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"Twenty years ago," says Zwicker's director, Ian Munro, "maritime art accounted for perhaps five percent of our sales, certainly not more than 10 percent. Today, that figure has grown to 40 percent." Such is the general surge of interest in Canadian marine painting, an interest that quite naturally finds some of its most vivid expression in Nova Scotia.

Still, it is a form of art with gifted practitioners and growing popularity right across Canada: in Ontario, artists paint images of the workaday life of the Great Lakes; in British Columbia, they depict the timeless and varied life of the Pacific. This increasing interest in Canadian marine art is reminiscent of the upsurge in popularity of wildlife painting in the late 1970s, when artists like Glen Loutit and Robert Bateman burst into the public's consciousness.

Marine art differs from region to region, yet there are certain features common to the field across Canada. The new wave of marine painting is characterized not by seascapes so much as by realistic interpretations of ships, especially sailing ships, and of harbors, wharves, slips and such. While several of the country's major cities, including St. John's, Montreal and Victoria, have galleries that emphasize marine art, most energy in the field is channeled through places and publications that are more concerned with the sea than with its aesthetics, such as marine museums and sailing magazines.

Though it is only recently that marine art has gained popular appeal, it has a long and honorable tradition in Canada. Throughout this country's history there have been important painters of the sea (and inland seas). In the 19th century, when even the smallest port was a tangle of masts and spars, many painters recorded waterfront scenes and ships at sea. William Armstrong, who settled in Toronto in 1861, left an invaluable record of both the steamers and the schooners that were then so numerous on the Great Lakes. His technique is still admired, as is that of John O'Brien, a 19th-century painter who frequently worked in Nova Scotia and whose work can be found in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

Today's marine artists are, for the most part, interested in the same sort of subjects: painting of sailing and shipping in the coastal waters of the Atlantic.
This painting of yachts and a tugboat on Lake Ontario was created by Toronto artist Keith Miller, who spent five months as a crew member on a tall ship.

When he returned to North America he did so as part of the crew of the 140-metre barkentine Gasela Primavera, which was being sailed from Portugal to the Philippines Maritime Museum, which would be its new home. "I'd never experienced sailing that complex before," he says. "Naturally I made a lot of drawings, many of them quite technical. That's where I got most of the technical knowledge that's involved in some of my paintings.

Once he was back in Toronto, Miller received plenty of encouragement from the late Alan Howard, who was then the curator of the Maritime Museum of Upper Canada. Howard long espoused the importance of painting historical subjects. Such advice is basic to the marine art movement, for so many of the participants, whether artists or appreciators, are yachtmen or former people nautical for the age when sail ruled world trade. To many such people, even modern ships have an almost historic quality simply because they're ships, not aircraft. One detects this sentiment in Miller, whose own work is growing away from the 19th-century vessels while he himself remains at the centre of the marine-art revival.

If you spend your whole career painting vessels at sea with lots of sail you fall into a trap of producing that on demand and nothing else," he says. "So there's often an urge to branch out. In my case, I'm interested in the architecture of the various ports in relation to the ships. That's why it's important for me to paint on the spot as much as possible. It's why much of his work depicts Toronto harbor and why he has also painted New York harbor and the Brooklyn Bridge. Miller has done many pictures of racing yachts, including many past entrants in the America's Cup, but he is more inclined toward painting workaday vessels, such as tugs, ferries and barges, including some of the best modern ones. He prides himself on the authenticity of the vessels' detail and that of the shoreline. "I enjoy this," he says. "I research and have quite a collection of

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Harry Horne's paintings of salmon trollers (top) and winter at Ludher, B.C., illustrate the West Coast art's excellent command of light.
books to refer to," he says, "but I enjoy studying today's vessels and wish more people did." Interest in modern ship-
ing, both among collectors and art-
ists, it seems, increases as one moves
westward across Canada.

A little more than three years ago, a
group of painters on the West Coast
formed the Canadian Society of Marine
Artists, which holds an annual group
exhibition that receives a great deal of
favorable attention. The group was
formed in emulation of the Royal
Society of Marine Artists, a much
older British organization that had
already inspired the creation of the
American Society of Marine Artists.

The Canadian group now has 38 mem-
bers, including one Briton and one
Ontario artist, Ronald Okey. As yet,
however, it has no members from the
Atlantic provinces. (One West Coast
member, incidentally, is also one of
fewer than 50 artists inducted into the
British society. He is Harry Heine of
Vancouver, whom Miller praises not
only for his "command of light" but
because "he's not afraid to look at
industrial subjects").

A number of the fellows of the Cana-
dian Society of Marine Artists exhibit
through the Harrison Galleries in
Vancouver and other galleries in Van-
couver or Victoria where marine art
is one of the preferred areas. "Al-
though individual members show in
private galleries," says the society's
secretary, George Bates, "our group
shows are held in museums and other
public institutions."

West Coast marine art is markedly
different from its Atlantic counterpart
in substance, too. As a rule, it shows
more interest in contemporary ship-
ing and modern port facilities, al-
though there is one West Coast mem-
ber of the Canadian Society of Marine
Artists, John Horton, who likes to
specialize in the voyages of Captain
Vancouver and the period in which he
lived, and there are several others who
are also interested in historical sub-
jects. For the most part, however, B.C.
marine artists are apparently more con-
cerned with the present day than are
such artists in the East. It is probably
safe to say that more so than in other
parts of Canada, the shoreline plays an
important part in West Coast marine
art. One frequently sees good use made
of the distinctive vegetation that has
occupied a recognizable place in the
story of Canadian art since the days
when, in her very different way, Emily
Carr used it to feed her imagination.

The regional flavor of much Cana-
dian marine art is one of its attrac-
tions, but it is also responsible, at least
in part, for artists not gaining promi-
nence outside their own regions. A
prominent West Coast marine paint-
er, Len Gibbs, who is a veteran of the
Royal Canadian Navy, is a case in
point. His work is in virtually every
major collection in the West. In
Edmonton, people queued up at eight
in the morning to attend the opening
of a Len Gibbs one-man show that
evening, and though the Canadian
Art Collectors' Guide advised in the
early eighties that interest in his
"works will increase as collectors in
the eastern half of Canada discover
him," he has still to come to promi-
nence in the East. Conversely, Joseph
Purcell, who is strongly represented
in a great number of eastern collec-
tions, as well as in private and pub-
collected in places as far away as
India, the Philippines and the Soviet
Union, is virtually unknown in the
West.

Despite the increasing presence of
marine art in commercial galleries
and the interest now being shown in
the genre by some public galleries,
Canadian marine art is most often
viewed at its best, and perhaps appro-
priately so, in marine museums. But
in time, everyone agrees, more will
be available to the average private col-
lector. Then the wider world will recog-
nize the clear Canadian sensibility
in our marine artists.
between May and October 13, 1986."

