PRIDE IN THE NORTH

Fort McMurray came through the boon years and then faced the hard times. It is a survivor. Now it has come of age.

Fort McMurray came through the boom years and then faced the hard times. It is a survivor. Now it has come of age. Looking toward tomorrow and it likes what it sees—a city of spirit that people are proud to call home. 25 years, where they want to be. And where they want to remain.

BY KENNETH BAGNELL

Photographs by ALICE REEDIN

Fort McMurray has endured a persistent image as a rough-hewn bush town. As Patricia Callahan, who runs Northland Investments Ltd., a burgeoning firm, recalls, "When we moved here I had a difficult time convincing people that there were virtual-
The quality of life in Fort McMurray may be the result of one of the lessons of Canada's history in the North—communities that are isolated should be developed so they are not barren outposts but towns and cities where life is reworking in the broad sense and where people find social and cultural fulfillment. In Fort McMurray's case, Syncrude has spent large amounts of money to help the city's development. Last year alone its contributions to scores of causes amounted to more than $300,000 spread among recipients as diverse as a cultural centre at Keyano College, the local music festival and Unity House, a crisis centre for battered women. Its support of Unity House has added up to $180,000 over the past three years. But Syncrude does more than simply hand out money: its contributions are carefully distributed to make sure that organizations that receive them turn contribute to the community. For example, a couple of nights each winter several hundred people crowd into Thickwood Heights Arena to watch the local junior hockey team, the Oil Barons, do battle with other teams in the league. Since 1984, Syncrude has been helping out with annual contributions that vary between about $10,000 and $20,000. But there is a condition: the team members must take time to instruct youngsters in Fort McMurray's minor hockey.

Fort McMurray's roots date back to 1778 when a fur trader named Peter Pond set up a trading post, MacLeod House. Almost a full century later, in May 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company founded a small settlement, calling it Fort McMurray after William McMurray, a representative of the company. For most of its history; the community's population has been small and transient—trappers, traders, loggers. In the 1920s, geologists began to conduct research into the region's oil sands. But it was not until the sixties that the first large effort to produce oil began, under a consortium called Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited, later known as SunOil, which now operates 33 kilometres beyond Fort McMurray on a 2,456-hectare site. It employs about 1,500 people. Then, in 1973 came the announcement that would transform Fort McMurray: a consortium called Syncrude would build a large oil-sands plant, which would open in the late seventies. The Syncrude plant, located 42 kilometres from Fort McMurray, at Mildred Lake, is the world's largest oil-sands operation—an enormous open mine, 30 square kilo- metres in Alberta to bitumen-laden oil sand is scooped from the land, then passed through a giant tangle of pipes, stacks, furnaces and tanks that remove the oil and upgrade it. A visiting journalist once described it as "the ultimate in thinking big." The hydraulic slurry, which are used to remove the overlying layer of muskeg and earth, exposing the oil sand, can fill a 150-home truck in less than two minutes. But it is the amount of oil produced at Syncrude that is staggering: more than 10,000 tons per day. Since its inception it has produced a total of more than 50 million cubic metres of crude oil. In 1987 it produced a record eight million cubic metres. More than 4,500 people work at Syncrude (250 are based in Edmonton, the remainder in Fort McMurray).

Fort McMurray's growth of the past decade has been swift and rapid, having some negative aspects. Judie Dickens, a social Australian-born member of the city council who has lived in the city for more than 16 years, is sensitive to its new spirit but says the social costs of the past were too high. "Most cultural an- thropologists would tell you that our community can handle the growth rate that we faced in the late seventies and early eighties without being overwhelmed but we don't think we became unglued exactly, but we suffered—in alcoholism, drug problems, mental illness, snatch thefts and all the things that go with social stress. I'm glad that growth period is past." Fort McMurray has now received its just desserts in style and its business people more cautiously. But it has a lot of confidence. Some of its best supporters are those who suffered severe setbacks in 1986. Bill de Silva, a soft-spoken man in his early forties, came to the city from Toronto in 1976, joined the division of Syncrude that was putting up thousands of houses. He has since become more reserved as a builder. One day not long ago, de Silva recounted the roller-coaster ride of his life as a builder in Fort McMurray in the eighties. "I had a hand in constructing all the buildings you can see from the doorway here—the apartments, the houses, the churches, the malls. I had holdings worth about $20 million. Well, 1986 put an end to as a development company. But we stayed on in Fort Mc- Murray—as a maintenance company. We're certainly smaller. We once had 35 trucks. Now we have four."

As for the tradepeople who once worked for him, de Silva says they are doing fine: "You can't find a painter if you need one; they are all so busy. Fifty per cent of the subcontractors—the painters, carpenters, bricklayers—left town. So those who remained have more than enough work." About a dozen businesses, mostly retail stores, closed during the 1986 downturn, but some business leaders insist that factors other than economic hard times led to their demise. Carlo Weckert, a former manager with IBM in Toronto who now runs Fort McMurray's Canadian Tire store, says, "To be frank, it was 1972. For too long people were too busy they didn't notice that good businesses were able to get by simply because the wave of business was so great that they didn't have to think of efficiencies. Well, when 1986 hit, they couldn't maintain that. Since we were friends and I felt sorry for them. But I think, in time, their businesses would have failed anyway." Paulette Coelho, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, tends to agree: "While it was difficult time, it had a beneficial side. We all had to become more realistic, management had to be tighter."

Naturally, most people take a keen in- terest in what's ahead. Fort McMurray's mayor, Chuck Knight, a lanky man with casual western friendliness, has been living and working around Fort McMurray for more than 30 years. "It's no sur- prise that he is full of confidence. In fact, he believes that by the year 2000 Fort McMurray will be the third largest city in Alberta, after Edmonton and Calgary. He leans back in his office in the gleaming new city hall and speaks of the way people responded to the 1986 downturn in the oil economy. "If they had believed what had been written about the city the outside they would have heaved head down the road for good. They didn't. You'd be astonished at how many left only temporarily. Our census takers were surprised to find in the numbers of homes, that while vacant, were still completely furnished. Their owners had gone elsewhere to work a while and later returned to Fort McMurray. I be- lieve our future is really most promising. Governments realize that if Canada is to be self-sufficient in oil, the oil has to come out of the oil sands."

