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Imperial Oil

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The Inspiration of Charlevoix

For more than a century, the striking beauty of the Charlevoix region of Quebec has attracted writers and artists, providing the setting for some of their best works.

by jean Martin

The rain falls lightly as the small ferry makes its way across the St. Lawrence River, leaving behind the gentle charm of the river's south shore. Before it, rocks rise up from the water to pine-shrouded hills that are dark and forbidding. This is the Charlevoix region of Quebec—powerful, rugged and seemingly impermeable. When the English poet Rupert Brooke visited Canada in 1913, he travelled up the Saguenay River, the eastern border of the region. "There are no birds to this river, for the most part; only these walls, rising sheer from the water to the height of two thousand feet, going down sheer beneath it, or rather by the side of it, to many times that depth," he wrote. "The water was of some colour blacker than black, even by daylight it is inkily and sinister." Yet for all this—perhaps because of it—Charlevoix is possessed of a striking beauty.

A 6,000-square-kilometre area stretching north from the St. Lawrence between Côte de Beaupré, 170 kilometres east of Quebec City, and the Saguenay River (and including Île aux Coudres in the St. Lawrence), Charlevoix is a land of canyons and tablelands, white-water rivers, rolling farmland, dark, dense forests and mountains. A large portion of the Laurentian range is located in the region, including some of Quebec's highest mountains, and the entire area, except for Île aux Coudres, is part of the Canadian Shield.

Named in honour of Father François-Xavier de Charlevoix, the first historian of New France, the area has a population of 12,000 (99 percent of residents are French-speaking) and is largely rural. Picturesque villages dot the region (the largest community is Baie-Saint-Paul with a population of 7,135), most hugging the bays and capes of the St. Lawrence. Names like Cap-la-Roche and Baie-Saint-Paul suggest the maritime flavour of this part of Charlevoix, where the smell of salt water is in the air and whales can sometimes be seen breaching in the river.

For years, writers and artists have been drawn to Charlevoix. From her refuge at Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, where she summated for 29 years and wrote 15 of her 19 books, Gabrielle Roy could see Île aux Coudres, which Jacques Cartier stopped to baptize on a voyage up the St. Lawrence in 1535. The writer would gaze out from her porch sitting in the sun set, watching its reflection ripple in the river before her. She would walk in the evening with a friend along the railway tracks. So enamoured was she of the river and countryside of the region that she wrote Enchanted Summer, a collection of essays set in Charlevoix. "Right beside [the railroad] lies the river, which has all the room it needs to extend its great tide-ripped body for a breadth of twenty-two miles. At flood tide, waves splash against the embankment; at times you can hear the sound high on the rocky hillside as if the waves were breaking within the stone. On the crest are some ancient, rarely silent pines. One, flung out on the slate, mounds with a curious insistence just before the fading of the light." Roy cared deeply about the land. "Shooting stars plummeted through the sky," she wrote in Enchanted Summer. "I made a wish. I wished that the children of these regions would never tire of listening to their planet Earth." It seems they haven't; for in 1988 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named Charlevoix the status of World Biosphere Reserve. (World Biosphere Reserves—there are 324 in 92 countries—form part of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme, which aims to "demonstrate that conservation and development can exist in harmony."

The programme, among other things, endeavors to conserve examples of ecosystems characteristic of the world's natural regions, "demonstrate and foster practical sustainable development" and involve local people in the reserve's management.

Félix-Antoine Savard was a close friend of Roy's. Born in 1886, Savard was a priest, activist, founder of a specialty paper mill and writer. He loved the people and landscape of Charlevoix, and they were ever present in his writings. His best-known work, Born of the River, is set in Charlevoix and focuses on a log driver, hunter and man of the forest named Menau. "Again, Menau could see the old fellow breathing in the scented acres of forest as though these were the very odour of his own being, eyes on the hills as on some familiar animal that one strikes, proud that his own steps should cross those of his people of other days as they turned this splendid domain." "Alone among the numerous clergy in the ranks of French Canadian literature," commented the critic Gérard Tougas, "he [Savard] has been able, by the magic of his style, to make us share his joy in the simple, hard-working life of the farmers and the men who clear the land."

After settling as a priest in the Charlevoix communities of La Malbaie, Sainte-Agnès and Cler-
moment, Seward made his home from 1961 until his death in 1983 in Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, a tiny village on the St. Lawrence with a white church steeple that on clear days stands out against the bluest of skies. In 1965, Seward established a plant in the old village schoolhouse, where finely crafted rug paper was made using the trees, leaves and flowers of the region. Seward believed that making beautiful paper was a way to honour time writing and at the same time to pay tribute to the craftsperson's work. In the cemetery at Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive, a spruce tree planted near Seward's grave is a reminder of the love he bore the region.

But Charlevoix has influenced not just French Canadian literature; it is the type of powerful, living land that the late literary critic Northrop Frye and the writer Margaret Atwood have considered in their writing. It seems somehow appropriate, therefore, that a man who had called Charlevoix home, the lawyer and writer Sir Adolphe-Basile Rochebaron, who was to become a justice of the Superior Court of Quebec, should have written in 1900 a 12-line verse called "Chant national," which was later set to music and became known to all Canadians as "O Canada."

