by PASS. IMPASS processes some 125,000 purchase orders each year. Now the company's buyers find it a lot easier to make the best possible purchasing decisions, as the paperwork and other routine tasks involved have been greatly simplified. Fred Fiacco, manager of the materials and services department's materials division, says CMCS helps the company "buy smarter" and can save it up to $4 million a year. Both CMCS and PASS are being marketed externally. In fact, CMCS has already been sold to a major U.S. company, Mobil Corporation.

Patrick Berstein, an electronics engineer and currently manager of retail purchase systems with Esso Petroleum, led a team in the designing of a Data Capture Liquid Delivery system, or DCLD. Small meters incorporating tiny microprocessors are installed in tankers delivering heating fuel to record, on a capsule resembling a videocassette, the volume of fuel loaded and delivered to each customer. The system also records the payments received and generates a delivery ticket for the customer. At the end of each day, the cassette containing all the delivery information is fed directly into a minicomputer at the Home Comfort Centre and a monthly invoice is generated. The system was entirely conceived by the Esso Petroleum team and designed and built by the company with the help of outside consultants. The rights have now been granted for its manufacture and sale to industry under Canadian and U.S. patents. The Universal Transaction Terminal, industry but in other industries as well.

Bill Sande, Imperial's vice-president for corporate business development, thinks the new technologies of mini- and microcomputers are generating a surge of creativity, innovation and imagination in his department and throughout the company. "Everyone wants a minicomputer now," he says. "It used to be that engineers worked with slide rules. Then everyone had a pocket calculator. Now it's a microcomputer — and it's not until you start working with one that you realize how much you can do with it."

Sande, who is responsible for examining potential business areas for the company, also stresses the need to adapt the new technologies to Imperial's business requirements. "The technology has to develop in response to a real business need, with clear-cut economic and other benefits," he says. "Then the real issue is to transfer the technology quickly from the laboratory or the drawing board to the marketplace."

People, Sande adds, are the key to linking the new technologies to business needs. "It's one thing to stimulate technological innovation for its own sake," he says. "But the real need is to identify innovators who understand the new technologies and can apply them to our own business, then perhaps carry them over from our industry into nonpetroleum industries. These 'people bridges' are probably the single most important element in successful technological development."

Give rein to creative, inventive and innovative individuals has always been a vital key to business success, and Imperial has a strong record both in developing new technologies and in applying them. But what of the future now? Bill Sande says. "The technological future will continue to be full of surprises, some it springs from human creativity. What we have to do is to work — and what we are doing is to create a climate that encourages and recognizes innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship. Then we have to find and identify the right people and let them go to work."

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A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Canada and its Rhodes Scholars.

BY KENNETH BAGNELL

A little more than a year ago, on a lush green lawn beneath the old spires of England's Oxford University, about 1,000 men and women from more than a dozen countries got together for a garden party that was surely one of the most interesting of the season or of any season in memory. About 800 of the guests were recipients of history's most famous scholarship, the Rhodes, and were returning to the familiar quadrangles of Oxford, the splendor of summer gardens and the chiming of evening bells to attend a reunion marking the 80th anniversary of the granting of the first Rhodes Scholarships. Of the scholars who attended, 177 were Canadians, or former Canadians, and even a cursory reading of the list reveals why they are regarded as high achievers: six had become judges of high courts, seven had become university presidents, five had served as ambassadors, a dozen were corporate executives and still more were professors in almost every discipline from business to biochemistry. All of them had studied at Oxford...
on scholarships granted through the legacy of Cecil John Rhodes, a British expatriate's son who was born in 1853 and made a fortune in South Africa. When he died in 1896, he left an estate worth about $20 million (in today's dollar), directing that the income from it be used to fund scholarships to Oxford for young men of exceptional promise from the British Commonwealth, the United States and Germany. In part, Cecil Rhodes established his grand plan to help further the dream he had of unifying the English-speaking peoples and extending their influence in the world. (Germany was included because the Kaiser believed his countrymen should learn English.) But aside from that rather dated notion, Rhodes saw the scholarship as a means of encouraging gifted young men to devote their lives to the service of society. In a letter he wrote in connection with his will, he suggested that in choosing the scholars "...great consideration shall be given to those who have shown during school days that they have instincts to lead..." As Dr. James Gibson, founding president of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont., a Rhodes Scholar of 1931 and the secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Association of Rhodes Scholars, puts it: "Rhodes wanted to provide the very best education possible for young men of intellect and character who, he deeply desired, would use both in the service of their fellow men and women."

When Rhodes died, the trustees of his will quickly chose a Canadian, Dr. George P. Parkin, then president of Upper Canada College in Toronto, to act as organizing secretary of the Rhodes Trust. Parkin, who was regarded as the ideal man for the position -- with close ties to public and academic life in Britain, Canada, and the United States -- seems to have been aware of many of his ideas," Blakney said, "but I think it is unfair to judge Rhodes by the standards of another day, just as some of us here today would be unfairly judged in the context of the thought patterns and value judgements of 1896 years hence."

Naturally, every university takes pride when one of its students is elected a Rhodes Scholar, and of few, Mount Allison, takes special pride. Through one of the smallest universities in the country, with an enrollment of about 1000, it has seen a disproportionate number of its students head off to Oxford. "This year," says Mount Allison's president, Guy MacLean, himself a Rhodes Scholar from 1955, "one of our graduates became the fiftieth student from Mount Allison to be awarded a Rhodes Scholarship." And while universities can take pride, so can several families who have had first a father and then a son chosen for the scholarship. Back in 1915, Arthur Carter was selected as a Rhodes Scholar from New Brunswick. He had two sons follow in the tradition. Edward in 1947 and Norwood in 1948. Gordon Cooper, a recently retired judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, was named a scholar in 1929, and his son George was selected in 1965. "Anyone, former Rhodes Scholar or not," said the elder Cooper, "is pleased to have a son win the award. The experience at Oxford is very special, in academic terms and in other terms."

