How different the world energy scene appears today from the way it did 12 turbulent years ago.

The 1970s were a period in which energy captured the world’s headlines. By 1970 the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was supplying more than 85 percent of the world’s crude-oil exports. A recession it was quick to exploit for both political and economic purposes. Between 1970 and 1980 the price of better quality OPEC crude spiraled from $1.36 to $34 a barrel, fueling the free inflationary inflation and draining the economies of many countries heavily dependent on imported oil.

Today the world’s energy future, and particularly Canada’s, appears considerably brighter. OPEC’s domination of international oil markets has diminished, and prices have fallen steadily over recent years, resulting in a corresponding reduction in the payroll effect on the economies of many nations. And Canada has once again become a net exporter of oil, earning substantial foreign currency in the process. In 1984 these exports, along with natural-gas exports, represented almost half of the country’s total balance for all merchandise trade.

The reasons for such a dramatic reversal of the world’s energy fortunes are not hard to fathom. OPEC’s actions during the 1970s served to sow the seeds of its own misfortunes. Energy conservation — which began after the 1973-74 oil-price increases, was reinforced by the increases of 1979-80 and further strengthened by a worldwide recession in 1980 — produced a sharp decline in the demand for energy and especially for petroleum. In Canada, for example, the demand for petroleum products fell by a quarter between 1980 and 1984.

At the same time, the price increases of the 1970s spurred an intensified search for oil supplies in nations outside OPEC. This led to a significant expansion of non-OPEC production and a corresponding drop in the demand for OPEC oil. By 1983 OPEC oil production had fallen to about 2.8 million cubic meters a day from close to five million cubic meters a day in the late 1970s, while non-OPEC production increased by nearly 25 percent, mostly from oil fields in the North Sea and Mexico.

In Canada the vast potential of the country’s oil sands moved closer to realization as major advances were made in heavy-oil production techniques, and exploration for new conventional supplies continued in the western provinces and the frontier areas.

Compared with a decade ago, therefore, Canadians need good reason to be complacent — about their country’s energy situation. OPEC has been replaced by relative stability, adequate domestic supplies of all kinds of energy seem assured for the short term, and we have moved from being a net importer of crude oil to a net exporter of a commodity for which strong demand is bound to exist for many years.

At the same time, it would be foolish for us to allow the current period of relative security of energy supply to blind us to some critical facts about the global energy balance that have not changed over the past decade. As Arden Haynes, imperial’s chairman, president and chief executive officer, points out: “Notwithstanding the current plentiful supplies, the world is still consuming oil at a faster rate than it is discovering it. By the year 2000 nearly 20 percent of world oil consumption will have to come from deposits not yet found. And Canada’s own oil production from conventional sources is continuing to decline. Unless new supplies are developed we are bound to become increasingly dependent on imports. Given these facts, Canadians cannot afford to neglect any economic opportunity to increase the country’s domestic reserves.”

“Canadians cannot afford to neglect any economic opportunity to increase the country’s domestic reserves.”

ENERGY OPPORTUNITY
Turning on the engine of growth

BY WYNE THOMAS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER GROYDON
production declines in the United States and Europe, combined with declining production from the Eastern Bloc countries.

On the other hand, the demand for OPEC crude is expected to increase by the end of this decade and will approach OPEC's current production capacity by the year 2000. The cartel's current weakness, therefore, should not be exaggerated. While it no longer dominates world oil markets, OPEC is still the producer of last resort and a power to be reckoned with.

"Canada has the potential to reap major economic benefits across the full breadth of its energy sector"

And Canada, despite its status as a net exporter of oil, is still dependent on imports to meet some of its demand for light crude oil. Most of our exports comprise heavy crude and bitumen, for which only limited refining facilities currently exist in this country. Present estimates suggest that to meet the needs of its eastern refineries Canada will have to import nearly 36,090 cubic metres of light crude a day during the next five years. As a country, therefore, we are far from immune to future disruptions in global oil supplies, and it is clearly in our own interest, as well as in the interests of our international trading partners, to increase our energy self-sufficiency.

Happily, we are in a strong position to be able to do so. As the Economic Council of Canada noted recently, there are many energy-deficient countries in this world that would gladly exchange their problems for ours. We indeed possess a remarkable array of energy resources.

In the area of hydrocarbons, in addition to our vast reserves of natural gas, this country possesses a number of promising sources of future oil supplies. We are only now beginning to tap the enormous potential of the oil sands of Western Canada, two decades of perseverance in exploring for oil in the western Arctic are finally resulting in discoveries of near-commercial quantities, and a major oil find (Hibernia) has already been made in the relatively lightly explored region off the east coast. Economics, of course, remains the key. In recent years the potential represented by Canada's oil resources was severely underutilized as a result of financial policies that, it is now generally agreed, overtaxed the petroleum industry, sapped its financial strength and discouraged development. But the recent replacement of these policies by a more realistic and encouraging regulatory regime has increased the economic feasibility of a number of projects and generally increased the industry's enthusiasm for renewed activity.

Obviously, one cannot totally eliminate risk from a traditionally high-risk industry. There will always be winners and losers. That has always been an accepted hazard and, indeed, a perverse charm of the business. And the industry remains highly vulnerable to international developments. Now that Canada has moved to world price for domestic oil, any severance in that price could render some high-cost projects uneconomic and slow the pace of the development of our indigenous resources.

But, such hazards apart, Canada today finds itself faced with a great opportunity to transform its tremendous oil-producing potential into reality and to rid itself for many decades to come of its dependence, in an uncertain world, on foreign sources for such a vital commodity. In truth, our fundamental option remains the same as it has always been: to develop our own sources of oil or to buy on the world market. For most Canadians the choice would seem an obvious one.

In addition to these important supply considerations, however, there is today another and equally cogent reason for Canada to launch an all-out drive for new energy development: the contribution that such a program can make to job and wealth creation in Canada. The Economic Council of Canada's recent major energy study reached one basic conclusion: Canada's immense energy resources, together with the industries that are now available to develop them, represent an enormous economic potential for this country. . . . Canada has the potential to rekindle major economic benefits across the full breadth of its energy sector in both the short and the longer term and in both the domestic and the export market. "A similar view is shared by the federal government, which has claimed the industry an engine of growth for the country's economy. Although the petroleum industry is by no means the only one in Canada that has the opportunity to create jobs and wealth, few other industries can match its advantages. Any new oil produced is immediately marketable. While selling natural gas represents a tougher proposition in today's environment, the surplus that exists in the United States is expected to be relatively short-lived. Many experts believe that there will be a strong demand for new Canadian natural gas by the time the necessary facilities can be built. And much of Canada's resource base can be economically developed at projected international prices.

When you add to these advantages the technical expertise that Canada possesses (it is, for example, an acknowledged world leader in oil-sands technology), its skilled labour pool and the industry's proven record in financing and managing major energy projects, the petroleum industry's unique opportunity to play a major role in the country's economic revival becomes obvious.

The Canadian Petroleum Association, in a recent brief to the standing Senate committee on energy and natural resources, estimated that, given appropriate government policies, the oil and gas industry could generate 300,000 additional permanent jobs by 1982. This would represent a 12-per cent increase in new jobs created over a 10-year period, an increase that would have the effect of reducing unemployment by a significant one percent.

Economists are fond of talking about the "multiplier effect" — that is, the tendency of new investment by a particular sector of business to generate ancillary investment and jobs in other sectors. The petroleum industry is generally accepted as having a high multiplier effect, a view that has been borne out by numerous studies. The Canadian Petroleum Association has estimated, for example, that a direct investment of $70 billion by the industry in energy projects would generate an additional $30 billion in induced investment by other business sectors. But one does not need to rely on the economic theorists to document the advantages that energy development could bring to all regions of Canada. While, clearly, the oil-producing provinces, such as Alberta, are destined to be major beneficiaries of energy development, there are many tangible examples of the numerous spin-off benefits that, of careful planning and the encouragement of regional, can flow from new energy projects.