Nested in a deep gorge, the small town of La Malbaie, which serves as the administrative centre of Charlevoix, was home to Marie-Louise Felicite Angers. Born in the town in 1845 and writing under the pseudonym Laure Corson, Angers was the country's first French Canadian female novelist. She was also the author of Canada's first psychological novel, Anglaise de Montreal, in which Angers broke away from the romantic tradition of 19th-century French Canadian literature. The author lived a quiet life in La Malbaie, attending mass daily and tending her garden. In the words of biographer Anglaise de Montreal, she wrote, "Alas! I fear that I will always remain a country lass to the soul. Here everything is so calm, so fresh, so pure, so beautiful... In spite of the permanent sadness at the bottom of my soul, the beauty of nature sometimes carries me into delicious reveries."

It was towards the end of the second half of the 19th century that artists first began to take a particular interest in Charlevoix. Until the turn of the century, however, their painting excursions rarely took them far from the St. Lawrence. In the early 1900s they became more adventurous, making their way to the wild hinterland of the region. The rugged Charlevoix landscape became a compelling subject for nationalist painters struggling to establish a "Canadian art."

Since the early days of this century, Baie-Saint-Paul, which sits in a valley at the mouth of Riviere du Loup, has been a meeting place for painters. Clarence Gagnon, who was born near Montreal and attended school in the city, visited Baie-Saint-Paul first in 1903, when he was 22, and after completing his art studies in Paris in 1909 was to spend a good portion of his life in the community. Painting Charlevoix became Gagnon's passion, and even during the 12 years he lived in Paris, from 1912 to 1916, he returned to the region as often as possible to sketch and paint. Gagnon was particularly fond of the region's hinterland. Winter and summer, he travelled throughout it by whatever means necessary, here and there stopping to make sketches that he would later rework in his studio. His paintings, set against the dominating landscape of the area, depicted people and their everyday tasks — farmers, for example, ploughing fields,せabying hay and cutting wood. Gagnon became so well-acquainted with the people and traditions, landscape and buildings of the region that he was able to create from his memory in his Paris studio the 54 gouaches used to illustrate Louis Hémin's novel Maria Chapdelaine (although Gagnon drew on his memories of Charlevoix in illustrating Maria Chapdelaine, the novel is actually set in the Lac-Saint-Jean region of Quebec). Writer Jean Des Gagniers of Gagnon in his book Charles: "No painter has better expressed the moral climate, the atmosphere of Charlevoix writers."

Drawn by the exceptional light and landscape, other artists soon began to follow. Among them were Jean Palarzy, Albert Henry Robinson, Arthur Lismer, Frank Johnston, Paul Cazin, Edwin Holgate, Frederick Johnson, Marc-Auréle Fortin and A.Y. Jackson, who said, "Baie-Saint-Paul is the most active art centre in the country."

"Such a concentration of painters was unique in Canada," points out Françoise Labbé, director of the art centre at Baie-Saint-Paul, which every year hosts a national symposium on the work of young painters.

"Alas! I fear that I will always remain a country lass to the soul. Here everything is so calm, so fresh, so pure, so beautiful."

The Hunters sundial to the George River, Ungava Bay, by Rene Richard, 1949.

Rene Richard came to Charlevoix in the 1920s on the advice of Gagnon, whom he met in Paris. But first Richard spent a number of years travelling across Canada's Far North, living off the land and sketching the harsh Arctic landscape. After visiting Charlevoix, he decided to make it his home, settling, in 1939, in Baie-Saint-Paul, where he lived until his death in 1982. Like Gagnon, he was drawn to the region's hinterland.
Later, the meditative Jean-Paul Lemieux [one of Canada's best-known painters], he spent almost every summer in Charlevoix after completing his art studies. He drew his inspiration from the peculiar art of the region."

In the 1920s, Charlevoix caught the attention of a group of largely anglophone female painters from Montreal and the Beaver Hall Hill group, which included Kathleen Morris, Lillian Newton, Anni Savage, Pauline Herrard and Nita Colby. "Each," writes the art historian Jacques de Rooson in his book Charlevoix en peinture, "made at least one pilgrimage to Charlevoix to make studies and scenes, which contributed to the already considerable fame of the region."

Despite the wealth of artists associated with the area, there is no particular Charlevoix school, says de Rooson. The artists brought with them many styles. "In this confusion of styles," he says, "one constant emerges: the painter's astonishment in front of the richness and pictorial and chromatic diversity of the landscape."

Charlevoix was also to become well known for its folk art. "These arts brought with them the countryside and the era they lived in," observes de Rooson in creating what he calls a naive and primitive school.

Ironically, it was the folk artists who achieved the renown for which the more serious artists like Gagnon were striving. Exhibitions of the art of the "popular painters" were held annually in Pointe-au-Pic, near Baie-Saint-Paul, from 1934 to 1939. The folk artists attracted the attention of New York critics, and an exhibition of their work was held in New York in 1932. Today, the tradition of folk art continues in Charlevoix.