The crowd laughs and applauds. Those are the scheduled opening and closing dates for the World Expo on Transportation and Communications, the first such event to be held in Vancouver since the provincial government announced its intention to hold Expo 67. And while Expo 86 may not surpass Expo 67 in total attendance, organizers have reason to believe that visitor turnout will, like Expo 67, generate tremendous worldwide interest in Canada. Both events opened to put $2.8 billion into the B.C. economy—alone (overall Expo 86 is expected to raise $4 billion for Canada) and provide some 534,000 person-years of employment for the province.

Even those ambitious expectations may be surpassed. Jim Pattison, the Vancouver businessman who has worked indefatigably as chairman of the provincial Crown corporation responsible for Expo 86, announces at the roundhouse ceremony that tickets representing 3.1 million visits to Expo have already been sold—many more than anticipated.

Visitors to Expo will experience an extraordinary event in a spectacular setting. The 66-hectare principal site curves along the waterfront of False Creek and is linked by various modes of water transport and a light rapid transit line to Canada Place, the magnificent host pavilion on the other side of the city centre, on the south shore of Vancouver’s sparkling harbor.

As many as 50 pavilions hosted by foreign nations, Canadian provinces and territories and national and multinational corporations will house spectacles exhibits of technology, culture and cuisine, reflecting the Expo theme, "World in Motion, World in Touch."

The attractions and special events at the exposition will range from art shows, feature festivals, trade shows, rodeos and regattas to tall ships, daily parades and such as the 12,000 performances by Canadian and international artists. Expo 86 will be, by any standard, a genuine extravaganza.

Of course, Expo has had its detractors; skeptics cite the relative lack of success of such North American expositions. But Expo officials respond by citing some differences in, and some strong advantages of, their project. "Expo 86 will be the first exposition ever to include pavilions from the United States, the U.S.S.R., the People’s Republic of China and Cuba (together, which should create a lot of interest worldwide and particularly in the United States," says Dennis MacDonald, Expo’s director of corporate sponsors and official suppliers. "As well, Vancouver is equidistant from Europe and the Orient, which is a big plus given the high-tech nature of many of our exhibits and events. And, we will have the strongest corporate sponsorship of previous expositions in history—more than $150 million. The total corporate sponsorship of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, which were proceed with the restoration. The restoration of the roundhouse, which was built by the Canadian Pacific Railway at the end of its transcontinental line to service and house its steam locomotives, preserves a valuable symbol not only of the golden age of steam locomotives but of Canadian history itself. As Premilair Bennett remarks at the ceremony, "The CPR roundhouse is a historic symbol for British Columbia. It represents British Columbia’s entry into Confederation and symbolizes the dedication and courage of the people like those at the CPR who helped link the nation from coast to coast."

What is interesting about the project is that the historic, semicircular structure, abandoned and derelict for decades, has not only been lovingly restored but completed in accordance with the original architect’s plans. Detailed millwork (wooden trim around doors and windows) originally called for but never carried out, has at last been added to the roundhouse. Another piece of Canadian railroad history will also be preserved with help from a program sponsored by Esso Petroleum. In the circular courtyard of the roundhouse is a rotating steel turntable originally used to align steam locomotives with tracks leading to different areas of the roundhouse. During Expo, a vintage steam locomotive—engine #374, which brought the first transcontinental passenger train into Vancouver in 1887—will once again stand on the turntable.

Locomotive #374 is also being restored, partly with proceeds from the Esso Heritage Brick Program, an idea developed by Tom McDonald of Imperial’s public affairs activities in the Pacific region. McLean proposed that the Vancouver CPR roundhouse be restored, and bricks, which would be engraved with the names or messages of those who bought them, be constructed appropriately in the courtyard of the Esso Roundhouse. The proceeds would be donated to the Esso Heritage Trust (which will use part of the money to restore locomotive #374). The bricks, or rather the rights to them, are sold at participating Esso service stations in British Columbia for $19.86. During the roundhouse ceremony, Esso Petroleum’s president, Gordon Thornton, presents Charles Nash, a director of the trust, with the first proceeds from the brick program — $63,500.

Imperial’s association with Expo 86 began with a casual conversation between two men, the same surname. Patrick Reid is commissioner general of Expo 86, an appointment he assumed in 1983 after holding a three-year diplomatic posting in London. While in London, Reid, who was also serving as president of the International Bureau of Expositions, the body now sanctioning Expo 86, met Dick Reid, a former president of Imperial who was then, and is still, president of Esso Europe Inc. "At that time," Patrick Reid recalls, "there were tentative plans to hold a world exposition in Vancouver with a transportation theme in 1981 to be called Traspo 86—to commemorate the city’s 100th anniversary. I didn’t know then that Dick Reid had been president of Imperial, but I knew that Imperial had been the official petroleum supplier to Expo 86, so I suggested that his colleagues in Canada might like to be involved with Transpo 86. He agreed to pass the word along and suggested I contact the company in Canada, which I did. By that time the potential project had grown into Expo 86. Reid’s letter eventually reached Tom McDonald, who was aware of Imperial’s potential, picking up the story, "and while it looked like an exciting project for Imperial, it took a lot of negotiation to scale and the wide range of coverage required, we knew we had to attract the major national and multinational corporations in Canada, the leaders in their own fields. It is critical for us to establish the perception of Expo 86 as a national Canadian celebration, not as a local or regional event." Adds McDonald: "Imperial operates in virtually every Canadian community, and it was a tremendous boost for us to sign the leading Canadian petroleum company. It helped us gain the support of other leading corporations, such as IBM Canada Ltd., Titanium Metals of Canada Limited, Coca Cola Ltd., Kordak Canada Inc. and others. With the money and commercial and competitive benefits from being designated the official petroleum supplier to Expo 86," Bomben says. "But more important than that, we believe that Expo is a worthwhile community project through which Imperial can support and participate in community affairs. It’s also a great opportunity for Canadians to show the world how to do these things—as we showed them at Expo 87, which was a very successful project."

What tipped the scales for Imperial was the opportunity to assist with the roundhouse restoration. "Rather than simply presenting an exhibit that would end with Expo, we wanted to be associated with something that would...
remain," adds Bomben. "The Esso Roundhouse is one of only four permanent structures at Expo 86."

He mentions another factor that helped the company decide to participate in the exposition: "At Imperial, we like to be associated with winners — winning people and teams, like our Canadian Olympic swimmers and hockey players, and winning projects. Expo 86 is going to be a winner."

Judith Wintrob, located in Toronto, is Esso Petroleum's manager for Expo 86. She and Bob McLean work closely in organizing and coordinating Imperial's Expo activities. And they both work closely with the Expo organizers, other corporate sponsors and many other agencies and groups connected with the event.

In addition to sponsoring the Roundhouse theme pavilion, Esso Petroleum is undertaking full-scale advertising and promotional campaigns related to Expo 86, including television and print advertising, a major Expo-related gasoline promotion, special product packages and Esso truck livery featuring the distinctive Expo 86 logo.