In a large, quiet office near the city hall, Ralph Shephard offers what may be the most measured and credible view of Fort McMurray's economic future. Shephard, a self-confident man who joined Imperial back in 1958 and made his way into management, serv- ing as an executive with Exxon Corpora- tion in Europe, became Syncrude's chief executive officer in April 1985. Almost exactly one year later, after the dramatic fall in crude-oil prices in the spring of 1986, he could be seen calmly making the rounds of a dozen meetings with Syncrude employees. He told them the facts as he saw them, outlining frankly what Syncrude had to do to adjust—the situation was going to get even more ways to be more efficient, so they could cut the cost of producing a barrel of crude oil from $47 to $35. Today, as he

Ralph Shephard (left), Syncrude's chief executive, and the Rev. Bob Harper share special pride in Fort McMurray.
recalls what happened, Shepherd pauses and speaks in a quiet voice: "I've never seen in my entire career such a response as I saw at those meetings," he says. "There was absolutely no doubt anywhere among employees that we all had to do what was suggested. As a result, the employees didn't bring production costs in at $6 a barrel but $5, which was a full $3 a barrel less than the production costs of the year before. I call that tremendous." When he is asked about the future, Shepherd, who has the usual caution of senior executives, is remarkably positive: "We have a very viable business, and we'll be here for a very long time. The people in Fort McMurray should feel extremely good about themselves and confident about their future.”

The good things of Fort McMurray, from its economic opportunities for families to its well organized recreational and cultural life, are bound up in the well-being of the oil industry. As the Rev. Bob Harper, a United Church minister who moved to Fort McMurray in 1962 after studying religion and psychiatry at the Memorial Foundation in Kanan, says, "The role of Syncrude and Sun Oil here has been positive in human terms. Obviously they've put a great deal of money into the community in a lot of good ways. And while it's not all sweetness and light, they behaved very well when the fall in crude-oil prices came. They did all they could to soften the blow. As for the downtown, it wasn't all tragedy. Doing that time, I saw some very inspiring examples of human compassion — people who instead of pulling back and thinking only of themselves decided to support others who needed them." One of the members of the large, diverse congregation at Harper's Church — a new white building through whose windows the sun falls on red-cushioned pews — is a former employee of Imperial named Ian Thom. He joined the company in 1963, spent most of the next 20 years at the huge refinery near Vancouver and became involved in the life of his union, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (now the Energy and Chemical Workers Union). He liked Imperial, but his interests deepened in union affairs, and in 1985 he became a full-time unionist, moving to Fort McMurray as national representative of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union, which has about 800 members at Sun Oil. "Let me put our approach this way," says Thom in his office at the union headquarters, "We don't work with the union against the employer but with the union and with the employer for the good of all." Thom too exudes confidence as he outlines his view of Fort McMurray's future: "I think we are going to see the right sort of growth in the industry and the right sort of growth in the community — not the sudden growth of a megalopolis but the kind of steady growth that Imperial is bringing on so well at Cold Lake. As for the price of crude oil, I'd certainly rather see a stable price which is adequate for a healthy industry than the wild swings of a couple of years ago." Often, a man named Carl Sherman, in his middle fifties, packs his tools and shifts over to the United Church where he spends a couple of hours keeping things in repair for the congregation and its minister. Later, on the way home, he may stop by at a neighbor's to help put up a screen porch, like the one he built at his own home. Sherman is a popular man around Fort McMurray. He is also a former vice-president of Syncrude who went there after a career as an oil executive in Toronto and later in Nova Scotia. Last year, on the eve of Sherman's retirement, several hundred people packed a large hall to pay tribute to him for his work over the years, especially in the late seventies, when he helped so many newcomers settle into housing erected by Syncrude.

Sherman thanked him. His sincerity was evident not just in the way he spoke but in what he said. He was not leaving Fort McMurray. He and his wife, Kay, would spend retirement there. The city was home to them and to their three children, an engineer and two teachers — each had found fulfillment and promise in the community the family had come to in the seventies. Some words Sherman used later may tell us a lot about this most distinctive of Canadian cities: "Fort McMurray people have gone through a lot and learned a lot — not just about a living but about learning to live. Fort McMurray is where we want to remain."
has just been published; it is a colorful face about a two-headed monster whose minds have not been able to stand sharing the same body since a Vancouver surgeon offered to remove one. As the two heads develop strong separate identities, it becomes more and more difficult for them to be part of the same body, and in the end they come to the conclusion that, as separatist is impossible for them, they may as well undo the radical surgery. The monster awakens after the operation a bilingual anglophone with no recollection of ever being French-speaking.

Godbout's novel, an obvious analogy to the political situation in Quebec, is a great deal more daring than the literature of Quebec's early days. Yet it shares a common thread: like its forebears, *Les Titres à Papineau* is a reflection of the society that spawned it.

Explaining French-Canadian literature means, in large measure, recapitulating the adventures of the human community for whom that literature has been a cry or a dream of escape," wrote a former Laval University sociologist, Jean-Claude Parizeau. "What we must ask of history in particular is to indicate the conditions that have encouraged certain types of intellectual climate, certain sorts of literary expression, certain themes or obsessions."

In Quebec, at least until the 1930s, those conditions meant a rural French society isolated in a predominantly English land. And by large Quebec novels of that period reflected those conditions and often offered readers models for the survival of French life in Canada.

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's Jean-Ricard, Le déchevrier (1882), for example, tells the story of a young Quebec man who becomes a farmer and finds a new parish in a vast area of virgin land deep in the Quebec forest. Gérin-Lajoie's rather simplistic ideal of a self-sufficient community cut off from the world would endure at least until after the First World War, when survival began to take on more nationalist accents.

Even during the years of the Second World War, when Quebec society was becoming industrialized and farmers were leaving the most unproductive land to work in the factories, the rural novel with its traditional theme would continue through such works as *Le survenant* (1945) by Germaine Guenette. Still, an "urban" literature was coming into existence. Writers such as Gabrielle Roy with Bonheur d'occasion and Alexandre Chouinard and Roger Celmont with Au pied de la pente douce analyzed the lives of French-Canadian families in working-class sections of Montreal and Quebec City. The sentimental stereotypes of the past have given way to more acute observations," wrote Jean-Claude Parizeau. The novel is now sensitive to human misery. Quebec literature has reached a sociological stage.

Then came the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, Quebec's great leap forward, the coming of age in social and economic terms. It was also a cultural revolution, one that brought the province out of the "great darkness" that had gone before. The first books by such writers as Gérard Bessette, Robert Lajopit, Réjean Ducharme, Marie-Claire Blais, Jacques Ferron and Jacques Godbout marked an explosion of freedom, along with a rejection of traditional values and of a society whose members could appear to nothing more than being-bewilders of Quebec, a linguistic laboratory.

wood and drovers of water. "Quebec writers felt free of a certain intimidation — a shame where language was concerned — which had characterized most novels from before the Quiet Revolution," says Gilles Marcotte, professor of Quebec literature at the University of Montreal and a former book reviewer for the Montreal newspapers *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. "Beginning with this period they showed signs of growing confidence in the power of language to transform society."

Not only did French-Canadian writers of the 1960s seem to understand the power of language, but they mastered the language itself and began to use it as an instrument. Characters no longer spoke like the French of France, and their authors no longer aspired to write like Europeans. "They stopped writing for a French audience they rarely reached," says Roch Carrier, whose stories and novels have been translated into many languages. "Quebec writers were now addressing Quebec readers."