It is the picturesque landscape alone that has drawn artists and writers to Charlevoix; the culture and traditions of the region are certainly part of its appeal. Charlevoix is very much French Canada. Its culture, which stems from the days when the region was the heart of New France, has, because of the area's isolation, endured relatively untouched. The year 1987 saw the railway open in Charlevoix, but until the 1950s, when main roads were constructed there, the St. Lawrence was the primary route to and from the area.

In the late 1600s, Charlevoix saw its first colonists. They settled initially along the St. Lawrence and then, in the 19th century, began to move inland. For the most part, farming, fishing, forestry and shipbuilding provided their livelihood.

Huts of New France still abound — in the old "Canadienne" stone cottages with their steep roofs and dormer windows; in the charming old churches that dominate the villages; in the museums that speak of the days of seneg bapties; and in the many artifacts displayed in museums, old inns and private residences.

History is everywhere. Skeletons of schooners that long ago ran aground evoke a time when generation after generation of Charlevoix residents were shipbuilders and sailors. During the 1820s and the early part of this century, banners rang on anns all day along the St. Lawrence, especially at Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive and on Île aux Coudres, where, in a small shipyard, wooden vessels were still built using traditional techniques. Between 3860 and 1939, nearly 350 boats were built in Charlevoix — brantignies, sloops and steamers among them.

This century has seen shipbuilding wane in Charlevoix, to be replaced by the pulp and paper industry, a fitting business for a region where so many writers have found their voice.

In the late 18th century, when it became fashionable to take country holidays, Charlevoix became a destination for wealthy Canadians and later Americans, who were drawn by the rural life, pure air and beauty of the region. They travelled to Charlevoix by sailing ship and later by paddle steamer. At first they lodged in mansions. Gradually, inns were built to accommodate the tourists, and some visitors constructed grand summer homes, which can be seen today nestled along the trees along the St. Lawrence.

"IN THIS CONFUSION OF STYLES, ONE CONSTANT EMERGES:
THE PAINTER'S ASTONISHMENT IN FRONT OF THE RICHNESS AND
PICTORIAL AND CHROMATIC DIVERSITY OF THE LANDSCAPE"

EVENING, LES EICHEMMENTS, BY A.Y. JACKSON, 1937.

THE FERRY NEARS THE NORTH SHORE, DAVIVED BY THE high rock face that greets it. The dark, forested hills that rise up from the river and the rugged mountains that stretch beyond them in the grey mist seem to hold secrets. Charlevoix is a land that assaults the senses — it is easy to understand why so many artists and writers have been drawn to it. To Clarence Gagnon, it was "the most beautiful place in the world." For many today it still is.
From Halizahs to Kamiks

A new Canadian museum traces the history of the shoe both as a footprint to fashion and as an important cultural artefact

BY ALYSE FRAMPTON

"Some colleagues from other museums have complained that we show too few shoes here, but that's deliberate," says Jonathan Waldorf, curator of Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum. "We do not want simply to display footwear. The chief curator of the museum waves his hand as if to take in the entire building. "Our exhibitions use everything from high technology to 16th-century woodcuts to set a mood and put the shoe as an artefact in context. We want to show people how to 'read' the shoe for what it reveals about its owner and the culture it came from."

Waldorf is standing in front of the first display in the museum's major exhibit, "All About Shoes." Set at floor level is a cast of the oldest known bipedal hominid footprints on earth. The originals, dating from 3.7 million years BC, were discovered in a field of volcanic ash in Tanzania in 1976 by the anthropologist Mary Leakey. The impression suggests that the feet of our early ancestors weren't much different from our own and is an apt introduction to a museum that explores shoes and shoemaking, not just as a footprint to fashion but an integral part of human history.

When the museum opened in May, it attracted widespread attention - it is the only footwear museum in North America. With more than 12,000 shoes and related artefacts spanning 4,000 years of history, it is, in fact, one of only a handful of distinguished footwear museums in the world. Port of its permanent collection has already been exhibited in Paris, London and Munich and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. "Only a few collections of this caliber exist anywhere," says Karin Humann, director of the Dutch Shoe Museum in Schonenwald, Switzerland, who was present at the museum's opening.

"There are quite a few pieces with which we had in our own museum."

The collection was amassed over nearly 50 years by Sonja Bata, wife of the shoe manufacturer Thomas Bata. Today, Sonja, a tall, elegant woman of nearly 70, is sitting behind the shoe-shaped reception desk at the museum she established as a charitable organization, selling tickets and directing traffic. "Shoes reveal more about people and their history than any other artefact," she says. "They are intensely personal and deserve a museum of their own."