The company is also establishing a major program through which a network of hundreds of Esso service stations and agencies across Canada will serve as Expo information sites. Customers considering a visit to Expo can obtain detailed information to help them plan their visits just by stopping at one of these Esso stations.

The enthusiasm for this project is palpable, genuine and probably contagious. Those involved are committed to making Expo 86 a tremendous success. In a nation where people often criticize themselves and one another for hiding their lights, settling for the less-than-excellent and taking the route of least resistance, these are people who will undoubtedly, as Tony Bomben suggests, "help Canada show the world how it's done."

The rain has one minor deleterious effect on the proceedings of the Roundhouse ceremony. Gordon Thomson, concluding his remarks, invites the other officials on the platform — Premier Bennett, Jim Pattison, Patrick Reid and Charles Nash — to join him in the ceremonial placement of their own engraved Esso Heritage Bricks in the courtyard. The group proceeds to a doorway through which massive locomotives once passed and then, huddled under bright-red Esso souvenir umbrellas, out into the rain-soaked courtyard.

Intended as a photo opportunity, the occasion is more like what reporters and photographers refer to as a "scrum." Flashbulbs pop as photographers crouch under umbrellas trying to keep their equipment dry, and spectators and dignitaries alike chuckle and joke as they hurry back inside.

As noted, however, the rain fails to dampen the celebratory tone of the proceedings. With six months still remaining before the opening date, construction of the Expo 86 site has virtually been completed; some 20 percent of the people expected have already bought tickets; corporate sponsorship is approaching $150 million; and on November 30, 1985, the pavilions will be handed over to the nations, provinces and corporations whose exhibits will fill them. This ceremonial has been symbolic of more than just the successful restoration of the historic Roundhouse; it's a signal that from here on it's all systems go for Expo 86.

Premier Bennett will, without a doubt, be proved incorrect — it will rain in Vancouver between May 2 and October 13, 1986. But it will not matter. It will take more than a little rain to throw cold water on this Canadian celebration.
Jean-Louis Roux,
director general of the National Theatre School.
Training human beings, not instruments

A star player in this development was born 25 years ago in several rooms of an old Canadian Legion building in Montreal. The foundation of Canada’s first and only “national” theatre school was more than an appropriate response to the dire pronouncement of the commission’s report. For a diehard group of passionate believers in a distinctly Canadian theatre, it was a long held vision come true. A training ground in two languages for the cream of young, homegrown talent at the confluence of the nation’s two great cultures could only produce a dynamic that was profoundly and uniquely ours.

And so it has. The National Theatre School became a new cultural arena for the pursuit of excellence, a place where gifted young people from every corner of the country have an equal chance to compete. Guided by Michel Saint-Denis, an internationally renowned master of the theatre, along with the best and brightest minds in Canadian theatre, it soon gained a reputation as one of the leading training centres for the dramatic arts in the western world. In 1964, the American theatre critic Richard Schenckner wrote, “the school seems to offer the best, most confident and complete training of any on this continent.”

Testimony to the experiment’s success is the astonishingly high percentage of graduates whose names can be found in the credits of nearly every branch of the entertainment industry across the nation as well as in such meccas of the dramatic arts as Hollywood, New York, London and Paris.

But while most Canadians are familiar with the country’s other national training school for the arts, the Toronto-based National Ballet School, they may not have heard of the school in Montreal that year after year produces, in French and in English, top-calibre actors, designers and technicians who have gone on to make their names on the world’s stages and silver screens.

With this in mind and with uncharacteristic fanfare, the National Theatre School is celebrating its first quarter century with an unprecedented public-relations campaign. Launched on November 1, 1985, with a $125-a-plate black-tie dinner in Montreal and ending at the end of the year, this festivities feature CBC and Radio-Canada television specials and cross-country tours of English and French productions by graduates of the school. By showing the rest of Canada what it does best, the school hopes to raise its low profile.

The gala celebrations are a far cry from the National Theatre School’s modest beginnings. In 1959 the task of creating what came to be known as “the school” fell to a 15-member committee of prime movers in the quest for a Canadian theatre. Among them were the country’s leading actors and directors, including Jean Gascon, Jean-Louis Roux, Gratien Gélinas, Michael Langham, Powsy Thomas and Mavor Moore, as well as other steadfast cultural missionaries like Pauline McGibbon, former lieutenant governor of Ontario, and Herbert Whittaker, drama critic emeritus of the Globe and Mail.

The founders invited Michel Saint-Denis (who had already shaped such influential institutions as the London Theatre Studio, the Old Vic Theatre School, also in London, and Le Centre de l’Est in Brussels, France, as well as the drama division of New York’s Juilliard School) to plan the school’s curriculum. With Saint-Denis’ expertise, a staff of star teachers — including Leon Major and John Hiltach — and the founder of the Stratford Festival theatre, Tom Patterson, as chairman of the board of governors, the school quickly gained an enviable reputation in drama circles across the country.

Since 1970, the school has made its home in central Montreal in a yellow brick building whose grim isolation, still intact in the basement, are a reminder of its former incarnations as a juvenile court and boys’ reform school.

Today the building is a hive of activity throughout the day and very often in the evening too, as students pursue their craft, in English or French, through one of the school’s various sections: acting, playwriting, design, technical and directing. The curriculum is rigid. Acting students, for example, study all aspects of performance, from mime, dance and direction, as well as theatre history, make up and a number of other non-performance areas as stagecraft, costume, set and property design, theatre history and text analysis. And the playwriting students spend long hours completing writing assignments and attending courses in such subjects as dramaturgy and theatre history.

They are also in constant contact with acting students, and visiting playwrights and directors. An indication of the success of the course is the fact that graduates of the French playwriting program are among the most produced playwrights in Quebec today.

The school’s philosophy is as important as its tough curriculum. “We aren’t training actors. We’re training human beings,” says the school’s current director general, Jean-Louis Roux. “We’re teaching our students the techniques we try to help them become conscious of their own tools and skills so that they can cope with the technical in the world it will not help actors who don’t know themselves, he explains. “The students here are really faced with hard work, but in spite of that they feel extremely free. We’re really happy with the school, and especially the students. They’ve worked hard to get it. The tone during Rain’s regime was not always serious, however. Groups of students would often pass the great man’s office singing “Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer true” under their breaths to acknowledge Rain’s memorable, if invisible, performance as the voice of the infamous computer complex called “Daisy” in Stanley Kubrick’s film 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Administrative director Jean Pol Britte recalls the heroic efforts involved in surviving the precarious early years. In 1963 the old Legion building had become too small and the school moved to the third subbasement of the city’s sparkling new Place des Arts theatre complex. A two-year lease held
been signed, but the sight and sound of 100 exhuberent students bursting through the auster concert halls was more than the stolid administrators could handle. After several nerve-racking weeks, they asked the school to leave. The former incident provoked the then new director general, James Donville, to fly through the halls shouting, "Crisis! Crisis! (Crise! Crise!)" which became a kind of school rallying cry.