Take, for instance, a single project: Imperial Oil's commercial development of its oil-sand deposits at Cold Lake, Alta. Imperial started experimental work at Cold Lake in the early 1960s. Since then considerable progress has been made toward economically extracting the oil-bearing bitumen that lies about 500 metres below ground. Production of bitumen from the first two phases of the Cold Lake production project began this July, and by the end of 1980, when four additional phases are scheduled to be in operation, production from the project — including that from the pilot plants — will reach almost 12,000 cubic metres a day. By that time, Esso Resources Canada Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Imperial, will have spent more than $800 million at Cold Lake.
Lake and will have generated more than 2000 work years of direct construction employment and about 15 000 work years of direct and indirect employment in the Cold Lake area and throughout Canada. A close look at Esso Resources' shopping list for its Cold Lake project provides an interesting insight into the extent of the benefits it is providing for Canadian industry. Every well drilled requires about 11 500 kilograms of steel pipe for every 300 metres of depth. With about 800 wells to be drilled by the end of 1996, Esso Resources will require nearly 500 kilometres of seamless casing. That's good news for Ontario's steel industry. For example, the Algoma Steel Corporation, which is a major supplier of casings for the Cold Lake project, has been sufficiently encouraged by an increase in its energy business to complete a new seamless tube plant at Sault Ste. Marie, construction of which had been halted during the recession. Other Ontario companies are also benefiting from the Cold Lake project. Ecodyne Limited, an Oakville water- treatment company that currently employs 55 people, credits the oil industry for much of its success. Its Cold Lake contracts represent more than $7 million. "We would not be the prosperous operation we are without Esso Resources," says Peter Watts, vice-president of Ecodyne. "And the 55 people we employ are really just the tip of the iceberg. The fabricating company that works for us also benefits. The ripple effect of these projects stretches out to many manufacturers throughout Ontario and Canada."

Among them is Pyrotenax of Canada Limited, a Trenton, Ont., company with 250 employees that manufactures heating cable for the Cold Lake project. "The overall impact of the energy industry on our business has been tremendous," says Russ Meckling, the company's manager of energy industries. "Without the oil in this area we would have to cut our staff dramatically — possibly by half." Ipcso Inc., a Saskatchewan-based steel and pipe manufacturing company that employs 70 people in the West, has a sizable stake in the Cold Lake and other Esso Resources projects. "If it had not been for the oil industry," says Ipcso's senior vice-president, Larry Weich, "we would not have spent $70 million on facilities in Calgary, $18 million in Red Deer, Alta., or $60 million on the expansion of our Regina plant. All these are commitments to the industry." Many of the 25 000 valves for Cold Lake are being manufactured in Quebec. Further east, circuit breakers are manufactured in Edmundston, N.B. Electrical wire and cable, hundreds of thousands of metres, come from Brockville, Ont., and Winnipeg, and from Albertans, steam generators, 166 metres of piling material, 50 million kilograms of casing cement and concrete, and a host of other supplies and services. One project, seven provinces, many companies, thousands of jobs. But, indeed, there is not a single province or territory in Canada that does not benefit, in one way or another, from Imperial's energy and associated projects. The oil industry spawns some unusual enterprises in some unlikely places. Who would have thought, for example, that a company in the small Nova Scotia agricultural community of Upper Musquodoboit would come to play a role in Esso Resources' drilling program in the Beaufort Sea? But Mosher Limestone Co. Ltd., a supplier of crushed limestone to local farmers, did just that. In 1981 the family-owned company, which employs about 35 local people, put together a portable limestone grinding mill. When the drilling activities off the east coast created a need for barite, an essential ingredient of drilling fluids, Magbobar Dresser Canada Inc., a supplier of these fluids, contracted the mill to grind not limestone but barite. Then last year Magbobar moved the mill to Cold Lake in the Yukon, where, with help from Esso Resources, it developed a barite mine — the first in northern Canada — to supply the mineral to Esso Resource's Beaufort exploration program. Now Magbobar employs more than 50 people in the Yukon, including 37 northerners, and supplies customers throughout Alberta, British Columbia and the North. And so another Canadian industry grew to be born too in the North.

In rural Prince Edward Island, Gordon Drake and his partner started a two-man sandblasting company seven years ago. Last year Island Sandblasting Ltd. provided full-time and part-time jobs for 98 people, mainly in servicing the offshore drilling industry. "If it wasn't for the oil companies we wouldn't be around," says Drake. And in Edmundston, N.B., Imperial Signs Ltd. (the name's a coincidence) is one of four Canadian companies producing service-station signs for Esso Petroleum. The $1 million contract meant 15 new jobs in the community.

From British Columbia, where a number of companies manufacture a variety of oil-field equipment, to Newfoundland and Labrador, where offshore exploration is providing a tremendous boost to the provincial economy, oil industry activity has already generated new businesses, new jobs and new opportunities. Given the fact that in recent years the industry has been constrained from making the contribution it is capable of making to the economy, the future should see considerably larger benefits flowing to many businesses throughout Canada. Federal energy, mines and resources minister Pat Carney told an audience of Calgary oil people earlier this year that the government had radically altered the federal oil and gas policy framework "to take advantage of the capacity of this mighty industry and to take advantage of the country's rich resources." The industry's response to date provides considerable grounds for optimism on that score. Imperial estimates that the $1 billion it plans to invest in new energy development and associated activities in 1985 will generate more than 30 000 person years of employment across Canada. Canada's "engine of growth" is moving into high gear for the benefit of all Canadians. And that is important, because, as Arne Nielsen, past chairman of the Canadian Petroleum Association, said recently: "We are all bound together in this nation. The times are never rich enough, the profits never high enough to support a policy designed to benefit one part of the country at the expense of another."
TRAVELS WITH MY SON

BY MARTIN O'MALLEY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM MCEELLY

The morning was perfect for going. The night before we had prepared the provisions: ham-and-lettuce and cheese-and-pickle sandwiches, cups of macaroni and potato salads, oatmeal cookies, fig newtons, four bananas, two cold cans of root beer. They were stacked in the yellow cooler and stashed in the trunk of the car in the driveway. The only thing left to do was wait for the coffee to finish brewing and pour it into the thermos — then we'd be on our way.

It is the part of any voyage I enjoy most — the anticipation, the preparations. For this one, however, it felt as if I had been anticipating and preparing for a lifetime, since the day my son, Sean, was born. I knew, even when he was trying to balance himself on a pair of skates, that someday he would leave and go off to a desk or studio or factory in the world. The thought is always in a parent's mind, and in quiet times we try to work out the details, hoping that any optimism has solid underpinning. We were about to drive to Halifax to find a room for the academic year and register Sean at Dalhousie University. "This isn't a vacation," I assured at the outset. "This is work. This is a mission." Privately, I
looked forward to the trip, having always preferred missions to vacations. Vacations exert an inordinate pressure to perform, to live up to all that exists right. There is an explanation. I once heard regarding the differences between Eastern and Western Europe, so it goes, one nice thing makes your day; in North America, one thing ruins everything.

In a melancholy way I regarded the trip as a last chance for Sean and me to spend an entire week together as father and son. He was 18, leaving home, no doubt about that, and when he returned — for Christmas, for Christmas — he would return as a visitor. It was not the first time I had tried to do something special for our relationship. Perhaps it is a lucky thing to be a writer and to have, if not riches, at least flexibility on your side. This allowed me to do something eight years earlier that still gives me a frisson of parental pride. I was heading to the Northwest Territories on a journalistic assignment for The Globe and Mail, and en route to Yellowknife, I dropped Sean off with his grandmother in Winnipeg. On my way back, I stopped off in Thunder Bay, where I ended up by accident, and we stayed with a friend in the old hometown. We slept in my summer bedroom, a scented cherry in the room and a sea of memories, with the old house where rusting elms lulled us to sleep. We retired early after a busy day of doing nothing except talking and, waking more often than not, I would wake with my head buzzing with those predawn epiphanies that come out of nowhere, always a mixture of joy and anguish. What was missing? Where was this job taking me? More to the point, what was it to me? We looked over at my son as he slept, his face to the wall, which was still decorated with baseball bats. I opened my eyes and sneered at the empty feeling when I was his age. For a moment, no time had passed. There had been no years between, I knew what to do. The next summer I quit my job to work at home.