Over the years, Bata's footwear forays have taken her from Ellerman Island in the Canadian Arctic to Tibet. At other times, shoes have simply come to her - the thin star Robert Redford, for example, sent his cowboy boots unshipped. Yet Bata sees herself as anything but a born collector. Initially, she says firmly. "Her interest in footwear was strictly commercial. In 1946, the Swiss-born Bata was a young bride, having recently married into a prominent Czech business family. The Batas, cobbler's for generations, had mechanized their country's shoe industry and, by the beginning of the Second World War, had built their firm into an international supplier of footwear. In 1939, as the Nazis advanced across Europe, Thomas Bata immigrated to Canada, where he started a new Bata organization. Sonja Bata had been pursuing architectural studies in Switzerland but dropped them to help her husband build the new business, applying her bent for design to product development. On visits to new company plants around the world, she gathered traditional footwear to adapt for mass production. The artistry of the shoes impressed her deeply.

NORTH AT THE BATA SHOE MUSEUM IN TORONTO.
She also realized that indigenous styles were being gowned among western goods. Her gait, Bata said, was never simply to acquire shoes but to preserve the technological and cultural heritage they represent. "I feel I have a little bit of a mission to share the knowledge I've collected."

"All About Shoes" explores footwear through the ages. The approach is to make each grouping of shoes tell a story," says the museum's director, Edward Maeder. "I see how people throughout history have used shoes, not only for practical reasons or to indulge in fashion but to display status, symmetry and beauty— all the qualities that make us human.

It delights Maeder to see visitors whirling around the museum, lured by the beauty, exoticism and downright strange- ness of the materials on display. He is nearly moved down by a boy making for an ominous object brandishing with 15-centuries-long- set iron spikes. A wood and leather clog that was used to crush chestnuts in 15th-century France, it is part of a display on occupational footwear called "What's Their Line?" "Could it be a chop-and-whistle the boy, before dashing off to inspect another intriguing specimen, a U.S. army boot fashioned with a molded sole that leaves the imprint of a Vietcong sandal.

"We're out to amaze, amuse and impress people," Maeder says. "I think there's a great deal of pleasure in seeing that an everyday, humdrum object we all wear and take for granted has such incredible variety and meanings."

Like a father extolling the merits of his sister other shoe collectors, Maeder can't help looking attention to the shoes that are easily overlooked. "The removal of this shoe changes people's lives completely," he says dramatically, pointing to a draft, crudely made brown boot with rough leather toe that is part of a display called "Shoes and Religion."

"This is a halatshu shoe," says Maeder. According to an ancient Jewish tale, an unmarried brother-in-law of a childless widow is obliged to marry her. By publicly untying and removing the halatshu shoe from his brother-in-law's foot, the widow can release him from his duty. Another Maeder favorite is "Star Turns," a tongue-in-cheek look at celebrity footwear. To view the collection, one steps under a marquee into what seems like a movie theatre, complete with seats. The shoes are displayed orange background, a screen shows newstrial and film footage pertinent to the footwear.

"The shoes here, Robert Redford boots are in good company. Among other items are former prime minister Pierre Trudeau's scuffey sandals, a pair of pink satin ballet slippers that once belonged to Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, and Elton John's rhinestone-studded, platformed boots. Members of the museum staff predict that the popularity of wear designed for rock and roll will be eclipsed by what Jonathan Walford describes as an "excessively cheaply pair of Madonna's hot-pink platform with beaded stars," which were recently acquired at auction for about $3,000.

"All About Shoes" is complemented by the exhibits of three smaller galleries, which have more specialized themes. In the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas gallery, a high window of fractured granite on the sixth floor wall which looks from floor to ceiling. The work of the Vancouver artist Lutz Hauthchild, the window does not carry a huge price, casting shadows on the ceilings and walls, depending on the time of day. It is a detail that delights Monterey—making light pools on the floor and stairs, showing visitors the art of their feet. Adding to the airy effect, a wide central staircase with a glass balustrade sweeps from basement to top floor.

Plans for the future are ambitious. The museum staff will continue to collect shoes and related objects, with a special emphasis on Native American and circus footwear, and hopes to send exhibits across Canada and abroad. Sonja Bara's aim is to make the institution a centre of knowledge regarding the history of footwear, and it gives her particular pleasure that in cosmopolitan Toronto, people from various ethnic backgrounds will use the museum to research their footwear traditions.

With less than a tenth of the museum's collection on display, the director and chief curator are not short of material for future exhibitions. Jonathan Walford is eager to do a show on shoes and dance and another featuring the museum's wonderful group of native and early settler cowboys.

"I'd like to have as usual, provocative things," Maeder says, "like a serious, scientifically researched exhibition on foot fetishism or a fabulous show on Renaissance footwear, complemented by paintings borrowed from all over the world."

Wishing for his subject, he pauses for emphasis. "This museum's possible are unlimited, but one thing is sure— we'll never do exhibitions merely about shoes."
Buried Treasure

The oil sands of the West are a vast energy resource, and as Canada’s reserves of conventional crude oil decline, operations like Imperial’s Cold Lake development are destined to play a vital role in the country’s energy future.

BY TED BOWER

IT WAS MID-JULY 1985. Northeastern Alberta – lake-studded cottage country shimmered in another glorious summer. On Imperial Oil’s rolling, wooded leach pad just northwest of Cold Lake (a lake so clean that boaters scoop drinking water from it), the first two phases of the company’s long-awaited oil sands project were poised for their official opening. Pumpjacks modded in unison above some 241 new wells. The guest list was confirmed, the programme finalized, procedures rehearsed and prime rib ordered for 600.

