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IN the spring of 1938, Samuel Strayer had to make the kind of decision that can break your heart. Drought—four dreaded, desti-
cating years of it—had parched his farm near Edgerton, in east-central Al-
berta, and destroyed his crops. Now it was forcing him to find a less thirsty
land where he could feed his wife and four children.
The location he chose was the lake-
screened countryside 300 km northeast of
Edmonton, where he had taken his fam-
ily on vacation in preceding years.
There, near the shore of a small body of
water called Ethel Lake, he would begin
again as a homesteader, paying a $10
fee to register his quarter section (65
hectares) of land.
In those days of the late Depression,
the rolling countryside surrounding
Strayer’s farm seemed an unlikely set-
ting for dramatic economic develop-
ment. And for the first few years, life
was relatively quiet. One thing was im-
mediately apparent about this fresh new
countryside, however: there were more
ways than farming to put bread on the
table. “There was logging as a sideline,
there was commercial fishing in the
nearby lakes, and there was trapping
most of the winter,” recalls Bob Strayer,
who with his wife, Mabel, took over the
family farm in the early 1950s when his
father retired.
Bob Strayer, who was 16 when the
family packed its belongings into a half-
ton truck and two horse-drawn wagons
for the trek north to Ethel Lake, was
willing to try his hand at whatever work
there was. In 1942, when regulations
were passed requiring the registration of
trap lines, young Strayer registered the
line that he still works, nearly a half-
century later, as one of Alberta’s oldest
trap lines continuously registered to the
same individual.
More employment opportunities ar-
riveted a decade later, with the first of the major changes. Strayer signed on to help build a project that would fundamentally alter the economic base of the entire region and would transform the surrounding barrens of Boneyville, Grand Centre and Cold Lake into towns in the space of a couple of years.

That project was the Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake and the adjacent Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, established as a training centre for Canada's fighter planes. In northeastern Alberta and the neighboring corner of Saskatchewan, a weapons range and operating air space nearly the size of western Europe could overlie the land without displacing many people, and the skies were full of sun.

The creation of the base brought changes to the region in addition to the occasional sonic boom. A new rail line was spurred through to the community closest to the base, Grand Centre, to transport the tank cars of aviation fuel that a jet squadron can consume. The existence of the line encouraged the wheat pools to put up grain elevators, giving the cottage-country terrain a strangely hybrid look, as if the Prairies had decided to move to Pappy Sound. But the change that Mabel Strayer remembers best must finally have hummed to the roads.

"I didn't see my first grader till the 1970s," she recalls. "You couldn't see the roads were bad then, because there were hardly any roads — a lot of it was just old cord. It wasn't so bad when things were dry, but when you got wet, local travel could turn into a real adventure. It could take three hours to get from the farm to Cold Lake, which is just 20 kilometres away." Better roads and more people brought other ailments. In 1958, the Strayer farm received electric power, which allowed them to decommission the ice house and retire the 32-volt generator.

And then, in 1961, the promise of an entirely new source of prosperity walked up and knocked on the door of the Strayer farm. It came in the person of Walter Smith, supervisor of surface-light acquisition in the Edmonton office of Imperial Oil Limited.

"I left the office one day at about one o'clock in the afternoon to drive to the Strayer farm," recalls Smith, now retired and living near Edmonton, B.C. "I was almost at most there, driving peacefully along a gravel road, when suddenly a jet came screaming over the car about 15 metres off the ground. I nearly died of fright." Smith recovered sufficiently from his close encounter to negotiate an agreement with the Strayers that would allow his company to build a road across their farm to a small beaver leat that would produce the experimental steam.

It had recently been leased from the Alberta government. The company's interest in the property of the Old Pine Creek Creek — a small water body — was not the Strayer's; other — would find difficult to imagine. In fact, at a time when Canada's entire interest in water resources was 663 million cubic metres, the oil in place in Imperial's Cold Lake formation alone had a potential of 6.5 billion cubic metres.

This was not, however, Hollywood oil that rumbled and shook the ground and gushed into the air with dramatic flourish. This was a far less fanciful development. The sand of sand up to 50 metres thick and 500 metres underground. The depth of the deposits made it impossible to recover them by surface mining, a method that had been used to exploit deposits of oil in the Illinois basin region of northern Alberta. Consequently, most petroleum companies at the time dominated by large companies, saw little interest in the oil and the possibility of selling it for a profit to small companies like Imperial. Consequently, most petroleum companies at the time dominated by large companies, saw little interest in the oil and the possibility of selling it for a profit to small companies like Imperial Oil. In 1970, Robert Peterman, then head of Cold Lake operations, reached the decision to give up on surface mining.

The announcement triggered speculative fever

vened meeting of municipal officials and local media from the Cold Lake region would be the first to hear publicly about the project the company was planning. Even by the standards of a busy port, the scale of the original Cold Lake project was impressive. A company that would grow to 300,000 people would be commissioned to drill a total of 180,000 holes. To dig the holes, build boilers and construct cooks and generators — all the other paraphernalia required to form tarry bitumen into 22,000 cubic metres a day of light crude oil. Preliminary estimates placed the cost of this massive venture at more than $4 billion.

The speculative fever triggered locally by the announcement of the Cold Lake megaproject still exists today. There are still enough people to make it happen.

The weekend after the announcement was made, people were planning their move from Saskatchewan to buy property, even though they had never heard of it. City people who were interested in the Cold Lake project had already been negotiating for months to buy land in 1976, when they realized they could make a killing on any land that could eventually be developed.
selves had spent some serious money preparing for growth. Keep in mind, we were approving subdivisions that were going to double the population of our towns. We built a brand new hospital, new schools, a new water system and sewage systems, new fire halls and paved some roads. And yes, we made some mistakes because of the time pressure.

The period of 1963 to 1985 is not fondly remembered by business people in the area. “I might as well have gone on vacation for those two years,” recalls retailer Cee Beulock. “Our biggest job was selling foreclosures.”

Even though private-sector development seemed to seize up completely, there was one flywheel—that original Cold Lake megaproject of the 1950s—to keep the regional economy moving. Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake—the country’s largest fighter aircraft base, which now boasts a complement of more than 50 advanced CF-18 airplanes, total military assets valued at more than $4 billion and a combined military and civilian population of 7000 people—continued to pump between $250 million and $300 million a year into the local and provincial economies. As well, beginning in 1977, each year the base hosted one of NATO’s largest air force maneuvers—Exercise Maple Flag—which filled local hotels, motels and entertainment spots with more than 1500 allied pilots and support personnel and filled the local skies with the shimmering deadliness of Hurricanes, Eagles and Phantomas.

And even though inflation, recession and soaring interest rates could stun small-town private-sector investment, they couldn’t cause those massive bands of bitumen sand at Cold Lake to disappear. The handful of people who remained on Imperial’s Cold Lake project team—a team that had grown as large as 250 persons before the collapse of the megaproject—continued to circle and probe at the Johnstons’ problem of how that resource could be tapped on a commercial basis.