The rich smell of coffee made from freshly ground beans filled the house and wafted to the front porch, where I sat waiting. I must have been an early riser, and I don't know why, but there are the fragments of summer I remember, wistfully, in the cold part of winter: how the early August sun breaks through the oak and maple foliage and throws a warm, mustard light over the street. I wondered what horatious genii might fall from my lips between Oshawa, Ont., and Shubenacadie, N.S. I had actually done some reading on the subject. "But the genie already advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live as if he already possesses the means of accomplishing his aims, and will meet with a success unexpected in common hours," said Thorstein. After a walk in the road, in little motels, at roadside cafés and picnic tables and in the great city of Halifax itself, we would throw a burst of rapport to last a lifetime. When it came time to shave off, I decided it would be best just to be myself — and ourselves.

East on Highway 401, that marvel of 20th-century efficiency that blasts you in a long, dull shuttle every day from Toronto to Montreal. At the first opportunity, a few kilometres east of Gana
toogac, Ont., we turned right and crossed a bridge to New York State. The young officer at customs did not leave his booth for the interrogation. We covered nearly 800 kilometres the first day, mostly on winding secondary roads that took us through the Adirondacks to Plattsburgh, N.Y., where we dined from the yellow cooler at the base of an enormous statue of General Sherman. We drove south along the western shore of Lake Champlain, wandering where to stop for the night, rolling through farms and towns where the evening air was so redolent of apples it smelled as if someone had uncorked a jug of cider in the back seat. We covered the last few kilometres on a ferry that crossed over to the western end of Lake Champlain, from Essex, N.Y., to Burlington, Vt.

It should be admitted here that we were driving no ordinary automobile. One afternoon three weeks before the trip, when I walked a novel-catch-up I, "The Catcher in the Rye" by a distant second, Joseph Heller and J.D. Salinger are good models for an aspiring writer such as Steinbeck and Thomas Wolfe were for me. The authors I studied at university — Milton, Chaucer, even Shakespeare — intimidated and inhibited with their high-minded excellence, and I emerged with a bias against any writer who could exist by surname only. The Americans seemed more adept at touching head and heart. Steinbeck inspired me, made me want to write as he did, made me want to write, and somehow encouraged me to.

We discussed this through New Hampshire and Maine, all the way to New Brunswick and southeast through Nova Scotia to Halifax. Sean's plan is to study arts, then law, then try journalism, doing as much writing as he can along the way. His first plan was to finish high school, work and travel for a year, then go to university away from home. I have always regretted going directly to university from high school — it seemed too much an extension of high school — and I wish I had attended a campus away from home. The university experience (I continued, as the kilometres slipped by) should be new, fraught with challenge, even strange and a bit scary. After the loneliness, the new friends and the grind, the rewards are sweeter. I was enjoying this as Sean reached over and turned up the radio for, "When the Band Comes Back rock!" — Bill Haley and the Comets, I got the message. "Did you know that's by B.B. King?" I asked. "No." "Keep On Truckin'." I had seen it 10 times. We used to go just to hear "Rock Around the Clock" as the credits rolled up.

"I thought it was just a song."

Somewhere on the Miramichi another song started, "Thunders only happen when it's rainy... and something..."

"What's the next line?" I asked.

"Players only love you when they're playing," said Sean. "Fleetwood Mac."

He had started the summer working as a waiter, but after two weeks of washing dishes and scrapping tips, he altered course and decided to go to university that fall. He had been accepted at the University of Toronto, Trent University, York University, and Carlton College. He visited two of them, talked to professors, checked out the facilities, and concluded that the University of Toronto was the right choice. "Why Dalhousie?" I asked him.

"Just felt like going to the East Coast," he said.

Ah, serendipity. He might just as well have blinded himself and thrown a dart at the map. He worked at manual jobs that summer — as an enumerator for the federal election, as a political pollster. He has always been good at finding jobs, and when he left for the East Coast he had raised $2000 toward the cost of university. Once he worked as a janitor on the midnight-to-dawn shift at the neighbor
datarena, the highlight of which was learning to operate the ice-making Zamboni machine. During one shift, several hundred minutes, he didn't even move, so he stopped the machine, climbed down and went to find his host. When he returned, he found the Zamboni had melted nearly half a metre into the ice — the Saturday hockey games were due to start within the hour. There will be a time when this will make a fine anecdote for a writer.

Halifax looks impressive, bigger than it is, as crowds surge under the towering Angus L. Macdonald Bridge. The
downtown skyline is busy, chunky, with new towers of steel and glass jostling up above old brick buildings. Far below are docks, cranes, ocean-going cargo vessels, barges covered in soot, and sleek, gray naval ships. We crossed in silence. Sean getting his first salty whiff of the Atlantic.

The mission part of the trip really began here. We had three days, at most, to find a room, register, explore the campus, select courses, get course approval, apply for student identification and — this was important too — experience this old and bustling city. Sean had grown up in a much bigger city, so it was not the size or busyness of Halifax that held him spellbound as we crossed the bridge. It was our destination, to be sure, and there was a certain sadness, and fear, that this far-away place would be his home for the next eight months. We would not toss our bags into the trunk and head for another town, for a new adventure. I don’t know exactly what impressed him most, but no small part must have been the ocean and the East Coast itself, the dream made real after all he had heard from me and from his grandmother, my mother, who grew up here and who left for Saskatchewan when she was as young as he was setting out, he was rerouting, and the ironies could not have been lost on him.

No chance for a room at Howe Hall, the men’s residence at Dalhousie. A waiting list already had 50 names on it. We tried the housing service at the student union building, and while we were there a call came in: rooming house, Robie Street, $70 a week, sink, stove, fridge. We hurried over and the landlady showed us the room. It looked dark, small and dingy. As we talked I ran my finger over the fridge and a blob of goo stuck to it. "We’ll be giving it a thorough cleaning," the woman said as Sean and I exchanged glances that said, "Thanks, but we’re going to look around a bit." I said, "This is our first stop.

We drove downtown, where I wanted to show Sean some of the haunts I remembered from journalistic stopovers. One was the Victory Lounge, a former pro wrestling troupe connected to the Lord Nelson Hotel, where several of the Swede’s ex-Wrestlers have been known to call. It was showing "The Great Escape" on TV. Sean got right into it. For my own part, I was happy to be in my old stamping grounds, with the various movie theaters showing "The Goonies" and "The Little Mermaid."

A little later we drove out to the Dalhousie campus. We stopped at the Student Union Building, where I registered Sean for residence, and then we took a walk around the grounds. It was a lovely day, with the sun shining and the leaves changing color. We talked about our future plans, and I tried to get across to Sean just how much I had missed being part of this community.

That evening we went out to dinner at a small Italian restaurant. The food was good, and we had a pleasant conversation. I tried to reassure Sean that everything would work out, and that he would soon settle into his new life at the university. He seemed to understand, and we left the restaurant with a sense of optimism.

The next day, after breakfast at dawn, we found a room and took it: sink, access to a bathroom, $55 a week. It had a private entrance up a rickety, fire-escape stairway at the rear. There was a bus stop across the street. As we drove away, nearly feeling triumphant, Sean said there was something curious about the room.

"What’s that?" I asked.

"There was a butcher knife under the mattress."
There are many waiting, obviously, that are pleasant — waiting for a bus on a cold day, for example, or waiting in a dentist’s office with the time of his visit and the occasional muffled groan coming from behind the closed door. The extent of a dental wait varies in direct proportion to the naughtiness of the work at hand — a wait to have your tooth filled is deemed to be longer than a wait for the miserable business of a root canal.