In the 1980s, forties and fifties, says Gilles Marcotte, Quebec writers had difficulty dealing with the French language. "The style of our writers was cautious," he says. "They used linguistic cliches. Since the Quiet Revolution, however, French has no longer been a foreign language for us. It belongs to us, and we do with it what we want. Quebec has become a sort of linguistic laboratory."

It was during the Quiet Revolution that Jean-Paul's appearance in Quebec literature, especially in dialogue, "borders used to be in a positive way," adds Marcotte. "They didn't simply reproduce the language of the street. There was a kind of explosion of language that was now part of the Quebec writer's aesthetic arsenal. The poet Gérard Godin, for example, uses it in a particularly skillful way, while the novelist Réjean Ducharme actually plays with the language. They are creators of language. They make and unmake it."

Oddly enough, it was as Quebec writers were managing to free themselves from their linguistic inferiority complex that the French-Canadian novel began to gain recognition in France. "Some of our authors had already won prestigious French literary prizes," says Marcotte. "But now one might see an entire page dedicated to Quebec novels in France's newspaper *Le Monde*. The French were starting to become interested in what was being done here."

The states were also, at least for French-Canadian literature, a decade of introspection, of fictional characters with a strong voice (the "character" character), says Marcotte. "was young, a good talker and someone not interested in becoming an adult. He rebels against order as personified by the adult — against a closed society."

It should not be surprising then that this character also sought liberty. Nor that the notion of the political independence of Quebec should be so widespread in books written during the Quiet Revolution. In *La Quete*, yes, sir! published in 1939, Roch Carrier described the ruggedness of French Canadians to fight for "Les Anglais" during the Second World War. One character actually cuts off his hand to avoid conscription. The novel, however, refuses the nationalist label that some critics have tried to pin on him. "I'm not looking for any name tags," states Carrier. "People have found things in my books that I didn't even suspect were there. I see myself simply as a good writer who reports the reality in which he lives."

It was also in the sixties that Quebec writers began making demands of their own: in a country where the number of readers meant that virtually no literary publishing venture could be profitable, it was also in the sixties that Quebec writers began making demands of their own: in a country where the number of readers meant that virtually no literary publishing venture could be profitable.
they wanted the means to spread their message and be heard. In response to their demand, the federal and provincial governments introduced a number of grants. "With the founding of the Canada Council in 1957 and the creation of Quebec’s first ministry of cultural affairs in 1960, governments made a political choice to increase the standing of Canadian culture," says Andre Vannasse, a novelist, professor of Quebec literature at the University of Quebec in Montreal and editor of the collection "Littérature québécoise". In 1961, 21 novels and 14 collections of poetry were published in Quebec. With the help of grants, those figures increased to 68 novels and 51 collections of poetry in 1970 and 128 novels and 74 collections of poetry in 1980. It is fair to say that in a market of fewer than 10 million, this amazing publishing boom could never have occurred without government support. "Even so," says Vannasse, "grants have never accounted for more than one percent of the province’s publishing budget." And whereas between 1950 and 2000, copies of a work were being sold each year between 1970 and 1975, average sales of French-Canadian books in Quebec in 1980 were only about 780 a book.

What is responsible for this decline in popularity of French-Canadian novels? Vannasse assigns a good part of the blame to teachers who, he says, have stopped reading and no longer make the necessary effort to update their curricula. "I’ve nothing against Anne Hébert’s novel Kromm, the very famous. It’s a great novel. But plenty of good novels have been published since. Young people nowadays do not know the new authors simply because the people who are teaching them don’t know them." Partly as a result, feels Vannasse, 50 percent of Quebec writers earn less than $1000 a year from their literary activities.

What matters most, however, is quality not quantity. Vannasse says that at the moment, because of the weak market demand and to an extent the quality of the work, only about two percent of the manuscripts submitted to publishers are published. "With time," he says, "we will see more and more high-quality manuscripts — compared with the sixties, the choice available today is relatively good.

Despite the seemingly small percentage of manuscripts that become books, however, the number of French-Canadian novels published each year is growing, and that growth is leading to a greater diversity in subject and style. The nationalist novel did not disappear altogether with the decline of the Parti Québécois in 1976. The theme, once so prevalent, has more recently been submerged by a wave of new novels from which the national question is absent. Writers deal with their own fantasies," says Alain Poite. "When they are realized, they move on to something else." The current ideological slack period has given rise to a different literary form — escape literature. "Science fiction and fantasy are doing very well in Quebec," says Vannasse. "Today’s writers deal with mystery, magic, the supernatural. In the past few years, some very good science-fiction magazines have appeared, and they’re even starting a literary prize for that sort of novel." At the same time, as in the case in other Western societies, feminist literature is making important inroads.

A new openness to the world
Quebec Marie-Claire Blais considers that "it’s a game of literature that has shown a great deal of audacity and style. It’s a very interesting trend."

Another aspect of Quebec literature is its openness to the world and to ethnic groups. The most striking example is a comic novel written in 1981 by Habib-Abou Romney, about the coming of life of Africans in Montreal. The three novels on the shortlist for the 1988 Governor General’s Literary Award were also indicative of this new openness. "Les Affinités du cercueil by Vuol Rizard (which won the French-language fiction award) is set in an asylum in India; L’Ultime de Maria Christy by Pierre Napoleon is about a Haitian woman living in Vancouver; and Le Star de la Héritage by Sylvestre Vaudel features an Ethiopian child who is adopted by a Quebec couple.

Today’s reader will also hear about groups that were frequently ridiculed and sometimes ignored in the past. Michel Tremblay’s latest novel, for example, Laisser disparaître, recounts a homosexual love story between Jean-Marc, a 40-year-old professor, and an artist, Mathieu, a gay. Typical of this new direction of Quebec literature is Le Matin by Yves Beauchemin. This saga — 583 pages long in paperback — was an unprecedented bestseller, with almost one million copies sold. It was also adapted for the cinema and a television mini-series. It’s a Balzacian novel," says Alain Poite. "Plenty of intrigue and a plot filled with all sorts of twists and turns. It’s a tremendous success, a genuine social satire."

Nor is the construction of the novel very traditional. "There are no surprises in the narrative structure," says Alain Poite. "The novel is a revival of the classic novel. It also represents the resurgence of nationalism — post-modern style. It’s now concerned with conquering," says Pierre. "Rafter & Illustrates an attempt by Quebec to take over its own affairs."

Recent Boissonnault, the central character in Le Matin, dreams of opening a restaurant in a working-class section of Montreal. Lack of capital, he joins forces with two steady English-speaking associates who take advantage of his naiveté to con him and take away his business. But the hero refuses to admit defeat. He struggles along by himself and emerges victorious. The novel is also faithful to its reflection of contemporary society, with its broken families, its inner turmoil and its generations of young business people.