The solution they conceived, as brilliantly as simple as effective answers to complex problems often appear in retrospect, was to develop the bitumen deposits in stages. The projected cost of the individual stages, about $15 billion, was almost laughably economical when compared with the $12 billion price tag that had been attached to the megaproject. Each stage would initially entail drilling 120 wells into a 325-hectare area of the underground deposit. (Clusters of wells would be drilled at angles from central locations to minimize surface disruption.) The wells would set both as steam injectors for a period of four to six weeks, and then as bitumen producers for several months. Production from the first two stages, which were to be built consecutively, would be 2000 cubic metres a day, drawing on a proved underground reserve of 24 million cubic metres of bitumen.

Unlike the all-or-nothing commitment required for the megaproject, the stages could be paced to match external conditions. If the investment climate was better than expected, development could be accelerated, if conditions deteriorated, the expenditures could be slowed. To achieve that economy and flexibility, however, the company was preparing to abandon a central element of the original plan.

“During the planning of the megaproject, it was assumed that the bitumen produced at Cold Lake would have to be upgraded into light oil, which meant that you had to bring in a large amount to justify an upgrader,” says Richard Rodgers, who moved to Cold Lake as district manager in 1967. “The idea of selling large volumes of bitumen was out of the question. But every time we took a closer look at the potential market for bitumen, it seemed to us that traditional market for bitumen was very limited and very seasonal. It was terrific stuff to use for manufacturing asphalt for summer road paving. End of story. However, a closer look revealed that bitumen could also be used as raw material by refiners where conversion equipment—so-called because it is used to convert the heavier elements present in each barrel of oil into more valuable products such as gasoline—had been installed. Not every refinery, however, knew how to take advantage of that equipment, but for those that did, bitumen could be as attractive a raw material as any refinery’s own crude oil—as long as the price was right.

The bitumen market looked even more promising after a major program to revive the American interstate highway system was announced. And so it was that in the quarter century after Walter Smith knocked on the door of the Strayer farm house in freezer for Cold Lake (top right). The heavy diesel now fits easily with an active community.
SATURDAY night, October 17, 1987, the annual International Festival of Authors, down by the lake at Toronto’s Harbourfront complex of shops, cafés and restaurants, is in its second day, the second of nine consecutive literary afternoons and evenings at the square, 450-seat Premiere Dance Theatre. Brian Moore, the Belfast-born Canadi- an, has just finished reading from his latest book, The Color of Blood, which was shortlisted for Britain’s ren- owned Booker Prize. Now it is Irina Ratishinskaya’s turn. Speaking in her native Russian, Ratishinskaya recites a series of short poems. Each one, she waits, impassively, in her proper white blouse and her long black skirt, as act- ress Kate Trotter reads the English translations. Ratishinskaya’s poetry comes to life. And of beauty, the beauty is in the pan of perfume she is wearing. It speaks of life, and the audi- ence responds in kind. The applause is sustained, and Irina Ratishinskaya is her seat in the theatre’s front row. For three-and-a-half years, the 34-year-old Ratishinskaya had languished in a Russian labor camp, her poetry deemed “a threat to the security of the Soviet Union.” Now, at intermission, the audience consists of a festive, swarming sea of people, some of them sipping drinks purchased from the stylish lobby bar, others clutching books bought at the temporary bookshop. Set up by a local bookseller, the bookshop, with its 3000 to 4000 books, rang up about $10,000 in business during the nine-day festival. Ratishinskaya’s two English-translated poetry collections sell well—so well, that the bookshop quickly runs out. A woman in the crowd, frustrated, desper- ate for an autograph of a woman she admires, looks for something, anything.

It takes more than literature to make a reading series the best in the world.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW MCMIN;

that Ratishinskaya might sign. What she finds, finally, is a Leoban’s grocery receipt. Ratishinskaya signs the back of the slip, then, beside the signature, she draws a horse—a winged horse—one hooded foot high in the air. Ratishinskaya were not allowed to sign our names to the cell walls, so we took sym- bols,” Ratishinskaya says when asked about the drawing. “The other prisoners knew me as Pegasus, the poet.” In an- cient Greece, Pegasus was the mythical winged horse. Today, Pegasus lives on as the winged steed that bears the poet on her flights of imagination.

A winged horse and a grease-stained grocery slip, the mythic and the mundane: together they are eloquent, if unus- ual testimony to the passion, the pag- eneauty, the human poetry that is the International Festival of Authors. The precarious outpouring of the Harbourfront Reading Series — now in its 15th year of regular weekly events — the festival was born in 1980. And since its inspired con- ception, this autumn classic has been a celebration unique in the world of literature. No other annual literary event draws on such a rich and catholic array of international authors, poets and dramatists.

In addition to Moore and Ratishin- ska, last year’s festival brought to- gether nearly 40 authors from all over the world. The writers themselves brought to the stage moments that echo still in the minds of the more than 6000 people who attended the readings, the public interviews and the afternoon reminiscences by Sir Stephen Spender, the 79-year-old British man of letters knighted in 1983 for his services to litera- ture. Spender’s tall and lean and aristocratic, regaled his audience with gossip recounts of some of his contempo- raries, from W.H. Auden and Chris- topher Isherwood to Virginia Woolf: “She had great refinement, but that of a razors blade,” Looking like anything but a razors blade, a very pregnant — and nervious — Alice Hoffman won her audi- ence with a disarming plea: “This is the first time I’ve read to anybody but my four-year-old son,” she critically ac- claimed young American writer said. “I hope you’ll be kinder than he was.” Per- haps the week’s most hypnotic reading was given by English novelist Lisa St. Aubin de Teran, whose perfectly pitched and modulated voice seemed to leave every verb and noun she spoke rever- berating in the dim, warm womb of the theatre. And then there were the lumin- erios of Spanish dramatist Fernando Ar- nabal, whose language — and his books — disappeared in transit. Arribal took to the stage anyway and sang the “national hymn” of Canada, in French, “because I am provocative.” There was more the- atre, and arresting literature, from In- dia’s Anita Desai, dressed in a flowing black and gold sari, Japan’s Minako Oba, wearing a black and white silk sar- mono, and America’s Robert Bly, who strummed a bouzouki — a Greek stringed instrument — while reciting poignant reflections on his father. There was, as well, an audience that had authors like Somali Said Dhi- Farah struggling for superlatives. Farah finally settled on “intellectual rever- ence” to describe the respectful atten- tion he and the other writers received throughout the festival. Kazuo Ishiguro, the young British writer whose second novel, An Artist of the Floating World, won Britain’s Whitbread Book of the Year award in 1987, was equally over- whelmed: “I find it astonishing that night after night this festival can draw such crowds, with everyone hanging on every word from every author. In Lon- don, many famous authors might draw only 20 or 30 people for a reading.” But it was more than a reverential audi- ence that appealed to Ishiguro and his fellow authors. “It’s all so professional,” he said, while dining on smoked salmon and good white wine at the Harbour Cas- tles, the authors’ hotel, festival house home. (The festival relies heavily on such corporate support.) “This is not run by a professor at St. Andrews who picks you up at the train station and, after a reading attended by eight people, takes you back to his flat where he pro- ceeds to bore you to tears until 2 a.m.” Indeed, it’s not. Greg Gatenby, the 38- year-old artistic director and singular force behind both the annual festival and the weekly reading series at Har- bourfront, is hardly the Stratford pro- fessor type. With the collage of his black leather jacket turned up and his she- shears, basic jeans on, Gatenby looks more like a mischievous, motorcycle-club ver- sion of Friar Tuck than a member of the international literary elite. And it’s un- likely the way and occasionally wicked wit of Gatenby would bore anyone. In- timate, yes. Gatenby is a prodigious man in every sense of the word. He car- ries with him an almost encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary authors, in- clding those he has yet to lure to his Harbourfront stage. A man of disam-
ingly direct inmoodly, he insists his reading series has no peers, even among series that, in the past, have attracted well-known authors. While he may have read the castle: 'Now they call me for advice.'