For months, tiny vials were filled with the prize of the project: a heavy oil called bitumen that is coaxed with steam heating from 500 metres below the earth’s surface.

The processing plant’s flare stack, a symbol of the safety and environmental protection threaded through this $300 million project, poked into the big blue Alberta sky. In the operation’s new headquarters, a low-slung structure finished inside and out with slabs of black stone, the world was unfolding as it should for Howard Dingle, who, as area manager, headed the project. Outside his office windows, the poplars rustled and glistered.

But a moment later, he didn’t want to believe what he was seeing: the new flare stack – at least the top third of it – was engulfed in flames.

Hours after, recalls Ron Martens, now a field foreman at Cold Lake, a postmortem concluded that a stack valve had let volatile fluids escape into the flare system. They ignited and the stack was seriously damaged. The new plant couldn’t function without it. Yet in just four days, scores of dignitaries led by Alberta’s Premier Peter Lougheed were to arrive in Cold Lake to celebrate its opening. The ceremony could scarcely be postponed, but with no flare stack, it could scarcely go ahead, either.

The current operations manager, David Boone, then site operations superintendent for Midsway, one of the Cold Lake plants, recalls how gritty employees saved the day. A number were already veterans of the oil sands – some had worked in pilot plants at Cold Lake for 20 years, verifying that Imperial’s extraction system worked consistently and economically. They had shared in the euphoria when a 140,000-barrel-per-day megaproject was planned in the late 1970s – and had shared in the despair when price falls, costs escalated and the project was shelved.

This time, the idea was to develop the heavy oil – or bitumen – deposits in relatively small increments, or “phases,” expanding as demand warranted. Each phase of pairs would be able to produce 20,000 barrels of bitumen a day. When the flare stack burned, the first two phases were ready to go into operation, two more were scheduled to start up that fall and another two the following year.

Having got that far, the Cold Lake team had no intention of allowing a damaged flare stack to jeopardize the opening ceremony. In theory, the solution was simple: replace the stack with one from the uncompleted third and fourth phases of the project. In practice, it was not: the work would have to be completed within just four days.

But a determined rescue mission accomplished just that. When the day of the opening dawned, Dingle looked out his window at a gleaming, freshly painted stack towering above phases 3 and 2. Ten years later, Martens recalls the occasion with clarity and understatement: “It was a lot of work and quite a feat.”

The official opening proceeded on schedule, and everything worked flawlessly. After more than 20 years of research and testing, the Cold Lake oil sands were in commercial oil production.

Today, the Cold Lake operation – huge by any measure – accounts for more than one-third of the company’s total crude oil production. The only operation in this country with higher annual crude oil production is Syncrude Canada’s oil sands plant in north-central Alberta, and there are knowledgeable people who will tell you that Imperial’s Cold Lake operation could eventually surpass Syncrude. With eight phases in operation, bitumen production at Cold Lake is currently more than 80,000 barrels a day. The field facilities for phases 9 and 10 are nearly complete, and with enhancements made to the first eight phases, production could reach almost 130,000 barrels a day.

Phases 11 and 12 are currently in the planning stages, and eventually, the operation could include phases 13 and 14 and beyond. “There’s no such thing as a steady state here,” Boone says. “You live with hectic change, and it’s always dynamic.” There’s a sense of urgency when it comes to development – there’s impatience in the air. “What you hear,” says Boone, “is, ‘What is the hand-up on development? Why not now?’”

“Now, if that is in the future,” says Howard Dingle, now vice-president of oil sands with Imperial’s resources division. Dingle, a second-generation employee, was the first non-aboriginal child to be born in Norman Wells, N.W.T., the site of Imperial’s most northerly oilfield, where his father was chief engineer. “Canada’s oil sands are among the biggest petroleum...
deposits in the world— they cover an area almost as large as Nova Scotia. We've long talked about the enormous potential for growth and development of the oil sands once world oil supplies shrink and prices rise. Well, our conviction now is that production from the oil sands can be profitable despite flat prices and world oversupply. We're not prepared to wait on the sidelines for ever.

Certainly, some impressive strides have been made in reducing production costs during the 10 years that the Cold Lake project has been in commercial operation. David Boone points out that unit operating costs have decreased continually since the operation went into production, largely because the process for extracting the oil contains oil to be refined, with better and cheaper ways to coex the oil out of the ground being discovered all the time.

The principles that underlie Imperial's patented processes for recovering Cold Lake's bitumen are basically simple. Unique conventional oil, bitumen is too viscous to flow to the well bore and requires a different recovery technique. High-pressure steam is injected into the wells (which at Cold Lake are usually chartered in groups of 20 over a period of around a month. The wells then "soak" for about another month. During this time the bitumen is heated and softened, which enables it to be pumped from the well. After removal of the water and gas that mix with it during the process, the bitumen, now resemblingindustres diluted (mainly with natural gas condensate and delivered by pipeline to the American Midwest and western Canada.