"Writing is a solitary act," declares Marie-Claire Blais. But no writer, even the most individualistic, can claim to be totally immune to his or her cultural environment. "The writer is staked in the society in which he lives," says Andre Vannasse. "He takes elements of it and uses them in his own strange way in his own strange way. Sometimes, with out being aware of it, he becomes a sort of echo of his society."

If literature is, in fact, the mirror of a society, we may look forward to increasing diversity in French-Canadian literature in the future, for Quebec today is essentially a facts and thinking, rather than being involved in one. This is not surprising in a society that has lost its former homogeneity, in which, according to Vannasse, "45 percent of the children enrolled in Montreal schools are new Quebecers.

Individually or collectively, these newcomers will undoubtedly exert an influence on both the form and the content of Quebec literature of tomorrow. And maybe someday one of them will write a sequel to Jacques Gouin’s Les Thibetens et la Patience in which the monster will have several heads and indeed be a truly Canadian hybrid.

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS

"Writing is a solitary act"
The world takes lessons from a Canadian cardiac program

MENDING THE HEART

BY LAIRD O'BRIEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN REEVES

Dr. Terence Kavanagh, medical director,
Toronto Rehabilitation Centre

MAY

A little Monday morning indigestion turned decidedly nasty. By Monday evening I was in the coronary care unit of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto—a deathly quiet, serious place where they take you when you've had a heart attack.

Two days later, when I was released, the floor nurse sent me off with the cheery reminder, "Remember, lots of walking." Little did I realize how prophetic those words would be.

My doctor was the one who first mentioned the Toronto Rehabilitation Centre. "It has an excellent walking and jogging program," he said. "They've even sent patients to the Boston Marathon. We'll see if we can get you in."

The mere mention of the Boston Marathon was unnerving. However, when you hunger for information to help you put your life back together, you read and ask questions and learn as much as you can. The Toronto Rehabilitation Centre's cardiac exercise program offers both comfort and inspiration.

The program began in 1968 under the guidance of Dr. Terence Kavanagh, a young Irishman who was the centre's medical director. At that time rehabilitative exercise programs were almost unheard of, despite research showing that although 83 percent of heart-attack patients had returned to work by the end of six months, only 63 percent were still working after a year. In a recent interview in his North Toronto office, over...
looking the centre's outdoor track, Kavanagh talked about the birth of his program and the changes that have taken place in the treatment of heart-attack patients.

"When I was a student, a heart-attack patient was in hospital for three months," he said. "Gradually there was some recognition that we were treating patients too gingerly. In fact, many of the effects thought to be of the aftermath of a heart attack—rapid heart rate, agitation, depression, dizziness—turned out to be the result of immobilizing them in bed for six weeks or more."

When Kavanagh joined the centre, he brought with him a strong commitment to the world of track and field. He'd been a keen runner in high school and throughout his university years in England. Later he had become involved in the administrative side of track and field and the treatment of sports injuries, so his interest in exercise rehabilitation was a natural progression.

Kavanagh launched his program with three volunteer helpers and a handful of patients referred to him by fellow doctors who could see no harm—if no great benefit—in a program of exercise and education. Now, 20 years later, the centre's cardiac exercise program is the largest in the world. A staff of more than 50 people, including physicians, exercise physiologists, nurses, therapists and technicians, works with a caseload of 1000 patients. The program has more than 7000 graduates and has been the inspiration and model for similar programs around the world.

The objective is to improve the physical and mental well-being of those who suffer from coronary artery disease, particularly heart-attack victims (although heart-bypass patients now make up about 20 percent of the participants). Kavanagh himself is an excellent advertisement for the benefits of running. Now in his late forties, he is of medium build and extremely trim. His manner is relaxed and informal. In presentation he likes to use a blackboard, and as the chalk dust flies, his speech is sprinkled with quips and asides. His enthusiasm shines through, as well as his ability to present complicated ideas in simple terms. In describing the program he says, "We simply geared track and field activities to the middle-aged person who has had a heart attack or a bypass operation."

The first step is extensive stress testing of the program's participants to measure fitness and to determine the best starting level for each of them. The participants then follow a personal exercise prescription five days a week—four days on their own and once a week in a day or evening class at the centre under close supervision.

The target for those accepted into the program: 25 to 30 kilometres of walking or jogging every week for the rest of their lives.

AUGUST

Based on a sample of one, I can say with some conviction that the recovering heart-attack patient is completely pre-occupied with self. Particularly with the chest area and with every sudden tingling and hiccup. You sit at the window and watch the world go by and wonder what you'll be able to do— if anything. And you puzzle over why you and you alone were singled out for this gross indignity.

Then, finally, you get the word. You've passed your stress test and have been accepted into the Toronto Rehabsi- lation Centre's cardiac exercise program. You walk into the riled audito- rium for the day of orientation. And to and behold, you are not alone. There must be 100 men and perhaps half a hundred women sitting in T-shirts and shorts, trying to look relaxed. This day of "intake," as they call it, includes lec- tures, questionnaires, a trial walk, a run- down on house rules, diet information and even a lesson in pulse taking.

Kavanagh and his people have been through this many times. They know how important it is to cover all the bases and help new participants acquire both knowledge and confidence. But some of the benefits of this day take place be- tween the formal sessions—in jocky, tentative conversations among stran- gers. "Do you get that pain, too?" "Let me tell you what happened to me..." We reach out to one another, shyly at first, to share experiences, questions and fears.

My first walk is a trial prescription of 1.6 kilometres in 16 minutes. The track is about 200 metres around, set among tall trees and shrubs. There is a moni- toring station (always manned by a physi- cian), a number of exercise coordinators sported around the track and closed circuit television, so portions of the track are visible on screens in the ad- joining offices.

On that day I meet my coordinator, the person who was to be my front line source of information and inspiration in the months ahead.

I complete the 1.6 kilometres free of pain and discomfort and without trip- ping over the lace of my new shoes.

Another surge of confidence.

OCTOBER

Each Tuesday evening we check in at reception and gather in the large down- stairs lounge. Start is at 7 p.m. Kavanagh or occasionally one of his people arrives to spend 20 minutes or so telling about the mysteries of blood pressure, stress, cholesterol, skip beats, angina, diet... Questions are encouraged. Week by week we are being given a much fuller understanding of heart attacks and heart disease than most cardiologists are able to offer their patients.

After the lecture and a short warm-up in the gym, we move out to the track.

We have become quite adept with our lap counters (worrybeads, as somebody called them the other night), stop- watches and pulse taking. I suspect most of us now look forward to our weekly visits to the centre; after four days of walking on our own, the camaraderie and the staff's warm concern is a welcome change.