The range of waiting is infinite. There are important waits (waiting for a parachute to open and unimportant waits (waiting for a taxi to change). The chances are pretty good that, if you read these words, you may be waiting for something or somebody, even if it’s only for a cab to come or a phone to ring. Perhaps you have the perfect opportunity with you in the waiting room at the airport in San Francisco or London.

We are all waiting, physically, especially at airports, because we’re able to put waiting time to good use. To an extent, the American Airlines Qantas O’Hare Airport in Chicago is the world’s major connecting airport than at any other place in North America. While people use waiting time to sleep through catalogues reports they didn’t need, otherwise, get around to, but they also look uncomfortable and a little awkward with heircases spilling out of the suitcases. Writers, on the other hand, sit down with notepads and pencils and crank it out; we’re used to thinking.

Some of the most pleasant waits are those of childhood — hanging in the spaghetti restaurant waiting for hours until lunch. But now, wait that takes forever is the wait for summer vacation to begin, especially on the west coast, and certainly if the weather is fine and warm and full of sunshine and the sounds of other kids who’ve found freedom a day or two earlier come floating through the open windows.

I think you’d find many waiter waits are pleasant and easygoing. Waiting for your turn on a tennis court is a great example, for example. You can sit there with the sun warming your arms and the back of your neck and watch the balls flying and zipping in front of you and listen to the thwack of the ball when somebody hits it just right, in the racket’s sweet spot — and who cares how long it takes for your turn to come around? Oh, yes, putting away your fishing rod is good, but you’re not walking on the road with something close to a roar.

Most waiter waits are a good deal less pleasant than those of summer: waiting for one of those, for instance, is the wait you put up with — not quite altogether but simply back off a little so you can at least feel some hope, or for waiting for the planes to reorder after a storm.

Which is not to say there are no pleasant waiter waits in winter. There’s the wait — brief but full of anticipation — atop the ski hill before you rocket down, the wait in front of a late evening fire, preferably with a hot drink, while the flames become flickers and the flickers become glowing embers; the wait for dinner after a day on the skis, with the smell of something warming and hearts (maybe a crock of beans laced with mustard and molasses) waiting in the air.

Another way to look at it is that many nulls fall is medical. Surprisingly, many of these waits turn out to be reasonably pleasant, mostly because they involve recovering from some sort of illness or waiting for cuts to heal or broken legs to mend. The point to remember — the thing that can make medical waits at least partly pleasant is that the unpleasant part is often brief.

Mind your, there are some notable exceptions. Waiting for an operation is miserable and so it is waiting for the results of important medical tests. But one of life’s most important waits — the gestation period, we must be reminded that the medical wait is that of the expectant father, waiting till his child should be born.

A great many important waits involve the business and business deals of everyday life. There are individual deals that keep people on tenterhooks — did you ever put an offer in on a house? — and an assortment of waits concerning our working lives. They begin with the prickly wait for a job interview and end with the countdown to retirement.

The experience of waiting in similar situations can vary widely. I remember waiting in a queue at a cinema in London, England, on a balmy evening in May — a wait day at the end of a prolonged cold spell, as I recall — and there was a general feeling of goodwill that was part of the lineup, itself, part of its own personality. A group of bookers, lively and enthusiastic, probably because they don’t seem to be aware of the importance of the subject.

PARKING YOUR PROBLEMS

Your ability (or lack of it) to wait in unruffled calm, even in the most complicated situations, is what he calls a “rating” system for problems that crop up. The way he sees it, he says, is: some of the serious consequences will be, for example, if you do miss your connecting flight because your plane is not taking off. On a scale of one to ten, you may think that’s nothing, missing the connection, but it’s probably not a 10. It is more likely to be inconvenient rather than a catastrophe — perhaps a three, which means you shouldn’t let it get you into a lather.

Another way to look at the waiting is that waiting is so necessary, no matter how much you don’t like it. You don’t like waiting for the weather to break, you don’t like waiting on your doctor’s office. You park a victory by deciding how you’re going to handle the fact that you can’t drive because of severe rain.

Many times, you could say it was because of something you couldn’t do, perhaps in extreme, even intermittent pain, for example, you couldn’t make specific plans to call your doctor at any time. It is the moment when you feel the creeping realization that you can’t do it, that it is feeling you should be sitting by the waiting room window, waiting for something to happen, waiting for some medication or pills, or drinks to be brought by the nurses. The sun sinks slowly in the west, as the felloe in those travellers used to say, sitting in the waiting room, waiting for the sun to set.

To be sure, there is a first-aid moment of beauty, when they should be revelling in the changing light, when they should be aware of just how wondrous the passage of time can be.
ONE DAY in the year 1790, a woman named Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, the second president of the United States, wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson in which she said: "These are the hard times in which a genius would wish to live." Her comment is probably worth recalling today — as we struggle with our own hard times — because it recognizes one of the telling facts of human life, for which we might as well be grateful: hard times not only demand gifted leaders, but may very well nurture them and stimulate the best among them to perform beyond normal expectation.

Consider Canadian business, specifically the petroleum business. In recent years, it has been through what might fairly be described as a battering of historic dimension: strong public criticism over oil company profits, followed in Canada by the onerous National Energy Program and topped off in the eighties with grinding recession, falling demand and sharp declines in profits combined to challenge the industry. In the case of Imperial Oil Limited, it all translated into stark consequence: the worst decline in profit in more than 100 years, from $662 million in 1980 to $267 million in 1982 — a drop of 60 percent in two years.

Yet for a company that might be excused were it to show a few signs of fatigue, Imperial, in 1985, is locked upon by the business experts as having come through the harsh experience of the past few years in excellent condition with a host of opportunities just ahead of it. At the beginning of the year, The Globe and Mail asked 17 stock analysts to select the Canadian company — in any field — most likely to increase the value of its shares in 1985. Imperial was the most popular choice. "For Imperial," the Globe said, "oil production should double within five years." One analyst with a credible perspective on the oil industry, Robert Pexman of Toronto, president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Investment Analysts, says: "If you talk to anyone in our field, you'll find that Imperial is very highly rated. It has the most visible earnings growth of any of the larger capitalized companies." Says an investment report put out in 1984 by Merrill Lynch Canada Inc.: "We recommend purchase of Imperial common stock, which we believe offers investors the best investment advantage for new opportunities in the Canadian petroleum industry." Merrill Lynch's advice proved valid. In 1984 the company's operating earnings increased 61 percent over those of the previous year.

The elements that form the foundation for this positive outlook are probably as numerous and crucial as the strands of a steel cable: employees who for many years have been carefully selected and developed in every discipline from biology to politics; a history of size and strength that stands a company in good stead during adversity; and, of course, a more positive attitude on the part of the public and government toward business as an instrument in the search for economic recovery.

Fast forward: Imperial's leaders move into future gear

Imperial's senior leaders, members of the management committee: Arden Haynes (centre), chief executive officer; William Young (left); and Robert Peterson

BY KENNETH BAGNELL
Still, for all this, the men and women who observe Imperial with calm determination can be encouraged and academics — give considerable credit to the people at the top. "Imperial’s tactical way of dealing with the major decisions in the difficult years, adapting the corporation in a decisive way to a rapidly changing environment and shaping it to be efficient and effective in the future," Robert Plexman, for example, pointed out in two of many large projects of Ecos Resources Canada Limited, Cold Lake and Norman Wells, mandate the tactics by which they’ve been developed to reflect the interests of all parties — shareholders, government and the communities they’re associated with. "I think the approach to Cold Lake," he says, "reflecting the fact that we’re a smaller one, has been very sensitively and effectively brought about. Senior management is to be commended." Then, last December, a New York business publication, The Wall Street Transcript, interviewed between 40 and 60 leading business executives, analysts and journalists to determine the best chief executive officer of a Canadian integrated oil company. They chose the man who was then Imperial’s chief executive — and has since become a senior vice-president of Exxon Corporation in New York — Donald McIvor. The lengthy article reporting the comments of those interviewed was so fulsome that McIvor and his colleagues could be excused if they found it, as the British used to say, a bit blush-making.