More than 10 years of research have seen the discovery of more and more ways to increase production at Cold Lake. Currently about 25 percent of the bitumen in situ is being recovered, but Downs says that could increase to more than 40 percent, given emerging technologies—the industry's understanding of the oil sands is growing daily. Even before commercial production started at Cold Lake, Imperial had invested around $35 million in oil sands research at its pilot project and continues to invest about $15 million a year at its research centre in Calgary. Says Boone: "Research is no longer exploration into conventional oil and gas development."

In 1994, one in every 20 barrels of oil produced in Canada came from Cold Lake's 2,000 wells. The trend is upward and is not likely to be reversed, since Canada's production of conventional oil—oil that flows naturally to the well bore and can be easily pumped to the surface—is declining. The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, the chief petroleum regulatory agency in the province, suggested in a report earlier this year that nearly two-thirds of the province's potential reserves of conventional oil have already been produced. The report also scaled back the estimation of the province's remaining conventional reserves by 12 percent, despite a record level of exploratory drilling by the industry in 1994.

Quite clearly, western Canada's reserves of conventional oil, on which much of Alberta's prosperity has been built, are declining. But that doesn't mean that Alberta's oil industry is in decline. Doug Baldwin, senior vice president of Imperial's resources division, says he's convinced that the enormous deposits of the oil sands "have the potential for success beyond anything the industry has yet seen" and calculates that "more than one percent of this resource that is brought to market represents $170 billion in revenue."

However, as a heavy oil, Cold Lake bitumen does not contain the same kind of properties as does the lighter grade of crude oil such as those produced from western Canada's traditional fields or from fields in the Middle East. Rather, it is priced to compete with heavy crude oil from such countries as Venezuela or Mexico, which can be shipped fairly easily to the American Midwest. The difference in price between light and heavy crude oil has varied considerably over recent years—from as little as $4 a barrel to as much as $9 or $10 a barrel. Recently, the price spread has averaged $5 or less, and as more and more refineries become equipped to handle heavier types of crude oil, demand for such oil has grown. Overall, demand for heavy oil over the past six years has increased by nearly 20 percent, and Imperial's estimate is that it will continue to grow at a rate of about four percent a year until the end of the century.

The current expansion of the Cold Lake operation will cost about $1.5 billion and will add the addition of about 400 new wells, drilled at the rate of almost one every day (160 of these wells will be drilled on the sites of existing phases). The expansion will increase total production at Cold Lake to almost 130,000 barrels a day. Howard Downie estimates the remaining net proved reserves of Imperial's 770-square-kilometre leasehold at Cold Lake are at 200 million barrels (proved reserves are those known to be there, and which can be produced with existing technology under current economic conditions). However, even with the expansion project, less than 50 square kilometres are under active development.

Unlike at most wells, pumpsacks at Cold Lake are grouped, reducing the impact on the environment.

The leasehold is a mixture of cultivated farmland and wilderness. It is an area rich in wildlife: beaver, deer, lynx, fox, coyote and about 80 percent of Alberta's 320 bird species share the land with the operation. Employees delight in recounting sightings of wildlife, whether on the leasehold itself or during their 40-kilometre daily journeys to the plant from the communities of Bonnyville to the southwest of Cold Lake and Fort Centre to the southeast. It is a setting that intensifies personal commitment to environmental protection.

Indeed, a surprising number of employees at the Cold Lake operation who were either brought up in this relatively remote region of Alberta or have developed close ties to it during their working life. Berry Derry, for example, comes from a pioneer family that settled a few kilometres west of Cold Lake in 1911; his grandfather raised 14 children there. As a teenager, Berry, now 44, realized that he needed training to advance in
any job. He wanted to live in the region and he wanted a good job. As soon as he finished high school, he headed to Edmonton for technical training and to gain work experience but returned to Cold Lake as fast as he could—toward Imperial's second pilot plant.

In the ensuing 18 and a half years, Dery has held just about every available job. Today, he's the leader of the operations' integrity/safety training team, and he and his wife live on a homestead six kilometres south of Imperial's leasehold. There, with a spring-fed well, they have established a hydroponic business that produces bean and alfalfa sprouts. "Over the years with Imperial, I've had lots of diversity in my career," Dery says, exuding a quiet confidence that there will be lots more.

Then there's Chuck McClain, 35, who has "a military kid" fell in love with the Cold Lake region when his father worked at Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake (now known as a Wing Cold Lake), one of Canada's largest military bases. Today, fulfilling a dream of his youth, McClain, with his wife and two children, lives in the town of Cold Lake, which he refers to as "a jewel with all the qualities of a resort but none of the stigma.

Now a steam-and-controls team leader, McClain has had a startling range of jobs since joining the company in 1985, including involvement in the start-up of the second steam plant, a "debottlenecking" project that increased production and a mothballing project when oil prices sagged. He also led a team whose responsibility included investigating whether one of the plants had more parts, pieces and equipment than were necessary.

McClain says his conversation with comments like "Individuals make this company," and "If you can believe in its people, then you can believe in the company.