The business of finding a suitable at- home route has been solved in a variety of ways. Some of us have headed for the shopping plazas and malls, guided by maps prepared by the centre. Some pre- fer YMCA and fitness clubs. Personally, I feel best out in the fresh air, covering a 1.6 kilometre route through my neighbor- bhood's streets and parks. As I pro- gress and am required to walk faster I simply repeat the route. Monotonous, perhaps, but conducive to accuracy.

Another milestone has been reached. My prescription has moved up again— now 4.8 kilometres in 48 minutes. Is Boston in my future?
FEBRUARY

On the bleakest of winter days, Canadians pursue fitness with a passion. In the half light of dawn we pass one another with icicles on our noses and exchange muffled greetings.

Like dedicated walkers and joggers everywhere, we have learned how to curtail skin splinters, the flu, colds, vacations, work schedules and the weather. Our commitment reflects a rather startling change in attitudes toward fitness. When Kavanagh started his program he was a lone voice preaching fitness in the battle against heart disease. Today, exercise and fitness programs are well accepted by the medical community. In 1981, the American Medical Association went so far as to publish a strong article in favor of exercise as a key component in rehabilitation from coronary illness.

Many surgeons now insist that their recovering heart-attack and bypass patients enter an exercise program. Kavanagh credits the federal government's Participation program with having a major influence on Canada's enthusiasm for fitness. There is also, of course, the growing body of clinical evidence that shows the contribution of fitness to good health.

APRIL

The cover is off—we’re out of the donut and walking in fresh air once again. Spring, summer and the rest of our lives stretch joyously ahead. Spirits are sky high. Some of us, now jogging as well as walking, get a little carried away. “Slow down,” shouts a coordinator from across the track. “It’s supposed to be a slow jog.”

When we step out on the track we have an immediate reference point to show us where we’ve come from; a group of new patients now share Tuesday night with us. They come in all sizes, shapes and ages — as we did — but with a common bond of apprehension.

As we move past them in the spring air I’m struck by what seems to be a relentless stream of heart-attack and bypass patients seeking help. The disease that some have labeled a North American epidemic since the 1950s is still far from licked. Kavanagh believes, however, that “we are getting on top of it, slowly but surely. It’s dropping in incidence.”

When he looks to prevention and the future, it is young Canadians who worry him the most. “Young people don’t have any concept at all of heart disease,” he says. “They think you have to be old to have a heart attack.” Education programs for young Canadians are just one of his hopes. He would also like to see more recreational programs in the schools, as well as more corporations putting money into facilities for fitness and exercise. “In Singapore,” he notes, “if you build a factory or plant you must include sport facilities.” The ideas and plans tumble out one after another as he gazes out his office window.

There is a certain missionary zeal to the work of the centre. Kavanagh and his staff are now looking at a possible research project involving the male children of the centre’s patients. “We would like to test a group of them,” he explains, “to see if they have a predisposition toward coronary illness and if they are following the same bad habits — poor diets and little exercise — that helped bring on their parents’ illnesses.” That would be an exciting problem to grapple with.

And on the track below, yet another class of walkers and joggers mingle in the spring evening — recruits and veterans carrying on a new-found commitment to fitness.

A winter cover makes the centre’s track seem like a giant sugar donut

BY RUSSELL FELTON

The Sleuths of Science

They come from every major university in Canada. And from a dozen countries of the world from Poland and Australia to India and Iraq. They're Imperial's scientists, men and women at work in the laboratory, busy with plans to make life better. They work quietly — often brilliantly.

The problem appeared to be insoluble, yet the need to solve it was both critical and urgent. Many millions of dollars— tens, perhaps even hundreds of millions over the long term — were at stake.

It was the summer of 1983. Engineers at the huge oil-sand operation of Syn-
crude Canada Ltd. near Fort McMurray, Alta., were faced with a problem that was not only detrimental to the day-to-day operation of the plant but raised doubts that plants to increase production could be implemented successfully.

The problem was a technical one. The bearings in the plant's four bucket-wheel reclaimers—gigantic machines that scoop up oil-bearing sand that is then conveyed to processing plants for separation and upgrading to synthetic crude oil—were wearing and failing at a rate that was unacceptable. Repair and replacement costs were considerable—about $400,000 each time a bearing failed—but a more critical concern was the loss of plant production time. The consortium of corporations and governments that jointly owned Syncrude—among them Imperial Oil—planned to expand Syncrude's production. The mining machines were capable of mining more sand than the separating and upgrading plants were capable of processing. Adding new processing capacity could therefore increase production of synthetic crude oil—but only if the bucket-wheel reclaimers could be made to operate more reliably. The failure of the bearings was the fault of the greases used to lubricate them. At the time two different greases were being used—a winter grease and a summer grease. But the wide—and sometimes unpredictable—temperature swings in spring and fall led to problems. The thick summer grease would not flow in low temperatures; the thin winter grease would not lubricate effectively in high temperatures. Hence the high rate of bearing failure.

Faced with this problem, the Syncrude engineers approached several petroleum companies with an urgent request: could they formulate a grease that could be used to lubricate the bucket-wheel bearings all year round.

At the research department of Exxon Canada, a division of Imperial Oil, the response to the challenge was swift. "Syncrude approached us in late July 1983," says Don Murray, the senior research adviser who headed the teams of scientists, technicians and engineers that tackled the problem. "Before the end of September we had formulated and recommended a unique new grease using a synthetic lubricating oil component." This could be pumped at low temperatures and yet do a good job of lubricating bearings in high temperatures.

After extensive laboratory and field tests at Syncrude, the new grease, known as EPIC EIR 102, was put into use on a bucket-wheel reclaimer in November 1984. Its performance exceeded all expectations. In 1985, four bearing failures at Syncrude had failed at Syncrude, resulting in repair and replacement costs of $450,000 and 5900 hours of production time. In the more than three years since the introduction of the EIR grease, "the bearings have required no repairs or replacements," says Syncrude lubrication specialist Cliff Paton. The Syncrude improvement project went ahead. For Eso Petroleum's Sarnia based research department, it was yet another achievement to add to an already long list.

The beginnings of what was to become Exxon Petroleum's research department were modest, to say the least. When Dr. R.K. Stratford, a 25-year-old chemist from Stratford, Ont., arrived at Imperial's Sarnia refinery in 1924 to take up his duties as the company's first research chemist he was neither overjoyed nor impressed with what he found.

For one thing, he had been given no particular research assignment. For another, the facilities were, in his view, hardly adequate for any worthwhile research program. The only laboratories were those used by chemists to test the quality of products produced in the refinery and the equipment was, in his words, "of the most primitive type." Stratford was allocated only a corner of the refinery chief chemist's desk, and there was no technical library—he started one himself, using his own textbooks.