But Gately is motivated by some- thing more profound. "And he's fighting the perception that literature is boring and even painful. 'We try to make literature seem like it's art,' says the poet, "and they're anything but anything or dimming the light.'

And most authors agree with us."

Colombo, the prolific Canadian author of the last 30 years, 77 books. The eclectic Ed- bassy breathless humor and image to the English-speaking world." And the reason, he says: "No one else is the kind of people that important, I've brought to the table, the most that's happened to me."

Colombo, left in early 1976, and shortly after Gar- tney gave up his other duties to con- centrate on the reading series.

Gately inherited a Harbourfront venue that still resembled the truck warehouse it once was. Gately dubbed it "the subway depot." "I remember we had to wear parkas, it was so cold inside," Gately says. "I can still see living Lam- biden, and his reading, his keen interest in the local and regional auth- ors. And as foolishly, plan- ning, lack of intervention would have had. Crevel Milet was among that first assembled of two dozen literary lights. All the little-known Polish writer did was win the Nobel Prize for litera- ture. In a few weeks before the festival's de- but, giving Harbourfront and Gately in- stature credibility.

If you ask writers what makes the fea- ture of the reading series, one of the most prominent literary figures of his time, Gately has, historically, helped raise the flag of Can-adian literature abroad. Harbourfront readers, however, have not been immune to their country's literary elite, from fellow au- thors and book-review editors down to the booksellers themselves. Australian writer Peter Carey, who read at last year's festival, says that in the last few years, the novels of Canadian writer Timothy Findley have become broadly available in Australia, along with those of Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Ro- bertson Davies and other respected Ca- nadian writers. This, says Carey, is in a large part due to the influence of the many Australian writers who have read country's literary elite, from fellow au-

Gately, in a word, is a visionary. He's not inspired by literature and the scene, however, faint or of immortality. And un- derground's grandson's vision is a 50- stage festival, a world's fair of writers, and readings all running during the same nine-day period, with separate stages for romance writers, crime and

We try to convey to the audience that literature can be entertaining without in any way demeaning or diminishing the art.
LIKE MANY WRITERS, I've developed an instinctive curiosity about other people's lives. Residence in three countries and travel through many more has not diminished it. Whenever I reach a city or town or even a village, whether for a short stay or to settle, I make an immediate point of wandering its streets, not to seek out monuments or museums or historic buildings, but to catch the human rhythm and chemistry of the place. And for a stranger the surest way of doing that is to find out where its people shop.

Nothing tells you more about a community than its main street. A mere glance at its shoppers will give you the measure of their prosperity. A random tour of the stores and their displays will yield a wealth of insights into their everyday lives — what they like to eat, what they consider stylish. But why should that be important to a passing stranger? Because it may help you, for however briefly and no matter where you are, to feel more at home.

At home because each of us, usually many tones in our lives, will have identified a similar street as the comforting centre of some small world. Popular imagination tends to idealize the main street as the picturesque heart of a small town. But main streets occur, in many forms and sizes, wherever there is a need for them. The grandest cities, when examined closely, turn out to be largely composed of adjoining village neighborhoods, each with its own small main street, where groceries and fresh produce may be found, where clothes may be left for cleaning, where hair may be cut or where letters may be mailed. These streets may be called any name other than Main Street, but that is what they are, no matter how run-down and unimportant and different they appear.

Until I was 10 years old I lived in what served as a main street in an inner suburb of Dublin. My parents owned a store, clustered with a few others, in a neighborhood called, oddly, Dolphin's Barn. It had been a farm a few decades before, but too far from the sea to have ever housed dolphins in its barn. I was the envy of local children, because in addition to the newspapers, magazines and cigarettes on sale, the store flaunted racks of tall glass jars, full of candles, and cubic boxes lined with cookies. But what I cherished most was listening to the talk of neighbors who stopped by more often to gossip and joke with my parents than to buy anything.

In England, I lived for a while in an idyllic village where an increase in through traffic had made its narrow main street a noisy hazard. Planners decreed a bypass to facilitate the traffic, and to the chagrin of merchants who had sold their stores because they thought the change would ruin them, the main street soared back to life.

"Outposts huddled defensively round cores..." Carbonera, N.H. (above and right)

"I wander the streets, to catch the human rhythm and chemistry of the place." Bridgetown, N.S.
When I moved to Canada 20 years ago, I traveled widely. I savored in passing its rich variety of small towns: prairie hamlets that were little more than a main street overshadowed by a grain elevator; Ontario market towns where the tree-lined main street spanned the distance between the rail depot and the veranda-graced mansions of the richer merchants; outports huddled defensively round coves in defiance of the ocean.

Instinctively, I have resented changes prompted so rapidly by the omnipresent car and by other economic imperatives. I grieve for the prairie hamlets made ghastly by rail closures, the market towns engulfed by spreading metropolitan suburbs and the outports drained to serve the mass marketing of fish. While I appreciate the immediate need for vast shopping malls and use them, I am also conscious of what they seem to have displaced. But because I am not alone in my dissatisfaction, I am not without hope. I know that people have an irreplaceable instinct for getting what they really need by one means or another.

A friend who grew up in a B.C. town before settling in the city had this to say: "Sure, the main street was important, next most important after your home. When you were growing up, that was the outside world. There wasn't much else. Just a mill and the train depot and a plant making farm machinery. You knew all the people on Main Street because you went to school with their kids. Shopped in their stores, hung out in their cafe, had them fix your teeth, because you had no choice. And because you were young, you longed to get away to somewhere more exciting. Sometimes I miss it, but there's a variety store on the corner run by a Korean immigrant. Sometimes, when he's not busy, we talk about how different things were when we were growing up. There's a pizza place beside it that my son delivers for. And a dry cleaner where my daughter used to work part-time. It may not look like it, but that's our main street."

My own experience, since I, too, live in an inner-city neighborhood, is every more ironic. My closest shopping centre is a small mall on the ground floor of an apartment and office block — so small that it has been outpaced by larger malls nearby. In 10 years the staff of the struggling supermarket, the chain drugstore, the liquor store, the dry cleaners and the modest restaurant have become familiar friends; the promenade has become a meeting place for tenants from the apartments above, who otherwise might never have got to know each other.