One claim among the many, which McIvor would agree with enthusiastically, stated that it wasn’t just the chief executive officer, but the senior management of Imperial, present and past, that has served the company well. "I guess at this point in time everything is going for them," said one observer; "although it has been the last few years of the 20th century that has put them in the position they are in today." All of this opens the door on the executive suite and the people in it today and those who will enter it tomorrow. Who will be the recipients of these gifts, that distinguish them? One person at Imperial who has given thought to that is Robert Rabinowitch, basically with a calm manner named Bill Moher, who joined Imperial in 1948. Today, Moher is manager of executive development and organization and as such is a key adviser to Imperial’s three most senior executives — the members of the management committee, the group upon which responsibility for decisions ultimately rests. Arden Haynes, Imperial’s recently appointed chairman of the board, president and chief executive officer; Robert Peterson, executive vice-president and chief operating officer; and William J. Young, executive vice-president and chief financial officer. All three of them work in spacious offices on the quiet 20th floor of Imperial’s headquarters in Toronto. Moher’s own office is also there, and he is in ongoing discussion with all three executives. "I have never met in more than 35 years in business, Moher said recently, "so many people in senior management who acknowledge that they don’t have clear cut answers to what is around the next corner. I don’t think that’s bad. I think it reflects an openness that is positive. And it’s not just in the corporations but among leaders in general — in universities, in government, everywhere. There’s a sudden, rather startling realization that the world is not the same any longer. It’s not just the issue of how to increase productivity as we move out of the recession — though that is critical. It’s much deeper than that.

There’s a need for some structural changes and some very fundamental changes in the way we lead others. Right now, though, the immediate need is for leaders who will lead us into the future."

Arden Haynes, who was appointed to Imperial’s most senior position this spring, has spent a good deal of his time considering the various elements necessary to corporate leadership of the future. "One of the questions I’m reflecting on most seriously," he says, "has to do with what you might call ‘the lifestyle’ of the corporation of the future. In view of the vast social changes of our age — of technology, of information — how will we go about our work, how will we relate to one another? The questions are there, and we have to find the right answer. That is the responsibility of the committee, which gives the final approvals." That committee itself has been a reflection of progressive change. Once, as recently as 1982, it consisted of six members. But by the fall of 1984 it had been reduced to three — in line with the conviction articulated by Imperial’s leaders, notably Donald McIvor and Arden Haynes, that the corporation should reduce its bureaucracy, not just in the middle but at the top. But most important, the four tenders of the management committee’s task had changed from detailed reviews of company activities at many levels to long-range issues and, as always, the approval of major new investment proposals brought forward by the operating companies. The management committee members, Haynes, Peterson and Young, meet roughly once a week — though they are naturally in ongoing contact — in the tasteful Harris room, so named because of a large Lawrence Harris painting on its east wall. It begins, typically, in the morning on a Tuesday or Thursday, with informal but relevant talk on issues affecting business in general or Imperial in particular. Then, in turn, the topics are dealt with, often in the form of presentations from senior managers in the operating companies but increasingly, to facilitate the decision making, simple summaries of their written proposals or ‘topic summaries.’ In a sense, the leaner, more responsive style is one of the positive results of the hard times the company faced in the early eighties, when, led by McIvor, who became chief executive officer in January 1982, it simply had to become more flexible and responsive. ‘In former times,’ McIvor recalled early this year, ‘I can remember how we’d mull over decisions, fine tuning here, fine tuning there. But then, by 1982, when we faced such major concerns — the recession, the fall in demand, the drop in profit — it was clear that, at the senior level, we had to act quickly and decisively, relying only on our judgement, and taking into account everything that was currently happening and not just the day’s events. What we had been attempting was fair and deep surgery on their organization to make it a more effective one. That involves, as Bill Moher points out, understanding the attitudes of an emerging generation of employees and how to lead them. One man who has given careful thought to this is Lee Wall, a former general manager and instructor in organizational behavior who has served as a consultant to numerous corporations, including Imperial. “People have grown more complex,” he says, “with new needs, values and so on. They aren’t motivated simply by a paycheque and job security. They want a career not just a job. So the senior executive of the future must be someone who understands this and is able to lead people in a way that makes them not just productive, but satisfied.”

One way, according to Wall, that such leaders help create job satisfaction among talented and conscientious employees is through regular and effective communication with them. “More and more,” he says, “senior executives must become conversational figures within their own organizations — going on camera in audiovisual programs to speak to their people about the issues that concern them.” At Imperial, that practice is becoming a tradition. The company’s daily executive officer speaks regularly on video, addressing the issues facing the corporation. "The company has a team of people who are on the minds of employees about the company’s direction and their role and opportunities in its life. In some ways, the executive suite is changing physically; not in the tradition of the executive suite but in the tools at its command. "The talents,” says Imperial’s executive vice-president, "are changing, and the really important thing is to use all these, the same, but to be applied in new ways. For example, take the use
Respected chief executive officers, William Dimma of Canada’s largest real-estate services company, Royal LePage Limited, now has a home computer, which makes possible a management inquiry system, on which, at any time, the financial performance of any Royal LePage branch anywhere in Canada can be reviewed in a matter of minutes. He can compare one branch with another, one region with another or get a reading on branch profit as it relates to all branches. His answer is advertising. “I look upon the system,” says Dimma, “as an extra arm or an extra leg. It’s a highly useful diagnostic tool in helping to operate our business in a more efficient and effective way.”

Dimma, who in his career has been the dean of a graduate school of administrative studies and the president of a large newspaper, believes that the senior executive of a large corporation — the chief executive officer — is one of the best ways to control the world beyond the office tower. “While no chief executive officer,” he says, “can ever neglect in the slightest internal operations — and this applies whether or not he has a chief operating officer — and whether he is president or a vice-president — the chief executive officer of the future will give the highest priority to the external environment: government relations, new technology, markets, competitors, customers and suppliers. Indeed the better ones do this today.”

That external environment, in all its aspects, has been one in which corporations have been showing deeper interest in recent years. In particular, perhaps, they’ve been more attentive to government relations and with good reason. “I think the awareness of this aspect of our work and our sensitivity in carrying it out,” says Imperial’s chairman, Arden Haynes, “are absolutely crucial. I think we have to be in a relationship that reflects our readiness to listen and learn as well as to speak and, we hope, be heard.”

In recent years, Robert Peterson, who before assuming his senior post in Toronto was president of Esso Resources in Calgary, has devoted almost a quarter of his time to the crucial matter of dialogue with government. “In the petroleum business,” he says, “government is the landlord. And you have to maintain a good relationship with your landlord. It’s that basic. I think our performance here is improving. Certainly in the past few years there has been a receptivity to our contribution. Partly that’s the result of economic realities; partly it’s the result of our becoming more sensitive and aware of government’s complex responsibilities.”

One man with a unique perspective on the performance of Imperial’s senior people in the area of government relations is Robert Landry, the company’s Ottawa-based vice-president. “In my view,” says Landry, “they are doing increasingly well. They try very hard to understand the many facets of public policy — they keep an eye on the world beyond the office tower. While no chief executive officer,” he says, “can ever neglect the slightest internal operations — and this applies whether or not he has a chief operating officer — and whether he is president or a vice-president — the chief executive officer of the future will give the highest priority to the external environment: government relations, new technology, markets, competitors, customers and suppliers. Indeed the better ones do this today.”

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Denise’s grandmother was all of 15 and she was leaving home. “There were no motors on the dories then,” she tells us. “My grandmother’s father rowed her all the way from Newfoundland to Saint-Pierre. It took 16 hours to get here. Now the ferry does it in two.” Frightened for her daughter’s future in an alienally poor Newfoundland outpost, he had left her with a Saint-Pierre family, where she worked as a housemaid. The young girl eventually married and raised 16 French children, but she never saw her Newfoundland home or family again.