It was an unpromising start, but Stratford was not a man to be daunted by a challenge. He was, according to his contemporaries, a singular individual—daring and occasionally dictatorial but driven and determined and, ultimately, an inspiration to those who worked with him. By the time he relinquished his position as head of the department in 1951 to become Imperial's scientific adviser, the research department he created was acknowledged as one of the leading petroleum research laboratories in the world.

Today the department is by far the largest petroleum research facility—and one of the largest research laboratories in the world.
department researchers at every World Petroleum Congress since the first such conference was held in 1933. As Gujar says, with undiminished but evident pride, "No other petroleum laboratory in the Canada can match that record."

Senior research chemist Dr. Heather Boucher, a graduate of the University of Toronto, joined the department in 1980 after spending three years conducting research in the Gulf of inorganic syn-
thetic chemistry in Australia. The de-
partment's reputation is definitely a factor in Boucher's decision to return to Canada. "The Esso Research Centre is one of the very few sophisticated, multi-
dimensional research facilities in Can-
a da," she says. "For me, it was an opportu-

nity to work in an important field of research—that of lubricating oil proc-
cessing—and to be at the cutting edge of developments in that field.

An additional attraction for Bou-
chier—presumably for others—was that in the field of lubricating-oil processing, the department fields a so-
called "world mandate" within the worldwide research and development network of Exxon Research & Engineer-

ing, a subsidiary of Exxon Corporation. All of Exxon's research into methods of processing crude oil to produce lubricat-
ing oils is carried out in Sarnia, with the research results being made available to other Exxon affiliates around the world. In return, Imperial has similar access to research in various areas performed at Exxon laboratories in other countries.

The department's world mandate also includes the analyzing of all varieties of crude oil purchased by Exxon refineries around the world to determine the pro-
cess and treatments required to pro-
duce the maximum yields of high-
quality lubricating oils.

"Since 1980 we've analyzed more than 200 different varieties of crude oil," says senior researcher chemist cler. "With no notation, also that the financial and operational benefits of the service are substantial. Exxon-affiliated refineries have the capacity to produce nearly 15,000 cubic metres of lubricating oils a day from crude oils that vary widely in quality and price. The data we collect allow refinery personnel to buy the cheapest and most suitable crude oils available and to arrange the refining processes to achieve the maximum yields and the highest-quality products.

About 85 percent of the research de-

partments' efforts support the day-to-day refining and marketing operations of Imperial and its Exxon affiliates around the world. "That means developing or improving Exxon products to meet spe-
cific needs," says Neil Gujar. "The special grease developed for Syncrude bucket-wheel excavators is an excellent example. Exxon worked with Syncrude on the machine with an engine-cleaner and additive, and Syncrude added a fuel additive and an additive designed to prevent both catalyst coking and glos-
inot-speeding. It also means ensuring that our lubricants can continue to pro-
duce high-quality fuels and lubricants from different varieties of crude oil—preferably while reducing costs and in-
creasing efficiency.

The research indicates that 15 percent of the over-all research and development effort at Sarnia is devoted, Gujar says, to li-

polarizing research—this kind that re-

flects existing knowledge and can lead to major scientific or technological breakthroughs that benefit not only Imperial and its Exxon affiliates but the Petroleum industry at large.

"The work has just begun under Shantul," Gujar says, "our research-

ers have been encouraged to devote up to 10 percent of their time to exploring new projects. That means pursuing new ideas, notions and possibilities in any direction they feel will have value.

Interestingly, Gujar estimates that, over the years, it's the exploratory pro-

ects—most of them essential in helping to invest-

ment methods, equipment and processes used to refine crude oil and produce petro-

leum products and chemicals—that have led to the greatest financial and op-

erational benefits for Imperial and the petroleum industry, not only in Canada but around the world. "Hard-core or need-driven developments usually result in important benefits to the consumer and its customers, as at Syncrude. But those benefits, while significant, are usu-

ally relatively small. Funded exploratory research, on the other hand, while not always successful, can often result in huge long-term benefits.

While Toopsy says it is difficult to at-

tach a dollar value to inventions that of-

ten take years to perfect and won't show up to apply in the industry, he has noted that series of invention relating to additives that cause certain petroleum products to flow more readily at low tempera-

tures has saved the worldwide petro-

leum industry as much as $3 billion since the late 1950s.

But what of the future of petroleum re-

search at Sarnia? Is the industry now so "saturated," as some suggest, that future technological breakthroughs are un-

likely? Dave Gudelski has some optimistic answers to that question. A 35-year vet-

late who runs the department who has 35 pa-

rants to this credit, the Lithuanian-born Gudelski is now operations manager of the department. He insists that there are, in fact, more frontiers to extend in the petroleum sciences.

"Crude oil is a very complex hydrocar-

bon mixture," he says. "It's like alphabet soup, with many different molecular components. The refineries are usu-

ally looking at boiling crude oil down into some of its components—ethylene and propylene, for example—stripping impurities, then putting the components back together to make products. The ideal, of course, is to be able to isolate all the components, then build products to order, so to speak, by adding a little of this and a little of that. Technically, we're nowhere near that stage yet—but we're working toward it, and we will get there.

As for his personal accomplishments, Gudelski is quick to point out that every research project is a team effort. "One person might have the original idea," he says, "but it takes a lot of people from different disciplines—chem-

ists in the plant as well as scientists in the laboratory—to test the idea, prove it and make it work.

Warren Patterson, a scientist whose name is on the bonus cell, agrees. Re-

fined since 1962, Patterson spent 22 years with the department—but was hired by Stratford himself—first con-

ducted research into lubricants and greases, then into fuels and asphalt as well. "When I joined the department in the 1960s," he recalls, "each lab con-

sisted of a desk in the middle of the room for the section head and a work-

board against the wall for each chemist. We did research as a group, and ev-

eryone did a part of the work. In many instances, everyone's name was on the patent application, because it wasn't at all clear who had had the idea to begin with. Hutchinson didn't know that important, what mattered was the work itself, the progress we were making as scientists, as a team, as a department, and as a company. The challenge at hand—that was the thing." The challenge has always been "the thing" at the Sarnia laboratory. And it is working. To develop a better gasoline or or-

ignal oil, make a petroleum refinery run more efficiently or formulate a product to lubricate bucket-wheel excavators in a wall-boring mining operation.

Most Canadians probably wouldn't rec-

ogize the names of the people on Exxon's Petroleum's research honor roll. Yet, if pressed, they would probably acknowledge that the petroleum products of to-

day—the gasoline and other fuels that power our vehicles, the oils and greases that lubricate our machinery—are vastly superior to those of yesterday. Had they been even improved, perhaps not to learn that in manu-

facturing these superior products—from inferior quality crude oils, no less—the

Since the Esso grease

was introduced

increased

bucket-wheel reclaimer

have required no

repairs

The Review, Spring 1988
THE PROGRESS OF ALICE MUNRO

Alice Munro was taking a quick break for a club sandwich and a draft beer in the dining room of a hotel in the small Ontario town of Byth. She held a name tag — "Alice" — handwritten in block letters — pasted over the label of her pink swanation. "What I'm doing today," she said, "helping out at the book sale over there in the hall, is as much fun as I've had in ages."