As a main street it might dissuade conservationists with a more traditional image of what a main street should be. But I am happy with it as my main street. In a satisfying way it confirms the truism: the more things change the more they remain the same.
BY JEAN MARTIN

The road to Wapiti winds south-west from Grande Prairie, cutting through the snow and the silence that is Alberta farm country in early spring. A small, half-hidden sign pointing to a rural side road is all that indicates you've arrived at the Wapiti field and its nine-year-old gas-processing plant. Last December when Imperial Oil's subsidiary, Esso Resources Canada Limited purchased the assets of Sulpetro Limited, it also acquired a 40 per cent interest in Wapiti. Once the gas-pumping heart of Sulpetro, Wapiti is now the company's premier gas field, with a capacity of 3.4 million cubic feet a day, enough to heat 350,000 households in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI. Every day, Wapiti's superintendent is Gerry Armstrong, a slim, 50-year-old man whose style mirrors the casual slacks and curling horn-rimmed spectacles he wears to work. Together with Darrel Sudholly, a 49-year-old natural gas supply coordinator from Calgary, Armstrong takes the time to acquaint a visitor with Wapiti. Because peaceful as it may seem, Wapiti is the launchpad for a significant initiative at Imperial Oil.

For decades Imperial has seen natural gas as an important but relatively minor part of its operations. Changes in the marketplace, however, have sparked a reevaluation of that resource's place in Imperial's overall strategy. The Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI), a Calgary-based organization supported by both the federal government and the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, the University of Calgary and 75 corporate sponsors, has just issued a major study of natural gas by Kevin Brown, an economist. And Brown is not alone when he says that there is "considerable evidence" to suggest that "the Canadian gas industry is about to enter into a prolonged period of growth and prosperity." Ian MacNab, president of the Canadian Gas Association, adds, "There's a growing recognition that we have a tremendously valuable resource in natural gas. The expansion of the Canadian market, added to the growing potential for exports, promises - perhaps even ensures — a very successful future for the industry.

Natural gas already accounts for about 71 per cent of Canada's total energy consumption. Hydroelectric power is currently our greatest source of energy, but gas now ranks third, after oil. More than 40 per cent of Canada's households use piped gas as their primary heating fuel, while a similar percentage of our industries' energy demands and raw-material needs are fueled by gas.

In this resource, Canada is a lucky country, it has already had some of the largest deposits of natural gas in the world. But that advantage has its limits. While at the moment the high cost of transporting gas varies according to how far the gas actually rules out overseas exports. Meanwhile, the United States, the logical candidate for Canadian gas exports, has been experiencing an oversupply of gas in recent years. Even so, over the past five years, Canadian natural gas exports to the US have averaged 54 billion a year. Last year, despite the US supply bubble, Canadian gas sales to the US reached their highest level in seven years.

INTERESTED by the new possibilities for gas, in 1987 Esso Resources commissioned a comprehensive business review of the industry. The study team was led by Rick Daniel, manager of market research and planning for the gas department of Esso Resources, and its findings prompted Esso Resources to adopt a new and challenging goal — that before the turn of the century it would take its place among industry leaders in natural gas reserves, production and marketing.

"Oil is still our main business," says Bob Peterson, Imperial's president and chief operating officer. "But in the years to come, natural gas may offer more opportunities for growth and profit potential than any other company development outside the oil sands."

Early Imperial executives would have been astonished by Peterson's optimism. Gas generated more irritation than excitement in the pioneering days of the petroleum industry. In the 1880s, the bountiful resource was generally considered a nuisance, something that often showed up, unexpected and unwanted, during well-drillings for oil or water. By the turn of the century, however, several far-flung Canadian communities, from Moncton, N.B., to Medicine Hat, Alta., were tapping local reserves for street lighting. And for spectacle. The fiery gas shooting up from Medicine Hat's abundant reservoirs, for example, so startled visiting British author Rudyard Kipling that he later wrote of The Hat as "the city with all hell for a basement."

Imperial Oil's first major foray into gas came in 1923, when it assumed control of Calgary Petroleum Products, the company whose gas field in 1934 had sparked an oil rush to Turner Valley. Alto, shortly after, the Royal Oil Company Ltd. — as Imperial called its new subsidiary — reached an exclusive agreement to pipe Turner Valley gas to Calgary. With this windfall contract in hand, Royalite continued to drill and in 1924 found gas. It hit so much gas, in fact, that when a crew tried to close the well — Royalite *45 — it blew out of control, eventually catching fire and requiring wild-well experts from Oklahoma to extinguish it. As Fred Stenson notes in his book Waste to Wealth: A History of Gas Processing in Canada, "this event accounted for much of the waste of natural gas for which Turner Valley is still famous. When asked why they would not close their wells, operators would often cite the explosive beginnings at 45."

I TURNER VALLEY gas was vanishing into thin air, its precious oil was also draining at an alarming rate — alarming because more than 30 years after its discovery, Turner Valley was still Canada's only major oil field. The grim prospect of no further oil in Alberta's western sedimentary basin actually led Imperial to the brink of a multi-million-dollar gamble — the manufacture of synthetic oil from natural gas. History turned the page on the unlikely gas gambit, however, in early 1947, when Imperial struck black gold.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Imperial finds new promise in natural gas

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM M/CNEELY
At Ledco, #1 and Alberta’s long oil bust suddenly went boom. Not that Alberta at Ledco blew in the modern (Canadian oil era, the company didn’t abandon gas. At least not entirely. The company bought the first gas conservation plant in Canada. According to Steinson, the company’s marketing director, the concept of conservation “set a standard the industry would be a long time equaling”—for both its actual conservation and its marketing. Nevertheless, it was largely left to others to tap the lysing of gas deposits beneath the Alberta prairie. “Peterson’s, don’t waste your time with gas. If we were in the gas business, this company would be called Imperial Oil and Gas Limited.”

Westcoast Transmission and Trans-Canada Pipelines were the two archit-ects of the modern natural gas industry. The two pipeline giants—particularly TransCanada—forged thousands of kilo-metres of high-strength, crack-resis-tant steel pipe west and east across the country, in the process building the can-ad- eny energy industry now 30 years old. And in those 30 years the business of producing and marketing natural gas has undergone several significant changes, including price regulation, in 1975, followed by deregulation a year later. It was the Petroleum Administra-tion for 1975 and the subsequent Natural Gas Pricing Agreement that estab-lished government-set prices for the domestic industry. Under regulation, producers sold their product to a plant gate to the country’s few pipeline compa-nies, who, then, as gas merchants and gas wholesalers, sold their gas to large producers. It was simple. It was, then, admits John McDonald, Esso Re-sources’ natural gas and sulphur sales manager: “When there was high demand, the pipeline companies bought us gas. When they didn’t need our gas, we bought them lunch.”

Today, however, there’s more lunch on the gas market’s plate. “With deregulation, we are gradually getting direct access to major consumers right across the north,” says Bob Peterson. But while hunting for market share in the competitive world of deregulation many producers are looking for potential rewarding—the least rainfall under the umbrella of regulation, the marketplace to date has been anything but accommodating. With deregulation unfolding in a surplus market, gas prices have tumbled for the past three years. While benefiting consumers, par- ticularly industrial users, the depressed price has hurt many producers. Still, as Jim Park, vice-president of the gas department at Esso Resouces, says, “We believe in free enterprise, and that means taking the bad with the good.”