Undaunted, the keen troupe of teachers and students moved to another nearly decrepit building near the waterfront in Old Montreal. Money was still tight, so tight, in fact, that Donville and Britte painted the classrooms themselves on weekends.

Two years later, when the need for performing space and workshops for the technical section became critical, the school rented the Monument National, the 86-year-old former headquarters of the Jean-Baptiste Society at the tough south end of St.-Laurent Boulevard. Montreal drama critic Myron Gallaway called the building's theatre "to put it mildly, a mess… The seats are unrelentingly hard and uncomfortable and many are broken; the acoustics are a nightmare of ghostly echoes." But the show went on, and a remarkable dedication and spirit more than made up for the UNGLAMOROUS surroundings.

Under Donville's directorship, no talented student was turned away because he or she lacked money. The school took out bank loans to help pay these students' tuition fees. Teachers donated funds from their already low salaries to help pay for the students' living expenses. Britte describes the mood during those first few years as euphoric.

"Luckily enough, we were all a bit mad during those first few years," recalls Roux, who has performed more than 100 roles during his distinguished career as well as serving as the artistic director of Montreal's prestigious Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (viewers of early Canadian television will remember him best as Ovide in the CBC's long-running "Poulette Family" series). "We knew it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to refurbish those old buildings," he says, "but that wasn't important to us. Whether the problems were big or small, we simply refused to give up."

In 1963 the first acting class graduated from the school. Among the 14 graduates of the English program were such highly successful actors as Heath Lamberts, Martha Henry, Paul Hecht, Suzanne Grossman, Neal D'Andria, Diana LeBlanc and Donnelly Rhodes. Over the years, the success rate of National Theatre School graduates has become legendary, earning the school the reputation of having the highest employment record among graduates of any theatre school in the western world. "There isn't a professional theatre company in Canada that doesn't employ our graduates," notes Britte. A 1986 study found that 73 percent of graduates found jobs in the theatre within two months of graduation — jobs that, Roux explains, may last only a few weeks or months because of the theater's transitory and seasonal nature, but jobs nevertheless.

And not only are the school's graduates gainfully employed, but many are very successful. Among them are such eminent people as Gary Estrin, executive director of the Stratford Festival; stage, film and television stars Nicole Leblanc, Neil Munro, Marilyn Lightstone, Nathalie Gascon and Kenneth Welsh; and the singer Louise Forestier. As well, dozens of other former students, including Quebec rock star Robert Charlebois, launched successful careers before graduating.

Despite its raving reviews, however, the school has suffered its share of criticism. The bilingual ideal has long been a contentious issue. There are those who have felt since the school's founding that its English-language section belongs in Toronto, which they believe to be the centre of English theatre in Canada. The possibility of moving part of the school to Toronto has been considered more than once. In 1975, the Canada Council organized a meeting in Toronto to discuss the location of the school; the consensus was that it should remain where it was.

Theatre luminary Mayor Moore: one of the 16 "prime movers who created the National Theatre School

Students and teachers alike admit that the two language groups have never done much mixing. Writer Gregory Wickliff, an acting student in 1974/75, when Quebec nationalism was strong, recalls that "living in Montreal was a wonderful experience, but the two solitudes at the school, although not unfriendly to each other, rarely communicated." Roux says that while some among the school's earliest advocates had hoped to see it produce bilingual actors who felt equally at home with Shakespeare and Molière, Tennessee Williams and Anouilh, this has never been the school's intention. Students now study together in both languages in the design program and work together on stage productions for the public. Roux hopes to see even more joint productions in future.

Perhaps the most disturbing charge (made by John Hirsch, a former artistic director of the Stratford Festival, and Guy Sprung, artistic director of the Toronto Free Theatre) is that the quality of the school's graduates has declined in the last few years. Roux counters that while they might complain about the fact that the school's teachers earn as much as 25 percent less than those of their counterparts in universities, they are teaching U.S.-based schools. A lack of funds is a considerable problem to the school. It has begun life with a budget of $1.1 million, of which $50 000 came from the Quebec government and another $40 000 from the Canada Council (the council contributed 69 percent of the current $2.3 million budget, with the remainder coming from provincial and tuition fees making up most of the remainder). But the school is still saddled with a $400 000 debt, which accumulated during the period from 1978 to 1982, when grants from the Canada Council and the Ontario and Quebec governments were frozen. The school's survival was in doubt. Davidson Dunton, a former chairman of the CBC and cochairman of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, was asked to study the question of whether the school still filled an important need. His reply was an emphatic yes. He recommended increased grants and noted in his report that while there were other theatre programs in the country, "none had the same national scope and rigor in broad development of basic personal skills."

As a result, this council increased its annual grant, and last year the federal department of communications contributed $390 000 toward the 25th-anniversary tours. This school's facilities, however, still badly need upgrading. Additions to the headquarters would allow for more programs, and the 40,000-book library, the largest of its kind in the country, outgrew its present quarters long ago. Ever so, the old spirit that fueled the school is the first place still burns in its true believers. Robert Landry of Ottawa, a vice-president of Imperial Oil Limited and chairman of the school's board of governors, notes that corporations were eager to sponsor the school's cross-country anniversary tour of the opera "Candide, en Auver La Noite..."

The Royal Bank of Canada, Imperial Oil Limited and Air Canada provide an important portion of the participants' air travel. "This 25th anniversary gives us a good opportunity to reflect on the next 25 years," says Landry. "With the calibre of people we have at the school and on the board, we hope to continue to be one of the best theatre schools in the world for the next 25 years."

In a booklet about the school, Martha Henry, cochairperson of the newly formed alumni association, wrote: "The school taught me that there are no answers, no tricks. It taught me to have faith in my own resources, to demand and give more. And I go back to the school and see the quality of work done by all of these students by this staff and the integrity of work delivered by these young actors. Technical designers now — and if I were only 17 again, this is where I would go."
A PATCH OF GREEN

BY TED FERGUSON

On a bitterly cold day last winter the postman mounted the steps of my Toronto home and slipped a large white envelope through the mail slot. My wife, Jessie, and I had recently moved to the city from a farm in northern Alberta and although the move involved a lot of rushed, last-minute planning, we hadn't neglected to ensure that a deeply valued tradition would follow us East — the envelope was part of that tradition. It contained a seed catalogue, the first of half a dozen that would arrive over the next few days.

That may not seem a very significant event to anyone who hasn't gardened, but we greeted the catalogue's appearance as eagerly as we would have welcomed a new book by a favorite author. Jessie put the kettle on and, over tea and muffins, we sat at the kitchen table, leafing through the 89 wonderfully illustrated pages. Should we try the newest hybrid, a lavender pink pansy? Is the Toronto climate friendly to strawberries? Does Bibb lettuce taste better than icelberg? As always, we made one utterly frivolous choice, a European plant that would supposedly clear any room of flies.