It was the first Saturday in June 1987. Ten days earlier Alice Munro had walked across the stage at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto and accepted from Governor General Jeanne Sauvé a penins named after Sauvé's office, the Governor General's Literary Award in English fiction. Munro was fit for her collection of stories entitled The Progress of Love. Five thousand dollars went with the prize and so did plenty of justifi. Munro is getting used to that kind of fame and fortune, she has written six books of fiction and three times has won the Governor General's award. Her work has moved such specialists in English literature as Professor Mark Levine of the University of Toronto to unequivocal praise. "Munro," he says, "is among the best in the world when it comes to story writing. All you have to do is read The Progress of Love to realize that. It's close to a masterpiece."

So here was Alice Munro, world-famous writer of masterpieces, chatting over a beer and lavishing her enthusiasm on a sale of secondhand books in the basement of the Memorial Hall in Byth, population 900. The town rests among the tidy and prosperous farms of southwestern Ontario, about 17 kilometres up the road from Clinton, where Munro lives. The book sale is a yearly fund-raising event for Byth's annual drama festival, and Munro, whose voice performs merry runs up and down the vocal scale when she's pleased, wasn't concealing her delight in her role at the sale.

"Well, you know, working in a book store was what rescued me years ago," she said, keen at the manner. "I was living with my first husband and our kids in Vancouver. I'd had some stories published in magazines, but just about then, with the dreadful age of 30 coming along, I'd tried right up — couldn't write a thing. I even started to get an ulcer. Then my husband decided to quit his job at Eaton's, and we opened a book store in Victoria. It was terribly difficult at first. I used to count the money in the cash drawer at the end of each day before I decided what we could afford for dinner. But the customers were wonderful, people who adored books and thought they must be the only ones in Victoria who felt that way. They loved to talk about the books and so did I, and that store became the happiest place. In no time my ulcer just slipped away, and I began writing again. It was as if the dry spell had never happened."

Our lunchtime conversation was typi. Alice Munro, revealing and funny and faced with quirky drama. She is the most open of women and of writers. Her public persona may be a trifle more severe. That's because she resists radio and television interviews and because, when she does readings of her work in libraries and lecture halls, she makes it a condition of her appearance that she won't answer questions afterward about the stories. "Once I've written a story and published it," she said, "it's locked away, and I feel queasy if I'm asked to get it out again." But the fact is that, especially one-on-one, Alice Munro makes warm and exuberant company...

The Progress of Love, by Alice Munro, McClelland and Stewart, 1987, 166 pages, $15.

Eighleven kilometres north of Byth, in the opposite direction from Clinton but still in Huron County, is the town of Wingham. It's a slightly stern, buttoned-up kind of old Ontario town, and Alice Munro, born Laidlaw, grew up on an isolated farm just to the west of it. From her earliest years, she had splendid dreams. "First I intended to be Rais Hayworth," she says. "Of course, I spoiled that by having a simultaneous life as the perfect wife and mother." At about age 13, she changed course. "I was going to be the Charlotte Bronte of Huron County," she says. She scribbled away at a mammoth novel, and when she bashed the two younger Cowichan girls on the farm opposite the Laidlaw property, instead of reading bedtime stories she improved tales from her own imagination. And each day, walking from the farm across the Maitland River to school in Wingham, she used to compose stories in her head about the town and its people. Alice was set on the path of her life's slow, hard work...
The early 1850s in Mayfair, the Canadian province of Ontario, was a time when Alice Lidstone had lived. She married a fellow student named Munro and moved to the province of Ontario and was living in a Vancouver suburb. At the time I was 25, I had been married for two years. I had lost a child at birth," she says. "I felt practically mid-died-aged." But she wrote. "Nothing ever hinged on my being a writer," she continues. "It was just something I did, rather like the ironing.

Through the years, the period of birth by a third daughter, through everything, she crafted her story. The first collection of them, Dance of the Happy Shades, won a Governor General's award in 1968. "Even after the award the book didn't sell," Munro says. "I was a housewife who, by the way, wrote." She wrote two more books in the next six years, The Women in 1971 and Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You in 1974. And, critics, teachers and attentive readers began to realize they had someone special—one someone specially Canadian—on their hands.

Munro's stories covered plenty of emotional and narrative territory: woman/man relationships, the shifting perspective of people as they move from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Love of man is often torn and gone wrong inside a family, love unexpressed, love abused. But three characteristically Munro stories revisit these themes. One is the beauty of Munro's language. It is a breathtaking match of the act of writing and colloquial, rather as if the nice woman from next door turns out to be a spell-binding novelist. "She's got it so thick that she makes others talk the way people look and speak and smell," says Mark Levene. "You get to know and love the whole cast of characters that have startling clarity."

Another continuing characteristic in her work is putting the person at the centre of each of them. Female, smart, observant but vulnerable and not immune to getting things quite wrong. And a third characteristic lies in the locale of many stories, a place that is either specifically or very much—like the towns and countryside of Huron County. Over the years, with the publication of her stories, the number of the county's locals thought they recognized recreations of real events and places, and felt angry to what they saw as an invasion
to their lives. The Wingfield Advance-Times ran an editor's note at the time that Alice Lidstone had lived. She had married a fellow student named Munro and had lost a child at birth," she says. "I felt practically mid-died-aged." But she wrote. "Nothing ever hinged on my being a writer," she continues. "It was just something I did, rather like the ironing.

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can't help but be attracted to her."

In her stories there's an empathetic human consciousness reaching out.

For that, you can't help but be attracted to her"
As my life has progressed I have come to see that time is the great destroyer, that its soft dissolving work goes on day after day, moment by moment. But I've learned that memory is the great preserver, that it can give back to us, in modified form, what time takes. That being so, I've always felt pressed to live in a way that would provide interesting things to look back on.

One of my fondest memories is of my first sea voyage. It is not that the voyage surpassed all the other adventures of my life, but it was my first real adventure and held all the excitement that comes when, for the first time, one leaves home for abroad. The trip began in the late 1950s, when an old freighter I'd elected to sail on nosed its way out of the Liverpool docks in England at midnight and inched its way to centre stream and the outgoing tide of the Mersey River. I knelt on my narrow bunk and stared out of the porthole, watching the dockside sheds and cranes slide by. I was 20 and had found employment as the freighter's junior engineer.