Last year, the National Energy Board took price deregulation a logical step further, removing its complex for-mula approach to export approvals. This, along with the pending free trade agree-ment between Canada and the U.S., would help remove the regulatory dams in the way of flow of Canadian gas to U.S. markets. And it’s these U.S. exports and Jim Park, John McDonald and most of the industry are excited about. All of course, are mindful that there are no cer-tainties in life, particularly in the volatile business of natural gas. And as far as U.S. ex-ports are concerned, there are a number of hurdles, from continuing regulatory ir-ritations to pipeline limitations. There’s also the possibility that the U.S. gas sup-ply bubble will persist into the 1990s. Still, the numbers are promising. In re-cent years, while Canadian producers have supplied only about five percent of the US market, that share was between 30 and 40 percent of Canada’s total pro-duction. And as Park notes, “If the U.S. has more trouble producing its own supply, that could double this country’s export sales.”

That’s to say that Esso Resources has forgotten the domestic market, which accounts for two-thirds of Esso’s gas production. Still, “The Canadian market is still very important,” says Jim Park. “It’s just that the growth potential is much larger in the export market.”

Some, however, question the idea of substantial additional exports of Cana-dian gas. Paul Piminting, managing di-rector of the Ontario Natural Gas Associ-ation, argues that gas is a non-renewable resource and that Canadians have “a moral responsibility to leave some of it for future generations.” But Marit Macnamara and the chair of the natural gas branch for the Federal Department of Energy, Mines and Re-sources, points out that without signifi-cant exports, “there’ll be no money to search for frontier resources, no finan-cial incentive to develop any reserves.” And if that should happen, says Macnamara, vice-president of the association, “the whole country will lose.”

Aimed with their comprehen-sive review of the gas business and data suggesting that “the U.S. was likely to be bigger by 1990, Rick Daniel and the study team met with Esso Resources’ management committee last summer. “Even though we had been specifically asked to look into the potential of the U.S. market, what kind of reaction we’d get,” the 38-year-old MBA says. “We did find that, based on the company’s history with gas, there was no reason to assume that our plan would be easily accepted.”

In May, that new emphasis on gas was confirmed only a few months after with the purchase of Sulpetro’s assets, along with the shares of an associated company, Sullabh Explo-ration Limited. “You have to go back more than 20 years to find Imperial acquiring any kind of company—gas or oil,” says Bob Peterson. With this new affiliation, Imperial is the largest ever made by Imperial, the company boosted its annual gas production by a third and its reserves by a similar amount. Still, Sulpetro was acquired for more than its gas reserves. A small, fiercely aggressive company, Sulpetro had been the first producer to sell Cana-dian gas directly to the U.S. market. As Park points out, “While it’s true Sulpetro has seen some financial troubles, it also showed the leadership and the courage to go after the U.S. market.”

In March, Imperial moved again through Esso Resources, agreeing in principle to purchase the Alberta gas and oil production assets of Oolot Industries Ltd., a well-regarded, medium-sized gas producer based in Calgary. Oolot’s current gas production of about two million cubic metres a day—most of it in the Medicine Hat area—will bring Imperial a 20 percent increase in overall gas production and one step closer to its goal of becoming a leader in the gas industry.

Bob Peterson’s, North American markets before the turn of the century. But while Imperial continues to plan its Arctic possibilities, it is also aware that natural gas development there is far from a certainty. Aside from existing economic issues, there are environmen-tal questions to be asked and answered and native land claims to be settled. Experience with the Hudson’s Bay Company’s plans to operate in the Arctic is a cautionary tale for any other gas company’s plans to operate in the Arctic is a cautionary tale for any other gas company’s plans to operate in the Arctic. It’s been a long road. “We’re trying to do it in a way that works for the people,” says a third party. “But yes, it’s a much more reasonable ex-pectation now than it has been for a long time.”

The adds, “whether or not Arctic gas is ever developed, there are stimulat-ing times ahead for Imperial and natural gas.” The company’s position on gas holdings—particularly at Oolot and Led-co—are about to take centre stage. Oolot, 230 km west of Edmonton, is an old, well explored field and known for extracting natural gas liquids. “From now until we realize that goal of become-ing one of the main suppliers of natural gas, says Armstrong, digging into his sauce-and-sour chicken, “well, it’s going to be an exciting time in the careers of a lot of Esso Resources people.”

An option to place gas em-bargos on natural gas was a fairly common practice in the 1980s. In fact, when Esso acquired of Oolot and Ledco, Imperial had a strict embargo on natural gas exports, as a strong producer with sizable re-serves. In addition to its considerable re-serves in southern Canada, Esso Re-sources has in recent years made a number of gas discoveries in the Mackenzie Delta/Beaufort Sea region of the western Arctic.

In fact, the company’s Tagua field in the Mackenzie Delta, which was discov-ered by Imperial in the early 1970s, is one of the largest undeveloped gas fields in Canada, containing more than 90 trillion cubic metres of gas. There is a strong possibility that gas from Tagua could be flowing to North American markets before the turn of the century. But while Imperial continues to plan its Arctic possibilities, it is also aware that natural gas development there is far from a certainty. Aside from existing economic issues, there are environmen-tal questions to be asked and answered and native land claims to be settled. Experience with the Hudson’s Bay Company’s plans to operate in the Arctic is a cautionary tale for any other gas company’s plans to operate in the Arctic. It’s been a long road. “We’re trying to do it in a way that works for the people,” says a third party. “But yes, it’s a much more reasonable ex-pectation now than it has been for a long time.”

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houses as well as in such public places as the Montreal Art Museum and the Windsor Hotel. Widespread enthusiasm culmi-
nated when a wealthy art-lover, Renéalagh Gibb, bequeathed to the Art Association not only a collection of more than 50 paintings and eight bronzes, but also the sum of $8000 and a piece of land on the east side of Phillips Square, at the corner of St. Catherine Street. Gibb’s father, also named Renéalagh Gibb, was a Scottish tai-
lor, who made the family rich by outfit-
ting the local British garrison with made-
to-measure uniforms. But the younger Gibb’s love for art was no less fabric. He was one of the first association members to travel abroad in search of paintings.

Gibb’s generosity finally provided the site for a permanent art gallery, “the first building in the Dominion to be devoted exclusively to the fine arts,” as the Hon-
ourable R. Macdonald, president of the Art Association, stated at the opening festiv-
is in May 1879. The museum was offi-
cially opened by the Marquis and Mar-
chioness of Lorne. In honor of the occasion, the marchioness, who dou-
bled as Princess Louise, sixth daughter of Queen Victoria, donated her opening-
day dress, an extravagant piece of cloth-
edoring with a jet-black ermine cape. Other gifts included an impossibly lavish tea set, originally presented to Montreal politician Sir Hugh Allen to commemorate the first Atlantic crossing of a turbine-driven ship. Referring to Al-
len’s disastrous involvement in the Pa-
cific Scandal, one political rival quip-
ped: “If he’d gone rid of his eyesight earlier, maybe he wouldn’t be in such hot water today.”