Some people might consider Jessie and me to be catalogue connoisseurs, but we really aren't. We confine ourselves to a handful of Canadian seed houses; the true devotees gather 20 or more catalogues from all over North America. The prices at the various seed houses are roughly the same, but there's a world of difference in the products. Some houses specialize in exotic flowers, others in 10 or 20 different varieties of a certain vegetable. And they aren't above catering to fads either. Chinese vegetables and spaghetti squash used to be all the rage, but now it's peculiar colors: green radishes, white eggplants, lemon tomatoes. The catalogue's bright illusura...
tions and authoritative prose. "This radiant, strongly-smelled hybrid was developed specifically for patio culture, and it thrives in the snow, happy to be tucked into the snow's piling up in the driveway and it's so cold outside that the birds in the sky are frozen stiff.

Choosing and ordering the seeds is actually a prelude to another winter ritual when the seeds arrive, my wife cuts one side open off each of the milk cartons she's diligently saved all summer for them for flowers. She arranges the cartons around the house, on windowsills, in the morning sunlight catches sunlight. One year I had five or six on the desk I use to play my trade as a freelance writer. This proved to be too distracting. I was continually staring at the soil, hoping to witness that magic moment when the seeds sprout through. I finally moved the flats to another room, where, far from the demanding gaze, they developed lovely, little patches of presumer greenery.

It is said that the planning of many activities, such as a major trip, is often so engrossing that the actual event is anticlimactic. That could be our case with gardening. As I thoroughly enjoy the seed-catalogue and milk-carton staging, I guess I could forget about the rejuvenating smell of freshly turned earth, the knowledge that, if I treated my handlings I plant will survive and flourish.

Gardening is, above all, a pro- found way to learn to relax. It en- ables your skills to defeat a multitude of hazards, and, when you succeed, you feel a great sense of achievment, not too unlike the painting of a picture.

I haven't always been so keen on gardening. I am a writer by trade, and, for the most part, I neglected my garden. However, when my mother passed away, I had to write hundreds of articles and stories that I could never have done without her guidance and support. I learned that working in the soil provides a wonderful release from the day's tensions. The garden is a calm, orderly place, a universe unto itself. When the weather is warm, it is a place where one can escape the stress and conflict, slips into temporary obscurity when you become a gardener, it is a place where you can relax and enjoy good health. I discovered something else too: the sense of triumph that comes from growing and eating your own food, the feeling that you've eaten the system because you didn't line up at a supermarket to buy it. We grew our own vegetables, roses, marigolds, and other flowers from a city bus stop. People waiting there usually watched silently as Jenny, my wife, would pass by, her hair covered with her thousand, yellow flowers. Late one afternoon I was gazing out of a second-floor window, watching her pass by. I watched her, secretly moved to other choices that we postponed fixing the garden until enough greenery showed to attract deer and rabbits. What a mistake that was. I left the house on a June morn- ing and was startled to see a dozens crows standing on the field when I returned. Incredibly, they had broken through the fence. We gave up the garden for the season. I turned our thoughts to the cultivation of the flat earth and plant new seeds, and I wasted no time in

ran a small general store out of our front room, which hardly anyone patronized, probably because they didn't need to go outside the plain, gray buildings, which sat at the edge of a field, 15 kilometres from town. Canned food, laundry soap and other nonperishable goods gathered dust on crude wooden shelves. Lack of electricity, she kept sodas pop in water-filled buckets. But, behind her house, the widow had a small garden, as did the other local gardeners, she freely mixed flowers with vegetables. Clumps of rosemary and thyme grew up together, smelling wonderful. As we sat enjoying our dinner, we talked about the vegetables we grow and the wonderful -s in the potato patch. She nursed each plant lacerating a fence. Made of young pop- lars from a nearby grove, the fence learned terribly and regularly popped its railings, but with annual patches, it was still intact a decade later.

(August 9, 1995) We were accompanied by the showy fender, but they were generally impressed with the garden. There was a year when the garden was destroyed, but they learned to look at the garden. Sometimes they'd bring his whole family. They'd compare our garden with theirs and talk about others they'd inspected recently who were having trouble with his cabbages, whose corn was maturing quickly. All of them, of course, offered advice on how to achieve gar- dening perfection, but the only person we really paid attention to was the woman's sister. "She was an eccentric lady. Well, she was born in a small town, and she lived in a small house, and she

The Review, Spring, 1996
THE CAMPUS AND THE CORPORATION

One crisp evening last October, in the northern Ontario city of Thunder Bay, several hundred students at Lakehead University, along with scores of faculty members, crowded into a lecture hall for a historic occasion in the university's life: the first lecture ever given at the university by Professor Northrop Frye, Canada's preeminent literary critic and scholar of world renown. Next morning . . .

BY DIANE FORREST
... students from the university’s English department had the ever-richer opportunity of attending a seminar led by Frye, who supported discussions on everything from his treatment of Blake to his approach to the Bible. Frye’s vision for the University was realized in part through the lecture series held there that academic season under the sponsorship of The Reviewer. In January, the chief executive officer of Imperial Oil Limited, Arden Haynes, gave the second lecture of the series, and in March, Keith Spicer, editor of the Ottawa Citizen and former language commissioner, will present the third.

The Review Lecture Series, begun in 1980, is offered each academic year to a university that might not normally have visiting lecturers of the stature of Frye on its campus; its recipients have included Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Brandon University in Manitoba and Laval University in Quebec City. But the lecture series is only one part of a much more extensive renaissance that Imperial shares with universities on a much larger scale: one that involves among its many facets funding, joint projects and the sharing of expertise. Like other large companies, universities and corporations have had to face tighter budgets and new demands, that relationship has become more and more crucial.

In 1983, a small group of academics and corporate leaders, including Donald Mcivor, who was at the time known as the chairman and chief executive officer of Montreal Mutual, called on the university to form a task force that became known as the Corporate-Higher Education Forum. The recognition that the university community and the corporate sector had to improve their relationship was strong enough for this country was then to remain competitive in the world market.

For Imperial, a strong relationship with universities is nothing new. One indication of the company’s belief in education is its policy of paying the tuition of all children of employees and annuitants whose average on required university attendance is 70 percent or more. That cost the company $750,000 in 1983. Another $60,000 of the cost is the company’s contribution to the university of the province of Ontario.