Clint Cook's roots go back in oil patch history to Imperial's discovery of a major oilfield at Redwater, Alta. His grandfather, who had settled in the area in 1905, owned the land on which oil was discovered in 1948—probably for him, not the mineral rights. Clint's great-grandfather had settled in 1894 at the junction of the Redwater and North Saskatchewan rivers, his father came to Cold Lake in 1967 to work at Imperial's first pilot plant. Clint followed his father's footsteps into the oil patch, working in interests "remotely Alberta colleagues." But his dream was to return to Cold Lake. To qualify for a role in bitumen recovery, he became a steam engineer and has the distinction of having been the first process operator at Cold Lake's Leming pilot project. He married a local woman and never considered the possibility that the megaproject would not go ahead.

"It was a stressful time when the project was cancelled," he says candidly. But his Cold Lake career carried on. "I always had a sense there'd be opportunities at Cold Lake," he says. "There are tremendous reserves, and they are bound to be developed.

Ron Olson, now a plant operator, also has deep family roots in the region (his father owned a trucking business in nearby Grand Centes). As a young man, he, like Clint Cook, sensed personal opportunity in the oil sands and trained in steam engineering through correspondence school. Then he joined the company, working in a variety of positions in the Cold Lake pilot projects and later, in the commercial operation. Olson balances his career with community service in Cold Lake, where he is a town councillor. Familiar with the activities going on in Cold Lake, he praises Imperial employees for being "willing volunteers." "They are," he says, "much more likely to say, 'Yes, we can,' than, 'We tried it but it didn't work.'"

Alice Tay is representative of the other end of the spectrum — people from afar who've been attracted by Cold Lake's potential. An accountant by profession, she's a University of Manitoba business administration graduate who took a summer job with Imperial in Calgary, planning to return to university for her master's degree. An offer of a permanent position in the comptroller's office, however, persuaded her to remain with the company, where she joined the comptroller's early professional development programme. Not a person to be shy about asking, Tay soon requested a posting to Cold Lake, where in 1994 she became a financial analyst. "I wanted field exposure to our core business," she says matter-of-factly.

One former Cold Lake employee who moved away from the area but still maintains a keen interest in the operation is Imperial's chairman, Bob Peterson, whose career with the company has been closely associated with the project. He first went to Cold Lake as operations manager in 1973, when it was a pilot project, and was heavily involved in the planning and design of the commercial operations.

"Our Cold Lake operation," says Peterson, "is crucial to Imperial. Increasingly, the future of both Imperial and the industry in general is going to lie in the development of this country's immense heavy oil deposits. At Cold Lake our company has been at the vanguard of technological development. Not only is the Cold Lake plant the most important asset we possess as a company, but it is destined to make a very significant contribution to Canada's natural resource earnings."

The mayor of the nearby towns of Cold Lake and Grand Centes, each with populations of about 4,000, are remarkably consistent when they talk about resident employees. Cold Lake Mayor Hans Thaddeusvich finds that Imperial people "tend to be the people who push for innovation and improvement." She sits beside two of them at town council meetings. One is Ron Olson, the other Richard Alessio, who is completing his term as a councillor. Imperial, its employees and their spouses have done a lot for the region, says Thaddeusvich. She speaks, for example, of Debra Pelchosky. The wife of an Imperial employee, Pelchosky has been leading a project to raise capital funds for an indoor aquatic complex in Grand Centes. Thaddeusvich speaks, too, of Imperial's contributions to the region. Recently, for example, the company donated $20,000 towards a $100,000 renovation of the community building office. However, he pointed out, the incremental cost of each additional Cold Lake commercial production phase grows lower. "Today, we can develop Cold Lake oil at substantially lower cost than we could even 10 years ago. In fact, we can develop Cold Lake bitumen for less than it costs to develop oil from a number of fields. Thanks largely to research and technological developments. There's no doubt about it — Cold Lake looks very attractive."

In more ways than one.
Canada in Transition

The changes that are reshaping our national and provincial economies also have profound implications for this country's political and social structures, writes a leading economist

BY DIAN COHEN

"The state of health is not as good as we were led to believe," observed Seneca, the noted Roman philosopher and statesman. Seneca lived in the first century A.D., but his words are equally applicable to present-day Canadians as they approach the third millennium.

Some of us are willingly moving forward, eager to embrace the 21st century. Others are actively working for the return of the "good old days," while the remainder live uneasily in a country that seems to have undergone enormous change in a very short time.

Some of us are willingly moving forwards, eager to embrace the 21st century...

It's not only rapid change, but change of a different calibre from what we have been used to - a change in our understanding of how the world works. Moving forwards used to mean moving forwards in the world, making progress. But today, moving forwards means adjusting to change and adjusting to the world of global economics and interconnected computers. This is change on a totally different scale from anything we have known before, and its effects are still only vaguely understood.

There's a sense that it's tough and confusing to live in Canada in 1995. On the one hand, there's the usual basket of issues that Canadians worry about - the Quebec situation, the deficit, the possibility of losing our jobs. Few of us have seen our wages rise in several years, and many of us have had to dip into our savings to maintain our living standards. Add to these concerns the recognition by Canadians that the role of government is changing, and it's understandable that some people feel threatened.