In most ways, the Rhodes Scholarship still reflects the founder's ideal that bright young men of character and promise should be educated in the colleges of Oxford for the betterment of society. But several details of the scholarship have either evolved or been modified to take into account new social realities. For example, until more recent years a candidate stood a stronger chance of winning if, along with being a superior student, he was a top athlete. Roland Michener, who became a Rhodes Scholar from the University of Alberta in 1919, was on the varsity track, football and hockey teams, and John Turner was already the Canadian champion in the 100-yard and 220-yard dashes when he went to Oxford from the University of British Columbia in 1949.

Today, athletic prowess may still be an advantage, but selection committees seem to be more inclined to look for interest in sport, rather than achievement, thus making certain that a top scholar who is handicapped or not athletic is not denied an opportunity. But the most significant change has been to open the scholarship to women, something requiring an alteration of the Rhodes Trust Act of 1928. This change was brought about in 1976 by a British ministerial order, and since then, about 20 women have been selected for the scholarship from Canada.

"The experience at Oxford is very special, in academic terms and in other terms."

Jean Beetz
Rhodes Scholar 1951
Banuta Rubess
Rhodes Scholar 1978
Julien Chevassut
Rhodes Scholar 1951
Norman Webster
Rhodes Scholar 1962
Robert Rae
Rhodes Scholar 1989
Jillian Welch
Rhodes Scholar 1980
For you to apply for one of the 11 scholarships available each year in Canada, a student must be a Canadian citizen, married and the holder of an undergraduate degree by the time he or she turns 24 years of age. To win, however, an applicant must be a high achiever academically (a minimum GPA of 3.5), as well as socially and physically active and able to survive a selection process that is always thorough and competitive.

First, the applicant must write a brief essay on his or her background, qualifications, and plans for the future. This essay is sent to the selection committee in the student's region, accompanied by academic transcripts, references, and a letter of support from the president of the university he or she attends. An initial screening of these essays occurs — usually more than 200 in total from the entire country — usually reduces the number of applicants by about 60 percent.

Those who remain are then given the opportunity to appear in person before one of the selection committees in an interview designed to provide a fuller picture of the applicant, leading to final selection. The interview itself may be relaxed or rigorous, but for every applicant it is a time of high hopes and possibly considerable tension. In the memory of virtually every scholar, the interview with the selection committee remains a milestone, cordial and the first questions were really to put me at ease, for I was quite nervous. But then they would be testing me. They may ask you questions you cannot possibly answer, for that is a way of testing in itself.

John Turner remembers his interview as "a very overwhelming experience for me." He is referring to him as a lawyer in Halifax, a former Progressive Conservative MP and a Rhodes Scholar in 1963, recalls a special moment in his interview. "The question I most clearly remember, he says, was proposed by the chairman of the committee, who wanted to know what I was reading that had absolutely nothing to do with literature. It happened I'd been reading an Economics mystery; I mentioned it. Sure enough, the chairman had read the book. He had questions on it. I don't think it made any difference that the second line of the book is "I won, however, an applicant must be a high achiever academically (a minimum GPA of 3.5), as well as socially and physically active and able to survive a selection process that is always thorough and competitive.

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Trail riding through the great mountains

BY SARA LAWLEY

The only sound was the steady beat of
our horses hooves gently plodding on
the narrow mountain path. Dense
stands of pine and spruce flanked us,
and the air was filled with the heady
scent of damp earth and moss mingl-
ing with the evergreens. I watched the
ballet of life around me by the late
afternoon sun swaying in the breeze on
the trail ahead. Somewhere off to the
right, obscured by the trees, was the
Pipestone Valley. I could hear the
river rushing through it. Beyond the
valley, another vast mountain range...and
beyond it, another...

But suddenly my idle reverie was
broken by a rippling of movement run
through the line of riders as a message
was passed back. "Grizzly ahead." I
ripped the horn of my saddle; a silence fell
over us. The calm tranquility had been
altogether snapped.

I wasn’t sure exactly what I was afraid of—there were 46 of us (25 horses and 22 riders) and only one bear. But it seemed an instant. The high wind
ripped me. Perhaps the horses would
become frightened and bolt. Mindfully
down the mountain, perhaps. The great
breeze was rabid.

But I kept my place in the line of
riders, which moved unswervingly
toward the clearing where the animal
had been sighted—toward whatever
destiny awaited us.

Out of the one rode into the clear-
ing: one by one we scoured the land for
the great bear. But it had retreated into
the timber, evidently fearing us
as much as we, or at least, I feared it.

As I slid off my horse for a few
moments’ rest, a nearby voice called
excitedly, "Look over there." I turned
cautiously, expecting to come face
to face with the grizzly. Then I realized
it wasn’t the bear I was being directed
to look at, but a breathtaking sight
across the open valley.

I was suddenly and deeply stirred by
the view before me. Directly opposite
and seemingly so close that I could
almost touch it, an immense wall of
icy bog mantled from the clouds.
It was Mount Drummond glacier—a
colossal river of moving, living ice,
fed year round by upland snowfields.
It was our goal for the day, and a vivid
reminder of why I had come trail rid-
ing in the wild mountains of Banff
National Park with the Trail Riders of
the Canadian Rockies, a nonprofit
association that has been organizing
rides through the region for 60 years.

The association got its start in 1925,
quite fittingly on the summit of
Alberta’s Wolverine Pass. It was here
that a party of riders—which included
such eminent figures as Murray Gibbon, a writer, poet and
the general publicity agent for Canadian
Pacific, and H.B. Clow, president of
Rand McNally mapmakers—was
stranded for three days by a summer
blizzard. The riders had little to do but
talk during those chilly days, and,
ironically, much of the conversation
dwelt on the joys of trail riding.