In 1983, Arden Haynes, the company’s chief executive officer, was a member of the advisory council of the faculty of administrative studies at Toronto’s York University and he is an associate of the faculty of administrative studies at the University of Manitoba. Robert Winterton, Imperial’s chief operating officer, is a member of the advisory council of the school of business at York University’s. And John Aitkin, the company’s president, is a member of the board of governors of

The lecture series only one part of an extensive relationship Imperial has with universities

Imperial’s association with universities began before the Second World War. Today, both the company and its predecessor, the British Empire Tobacco Company, are seeking an even closer and more cooperative relationship, especially in the area of research. Says John Ciruna, a senior technology planning associate at Esso Petroleum, "we would like to see more of our companies. Imperial’s chief executive officer, Arden Haynes, for example, is

Imperial who will serve as contacts for universities—each university will be assigned a specific company representative who will find a "person is not to pursue issues," says Bob Burnside, vice-president of corporate development at Esso Petroleum. "we would like to see more of our companies. Imperial’s chief executive officer, Arden Haynes, for example, is

reduced," says Mannell. "At the moment we use a very expensive process to do this. We believe that microbes can be found to break down certain fractions of the oil that make it viscous. We’re hoping that Dr. Wyndham’s research will help us find a way to do that. We have also made some progress." Esso Petroleum and Esso Resources will contribute a portion of the cost of the

research

project along with the expertise of researchers in Sarnia and Calgary. The "bio-cracking" project is a good example of frontier research, an area where universities and companies like Imperial can help one another. University professors and their students want to investigate exciting new areas, which may not have immediate and practical application. The company needs to keep abreast of new technology, but it doesn’t want to hire staff and buy new equipment to investigate what may turn out to be a dead end. Thus, for a limited period of time, they can use the institute to date and help the universities at the same time.

Wynham’s bio-cracking project is also an example of Imperial’s new approach to the funding of university research. Instead of sponsoring a few large, expensive research projects, the company now provides its funding among numerous small, cost-effective projects. "We're creating a lot of opportunities for young researchers," says Bob Burnside. "Some may develop into larger projects, and if they do, we'll be because we have a good idea that they'll be successful." But the company doesn’t expect every project to add up to work. Adds Burnside: "A vital part of research is learning what won't work.

In the past, Imperial often donated large sums to general building funds. But the emphasis today, for both companies and universities, is on less tangible factors, such as creativity, expertise and quality education for students. It’s a spirit that’s behind the newly formed, Sarnia-based Institute of Chemical Technology, founded by Imperial, C-P-L Inc., Polystar Limited, Dow Chemical Canada Inc. and the University of Western Ontario with the idea of cooperating research. "We recognized that we will be in a better position to compete internationally," says Clem Bowman, vice-president of the research division of Esso Petroleum.

"If we pooled our resources and ideas," says the institute’s members decided on four vital areas of research they want to pursue, including industrial waste disposal. They hope that one day the institute will have its own facilities, but for now the work will take place in university laboratories and other technical centres across the country. The entire operation will be overseen by the institute’s director, Bill Stadekanin, former president of the Ontario Research Foundation, in consultation with the institute’s management committee, made up of its senior research executives. Initially the cost of the institute will be total of $160,000 to the institute, each member paying an equal amount. "The investment is well worth it," says Clark

The Review, Spring 1986
Leith, a vice-president (academic) at Western, "One of the major advantages of our association with the institute is that we get involved in solving genuine problems. In the long run, the institute will enhance our research potential and help us cement our relationship with the various companies involved as well as other universities that may join." Leith makes it clear that money is not the only, or even the main, benefit universities get from a closer relationship with companies like Imperial. "The universities are not looking so much for funds," says John Crum, "as for expertise and interaction." This call for expertise and interaction is being answered to a great extent through what might be described as personnel exchanges: people from industry are working at universities and vice versa. In 1983, for example, Esso Resources Canada Limited, along with a number of other companies, contributed to the establishment of a chair of petroleum engineering at the University of Calgary. That position is now held by Dr. Roger Butler, a former manager of heavy oil in the research division at Esso Resources and the person responsible for developing the concept of using horizontal wells for the production of bitumen at Cold Lake. "I think this sort of program is extremely valuable for both the universities and industry," says Butler, "The students benefit from having someone teaching them who has worked in industry and whose viewpoint is different from that of the academics. Industry benefits from strengthening universities — hence the education of future employees — and Imperial specifically benefits from the research I'm doing here." Both Esso Resources and Esso Petroleum have had "professors in residence" — university professors who take a year's sabbatical to work in a corporate lab, gaining a better understanding of business approaches and problems. Understanding each other is obviously of great importance if the deepening relationship between universities and industry is to flourish. "Corporate and academic employees must negotiate carefully to make sure they understand each other," says George Connell, president of the University of Toronto and a participant in the Corporate-Higher Education Forum. A problem could arise from the fact that professors' careers are dependent on their publishing the results of their investigations, while corporations aren't keen on having their company secrets broadcast so that the competition can take advantage of them. Both sides agree, however, that there are ways of handling this difficulty. For example, the researcher can schedule the publication of his or her results after the company has had time to patent the discovery.

"The first thing is to help the teacher and the student"; Jack Clemens, manager of academic affairs

"Moreover," according to George Connell, "corporations are realizing that there are benefits to the open style of the universities, where information flows freely and whoever is able to apply it does so. The potential for discord has been overstated, we're addressing our differences before they create problems." Another way Imperial enhances students' education is by offering them temporary employment, which gives them valuable experience in the workplace. In 1985, the company hired 1051 students at its various projects and facilities across the country, from Dartmouth, N.S., to Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories. "Students tell us the experience is invaluable," says Clemens. A program at the University of Waterloo is another example of how Imperial actively helps train students. Along with several other companies, Imperial assigns problems to fourth-year chemical engineering students that its own engineers have already solved. It then assigns employees to help students with their projects. Last spring, Norbert Lucis and Peter Penstone, design engineers with Esso Petroleum, were participants in the program. They asked students to design a hydrotreater — a processing unit used in refineries to improve product quality by removing contaminants from various oil products. Lucis and Penstone visited the students regularly to review their progress and help them with problems. In 1981 Lucis was involved in a similar Imperial project as a student at the University of Toronto. "The company usually assigns fairly recent graduates to the program," he says, "which is good because students can relate to us easily and we have a good idea of how they'll approach the project."

Jack Clemens emphasizes that universities must not become too dependent on corporate financing and that corporations must be careful not to take professors away from their first and most important responsibility — educating students. "The first thing is to help the teacher and the student," says Clemens, "but our interest in universities is not entirely selfish. We gain a great deal in terms of well-educated employees and technological research and, of course, there's the corporate benefit: teachers will come away realising that people of intelligence and quality are in its ranks. Transforming Imperial's strong relationship with universities calls for a great deal of creativity and hard work. But in the end everyone benefits. New technology and ideas, for instance, receive funding, students' education is enriched and, overall, the nation is richer. "So much can be gained from working together," says Bob Bursic, "and it all begins with talking to one another."

In June 1981, 35 years after my ordination to the ministry in the United Church of Canada, I reached the church's statutory age of ministerial decrepitude, so took my modest pension and moved from caesar in Ottawa to adlens in Victoria. Shortly before I retired I was asked by a younger minister what I considered to be the most important practical lessons I had learned during my years of active ministry. I told him that the little thing that came to mind was that a minister becomes very stiff, personally, pastorially and theologically if he does not learn to be tolerant of ambiguity. My answer seemed to puzzle him, so I explained that what I had in mind when I spoke of tolerating ambiguity was simply the acceptance of, and some appreciation for, the uncertainties and the confusions, the capricesness and the out-of-place-ness of so many of the situations in which we find ourselves as we struggle through life. This tolerance, I pointed out, can keep one from trying to force important issues in black and white, from indulging in what George Bernard Shaw called "soo-of-smithwixth of reasoning." Looking back on my long years in the ministry, and not trying to ignore the many ambiguities over which I stumbled and sometimes tripped, I cannot realistically imagine me having had another career. The road I walked was not smooth, and while on it, I experienced frustration and disappointment, at times, anguish and pain. But I have no regrets that I took that road.