As the ship moved toward the ripples of the Mersey's deep channel, all you could hear over the hum of the generators was the occasional slap of water against the ship's plating and, now and again, the peremptory blast of our tug's horn. Presently I could see the opposite side of the wide river mouth, the string of lights along the promenade and even my parents' house; weeks would pass before I would see my home and family again. The tug's horn blasted again, and
sights and sounds of Acaba, and a sudden awareness of the very moment standing on zeros firma (the more firm the less terror). I was ready to get on with work in the engine room, which, among other things, included pumping tasks by means of a worm-driven reciprocating pump that would, proactively, run away with itself, the reciprocating arm shaking wildly. My "experienced observer" reminded himself for his endowment in Glasgow by showing me how, by suddenly tightening the rope, the pump could be made to resume its irregular pumping motion. "That something they don't put it in books," he chided, "but it works like a charm, don't it?" And so the days proceeded.

But before I sighted the brush-covered ledge where the cliffs of Turkey, I could smell the thyme-scented landscape. It came as a faint thread of vegetation fragrance, riding on a clear wind that fanned across the sea. As we approached the shore, we could see the flowers that were blooming, the blossoming massif, where, here and there, an isolated house was visible. The odor by now had become an oppressive smell of creosote, tobacco and dust. We were standing in the air and the air was choking us with the smell of it. The smell of that mountain was so strong that we had to stand on the shore and feel the air, to understand what it meant to be in that place.

The first emotion that flooded over me was blind panic. Then came the thought that maybe someone else had done a number of the electric generators. I peered hard into the darkness, but there was no sign of anyone. "I think there may be someone on shore. The realization that I would have to spend the night on the jetty over me in a demoralizing way, and I remembered the second engineer's words — "maybe you shouldn't be going ashore." Presumably the ship was offshore because of anticipated bad weather. As I stood on the sheltered jetty, I felt the first strike by raindrops (rain in the sea of the rain). After a considerable amount of heartfelt

I thought of how many times in the past I had planned to take a trip but never did, the idea of a vacation. I was planning this one, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. I was going to do it, but I was not going to do it. 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In Closing

It is now almost exactly 80 years since a springtime near the beginning of the century when Clarence Brooks, a farmer's son from a village in southern Ontario—a young man with bright, curious eyes and a witty turn of mind—received his degree in dentistry. He graduated a doctor of dental surgery from the University of Toronto in 1908. That summer he rented an office in Toronto, hung out a sign and began a practice he would continue for half a century, mostly at Canada's famous corner, Yonge and Bloor. He is now in his 102nd year, and when someone noted a while ago that he was the last surviving member of the class of 1908, his eyes grew larger and brighter, and he said: "Why, I guess I'm the last survivor of almost everything."

When Clarence Brooks decided, in about 1903, when he was 16 years old, to become a dentist the profession was still in its infancy in Canada—not that far removed from the days of the medicine man with a mail-order degree from a school in Buffalo. He went to see a practicing dentist, Angus Clarke, in a nearby town, told him of his ambition and, in keeping with the practice of the time, asked if he might spend a year apprenticing before going to university. He did—running errands, opening up in the morning and cleaning up at the end of the day. "I was paid handsomely," he told someone in his laconic way a few years ago. "Three dollars a week. In cash. Every week." Then, in the fall of 1904, he enrolled in the dental program at the University of Toronto. All through his life Clarence Brooks not only made friends but kept them. One was a friend of mine, an accountant named Colin Young who was his neighbor in the fifties and at whose home, near Toronto, he has spent every Christmas for 25 years. Recently, my friend told Dr. Brooks that I was anxious to see him. The dentist replied in his casual, direct way, "If he's got an hour to kill so have I!"

He was wearing a soft grey suit, a light shirt and a wine-colored tie, and his eyes, his most remarkable feature, seemed to hold the light as he spoke in a way that was as precise as it was casual. "I have no recipe for longevity," he said. "As far as family longevity is concerned I am a contradiction. My father reached 75, had a stroke one evening and survived until morning. My mother reached 75, had a stroke in the morning and survived until evening. My uncle reached 75, was in the garden one morning and toppled over. Gone. So I actually have no business whatsoever being here. Obviously I'm encroaching."

For much of the afternoon he sat beside the window of his room, which overlooks a slight ravine, and spoke of some of the things that are in the foreground of his long, clear memory—most having to do with dentistry and friendship and the way a man's life can turn on an event that, at the time, seems of little consequence: "I could have gone to university a year before I actually did," he said. "But the interview I had with Dr. Clarke convinced me that a year as an apprentice before university would be a good idea. In that half-hour interview the entire course of my life was established. For in 1904, when I did go to university, I was paired with a fellow from near Brockville, Ont., a dental student named Maurice Billings. We hit it off. He was everything I wasn't. He was a natural athlete; he could toss me around the room like an extra football. We were friends for life, and I met people through him—including the woman I married—who I'd never have met otherwise. He has been gone many years, but that plant on the table was brought to me by his daughter. She still visits me so many years after her father and I met in 1904.

When I graduated dentists worked very independently and looked on one another as deadly competitors. The creation of medical buildings, where we practised together, helped end that. I made friends in dentistry who were close all my life—the kind of fellows who, if I got into trouble for any reason at three o'clock in the morning, would be there with no questions asked. You see that other plant on the table? It's from the daughter of a dentist named Walter Dawson, who practised next door to me for 40 years."

Clarence Brooks did not join organizations to build his practice, but it grew and for the most part his patients came from the well-to-do upper class of old Toronto. That too, happened not by design but by accident: "In the final year of university we sometimes worked as dentists in a hospital on patients who were treated as charitable cases. I had one patient who stayed with me after graduation and whose sister was a kitchen maid to a wealthy family on Poplar Plains Road. She thought I was a wizard. And the family she worked for, having the courage of ignorance, believed her. They came. And through them a doorway was opened to a large number of socially prominent people I'd never have treated otherwise. It wouldn't have pleased those upper-crust people to know that their connection with their dentist was through a kitchen maid."

When Dr. Brooks began his life's work, a patient could have a tooth filled for about one dollar and one pulled for a bit less. The cocaine solution he used in the early years to freeze patients' gums worked—if they were lucky. Otherwise, as Dr. Brooks recalls with the slightest of smiles, they didn't have a very good time. But then, most of us have never regarded going to the dentist as a great way to pass a nany afternoon, a fact that has led to a certain sympathy not just for the patient in the chair but for the dentist standing beside it. Dr. Brooks dealt with that problem for half a century, he says, by beeding the advice of a friend, a distinguished surgeon. "He said to me one day, 'You and I make our living doing something for someone who needs what we do, but doesn't like its being done. Unless we are made of iron it has an affect on us. We have to accept the situation and be comfortable with it.'"

Dr. Brooks does not presume to know the secret of living past 100 years, but gently promises he will let us know when he finds out. Of course, it may well be that Clarence Brooks has found it but that what it escapes the grasp of description, hidden for now among things intangible and eternal.