Trail riding has been part of life in
the Rockies for hundreds of years.
North American Indians blazed the
first trails, which later became central
to the fur trade and the development of
the West, not to mention the build-
ing of the railroad. But once the car
became common and roads penetrated
the mountains, the number of people
choosing to explore the region on
horseback began to decline. To the
disharid riders stranded on Wolverine
Pass, this was a great tragedy, and by
the time the blizzard had abated they
had decided to create an organization
that would ensure the survival of trail
riding in Canada’s great mountains.
Thus was born the Trail Riders of
the Canadian Rockies.

In those early years the association
organized our ride a year, and the 100
or so people who joined it came from
North America, Europe, and even Asia,
thanks to free international publicity
from Canadian Pacific Limited, which
sponsored the group until 1961, when
it became totally independent.

Nowadays there are eight week-
long rides a year, during July and
August, each for no more than 35
people. A permanent base camp is set
up at the beginning of the season
about 30 kilometers from the trail
head and central to the location of the
year’s rides. On the first day, the
groups ride out to the camp and there-
after take various day trips from it.

For me, first view of our camp came late
in the afternoon following an easy
day’s ride through thick forests. I was
seen from the Old West, the closet of
tepees, coral and tents lay in a mea-
dow in the Pipestone River, nestled
beneath towering mountains. Closest
to the river was the dining tent, where
we sat at long log tables, enjoying
sumptuous meals wonderfully created
on an ancient wood stove and grill.
Set back from the river, near the centre of
camps, was the thunderous, a huge twis-
tless tent where we gathered each
evening in happy camaraderie around a
crackling fire to pass a few more
hours endeavoring to sing and square
dance. But the pride of the camp was
definitely the hand-painted
tepees, which looked their best at
night when smoke drifted from their
tops and their richly colored Indian
designs were illuminated by the glow-
ing lights inside them. It was in these
that we duded up, two or three to a
tpee, snug in our sleeping bags
around the warm stove fire.
But the trail riders association pro-
vides much more than aesthetic sleep-
ing quarters. Ensuring the safety of
the riders is of paramount importance
to the group, and accompanying each
trip is a doctor. The ride I was on
was attended by a Calgary neurologist,
Werner Becker. As we lunched near
Molar Mountain one day I asked him
what duties he had performed during
his life as a trail-riding medic. "I sup-
pouse model they’ve invested six big
cuts and tending to minor injuries
and ailments," he said, leaning his
back against a tree. "I’ve never had to
deal with a serious accident." For
a moment he tried to recall if he’d
ever heard of our occurring on a ride.
A woman did break her leg a few years
ago," he told me after I thought he’d
goed off in the blissful moonlit sun.
I later learned she did it playing touch
touch football.

To tend to the group’s entertain-
ment needs, there is always at least
one musician on each ride, who leads
the nightly sing-songs and provides
music for square dancing. In 1935, Wilf
Carter, then a relatively unknown
rancher and western singer, was
seconded to accompany a ride. "Murr-
y Gibbon of Canadian Pacific heard
me singing to a bunch of cowboys in
Calgary’s Palliser hotel and asked me
if I’d like to go on a trail ride," recalls
Carter. "Well, I didn’t know what a
trail ride was, but I liked riding, so I
took my guitar and off I went." He
placed around the campground at
circling and even in the saddle by day. "The
only problem was, I didn’t know it
was an overnight affair, let alone a
week-long one, and all I had with me
was what I was wearing and my gui-
tar," he laughs. "When it come to
time to bed down at night I had to steal
blankets from the pick horses, and after
a few days, people weren’t too keen
to come back to me. It was dur-
ing this trip with the Trail Riders of
the Canadian Rockies that Carter
wrote, “Yodelin Trail Ride,” a song
he still sings today.

Floating through a pile of old asso-
ciation journals, slightly yellowed by
the passing years, I realize that the ride
Carter accompanied would not have
been very different from the one I was
on. The photos in a 1935 issue could
have been of my ride—the scenery
is unchanged, and the riders, in jeans,
ties, and some in chaps, could have
been our cohorts. In the moun-
tains, it seems, time stands still.
"There are times on the trail
when it doesn’t do to think of a hot bath
and a warm bed," wrote Margaret Francis in a
1912 journal, and I knew just how
she felt. I knew, too, how she felt when she
wrote, "It was good to feel the
mighty sing-songs and the Rocky
whipping my face again."

It was a fresh morning in late
August when I gathered with 21 other
dudes, several wranglers and our
guide, Gord Thomson, at a corral a
little way up a mountain pass from
Lake Louise. One by one our names
were called, and we were introduced
to the horses we would ride for the week.
My horse, Alice, was a 21-year-old
black mare with doleful dark eyes and
a steady temperament that made her
perfect horse for a novice rider.
Soon everyone was mounted, the stirrups were adjusted, and Gord gave the signal to move out. Single file we fell into line behind him, and headed up onto the muddy mountain trail that marked the beginning of our six day adventure in the Pipestone Valley region of Banff National Park.

The morning ride was an easy one, through thickly wooded country and stone-stiffened peaks on their peaks, casting dramatic, almost eerie shadows over the deep-green valleys. The soothing sound of the river rushing along below us, the fresh pine-scented air and Alice’s gentle gait, I felt the tensions of city living melt away.

By the time we reached camp, our home for the next six days, we were all just beginning to fade, and without the sun the mountain air was chill enough that I was grateful to pull on a thin sweater after an invigorating dip in the icy river.