It was only natural that in its early years most of the museum’s supporters were Anglophones. Montreal in 1860 was not the predominately French-speaking city it is today. The first official census in 1861 put the English-speaking share of the population at 53 percent. “Between 1825 and 1840,” explains Gilles Galli-
chan, a historian at the Bibliothèque na-
tionale du Québec, “there was consider-
able immigration from England and Scotland and later, following the great famine of 1845, from Ireland. In addition, many long-established English families had moved from Quebec City to Mon-
treal, which was seen as a city of promise par excellence.” As a result, the popula-
tion of Montreal tripled between 1861 and 1901. During this period of promi-

A mid-19th-century polyurethane pine, around 1880.

Many complete with tous; the 4-litre cask has been identified as the work of Pierre Pine.

interior with a Woman at the Clerihoved, Édouard de Mon, around 1890.

The first old master purchased by the Art Association of Montreal, in 1894.

Montreal’s love affair with the Museum of Fine Arts

BY MARIE TREMBLAY

When Monique Lanthier started working as a intern at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the first thing she noticed was a set of missing toes. Not just any toes, mind you. They had disappeared from the feet of a huge 19th-century wooden figure of Christ on the cross, hanging in a gallery devoted to early Canadian religious art.

“Where are they?” Lanthier, an art his-
tory student, asked, as she contemplated the masterpiece of unknown origin.

Her internship quickly turned into a sleuthing session worthy of Sherlock Holmes: find the toes and the origin of the carving.

The museum’s own sketchy records suggested the carving came from the remote Gaspe region of the province. But after months of intensive research, Lan-
thier traced the missing toes to the small village of St. Victoire de Sorel, near the St. Lawrence River. They were eventu-
ally found in the barn of Jean-Louis De-
guisé, a local farmer. Deguise had sold the rest of the carving to a traveling sales-
man for $15 in 1963, after his children said they’d found “a dead body” buried under the hay in the barn.

Lanthier wasn’t the first or the last person to embark on a journey of dis-
covery with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Over more than 125 years, Montrealers have grown to lose this most special of cultural institutions, the largest art museum in Quebec and one of the oldest in Canada. As early as 1847, a small group of con-
noisseurs and painters, including Corne-
lius Krieghoff and William Snow, formed the Montreal Society of Artists. Its lively meetings and exhibitions created such interest that on April 23, 1849, 80 individuals signed up for the Art Association of Montreal. Bishop Francis Fullwood, founder of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal and an avid collector of European land-
scape paintings, became the first presi-
dent of the organization that would later give birth to the gallery itself.

Historians say the shrewd-minded founders of the association wanted to capitalize on the visit that year of the Prince of Wales by lobbying for a perma-
nent exhibition space. They hoped the prince would give them the “Crystal Pal-
ace,” an impressive glass-and-iron build-
ing at the corner of Peel and St. Cath-
erine Streets, built in honor of his visit. But the prince failed to take the hint, and the palace never became the permanent museum the association sought. Soon after the exhibition, it was dismantled and moved to Fletcher’s Field on the eastern flank of Mount Royal, where it burned down in the 1880s.

Nevertheless, the members of the assoc-
iation soldiered on, organizing exhi-
bitions based on their own collections. Helene Lamarche, head of the muse-
um’s education department, notes that many collectors of that period bought Van Gogh paintings. “I refer to it as the barrow school,” says Lamarche. “Lots of sentimental pastoral scenes. The early patrons loved Dutch land-
scape artists and bourgeois portraiture.”

The exhibitions were held in private

The Review Oct 1898

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN WRIGHT
Following a competition, two Montréal architects who had studied the Beaux-Arts tradition in Boston—brothers Edward and William S. Maxwell, who also designed the Saskatchewan legislative building in Regina—were selected to carry out the great work. In the opinion of architect and urban planner Claude Beaulne, the result is a splendid structure: “it presents a successful synthesis of majesty and equilibrium. It is the jewel of Sherbrooke Street.”

The imagination of the Art Association of Montréal’s new building took place on December 5, 1921. Once again, nobility was trotted out to officiate over the ceremonies. The Duke and Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia held what is described as “a brilliant social event, attended by two thousand persons,” and the names of the donors were plastered across the local society pages. Members of the Association were jubilantly proud; they had successfully financed construction of the handsome building with no help from either the city of Montréal or the provincial government, while at the same time obtaining property tax exemptions as an educational institution. Visitors could discover great paintings that had never before been exhibited; painters of the Dutch, French and English schools; works of such great masters as Rembrandt, Rubens, Delacroix, Turner, Gainsborough. The groundswell of public enthusiasm was such that, in less than a year, admissions to the museum almost doubled.

The new building would offer more than just exhibitions. It was also used extensively for social functions: debonair balls, classical music concerts, and society candlelight dinners. And during the Depression, in 1937, the museum decided to set up art classes for children under the direction of Montréal artist Ann Savage. In 1941 she was joined by no less a personage than Arthur Lismer, one of the Group of Seven. “He was a brilliant instructor,” recalls Gail LaMarche, one of Lismer’s students: “He was a real wit. He always forced students to go deeper, to question their assumptions about art and life in general.”

Another dimension was added by F. Cleveland Morgan, a dynamic man with the soul of a collector, who created the museum’s decorative arts section. For 66 years, until his death in 1962, he served as a dedicated volunteer curator, overseeing the collection of arts and crafts objects from five continents. “It was he who transformed the institution into an encyclopedic museum,” explains Ruth Jackson, the first official curator of decorative arts at the museum. “He donated more than a thousand objects to the museum and encouraged his friends and family to do the same. He was the Sonia Sosa, coming back from his many journeys with his finds, such as Chinese porcelain, Greek pottery, rare textiles from Peru. He was interested in Quebec antiques as well, and concerned to keep them from being sold outside the country.”

Cleveland Morgan also made an administrative contribution, helping to choose the first director, Robert Tyser Davis, in 1947 and serving as president of the museum from 1948 to 1956. By 1949 the decorative arts section had become large enough that the term “art gallery” was no longer appropriate; the institution was renamed Montréal Museum of Fine Arts. Today, the decorative arts section contains about 7000 pieces, among them a collection of Japanese Inose boxes from the former French prime minister Clemenceau. According to art experts, the collection is one of the finest of its kind in existence, surpassing even the best Japanese collections. Meanwhile, many of Montréal’s 19th-century crafts are proudly displayed in the museum as a testament to the city’s rich history and cultural heritage.

Photograph: Portrait of a Young Woman, Brambati von Rijn, ca. 1665. Donated by the daughter of one of the museum’s founders. No one can escape the subject of this mysterious portrait.
best-known families — Strachan, Molson, Van Horne, Simard, Bronfman — continued to foster bequests and gifts to the museum. Unfortunately, many of the best pieces in the prime family collections went up for auction. As the rivalry between prominent families to out-contribute each other increased, some descendants bought back pieces their parents had sold and bequeathed them to the museum.