BY J. A. DAVIDSON

A MINISTER'S MEMORY
In June 1949 I was ordained and almost immediately began my ministry, serving the three small churches of the Woono-Dinsmore pastorale charge, which took in a rather large piece of the country in the big elbow of the South Saskatchewan River in the rich wheat lands southwest of Saskatoon.

"The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves"

As many other newly ordained ministers, I began my life's work carrying a rather heavy burden of the wrong kind of self-confidence. I learned early that academically certified competence is not readily transferable to the arena of the practical. At the theological college I had rather handsomely led my class in "worship and the sacraments," with my first communion service in the Winton church, which I had planned with great care. I would have had the wine distributed to the worshippers before the bread had a tacitul elder not whispered to me that I was about to get things back-to-front.

At no time during my ministry was I denied opportunities to be, from time to time, utterly wrong about this and that. Fellow clergy and dedicated parishioners were often willing to help me correct my professional inadequacies. In the fifteenth year of my ministry, a fellow pastor offered me a little gratuitous advice about my preaching method; he had recently taken a course on the subject at a seminary in the United States. He urged me to abandon my method of preaching from rather full notes and instead just let myself go, using only a skimpy outline and trusting in the Holy Spirit to fill me up and keep me going. I accepted his advice and tried his way a few times. An earnest parishioner, whom I had told about my little experiment, suggested to me after my third such sermon that I had damaged the Holy Spirit's reputation. I went on to tell him that I had learned from the experience and that I would try again the next Sunday. He replied, "I don't think that's it. I think you've got the Holy Spirit's reputation wrong. That's why you're not doing it right."

My joining the army and the service that followed made me acutely sensitive to the dimensions of ambiguity in so many of the decisions we must make in life. As I have struggled to live the life of faith, I have often experienced the tension between integrity and compromise. Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the more influential theologians of our time, put the problem this way: "We cannot be good unless we're responsible, and the minute we're responsible, we're involved in compromise." Accepting responsibility often demands that we modify our theories and even adjust our ideals, and this entails the making of compromi
I was hit on the shoulder by a small piece of spent shrapnel

During the campaign in northwest Europe I found comfort and delight in The Daily Telegraph and Terry and always carried it with me. Inside the front cover I kept notes about my grandson’s progress in the German port of Emden on the North Sea. There is a small rear in the cover caused by shrapnel during the Scheldt Estuary operation in October 1944; my jeep was hit, but no one was in it at the time.

A number of years after the war, the colonel who commanded the battalion I served with reminded me of an incident during the battle for the French port city of Boulogne in September 1944. Early in the attack we were forced to halt for a time because of enemy artillery fire. I was in the open command carrier, manning the rear-link wireless set. The reception was poor, so I had the headset firmly clamped over my ears, and I was therefore not aware of what was happening around me. The others got out of the open carrier and sought safety in a stone building nearby; they assumed that I too had left the carrier. When the shellfire abated they returned and were surprised to find me still at the wireless set, a gauze bandage over my ear, and I was quite safe. All we had to do was to move a few yards to the left, and I probably would not have been hit.

I remember one week having five funerals and three weddings

One Sunday morning, in the Wiseton church of that first change, as I was going to speak, an elderly woman sitting alone in a pew near the front of the church switched off her hearing aid to avoid the conspicuous flourish. She was angry because a few days earlier I had refused to sign a document endorsing the Stockholm Peace Appeal, a Soviet-inspired initiative introduced in the early years of the Cold War. She wrote indigently, and I now understood why, I had refused to preach the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, a broadly, I was told, a favor of peace. I tried to explain to her that I certainly was in favor of peace but had serious misgivings about that document. (She judged it to be an unworthy pastor and expressed that in her letter of complaint.) I had great difficulty Gutting through the sermon that morning. I now find it rather refreshing to have been chastised for being un-Orth.

In the theological books I read led me to appreciate the Christian faith that is both evangelical and liberal — evangelical in that it is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and liberal in the sense that it does not demand a putting-on of intellectual blinkers and can take with the Bible with the utmost of seriousness without having to treat it in a literal way. This approach, deeply theological, and broadly biblical has been the foundation of my preaching and religious writing.

Having come over from overseas in December 1945 I married my Marion and then studied for three years at St. Andrews’ College in Saskatchewan, the United Church’s theological college on the campus of the University. I was asked what I could now judge to be an excellent training to the ministry and the kind of stimulation that has kept me ever since on a heavy, mostly self-directed program of continuing education. I went to my first charge immediately following my ordination in June 1949; I was 30 years old, married and the father of two children.

My Marion and I say goodbye to Dominion-Chalmers at a luncheon given for us in May 1984

One Sunday morning, in the Wiseton church of that first change, as I was going to speak, an elderly woman sitting alone in a pew near the front of the church switched off her hearing aid to avoid the conspicuous flourish. She was angry because a few days earlier I had refused to sign a document endorsing the Stockholm Peace Appeal, a Soviet-inspired initiative introduced in the early years of the Cold War. She wrote indigently, and I now understood why, I had refused to preach the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, a broadly, I was told, a favor of peace. I tried to explain to her that I certainly was in favor of peace but had serious misgivings about that document. (She judged it to be an unworthy pastor and expressed that in her letter of complaint.) I had great difficulty Gutting through the sermon that morning. I now find it rather refreshing to have been chastised for being un-Orth. Some years later I was labeled "pink" and a "fellow traveler" by a parishioner who was a vocal anti-communist. I realized that this sort of thing was going to be part of my life, and I learned to relax and enjoy it.

In my ministry in Ottawa I was one of five clergyman officiating at the state funeral for the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson in Christ Church (Anglican) Cathedral on December 31, 1972.

On Monday, May 28, 1984, I left Ottawa. On the last Sunday of my regular ministry, the choir sang an anthem, the music for which had been composed by one of Canada’s better known composers of church music, William Francis. As I was then retired after nearly many years of service as organist and choir master of Dominion-Chalmers. The anthem was dedicated to my wife and me.

At both the Kingston and Ottawa churches I had been asked to place the emphasis of my work on preaching. Two ministers performed most of the general pastoral work, though I still did a good deal of it — hospital and other visitation, funerals and weddings and some counseling. But I often felt I should be doing more.

Some years ago I was pulled up short when, reading John Osborne’s play, Looker, I came to this warning given by the hero to his folk mon: "...there’s no security, there’s no security at all in holy busyness. One of my dictionaries defines "busyness" as "an activity, often asigated to a class in school, that has little purpose beyond keeping one occupied for a time." Ah yes, holy busyness.