People from Newfoundland have always journeyed to Saint-Pierre. In the past, the men came to trade fish, firewood, quenched thirsts — used by the Saint-Pierres to make a light beer. In exchange, they took home French clothing, tobacco, alcohol and other goods alien to an outpost existence. The women — girls really — came ostensibly to find work as housekeepers. They stayed to marry these children and enjoy a life with a continental flavor. “Today,” Denise tells me, “men and women both work on the island to earn French. But even now, some of them never leave.”

I soon discovered that this was true not only of people from Newfoundland but of Canadians in general. I was in Saint-Pierre on a month-long French immersion program run by the School of Continuing Studies of the University of Toronto. Its founder, Clarice Pascrea, told me that nearly 20 University of Toronto women left.
in the past two decades, married Saint-Priest's men. Most of them had settled on Saint-Pierre. I decided to try to find out what was the key to learning more about life on a French island just a few kilometres off the North American coast.

At dusk, from the living-room window of Silvia Cambray's modest, wood-frame bungalow perched on an unpretentious hilltop, you can see the harbor and the glowing lights of Saint-Pierre's only city (also known as Saint-Pierre). The harbor is a vast, frog-saddled mountain behind. You can also watch the next-door neighbor's porch as it blends into a patch of untamed front-yard grass. Silvia and her friend Elaine Borotra are both from Toronto — two Canadian women in their late twenties who now call Saint-Pierre home. They were still teenagers when they first visited in the 1970s — summer students in the University of Toronto's French immersion course. Both returned to Saint-Pierre several times before finally settling down to island life. Silvia married Andre Cambray, an air-traffic controller. Elaine's husband, Eugene Borotra, is a young Saint- Pierrean entrepreneur whose family comes from a family with a variety of local business interests, including the oldest continuing French restaurant in the Caribbean: Le Petit Courge. We sit at Silvia's dining-room table, drink diet cola and talk about a Saint-Pierre beyond its bien connus, bistros and gendarmes.

"In a big city, you can quickly learn to be apathetic," Elaine says. "Here it's different. You not only know everybody, you see the same people four times a week. So if the choice is bad or the bank teller is giving you grief, then you'd never think twice about giving of your loyalty. You don't want to get a reputation as the town complainer." However, the story of how she and I met — Silvia, I've heard, one of Saint-Pierre's most ambitious, most motivated individuals, has already been well told — now it's her turn to be heard. You can go back a long way to get together, we have to learn to be more accepting.

"At first, I just didn't know how to appreciate, even love, the relaxed pace of life on Saint-Pierre, they have to accommmodate to. I don't think about taking a bath every two weeks," Elaine says, "and you can go crazy. It affects us all. But on a minus, the fresh fish — people open their windows, take their babies out for a stroll and smile. Yesterday had been such a day. To me it seemed that all the island's people had taken either to the streets, to the surrounding beaches or to their backyards, where they ate their lunch on blankets and picnic tables and courted the unseasonal warm sun. For Elaine and Silvia, their husbands and a few friends, the good weather had been excuse enough for a spontaneous barbecue. "You can never plan these things," Elaine says. Her face, like Silvia's, is lit with the warm afterglow of yesterday's sunshine. "When it's cool, it's got to make time."

Elaine eventually leaves for dinner, talking for her family and tells me about the summers she spent on Saint-Pierre before marrying Andre. I ask her what it was that brought her back year after year. "The French charm and the freedom," she says. "And, too, it wasn't too far away."

"I love the feeling of being on an island in the middle of the ocean, the feeling of not being able to get out, even when you want to," Silvia responds. "Silvia's feeling about the emotional and physical limits of island life may parallel the incredible number of cars here. The local museum curator estimates the total to be more than 1,000. "There's a place somewhere that Saint-Pierre has the second highest concentration of automobiles in the world," he says, "after the South Pacific island of Norfolk."

"Driving is our escape," another Saint-Priestan explains. I asked him how many kilometres of road there were on the island. After a moment he said 37, then quickly revised his theory: "I'd say about 150 in full illusion of escape."

The Saint-Priestans' sometimes comic fascination with cars was perhaps most graphically illustrated for me when, on an early morning walk through the quiet streets of town, I watched a Honda slowly pull past me, followed closely by a trotting horse in its morning exercise. The horse was tied to the Honda.

For centuries, the sea transcended Saint-Pierre. It brought and took away. It has been a source of nourishment and a force to be reckoned with. Despite the 300 or so people who still work on the few trawlers and dories or in the fish processing plant on Saint-Pierre, long since shed its sailors' town ambience. What binds them today is the church, the school, the rituals like the annual blessing of the fleet and the sea. What endures is not a way of life but a happening on the sea, an ebbing way of life: a charred-wood anchor resting on grassy knoll, a harbour-side statue honoring sailors lost at sea. I had to take the ocean road, beyond the cemetery and its empty grave markers, from programme to programme, through glass portholes, over to Savoyard Cove before capturing any flavor of what once was. At Savoyard, mackerel dry in the sun by the sea, delicate lettuce gardens are fringed with bright pink flowers, and a few freshly painted dories sit by the summer fishing cottages, a reminder of what the sea once was. And when you split their cod catch on tables by the shore.

"A Saint-Priestan symbol of the way life has waned for the Saint-Pierre archipelago is île aux Marin's (Sailors') Island, the garden-sized island within sight of Saint-Pierre. More than 800 fishermen lived on this evocative island of rocks and waist-high grass. But then, with its artificial cod dryer in the 1930s, the fishermen slowly abandoned the island, most of them to Saint- Pierre and town life. Today, except for a handful of summer residents, the island is deserted, told to me by some of the last to leave, especially when the mist clamps the splendid white church, the decaying houses and the rusting remains of the Transpac — one of nearly 700 ships that have sunk in Saint-Pierre's unpredictable waters since the 19th century.

"Marie-Josée Béliveau has inherited the dark, sensual features of her Basque ancestors. But, like most of her very visible generation, more than 50 percent of the Saint-Priestans are under 20 — she has inherited her ancestors' love for continuity. "The women don't want to have kids at 18 anymore," she says, "and the young men no longer want to see their children. We want more now." Béliveau is a desk clerk at the Ile de France, a popular hotel in Saint-Pierre. "We will remain there until the fall, and then, like many other workers who tour the seasonal seasons, she will look for something else to see her through the winter."

For most Saint-Priestans, that "something else" generally means the sprawling civil service, which employs half the working population. And the government jobs are not all that demanding and the money, which flows in from across the sea, is excellent by island standards. Saint-Pierre has need higher education to compete for the available jobs. Béliveau talks about entering the civil service as an opportunity to leave the small world of Saint-Pierre. That would mean joining the roughly 100 young Saint-Priestans who left their island every year for universities and technical schools in France — all expenses paid by the government. Saint-Pierre is asking Saint-Pierre for several years of university education "across the ocean," according to the prospect of year-round work does. There is, of course, no real financial concern for Saint-Priestans. When her hotel work finishes, she is eligible for generous unemployment benefits. And when they end, she says there is always a temporary government job to carry her through the winter until the spring. For Saraborot, as with most Saint-Priestans, their island world floats in a sea of French subsidies that permeate everything from university education and government projects to clothing and summer sailing lessons. But, in the brilliant flat and a flourishing tourist trade, the Saint-Priestans a false prosperity and restored the islanders from the sea, they have also reinforced the bloodlines that for centuries have bound Saint-Pierre to mother France. The media, too, have exercised a modest role in strengthening the archipelago's ties with France. The French government owns the local television station and one of Saint-Pierre's two radio stations. Radio Atlantic, a branch of compatriot Radio Métropole, is run privately on a volunteer basis. "When nobody can come, which has happened once or twice, there isn't a broadcast," says Andrée Béliveau, who has been with the island's government-owned radio station since 1954 and has been involved at one time or another in everything from Saint-Pierre's thrice-weekly songwriting. "On a night cool enough to throw some wood in the fireplace, I sit in Lobel's living room and talk about the media's influence on Saint-Pierre. I ask her if the introduction of television in the late 1950s (color wasn't available until 1978) dissolved the vast distances between France and Saint-Pierre. She doesn't think so: "Television and our satellite link with France may have brought us a little closer, but the continent, and we have had radio here since before the war." Béliveau concedes, however, that radio news from France was difficult to receive, even as late as 1958. As late as 1958, on Christmas day, commonly, evening fare in Saint-Pierre consisted of a lecture — perhaps a local doctor's patients who had a local musician would run through his repertoire on the station's piano. When Lobel was a little girl, she says, "The radio from France was more regular, though hardly reliable." We used to receive news and weather updates by shortwave. But the reception was so bad we had only one person with hearing line enough to understand the messages. We were absolutely dependent on her ears for our news." The station, she says, receives about 16 hours a day, with nearly half of the programming produced locally. As for television, there is the CBC from Newfoundland for the winter, and special receive her a little extra expertise. But for most of the islanders, Lobel says television still remains French government programming. "We are well informed. We know everything that happens on the different islands of France, but I don't think television lets us smile enough.