I had imagined that camp fare would consist of such hearty staples as baked beans and chili with precious, fringed notions of nearly hearty coffee, and while not thrilled by this prospect I had convinced myself that I would be so hungry after long days of riding that it wouldn’t really matter what I ate as long as there was plenty of it. Fortunately, though, I didn’t have to test this theory: the food was simply splendid.

But there was more to dinner than food. It was that wonderful time of day, that welcome pause when time seems to drift and everyone winds down, and along the two log tables in the dining tent I would linger over coffee with my fellow riders, and considerably more often than not with the novices like me, others, skilled veterans — chatting about the day’s adventures and listening to tales of other rides.

I think my favorite was a rather poignant story of an elderly man who arrived for a trail ride in a neat, navy pin-striped suit, carrying only a briefcase. The old gentleman would not weather the ride well in his rather formal attire and convinced he had nothing appropriate clothes or even a sleeping bag in his briefcase, the ride organizers managed to put together enough clothing to keep him warm, dry and comfortable for the week’s ride, and off he went quite happily. “He had a wonderful time and was the life of the party,” said Ben Curtis, a seasoned trail rider and one of our official hosts. “It wasn’t until the riders returned that they found out he had walked all day from a nursing home in Ontario and embarked on his trip without telling anyone he was going.” When asked by his bemused companions why he had left without so much as a word, he had smiled and said simply, “I had always wanted to ride in these mountains, but I knew if I told anyone what I intended to do, they’d never let me go.”

The first evening of the trip, like those that followed, was spent around a roaring fire in the dougashoot, sipping hot chocolate and singing all the old favorites to the accompaniment of Rick Gilliason’s guitar. On other evenings, one of the wranglers would come out of the woods dancing merrily about the campfire, and our guide, Gord, called the steps, we tried to follow. A few people who were expert square dancers tried to teach us less skilled beings the basics, but it was all in vain.

No one took the pursuit very seriously, though, and inevitably we’d all dissolve into laughter long before the night’s ride had finished.

The next six days slipped into a blissful routine of spectacular rides through magnificent country, splendid meals, evenings filled with laughter and camaraderie and generous doses of deep, peaceful sleep.

Our excursions took us through the Pipestone Valley to the toilet hike, Mount Drummond, the Red Deer and Skoki lakes. We rode through thorn peas and dry bush, crossed rivers and rode through dense forests, along steep mountain trails and through vast, shimmering green meadows. We saw beaver, mouse and mountain goats and lunched by rivers and lakes, while our horses grazed freely nearby. Some of us simply took in the scenery during our long midday tests; others lunched the fast flowing river or hiked to greater heights. Always, all around were the iron forested mountainsides leading up to soaring peaks. Always, I felt the distinctive beauty of Canada’s mountain wilderness.

Often, as I rode the high trails or lunched by the river, I was struck by the timelessness of my surroundings. I was seeing these mountains as others had seen them 100, even 500 years before. Riding through this great range I often thought of Tom Wilson, the first settler in the West, and I wondered how he had felt that day in 1882 when he had stumbled upon an exquisite body of water known by the Indians as the Lake of Little Fishes. He was the first white man to see that deep, exquisite lake, now known throughout the world as Lake Louise.

The highlight of the week was our ride to Skoki lakes, two shining glacial pools that lie above the tree line in a rocky canyon. It had rained during the night and the forest was like fairyland. The boughs of the evergreens were tipped with droplets of water which glimmered in the morning sun like tiny gently lit. It was exhilarating riding higher and higher into the mountains, feeling the wind grow cool, seeing patches of snow here and there not far above us.

We entered our horses in a grove of larches that stood on the highest meadow on the mountain, above this rose the peak, and in its base sat the Skoki Lakes like two great mirrors in a granite basin, catching a constant stream of water from the massive glacier above them.

As I climbed on Alice for the final ride, which would take me back to the trail head near Lake Louise, I felt a certain sadness. I had spent the past six days traveling through more than 150 kilometres of surely some of the world’s most magnificent country and I would miss it. I would miss too the happy camaraderie of my companions — the dudes, guides, wranglers and cooks — living together in a quiet mountain valley, isolated from everything remotely urban. A certain tranquility had reignited in that valley, and I hoped to take a piece of it back to the city. I hoped, too, that someday I’d once more ride through the mountains and feel “the high wind of the Rockies whistling my face again.”

The mora factor

THE ETHIC IN ESSO'S LIFE

BY JAMES TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAURIE MCGAW

During my university days, it was assumed that ethics as a subject was dying. In an increasingly pluralistic culture, one trend seemed clear: good and evil seemed to be little more than personal opinion. My philosophy professor, who gave ethics barely two weeks of an introductory philosophy course — mere pretense — seemed alive and well to find that the subject has become a very live issue in corporate business and personal ethics.

It is often assumed that the prime consideration of corporations is maximizing the wealth of the company's owners — the shareholders. But what about the many other people affected by the corporation's actions? Consumers who buy goods and services, employees who work for the corporation, the local community in which the corporation operates, and the environment that is affected by the corporation's activities.

Corporations, of course, cannot survive without profits. Yet a number of studies reveal that the executives involved acted not only from economic motivations but also, one corpus sent in the twilight zone of ethics.

The research reveals, for example, that the executives involved acted not only from economic motivations but also, one corpus sent in the twilight zone of ethics. This is a worrying state of affairs, for it means that the corporation's success is really a function of the corporation's relationships beyond its shareholders. If it involves," he says, "the customers, the people we do business with and the communities we work in. I think that our relationship with the country, and our future in it, is much more assured if we operate completely ethically."
Native Canadians deserve a fair share of jobs in the North

For years, Imperial has taken its ethical standards seriously. But in more recent times, like an increasing number of other companies, it has defined formally the ethical standards it expects from all employees. The standards themselves are not new; the significance lies in the official status they are given. In the words of Donald McIvor, "It is better to have something that is clearly articulated than something that is only vaguely understood." Imperial's publication Corporate Ethics is given to every one of the company's nearly 15,000 employees. They are expected to be familiar with it and to understand it. A foreword signed by McIvor states emphatically: "No employee, from myself to the newest member of our staff, is ever expected to commit an illegal or unethical act. Not in the name of business efficiency, is the corollary to be gotten.