I have found, though, that a little busyness can be quite pleasant. At least it enabled me to avoid, with a fairly clear conscience, demands and duties I really didn’t wish to deal with — such as serving on committees that called themselves either "ad hoc" or "task forces." I also learned to be wary of any committee or program that has to use the word "planning" in its title; three-quarters of them tend to be exercises in form.

Related to busyness, holy and unholy, is the busyness that most of us ministers are never too busy to talk about. It is one of the paradoxes of ministry — and probably of most of us other occupations — that one can be excessively busy and yet accomplish very little. It takes courage to assess the quality of one’s busyness. A minister’s life can become so cluttered with little duties and trivial activities that he or she is in danger of losing grasp of the great centralities of Christian faith. As much as ever, I think, in all through my ministry, I worry about some of the ministers I know who have become "busybodies" and are sickening. A prescription for this affliction was suggested many years ago, by the Rev. John Sinclair, "Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried and to avoid voluntary and the prescription I needed in a quotation from the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead: "A man has to ignore much to get on with something." For more than a quarter of a century I have had that on a card stuck to the walls beside my various desks. I do wish I had paid more attention.

I have come to the conviction that human beings are a species in the unfilled life. Much humor today tends to be cruel, but that is not the kind I have in mind. I am thinking of the humor that is described in the opening sentence of Stephen Leacock’s little book, "Christian Humor." "Humor may be defined as the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life and the expression of the ridiculous in life. From my own experience, both personal and pastoral, I have come to the firm belief that faith can be nourished by humor. Religious people — particularly those of deep commitment and intense religious concern — need humor as a prophylactic against unnecessary solemnity and the wrong kinds of seriousness. Humor can be an agency of faith when it helps us see how ridiculous we are when we take ourselves too seriously.

Reinhold Niebuhr wrote a wise and instructive essay on the relations between faith and humor. Here is his key statement: "Insular as the sense of humor is a recognition of incongruity, it has in religion any philosophically seeks to devise incongruity in reason. But the sense of humor remains healthy only when it deals with immediate issues and faces the obvious and surface irrationalities, it must not dwell on the faith and sink into despair when the ultimate issues are raised.

To be added: "That is why there is laughter in the vestibule of the temple, the echo laughter in the temple itself, the laughter that fills the prayer, and no laughter, in the holy of holies."
In Closing

The other evening I saw a couple who seemed to see something worth remembering, although I wasn’t sure what it was until later that night. I was about at the time, sitting at a table I like in one of my favorite places, a room off the lobby of a hotel beside the water in a city I sometimes visit. It is a comfortable place, especially in the first hour of evening, just as the lights go on aboard the boats tied at the wharves beyond the window.

I was the only one in the room just then; I was putting in an hour before I went to dinner. I had ordered an aperitif and opened a section of my newspaper when I looked up to see him. He had narrow shoulders, thinning hair and a jacket that was brown and did not seem to fit him well or comfortably. He walked in ahead of her. He was by himself, encircled and preoccupied by his life. She followed, almost as if she always did — a slender woman, good looking, with hair that was dark and shiny and features that were finely etched.

She was wearing a light blue suit that was not new, and in her hand she carried a shopping bag as if she had been on her way home and had decided, at the last minute, to come here with him.

They sat down. In fact, they sat next to me, which was strange since the entire room was empty, and sitting where they did, they made me almost a third party at their table, a listener given no choice but to follow the flow of their conversation. He seemed a little more than 50, though his eyes were old, his smile tired. She was younger, and in her manner there was a composure that was not cosmetic but truly her own. When the waiter came, it was as if he too noticed, for he stood at her side and waited for her to speak. She folded her hands and looked across the table. "My husband will have scotch and water," she said. "Perrier for me. And a twist." They were silent. He was looking out at the lights on the water, and when he began to speak his voice had a tone that was just thin side of defeat. He began complaining of all he had to endure, and she listened and sometimes nodded. "I thought it would work," he said. "I really did. Now this..."

I felt I should leave. I began, as quietly as possible, folding my newspaper so that I might slip away unnoticed, when suddenly I realized that would be impossible in a room in which — other than the couple — I was the only person. If I got up and moved, it would be as obvious as if I leaned over and said: "I am leaving. I overhear your comments, and I have no time for you or your sadness." It seemed to me that to move would be bad manners, almost like stomping out at a wake.

I opened my paper and began to read. When their waiter returned and began to serve their drinks, the man reached up, took the glass in his right hand, placed his other hand beneath it and guided it to the table as though it might shatter or vanish unless he clutched it. Turning the drink slowly on the table and barely looking up, he began complaining of what had happened to him, as if he were reading aloud from the menu: it was Toronto; it was the network; it was the bureaucracy; it was the fact that for so long his luck had been so bad. "I was due for a break," he said.

For a while she sat simply listening to him, calmly and with great patience, almost as if she had heard parts of his litany before but felt that this time he needed to recite it in full and never-ending detail. As he did, I kept turning the pages of my paper, hoping to find something so interesting that it would do what I could not — give me escape from his unhappiness, which was private and personal and, most of all, beyond my reach.

She was beginning to speak to him — saying that she understood, that she would feel the same in his situation — when I saw an article in the paper dealing with what the reporter called superwomen; one such woman was described in some detail. She was president of her own company, an author, a columnist, a brown belt in karate, a musician's wife and the mother of a couple of youngsters she was raising to be "state-of-the-art" children by chauffeuring them pretty well everywhere — to soccer, Sunday school, karate, Suzuki-style music classes, gymnastics, Scouts and lessons in French, skiing, swimming and acting. She also made time for dieting, exercising and shopping for what the article called "success suits."

I was wondering if the woman at the table was wearing a success suit. She was still speaking, telling him that he had done well in not walking out earlier, in enduring for so long a kind of discouragement that would have defeated so many others so much earlier had they had to face it. He laughed lightly for the first time since they entered the room, as if she had touched him, not with any special insight, but with her simplicity.

She went on, saying something about how he had never allowed his work to become his life, that therefore, in what mattered most, he was a reasonable success — in fact, a considerable success. "You were there," she said, "when each of the children was born. You were there. You were not too busy. You were there." She did not seem, in her earnest way of speaking, to be a person of special culture or means or style — her suit being the wrong color for success and the shopping bag at her side, with its emblem of the grocery store, not an accessory likely to find instant approval, among those who decide the style of superwomen or supermen and superpeople in general. But in her manner, listening so patiently, then speaking so deliberately, she seemed to have a wisdom of her own, one that was beyond the ordinary symbols of it.

The room was filling. I called the waiter, paid my bill and left for dinner. I took my paper with me, thinking I might read the rest of the article on superwomen. I did, and it seemed to me that it might somehow have mentioned that sometimes the superwoman catches on unaware, in ordinary places and at ordinary moments, and that someday we may decide that, whoever she is, her name may lead all the rest.