And what an existence. In Saint- Pierre, the milk, the fruit and most of the food is flown in from France, the cafes may lack continental-style umbrellas, and the gendarmes — like these people — have a "duty." But television may be imported, but the people are uniquely St. Prietians, a blending of old-country and new. They have a unique connection with a bit of Newfoundland charm and shaped by the sea, the fog and the cold. It's not the same as what's in the mind," says Saraborot, "we are Canadian. Canada is so close. But in the heat, we are almost like it.
Early in September, almost 30 years ago, John and I met for the first time on a street corner in Kingston, Ont. We were well scrubbed, about to register freshmen at Queen's University, and John was lost. "Dropped all my stuff at the boarding house," he said sheepishly. "Came down to have a look. Got turned around I guess. Any idea where Pine Street is?" We guided each other home that night and became good friends.

Now, late on a Friday afternoon in October, my wife, Pat, and I are driving down Kingston's Division Street toward the 25th-anniversary reunion of our graduating class. Suddenly, a sign catches my eye: Pine Street. I immediately think of John and wonder how he is and if he will be here this weekend. It is just one of many thoughts this reunion brings to mind as I check my scribbled notes for directions to the La Salle Motel.

Duncan and Pat are flying in from Edmonton; Don and Ann are driving down from Ottawa, Don's brush cut reportedly still intact. Another Don and Ann are bringing their 17-year-old son, Bruce, who may go to Queen's in a year or two if this experience with the old boys and girls doesn't overwhelm him. The weekend promises to be a break from the routine — a time to visit with good friends and old acquaintances. But there are nagging questions in my mind. Who comes to a 25-year reunion and who doesn't? And why? Are we here in pursuit of old friends or lost youth? And how can the next two days possibly live up to expectations embellished by so many years of fanciful memory?

We unpack in our brown-on-brown motel room, and I set my Tricolor yearbook on the dresser. Flipping through it a few nights ago had brought back a parade of forgotten names and faces. Some were recalled with affection and the hope that they would be here; most, however, were virtual strangers even when we were together so long ago. And what about the others who have returned and are now unpacking in hotel rooms around the city — how they have gone through the same building?

In the weeks leading up to this event, I felt peculiar whiffs and tugs. Two weeks, for example, were devoted...
to a senseless attempt to lose a little weight. I gave in to a new pair of expensive shoes and almost bought one of the mats with the feather in the trim. Last Sunday I almost waded the car. Pat and Jim were out to have a good time. Any things. The funAPI? Are the good performances the ones who come? As I change my shirt for the evening, I'm caught off guard by my own image in the mirror. The wavy blonde hair is a memory and what remains is tinged with gray. The salt and pepper beard will be a surprise to those who haven't seen me in 10 years. Only my battered shaving kit, lying beside the yearbook, has survived the 25-year journey relatively unscathed.

We head out for the principal's reception, the first event on our schedule. Tomorrow will include a lunch-on at home of an old classmate, the football game and a dinner dance. Then on Sunday, the reunion will wind up. For those of us long removed from the rigors of football workout, this is a demanding schedule. Still, we have a tradition to uphold.

George Vaill, a member of the Yale class of 1935, is an authority on alumni reunions. He reports that the first one was held at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., in 1883. It seems that at the time anyone who had earned a bachelor's degree from Yale could have a master's degree without doing any work simply by appearing at commencement three years after graduation, paying five dollars, and six years later joining the Yale Alumni Association. The idea spread quickly.

Today, the alumni reunion is both a reunion and an expected event for alumni, faculty and students as family — and an efficient fundraising tool. How the style changes from school to school.

Our reunion begins with a quietier-than-expected reunion in venerable Grant Hall. The building is an old friend — the scene of memorable concerts, plays and other events, including famous Math 3A, which was almost my undoing! And Saturday-night dances, where bare shoulders and semi-darkness as we peer through a smattering of high foreheads and new clothes, nervous laughs and daring eyes.

The emotions there tonight are probably no different from everywhere else. We feel the feeling of a too swift journey through the years, the feeling of leaving family, who are recognizable or of being unrecognized one after another. We are, I think, discovering some familiar faces. It is louder than remembered. Sandy, who went out with the football player — or perhaps he was a drummer. Art still wearing white. Jim, still smiling.

We exchange a few words here, a handshake there, a chat for a minute or two for the past and puzzle over why so many have decided to stay home. Over coffee and a chocolate square, one woman offers an answer. "Simple," she says with a hearty laugh. "We look as good as we did.

We leave the reception — six of us, close friends down through the years — and go off to a quiet dinner that is filled with talk of growing kids, farms, holiday plans. ... For the moment, close friendships are the bond, and we could be a thousand miles from the reunion.

Bob, a Kingston lawyer, and his wife, Gillian, have invited old friends, and friends of friends, to a buffet lunch in their home before the Saturday-afternoon football game. Jim is there.

Years ago we solved some of the world's most pressing problems over coffee and French apple pie in the Queen's coffee shop. On this day, however, as we stand in the sun room, he doesn't know me. "Total blank," he says, looking on my stupidly. "Rejection doesn't bother me as much as expected; there is pleasure in being a man of mystery," he says.

Once contact has been made, we exchange the high points of lives that have gone in very different directions. The same thing is happening all over the house as visitors cluster in the living rooms, in dining rooms, on the porches, and in the kitchen. Finally, Bob's voice cuts through the din: "Kick off in 15 minutes."

We join the crowd on Union Street — a side of colorful scarves, toques, denim coats and turtleneck sweaters moving through fallen leaves. Football serves the college reunion apart from almost all others. Everyone you see is either a memory or understand the game concede that Queen's versus McGill is the banner attraction of the weekend.

The game is a good one, with dropped passes, long runs, fumbles and a few serious injuries from one game to the other. In the midst of it all, my eyes settle on a small man two rows in front who reminds me of Lee Hays and brings me to mind a very different reunion.

Lee Hays, along with Peg Seeger, Millard Lampell and Woody Guthrie, joy that we shared such good times through their music, sadness that their time, and mine, passes so quickly. "You can't go home again." As one who can't recall attending a family gathering of more than 10 people, weddings and funerals aside, my impressions of family reunions come secondhand. It puzzles me, though, that some will travel so far to spend time with people who spirit — family reunions, school reunions, gatherings of friends from old neighborhoods or those who once worked or played together. They are happy occasions and not at all like those reunions that are prompted by wars and other disasters, when the participants come together to remember, to pay homage to those who didn't survive and to make sure the tragedy isn't forgotten.

The Queen's pipe band cuts through my reverie and brings me back to the halftime ceremonies. The stars of this show are 100 or so men and women who have returned for the 50th anniversary of their graduation. Now in their seventies and eighties, they are parading around the outside of the field, each holding high a bright yellow umbrella. A few are in wheelchairs. Some use a cane or lean on a spouse or friend for support. It is a touching sight as the sea of yellow umbrellas makes its slow, proud journey. Surprisingly, today's students seem to take special delight in these graduates of long ago and lead the applause. Reunions, perhaps, are also a window for the younger.