One of the most valuable collections was left by Adeline Van Horne, who invited McGill students to her home to view works she intended to bequeath to the gallery. Even when she became totally blind, she would stand before each painting and describe it from memory. At her death, one-quarter of the Van Horne collection (including the infamous Damier) passed to the museum.

But many less well-known Montrealers also came to cherish the museum, among them the hundreds of volunteers whose constant support was indispensable. Not everyone enjoyed the gallery, of course. "It was intimidating in those days," says freelance broadcaster Toby Kinsella. "I remember my mother telling me to not to slosh, to be quiet, and whatever I did, don’t touch the paintings. It was worse than Sunday school."

The intimate lighting and color scheme of this gallery of 19th century works evoke the art exhibits of that time.
berge captured international attention with the enormously successful Picasso extravaganza. The numbers alone are impressive—half a million people clicked through the turnstiles—but the real coup lay in the show itself. It was smooth talking and painstakingly detailed attention to public relations that enabled Théberge and Lamarre to coax Picasso's wife, Jacqueline, to sponsor a show of her private Picassos. The Montreal exhibit marked the first time most of the 80 "Picasso's Picassos" were shown to the public. As a parting memento of the exhibit, Jacqueline donated the painting "Embrace" to the museum.

It's obvious Lamarre means it when he refers to Théberge as "the Waynes-Gretzky of museology," a reputation enhanced by his masterful staging of another blockbuster, "Leonardo da Vinci, Engineer and Architect," which brought in more than half a million visitors in 1987. This year the museum has further stretched its appeal with an exhibition featuring Paul-Émile Borduas.

The museum, according to art historian Laurier Lacroix of Concordia University, has now achieved its full stature, the result of contributions throughout its long life. "Today, the team of Bernard Lamarre and Pierre Théberge is determined to attract more visitors than ever," says Lacroix. "They are aiming at the international level, while at the same time making a place for our own artists."

Théberge is also closely associated with plans to enlarge the museum, which will double its size by 1991, at a cost of 564 million. "The central location of the museum on Sherbrooke Street has made it a matter of civic pride for Montrealers," explains Théberge. "It was essential to place the extension very close to the present museum, which meant expanding across the street." Two possibilities were considered: the construction of a new building or the integration of the New Sherbrooke, an apartment building erected in 1905, and located on the opposite side of Sherbrooke Street.

For the first time, the City of Montreal and the museum invited the population to take part in the debate surrounding expansion plans. First, in the spring of 1987, architect Moshe Safdie (assisted by the firms of Dejournays-mercure and LeMay-Leclerc) presented sketches of the two plans at an exhibition entitled "The Museum of the Future"; then, in June, public hearings were held. A clear majority favored incorporating the old building. The City of Montreal made its decision known in the autumn: because of its heritage value, the New Sherbrooke would be saved. The decision set an important precedent, that in future major developments must respect the city's architectural heritage.

Work on the addition began in the fall of 1987, with the opening planned for March 1991. With his plans now complete, architect Moshe Safdie concludes: "For the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, I had to come to terms with certain historical buildings. An architect cannot remove himself from the sociopolitical climate in which he lives. In any case, when I draw my plans I always bear in mind the people who will live in the buildings and make use of them. In this case, I wanted very much to design a building for Montreal; first, because I'd built nothing there since Habitat '67, but above all because I love the city. Of all the cities in my life, Montreal is the one where I've lived the longest."

As the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts heads into the 21st century with a larger exhibition space and growing emphasis on popular appeal, its small beginnings haven’t been forgotten. "Those austere Scots who founded the museum were right about one thing," says Hélène Lamarche: "Montrealers have always liked to admire beautiful things. Fashions in art may change, but the museum itself will always be in style."
The story: Fall 1984

The sun was setting, and the sky was a deep orange. The air was crisp and fresh, and the sound of leaves crunching underfoot was the only noise. We sat on the steps of the old schoolhouse, watching the world go by. The teacher, Mrs. Thompson, walked over to us, a smile on her face. She asked if we wanted to go inside for the night. We all nodded in agreement, and she led us inside.

Mrs. Thompson turned on the lights and we saw the old schoolhouse interior for the first time. The walls were made of wood, and the floor was covered in tiles. We walked to the front of the classroom, where there was a large chalkboard and a desk for the teacher. She handed us all a piece of paper and a pencil.

"Today, we are going to write a story about our adventure," she said. "Go ahead and start." We all scribbled away, each trying to come up with the best story possible.

After an hour or so, we all finished our stories. Mrs. Thompson read them all, and we were all pleased with what we had written. She praised us for our creativity and hard work.

"Next week," she said, "we will have a writing contest. You will all have a chance to win prizes for your stories." We all cheered, excited to participate.

After that, we went back outside to the playground. We played until the sun had set completely, and then we all went home, feeling happy and content.

That's it, exactly. And the truth is that the good-byes began many years ago, when our children were much, much younger. Like every girl in her teens, 'Tad would insist that her parents keep right out of the way whenever a date came to pick her up. Richard would ask me to drive him to school, but he always wanted me to let him out a block away ("I don't want anyone to think that I was pasted up."). And Anthony wanted desperately to go on his own to the Canadian National Exhibition. He was 11 or 12 years old, and we were all set to take him. We took all the kids every year, until they were old enough to go with their friends. We got as much fun out of it as we did, just by watching their reactions. Then Anthony asked if he could, please, go with a group of other boys; he'd be awfully carful and a couple of the boys were a little older... and... "You did let me go," he reminded today, "and I know you wanted to take me. I know you were looking forward to it and I felt sorry for you."

All of them were saying the same thing: "Mom and Dad, we don't want you to come." But it was different when they were younger. They really didn't need us then. Today they do not need us. Today our value to our kids is in the past—and in any case, it's a long time since anyone has come near. My daughter has a birthday, and at dinner I

Are you still at home, yet all of them, in cluding our youngest, have left us.

To put it simply, the children—our daughter, Tad, age 23, and our two sons, Richard, 18, and Anthony, 16—have grown up, something that seemed to happen collectively when the youngest was about four or five, and we realized that our kids, all of them, were ready to leave home. We realized that the days were over when we took them out—to buy clothes, to visit the doctor, to see a movie, to see Santa Claus, to fish and hike, and skate and skate. All these things are now gone forever and much too soon. Our kids no longer come to us during thunderstorms, and they don't tell us of their triumphs, of winning a race or finding a nickel or seeing a big dog. The innocence is gone.

This is a time, more and more, when my wife and I find ourselves reminding each other of our children's earlier exploits and problems, when we look back on the kids of mischief that pained us and delighted us. We talk about the time when Richard, at the age of four, painted my wife's Volkswagen. The house painters were at our place, and they'd left their brushes and pa into our garage. Richard did the en tire car—tires, windows, headlights, bumpers. Fortunately, it was water-emulsion paint, which dried easily and with a great deal of effort, to get it all off. Well, not quite all of it. A couple of days later, my wife had the fellow at the service

jas station check the oil, and when he lifted the little hood at the back of the Volks, he asked, "Why do you paint your car?"