Repeatedly the booklet affirms the priority given to high ethical standards. "In addition to strict compliance with all laws applicable to its business, the company will ensure that the highest standards of integrity be observed throughout its organization. There are no exceptions. Violations of the law or unethical dealings are not tolerated. But are codes necessary? Isn't it imperative to have a code? And we'll do everything we can to ensure it exists!

In view of this, executives and employees of Imperial were obviously disappointed when the company was fined $75,000 this spring for refusing to supply gasoline to a rural Alberta gas station because of the station's low pricing policy. "It has always been Imperial's policy to compete strictly with the Combineve in Investigation Act," says Gord Thomson, president of Esso Petroleum. "Mistakes may have been made in the course of doing business, but Imperial believes that its employees did not deliberately offend the law. The events of this case in no way reflect Imperial's normal business policy and point out the need to be very sensitive to the Combined laws.

There are many people besides shareholders involved in any decision. "There are communities of customers, government people, employees and suppliers — all those who are now being called the stakeholders. In serving all those communities, it is sometimes difficult for a particular employee to perceive what his priorities should be. That's why we develop things like a code of corporate ethics." The reaction to codes of conduct from nonbusiness critics has generally been favorable. "It is useful to have a code of ethics, if only because it establishes that ethics are a legitimate concern of business," says Roger Hutchinson, who teaches ethics at the University of Toronto's Victoria University. "It's a framework within which ethical issues can be discussed.

The Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, an interchurch group that examines corporate conduct, endorsed the concept of corporate codes of conduct in a brief to the Ontario government in 1986. In proposing revisions to the provincial Business Corporations Act, "Such documents are helpful," the brief stated. "...in that they clarify a company's intentions and the conduct and responsibilities expected. The public also benefits from a formal commitment, which raises consciousness. Given a standard against which a company may be measured and provides a reference by which to monitor performance.

Indeed, the task force's final recommendation states: "We recommend the Business Corporations Act of the Province of Ontario be amended to include a requirement that corporations establish a shared principle, code of conduct and that an annual report be made to the board and the annual meeting of the shareholders on the corporation's adherence to the code.

Most companies that have developed codes of conduct have "taken these things most seriously," affirms the United Church of Canada's senior financial officer, Bill Davies. Like Imperial, the Toronto Dominion Bank requires its employees to sign a statement each year confirming that they have read, understood and will comply with the corporate statement of ethics. Banks, says Davies, devise ways of monitoring their operations to see that policies set out in the code are being followed. For example, some banks make random spot checks on transactions such as loan rejections to ensure that women are not being discriminated against.

Imperial's subsidiary Esso Resources Canada Limited, in Calgary, shares Imperial's code of ethics. To ensure that it is taken seriously by the company's staff, all departments are required to develop their own ethics compliance program. Esso Resources, like Imperial's two divisions, Esso Petroleum Canada and Esso Chemical Canada, appoints an own ethics coordinator. "I think we have something as a system as any corporation — perhaps the best," says Bill Barker, a man deeply involved in making the system work at Esso Resources. "Each department reports to me on how it has met, or failed to meet, ethical standards."

Employees have a right to a working environment free from discrimination.

The Review, Number 3, 1984
It’s almost an axiom in business that employees learn the character of their firm from its top executives. Do codes of ethics put a lot of pressure on senior staff? “I don’t think it is difficult to live up to any of this,” says Donald McIvor candidly. “Do senior employees have to be visibly above suspicion? Yes, of course. But so does any employee. If we had an employee involved in embezzling or cheating a supplier it would be every bit as bad for the company as senior staff acting in, say, conflict of interest.”

Imperial’s ethical principles, which encompass operating practices, are embedded as deeply in the various policies of management as in the Corporate Ethics booklet. For example, the ethics booklet mentions that the company’s purchasing policies give specific preference to competitive Canadian suppliers and that, as a result, more than 90 percent of Imperial’s expenditures for goods and services are made to Canadian firms. Personal policies specify that employees and applicants for employment “will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, colour, sex, marital or family status, sexual orientation, age, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, political belief or handicap.”

And when Imperial decided, reluctantly, to close its Montreal refinery in 1983, it offered every employee choosing to remain with the company a job at another location and provided language training and other assistance to reduce as much as possible the difficulty of relocating.

At Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories, the company has formed a joint-venture corporation with the Dene and Metis peoples of the Northwest Territories, both to ensure that northerners get a fair share of jobs and to allow native people to gain direct management experience in the enterprise management any sacrifices they make to be ethical,” he says. “If you’re persons on a farm in a country, you’re not going to be profitable,” he summarizes his view. “This company’s ethic is not a passing thing. It has been a part of the Imperial character for a long time. I like to speak modestly about it, but at the same time people will understand that I mean it. It’s an ethic for today, but it’s an ethic that will be here for a long time to come.”

It was a frigid, windy January afternoon, the kind of day when the last thing we expected to see on our remote Alberta farm was a visiting neighbor. Yet Tom had walked five kilometres along the snow-blown municipal road and down the trail through the woods to our house to make an announcement. He was moving back to the city. He had packed his belongings, and when it was warm enough for his truck to start, he would drive to Edmonton, 150 kilometres to the south. “I can’t stand it anymore,” he said glumly. “The isolation’s driving me crazy.”