Hours later, football has given way to the hall light of an alumni dance in the Skylight Dining Room of the University Centre. Yellow umbrellas fill my mind, while the music of the more serious reels and marches fills the walls. "Go Johnny, Go," "Cry," "Parry Dool," "Old Cape Cod" fill the air. I look around the Clock. I find the door and step outside; half-a-dozen students are sitting on the steps. Two of them look up at me but can only say: "wow.

Every good reunion has its stories. "Remember the night the Canadian flag went up on city hall in Waterter, N.Y.? Late into Saturday night I saw a half-black, half-white flag flying from the help-yourself coffee, the tales are told — old memories and fresh fears, pinkies that worked and ones that didn't.

And off in corners some talk quietly of the odd reunion of odd events and of those who haven't come back.

We have left the others to dawdle over their morning eggs and pancakes. Sunday used to be as nice as one we've taken before — past old boarding houses on Aberden Avenue and East Street, along University Avenue past the Douglas Library and Ran Righ Hall and down to the shore of Lake Ontario. The sky is heavy and threatening. Somehow my questions of Friday night seem less important. What becomes of a reunion and who doesn't? Perhaps the answer lies in how one feels about nostalgic journeys. For some, it is a moment of something more than the weekend plans of friends.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines nostalgia as "homesickness as a disease." I don't feel ill in any way, but I am aware of longing this weekend — for youth, for time ... for days that never were.

Reunions are celebrations of nostalgia. This one has been what all reunions must be, I suppose; a strange and not always comfortable blending of today and yesterday, a groping for connections to the past while laden with the dreams of tomorrow. And perhaps a renewal. The first drops of rain land on my uncovered head, and we all join in wearing our yellow umbrellas in a youthful dash for the streets. Pat and I leave Kingston in a downpour after the July 1st party and past the Pine Street sign. I think of John and wonder how he is. 0
For most of us, the train is simply a way of getting to work or heading out of the city on the weekend, but when you think about it, the train may well be the inspiration of more folklore — and very diverse folklore — than any other aspect of our lives.

For example, there are the thousands of people who ride the train, especially over old lines, as a hobby and who are usually called "train huffers." Then there are the people who take pictures of trains anywhere they can find them — freight trains, passenger trains, community trains — and who are known in train circles as "rail fans.

And then there are the collectors of railroadiana: thousands of people out there biding every effort to collect timetables, catalogues and signs from railroads past and present.

Still, for all of these, no railroad hobbiest seems quite so dedicated to train lore, in all its dimensions, as the model railroader. He is, after all, not so many people think, simply someone who likes to play with a toy train. His railroad is not a toy; in most cases it is a replica, scaled down to minute dimension, of an actual train, in an actual setting, and as such it is the result of scholarly attention to history, engineering and geography.

The most serious of all railroaders — the ultimate model railroad person — does not even buy his train or railroad scenery. He builds it — every wheel, every rail, even the sash in the window of the caboose. Such a person, of course, form a tiny minority among the 200,000 model railroaders in North America; perhaps that's why, over the years, I'd never met one. Then, a few weeks ago, a friend phoned and began telling me about a man in Scarborough, not far from where I live, who has spent a quarter of a century building a model railroad. He seemed a true scholar of the craft. His name, she said, was Harold Midwood; she urged me to get in touch and, if possible, visit him and his railroad.

He is a sturdy man with a ruddy complexion in his late forties. He is a locomotive builder by trade (as his father was) who lives in the bungalow where he was born, about a 10-minute walk from a CNR line. There, as a boy, in the early 1950s, he watched some of the last steam locomotives go by; his fascination with the age of steam was born and was to deepen with the years. Even before he entered his teens he was dreaming of trains, reading about trains and then, sometime around the late fifties, his imagination was fired on a small, obscure railroad in Colorado — the Rio Grande Southern. Today, over a quarter of a century later, Harold Midwood's basement has become the mountainous terrain of southwest Colorado in miniature, a replica of 55 miles of an actual railroad that once carried precious metals in the gold and silver mines of the long-gone age of the American west.

"I don't know if I picked it or it picked me," he said, as we stood at the foot of his basement stairway, looking at the massive set of locomotives, tracks, bridges and mountains that made up what model railroaders call "the layout.

"The Rio Grande Southern was a poor feeder line to the Denver Rio Grande and Western. It has narrow gauge, which is to say the track was three feet wide. Its equipment was antiquated. The terrain was striking. I decided to focus on it as it looked in 1938 and 1939, a period when lots was happening. In those years, the fiesta for the centenary in southwest Colorado was celebrated and flowered with the train. People lived by it. The downhill crew even picked up shopping lists from housewives living by the tracks in the mountains. Then the upbound crew would bring back a few weeks' supply of groceries. What you see here is the section of the line from the town of Ridgway to Rico dramatically compressed. But it's as close to correct proportion as possible. Mind you, the entire line was 172 miles long and while it would be nice to have the whole railroad compressed, that would necessitate knocking out the walls of the basement, something in my wife might not appreciate."

You gather some idea of how seriously Harold Midwood approaches his hobby when he talks of the research he did on the old Rio Grande Southern. For three years, in the late fifties, before he even began to build it, he studied the way it was in 1938 and 1939 — from old records, maps and letters sent by people, mostly in Colorado, who remembered it. And he became the annoyance of 9000 photos of the train and the landscape, all taken by the dedicated rail fans who knew that both the train and the age of steam were about to pass. He has been to the remnant hill country where it operated seven times, the first time on his honeymoon in 1961; he has walked much of what remains of its old roadbed. "The more I saw of it," he said as he strode toward the railroad, which is a scaled version of the station in Ridgway, "the more intense the desire to build one like it became. So I started in 1961. I began building the layout — the landscape, the track, the trestles. I did it in bits and pieces of time. Trying it in big stretches is a mistake. It will overwhelm you. So you work half an hour here, 20 minutes there. As for building the locomotive itself, for me there was an absolute necessity. I had to see if I could. I built the steam engine from raw brass castings; the wheels are turned out on lathes. The cars are made piece by piece down to the rivets. Some, like the tank cars, are of brass; others, like the caboose, are built of wood, board by board, including bunks, washstand, closet, windows and doors. The painting is done either by airbrush or artist's brush. I used a wash to give a weathered effect. I added sound a few years ago. It's an electronic device with just sound of a locomotive located in the tender; the other sounds — the whistle, the bell, the chuff, are called up as required by the operator at a panel. Actually, the biggest obstacle in building the locomotive was psychological. Once I was over that, it wasn't that difficult."

From time to time, model railroaders from both Canada and the United States visit Harold Midwood's basement, not only because of the magnitude of his system, but to spend an evening observing how faithfully he has been to the original Rio Grande Southern of the late thirties. A few who come, the real experts, could spot something out of keeping in a matter of seconds.

"First of all," he says, "an expert will take an overall look. How clearly does the entire layout reflect what it is supposed to? The Rio Grande Southern was a tiny, narrow ribbon of track running through the woods with immense scenery around it. So someone who knows the subject will look at that and expect to see a literal replica in miniature but one that nonetheless captures the character of the railroad and the era. When it comes to the locomotive itself, however, things are very specific. The person will look to see that the locomotive and all the cars are in fact exact models of the ones that were in use in 1938 and 1939 — that you don't have a car there that didn't come on the property until 1915. If you did, it would stand out like a sore thumb."

Late that night, the Rio Grande Southern left Ridgway on its way to Rico. It gathered steam on the main line, climbed the grade into the mountain and crossed long stretches of land where, here and there, a man or woman stood alone, looking up at the train. For a time, it was as if I too was standing at the track in that time and place, waiting and listening as that first sound of its whistle, the distant promise of its coming.
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