The most painful thing we remember about Richard (or any of them) growing up was the time his friend, Gary, came to our house for dinner. Gary was a bright, cheery, ent husiastic boy who was in Richard's classic school and was over even at 11 (but not like Richard) often, Richard and Gary had part-time jobs at the same restaurant, Gary, in fact, served Richard's dinners.

One evening, Gary failed to show up for work at the restaurant. Richard called his home, and Gary wasn't there either. A couple of days later, Gary hadn't turned up, and Richard told us he was extremely concerned about him. We told Richard not to worry, it was De cember, and we figured Gary might have headed out for warmer climate, maybe California or Florida.

Several weeks went by. Then, one morning at about 10:30, Richard came home from school. Tears streamed from his eyes, and he was shaking. He could barely speak. I just sat down and let my arms around him, and he finally got it out, between sob s: "They found Gary's body," Richard's best friend had been brutally murdered. Two young men were later convicted of the killing.

The crime shocked our family more than I can say. It stunned us. And as the months passed, my wife and I were left with a special awareness of our children's crime, the crime gave us a sense of their frailty, and I have an idea that some of it has stayed with us. It's not that we worry, these days, every time one of them steps out the door, but we realize that anything can happen, and that anything can go wrong. We wish we could protect them, and, of course, we can't.

Apart from that monitory, most of the jolting memories of our kids' early years concern the hospital: Anthony's operation at age 12, in a room of the emergency department, lying on a table, his leg broken, his eyes filled with tears; Tad, age five, at another hospital, with his face suddenly putting up grotesquely in a reaction to a wrong injection, frightend and helpless, Richard, age three, silent, disturbing and hurting after his stomach had been pumped out because we thought he'd had too much food. And the birth to take place on another level. The initiation for a lot of things comes from the children themselves rather than be ing suggested by the parent — and there is a sense that you're out of control.

And that's true of any number of things when he said, "It's very stress ful, it's always sad to say 'good-bye' to somebody."

But it is different when they are younger. They really didn't need us then. Today they do not need us. Today our value to our kids is in the past—and in any case, it's a long time since anyone has come near. My daughter has a birthday, and at dinner I

If you would suffer yourself in their places—and you can do nothing. These days, in another way, we feel the same helplessness, same sadness, and I do believe that we don't have the dinn will not let us. And it is still painful. Richard changes his afternoon job, largely (as earlier) because it's boring; I believe he is bored because he doesn't tell us or don't consult us, and we get no chance to advise. Tad is writing letters in pursuit of a new fraternity, both his mother and I am writers, and we feel we could help her—but we do not even have her letters. Anthony, well, we really have no idea what his career is; he is writing us nothing. When he went to The Wizard of Oz at the age of six or seven he gave us five minutes of chitchat on the Wicked Witch of the West. Now, he comes home from a movie and says nothing. "How was it?" I ask. "Okay."
In Closing

One day, just about a quarter of a century ago, I was alone in a city in Europe on a Sunday. I went by bus to the edge of the city, where beyond a wide boulevard sheltered with great oaks I came upon a cemetery, a stretching field of green. The headstones, hundreds of them, were all the same in size and shape, small and white and engraved with a religious symbol and often a maple leaf. It was a war cemetery, and among the hundreds of graves were those of a number of Canadian soldiers and airmen.

There were no visitors that day. But there was a handful of women — elderly, stooped and purposeful, like the ones I have seen polishing and cleaning in European churches — clipping, raking, watering. I wandered down a path to where one of them, a dark woman with a lined, weathered face and a white kerchief, was clearing the grass at the base of one of the stones. We nodded. But it was what was on the stone beside her that has stayed with me most strongly, engraved in memory as on the stone itself. It gave the name of the man buried there, his military number and the years of his birth and death. His name was David MacLeod. He was 18.

In the fall, as the final days of autumn fade into November and Remembrance Day, I often find myself thinking in random moments of that afternoon in the almost empty cemetery. It remains vivid, I believe, because by then I was in my thirties, suddenly able to see that so many of the soldiers, airmen and sailors who died when I was a child during the war were almost children themselves.

But I also wondered about David MacLeod. Even yet, on certain autumn days, I still wonder. Perhaps if events had been different for him, I find myself thinking, he would have become Dr. David MacLeod, head of surgery at the Victoria General Hospital in Halifax. Or perhaps he would have become Professor David MacLeod, dean of engineering at Queen’s University, or perhaps Judge David MacLeod of the Alberta Supreme Court. What matters most is that, in all probability, he would have become David MacLeod, good citizen, husband, father, now grandfather.

The arguments of a few years ago over whether or not Remembrance Day glorified war seem to have faded now, as more and more of us, finding meaning in the past that helps us live in the present, see it not only as a reminder of events we must never repeat, but of people we must never forget. There are, from the first and second wars, over 100,000 Canadian graves in the cemeteries of Europe, most of them in Britain, Holland, Belgium and France, but there are also smaller cemeteries in other countries throughout Europe. They are, in an official sense, the responsibility of our own government, but in many places — especially Holland, which was liberated from Nazi occupation by Canada in May 1945 — the graves are still tended with gratitude by men and women who were witnesses to the liberation or by their children. Over the years, when I have been in one of these cemeteries, there have almost always been a few people there, working quietly, speaking softly, as if in a sanctuary.

The other day, I came upon a paper someone had prepared to help explain to young people the meaning of the Remembrance Day poppy. During the first war, after the bombardment of France and Belgium had left the soil rich in lime, poppies grew wild profusion on the fields of battle and upon the graves of the soldiers. John McCrae, the Canadian physician serving at the battle of Ypres in April 1915 — where he tended so many wounded he didn’t have time to change his clothes for 17 days — scribbled on a scrap of paper his poem with its famous first line, “In Flanders fields the poppies blow...” Then, in 1921, a YMCA worker in New York, on her own, began wearing a poppy as a symbol of memorial to the war dead. In 1921 the first poppies appeared on the lapels and dresses of Canadians, the proceeds going to help soldiers and airmen who returned wounded or needy. Today, 11 million are distributed.

It has been many years since I actually attended a Remembrance Day service, content, like many of us, to acknowledge the silence at 11 o’clock and see the aging faces of the veterans on the evening news — those who still turn out. Their numbers are falling so steadily that by the turn of the century there will only be a scattering left.

Sometimes it has been said that they joined for jobs or escape or the chance to become heroes. I have no way of knowing, of course, but I suspect that the real reasons were both less and more complex — the desire to do as their brothers and friends had done, the feeling that fighting for one’s country was a community and national obligation, all of it tinged with the understandable yearning among the young to see a distant world.

The young still yearn for such distant worlds. I saw three of them, the last time I was in an airport lineup, heading for Europe, expecting upon their faces. On each of their backpacks was a maple leaf, which even now, so many years after the wars, still evoke goodwill for young Canadians because of other young Canadians who went to Europe in another time for another reason.

Perhaps the teenagers I saw may, during their travels through Europe, come upon the stones with their tiny crosses and maple leaves beyond the city limits. Perhaps not. But I cannot help a small hope, that perhaps before they come home again, they may meet someone who remembers the war to end wars and men still boys who rest in soil they did not choose, a long way from home.