A former high-school teacher, Tom was among the thousands of Canadians who fled urban environments during the last decade or so. Tired of industrial smog, dogged traffic and nine-to-five days, they shared a common conviction that by simplifying their lives they could create a problem-free existence. There are no statistics on how many of them have returned to the city, but in the agricultural belt where I live, few urbanites have endured on the farm for more than three years. The hutter winners, endless chores, low incomes and, more than anything, the isolation spawned disillusionment; most jump ship soon after discovering that, although they’ve attained a quieter life-style, what they’ve really done is exchange one set of problems for another.

It is a dream to feel a strong empathy with them. Ten years ago, when living in Vancouver, I mistakenly thought a farm was a slow-paced refuge whose inhabitants had little else to do but make quilts, whistle and go to barn dances. My ignorance was understandable; I’d never set foot on a farm. At the time, I was a television critic for a daily newspaper and held two part-time jobs. I was working 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and while I liked the money, I loathed having to spend so much time away from the two people I cared for the most, my wife, Jessie, and our young son, Alex.

An unexpected letter changed all that. Jessie had started weaving in Mexico and a former classmate, spotting my television column, wrote from Alberta to ask how we were doing. She had settled on a farm, and the letter happened to mention that land was inexpensive in her part of the world: a 64-hectare parcel, she said,
was selling for the price of the unpaid taxes, $2500. Jessie and I decided almost immediately to buy it. If we liked the farm, we might live there someday. If we didn’t, we could always sell it at a profit. On a rain-sodden November morning, I mailed a check to a rural lawyer, who handled the purchase and sent us the deed. The following summer I took two weeks off, and we drove to Alberta. North of Edmonton the terrain is flat and plain, a landscape that only gains a touch of glory when it is heavy with crops. That June the fields were just beginning to nudge through the earth, and glistening at the solitary sycamore and clapboard houses, surrounded by a seemingly endless expanse of level fields, I doubted that I’d ever want to stay.

Then we came to the hills, a sudden line of tree-plated plateaus and valleys extending 80 kilometres from the hamlet of Waugh to the Athabasca River. Driving over twisting dirt roads, we passed the occasional farmstead, wedged between thick blocks of poplars, limes and jack pines, and every now and then, a glittering, calm lake appeared. What a marvelous surprise. It couldn’t rival the magnificent Rockies, but we had discovered a small corner of Canada that was imbued with its own kind of allure — a graceful, low-key beauty.

My wife’s friend, Bonnie, met us at the appointed spot, and after lunch at her home we went to look at our land. Our hero? For someone who had always rented houses and apartments, the words introduced a new emotion — pride of ownership. If Daddy Kraitz’s grandfather was right (“A man without land is nobody”), I was now somebody. At first sight, however, Ferguson Farm didn’t offer a great deal to take pride in. The 65 hectares were contained in a circumference of little more than three kilometres. When we pulled up in the car, we saw that the section facing the municipal road was dense with poplars. The original owners’ log cabin, deep in the trees, had holes in its roof and walls, and the well behind it was bone dry. If there had been a field near the cabin, the wood had exclaimed it: “This place hasn’t got much going for it.” I remember saying, “I guess we’ll wind up selling it.”

Out of curiosity, Jessie and I left our eight-year-old son with Bonnie and walked into the bush. A slush-dotted path followed the rusted, broken barbed-wire fence dividing our properties from a neighboring 65 hectares of timber. We had nearly gone the whole kilometre when we emerged from the trees and suddenly found ourselves standing on a ridge that sloped gently down into a broad expanse of uncultivated fields. It was an exciting moment. Across the fields, a shallow lake glittered under the hot sun. Beyond the water was a series of wavy hills and, from our vantage point, the only evidence of human endeavor was an empty farmhouse eight kilometres north. Absorbing it all and realizing that we had charmed upon an ideal setting, Jessie and I both knew that regardless of the obstacles we intended to live on the ridge.

Back at the car, Bonnie suggested buying a used trailer. It could be dragged up a different municipal road and, with the owner’s permission, moved over the fields lying parallel to the lake. A good idea, but a farmer we met during our stay at Bonnie’s had a better one. Why not buy an abandoned house? Dozens of sturdy frame houses pocked the countryside. When farmers prospered and built more modern houses, they often kept their old houses in the yard. Some were turned into granaries, others became storage bins for junk and, in one case, a dwelling for several St. Bernard dogs. Sometimes a farmer would let his old home go for a token one dollar, just to get rid of it. We returned to Vancouver in an exuberant mood. I would farm and write articles; my wife could have a big garden and my son, a pet goat. I quit my various jobs, and we drove back to Alberta a month later. We planned to live on our savings, and when they ran low, I’d head for the typesetter.

A local farmer allowed us to stay without charge in a derelict log house 12 kilometres from our land. Every morning at six we rose, cooked breakfast on a Coleman burner and drove to our property. Our first major task was to make the trail from the municipal road to the ridge wide enough for vehicles. I wasn’t the athletic or outdoors type, and in fact, I’d never done any manual labor. For two weeks every morning I slashed brush with a machete and toppled poplars with an axe. My wife helped me drag the fallen trees into the bush; my son cleared the cut shrubbery.

In the afternoons, tired and sore, we’d have lunch and a rest and then cruise the country roads looking for a suitable home. We dismissed three buildings as too shabby. Finally, 50 kilometres away, we found what we liked: a pleasant, three-bedroom frame structure. The owner sold it to us for $600, and a mover said he’d take it to our land for $1000. For a week I helped put big timbers under the building and shift it onto a flatbed trailer. Within three hours of leaving the farmyard, the house was on our ridge. We slept on foam-rubber mattresses that night. The next morning we awakened to the warm sun spilling through the windows and to the sound of birds singing. When I looked outside I saw two white-tailed deer grazing 15 metres away. I experienced a strong sense of victory. I had achieved what I’d wanted by doing something alien to my nature — manual labor. But I couldn’t spend the day congratulating myself — there was still too much to be done. We had our furniture shipped out of the storage lockers, bought a beautiful wood-burning stove, which the same family had cooked meals on for 55 years, and hauled drinking water from other farms (for bats, we had the lake to ourselves). We assumed we’d have electricity, but when the hydro company explained what was involved — building a hideous swath and erecting poles — we opted for propane lighting and a battery-rechargeable television set.

A diverter dropped by one afternoon. Holding a metal rod he walked around the yard and finally stopped beside the house. He swore there was a streaming stream not very far beneath the ground. In the six weeks following his visit, I dug 12 metres without finding a drop of moisture. Giving up, I summoned a professional driller. When he asked where he should bore, I pointed to a hollow and said he might as well try there. He hit water at 10 metres, and, not wanting to waste a good hole, we transformed the place the diverter chose into a root cellar. In September, a yellow school bus rumbled up the freshly gravely municipal road and halted at our front gate. As the trail we’d cleared by hand was quite narrow and rough, the driver wouldn’t come down it, and Alex began the ritual of walking through the forest every school day, setting off at 7:10 a.m. At minus 30 degrees Celsius he had to rip himself away from the kitchen stove and run the distance to the gate. The transition from a city school to a rural one had worried us. Would the other children accept him? Were the educational standards as high? Most of his classmates did accept him, and the standards were, in many subjects, higher than they had been in Vancouver. The only trouble he had was with a nearsighted turtle. The first week he came home with a black eye. My wife jok-
ingly suggested that for self-protection he should befriend the biggest kid in his class. That's exactly what he did. The bully soon lost interest in Alex, and the bulking boy who became his buddy is now a football player.

A rewarding lifestyle gradually evolved. We became a close, loving family. I was hardly ever away from the farm, but when I had to go on business trips, if it was possible, I took my son with me. Not because I thought it would be good for him to learn how the world functioned, but because he was fun to be with. My income from free-lance writing couldn't match the wages I'd earned on the coast, so we economized. Jessie baked bread and canned the vegetables we couldn't put in the root cellar. Two goats supplied our milk, and my father-in-law, a hunting guide in British Columbia, brought elk and moose meat in the fall.

Christmas took on a new significance for me. In past years I'd been so busy that I'd sat at my typewriter for an hour or two on Christmas Day. That unforgettable custom was abolished and a more gratifying tradition emerged. The day before Christmas, the three of us would trudge across the fields dragging a small sled, with the goats and two Labrador retrievers tagging along. We'd walk through ankle-deep snow to a richly scented spruce grove where there was always a light-spirited dispute over which tree had the bushiest branches or the nicest pinnacle. Once a selection had been made, we'd chop it down and pull it home.

On Christmas Eve we'd decorate the tree; on Christmas Day we'd listen to A Child's Christmas in Wales and Jessie would prepare a bountiful dinner. One night when a chinook promised to melt the snow we went outside. The sky was an immense black banded with astonishingly lucid stars. Alex started to sing, "The first Noel, the angel did say . . ." Jessie and I joined in and another tradition was born. Every Christmas, fair weather or foul, we'd huddle on the ridge and hurl carols out over the dark, snow-streaked fields.

A spring tradition emerged too, but it was far less pleasant. As soon as the ground dried, we'd drive our harrowed pickup to a distant patch of our land and fell the trees to feed the kitchen stove the following winter. We needed five cords. I'd drop the poplars and saw them into short sections, and Jessie and Alex would heave them onto the truck. Back at the yard, in the fall and winter, I'd slice the sections into stove-sized pieces.

When visitors came from the city, they were amazed at the length and breadth of our woodpile. "Sure," I'd tell them, "it was a lot of work, and sometimes we hated doing it, but I feel better doing this than I would if I just turned up a thermostat." There is a solid satisfaction that comes from knowing each tree you topple, each block of wood you split, has a vital purpose in your life. The daily hour I spend chopping wood has more meaning to me than, say, devoting the same amount of time to riding a crowded city bus. There's also the distinct sense that somehow, working in the woods, you are truly "Canadian," in harmony with the vast outdoors that makes up most of this country and with the pioneers who struggled to master it. Until I confronted my fear and started using a chainsaw, I cut all of the wood the way the early settlers did — with an ax and backsaw.

I didn't have any fear of tractors, but given my lack of success, maybe I should have. As only 16 hectares of our land were cleared when we moved there, I had to fashion complicated deals with neighbors involving borrowed machinery and crop-sharing. Farming is an exhausting, dawn-to-dark enterprise. There is nothing romantic about bombing about on a tractor that continually breaks down or trying to stay upright on a swaying binder platform, lifting 30 kilogram bales, swallowing dust and sweating rivers. The weather often dashed my hopes. A severe early frost ruined a fine crop of oats; a torrential downpour leveled a hay field. I've given up the idea of making a bundle of money farming; the Las Vegas casinos have better odds.

There have been other setbacks too.

A small stove on the back porch caused a fire and burned a hole in the wall, a wandering herd of cattle trampled my wife's garden, and in attempting to warm my car's engine with a propane torch on a frigid February day, I melted the plastic tubing attached to the engine. But the problems are greatly outnumbered by the pleasures — the wild berries, the lake swims, the exquisite silence, the autumn walks, the cross-country skiing, the heart-pounding summer skis, and, of course, the wildlife. Hawks and owls nest near our house; moose and deer stroll the pastures. I recall catching a glimpse of a dark-colored cat dashing under a brush pile; I told my wife there was a stray cat in the yard. She went to the brush pile, crouched and muttered, "Here, kitty, kitty." To her amazement, a startled bobcat tore out of the brush and bolted past her leg.

We'd had other animals in our backyard — bears, porcupines and a lost beaver — but never a coyote. From the kitchen window, we often see the clever creatures at the bottom of the field, moving with balletic elegance, always wary of meeting their nearest foe, man. The coyotes and I share that wariness. Until the 1970s, farmers in the area seldom locked their doors, even if they were going away for several days. Since then, the countryside has been infected with many 20th-century diseases, growing crime among them. Six years ago we returned home one winter night to find three snowmobiles beside our house. As we approached to the sound of the dogs barking, the snowmobiles sped off. Only a few tools were missing from our shed, but now, as we did in the city, we lock our doors whenever we leave.

For some people, coping with the isolation would be worse than having to scold off thieves. The isolation doesn't bother us. Although we have many summer visitors, we sometimes go for months in the winter without having anyone drop by our house. Neither Jessie nor I feel lonely or trapped. The radio is regularly tuned to the CBC, we subscribe to a dozen newspapers and magazines, we read books and we listen to music. If the weather is particularly nasty, we make muffins and tea, put Jazzie Björling or Miles Davis on the stereo and wait indoors until it improves. If you have a busy mind and an intense love of nature, you really don't need to be constantly surrounded by other people.

There was a brief period two years ago, however, when my wife and I fell prey to that peculiar form of loneliness known as 'empty-nest syndrome.' Our son graduated from high school and wanted to attend university. After plenty of discussion, it was decided that he should move to Ontario rather than to an Alberta university from which he could come home on weekends. We knew we'd miss him terribly, but having grown up in a warm family setting, we felt it was essential for his development to cut the strings and live by himself in an urban environment. Eventually, Jessie and I will leave the farm too. We both believe that true success isn't related to monetary worth but to the variety of life experiences a person accumulates. For the moment, though, the farm remains our physical and spiritual home.
In Closing

The other day, very early in the morning, I opened my Globe and Mail to find that a friend of mine had written a column for me setting the record straight, this time on a point relating to the importance of impartiality on the part of certain holders of very high public offices, though a day or so earlier he had been setting the record straight on a point of English usage.

For years, the newspapers and many people in Canada have called him our greatest authority on the Constitution, name it. But there is more to him than that — mostly having to do with a character that is rooted in our English and French cultures and a personality that is distinguished by quick and gentle humor, a humor always directed at himself, never hurtful or displayed at somebody else's expense.

I read what he had to say that morning, thought of the first time we met and was surprised to realize that it was a quarter of a century ago. Since I was going to Ottawa (the city where he has lived for many years) on business, I got on the phone and was glad I did, for when I reached him I learned that he was only a few weeks from his eightieth birthday — a good time to see him again.

A few days later, strolling only slightly, he greeted me outside his office, which is in a suite of lawyers' rooms on the second floor of a building just a few minutes' walk from Parliament Hill. He sat at a small table that was circular and engraved, and on all sides of him, from floor to ceiling, were bound volumes, lending a legal atmosphere to the office, though he is not a lawyer but a political scientist. His eyes, bright as dimes beneath thick brows, gave no hint of age.

"They were kind enough to give me shelter here when I retired from the Senate a few years ago," he said. "It was they who had a number of things that still keep me busy — rather large correspondence with the correct correspondents here and there, a fair number of requests for my opinions on political or constitutional matters. Anywhere that English is spoken or written these days, those who care about it worry about its decline, convinced that the enemies of clear and correct English — carelessness and jargon — are winning the day. Is that true, some wonder, of French usage as well?" "I doubt it," he added. "For very obvious reason that in recent years there has been such an emphasis in Quebec and elsewhere on French — correct French. I think that the standard of French, written and spoken, is improving and will continue to improve. I wish I could say the same for the standard of English. It has been in decline, often caused among people who should look after it, for years. Have you ever noticed the way people toss the words into their speech here and everywhere? I remember, in the years when I was the research director of the Canadian Labor Congress, a very bright university graduate used to say things like this to me: "I had a call from a lawyer in Vancouver like, and he said to tell you that he'll be in touch with you tomorrow like."

"When I hear this utterly superfluous 'like,' I say to myself 'like what?'" For a moment, adjusting the narrow small hearing aid in his left ear and casting an affectionate eye toward the books on the high shelves beside him, he seemed lost in private thoughts. Then he chucked softly and began recalling an experience of his from the years of World War II. "My boss at the time, at the Canadian Labor Congress, Pat Conroy, served on a body called the Canadian Youth Commission, which had many first-class people and did many reports for that were intended, not for specialists but for any general public. When he received the reports he'd send them to me for comments on the use of language. They were written by top-notch people, heads of departments in universities, men with enough letters after their names to fill a page. The thing that astonished me was that these people, who were at the very top of their academic fields, could not write literate English. Well, I did as I was asked and put my comments beside each page. But one thing I didn't realize: the papers were being returned to the authors with the comments alongside. I expected the roof to fall on me, but the victims actually thanked me."

We talked for another hour or so and then it was time to go. He walked with me to the elevator, pausing along the way beside the photograph, just outside his office, of a man who had influenced him greatly — Arthur Meighen, Canada's prime minister in 1926, the year Eugene Forsey, Rhodes Scholar, went to Oxford. We descended in the elevator. It was raining outside, and we stood for a moment looking out of the window. Then suddenly I remembered a detail of his life from the years after the war — that he was an abstainer from alcohol but drank so much water that he amazed his friends.

"Are you still an abstainer?" I asked. "Are you drinking as much water as ever?"

His eyes brightened. "I've slipped a bit," he said. "I've taken to drinking lemonade only at times. It's a good thing it's not an addiction or I'd have to join Lesbon Nomens."