On the other hand, there seems to be plenty of good news. We are told that Canada has the lowest rate of inflation of any of the western nations. We had the highest growth rate in 1994 and most...
Moving forwards means adjusting to the world of global economics

The globalisation of the economy has made it virtually impossible to defend the assumption that government can continue to play a central economic role in providing for our wellbeing. It is true that government is still this country’s biggest single economic influence. However, in light of the volume traded on capital markets – now more than a trillion dollars a day – government policies are just too small to impose their will. Even if governments move in concert, the most they can do is make a small, marginal difference. Stated nakedly, the real question is whether Canada’s economy can remain competitive in the context of the relations outlined in the World National North America Act, given the potential benefits of free trade and the liberalized world economy.

We used to believe that economic and political space shared the same boundaries. But today, we recognize the interdependence of the economies of the Western industrial countries. The European Union is one of the world’s most trade-based economies. Only in Germany does foreign trade constitute a greater proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP). Although we talk about a national economy, the fact is that our economies share almost identical characteristics. In one respect, the nation-state is no longer the most important unit. The economy has grown to such proportions that it is no longer possible to protect the different regions of the country from changes in international price movements. Moreover, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have moved toward more centralization.

WHAT THE SITUATION DESIGNATES IS A FUNDAMENTAL REBUILDING OF HOW THE REGIONS CAN Govern themselves in a country that has become internationalized. This is not a particularly Canadian problem. Globalization – and the information technologies that support it – has wiped out the Soviet Union and brought into play the development and the market economy. Internationally, we’re seeing region after region rethinking its capacity for governance.

One possible outcome is stronger central government. However, the trend in Canada is towards a much more decentralized government. Most of the provinces have been demanding greater autonomy to tax and spend, and the realities of fiscal federalism are already moving in that direction. More responsibility for economic performance is moving to the provinces.

While a majority of Canadians assume that Canada will continue as a united but greatly decentralized entity, that outcome is not assured. Canada’s political survival requires that Canada find a way to generate joint gains that are better than those obtainable from free trade. The challenge is to emerge from this time of trial as a new society. One that has an attractive investment climate and public spending under control, and has social programs funded according to sound economic principles and taken out of the political arena. It will be a society that has an education system that makes available the best teachers and best sources of knowledge to everyone who wants them.

In mastering the process of change, Canadians will have rediscovered some constant truths, for instance, the important role of education in economic development, and the importance of protecting the environment. And in doing so, it can save the social safety net more or less intact, but it reduces the amount of money transferred to the provinces for health and post-secondary education.

This approach turns Canada’s so-called equalization system into one that systematically increases regional inequality. Think of it this way: More people live in the well-off regions of the West andOntario, so that social programme payments to the poorer, less populated regions grow more slowly than those to the more prosperous, more populated regions. Canada’s economic performance since the 1970s has shown the impact of these regional diversities. Our national economy works like a zero-sum game in which good times for one region seem to be achieved at the expense of the others. When international commodity prices boom, central Canadian producers complain. When resource prices fall, the resource-producing region suffers, but Torontonians do not notice.

And people move from one area of the country to another, depending on the economic performance of the regions. Shifting migration adds to existing regional imbalances. Canada’s regions hurt one another by adding to government spending. They don’t help one another much when they buy resources and parts from other countries.

Simply stated, Canada’s dilemma is that Ottawa no longer has the power to create lasting prosperity, but it has a constitutional obligation to use fiscal policy to promote economic equality. In other words, the federal government can alter the regions from the international marketplace but is bound by the Constitution to maintain equal standards of government services across Canada. Clearly, this conflicts with the provincial desire to borrow less in order to cut the cost of private capital.
The Oil Traders
Finding the right buyers — in Canada and around the world — for the nearly quarter-of-a-million barrels of crude oil that Imperial produces every day demands special skills and cool nerves
BY PAUL MILLER

in a quieter and somewhat different kind of dealing than that of the nearby floor traders. Barrett, who has already been at his desk for about an hour on this typical morning, is negotiating with potential buyers in the United States the sale of some of the 95,000 barrels of oil that come out of the ground each day. Imperial’s Cold Lake oil sands plant in northeastern Alberta. At an average price in the region of $14 to $15 (U.S.) a barrel, those are big deals by any standards.

Gord Barrett is one of a small group of people — scarcely more than a dozen in total — who, working from Imperial’s Calgary office, are responsible for finding markets for and moving, at the most advantageous terms, the approximately 240,000 barrels of crude oil that the company produces every day. They also look after the purchasers and exchanges required to meet the demand of the company’s refineries for 340,000 barrels of Canadian crude oil a day. (There are several reasons why Imperial doesn’t simply use for its own refineries the oil it produces, going to the market only for additional supplies. Some of the oil Imperial produces, for example, is not suited to its own refineries. Sometimes transportation costs can make it more economical to buy imported crude oil. And at other times the company can sell its high-quality crude oil at premium prices and take advantage of its specially equipped refineries to process a somewhat lower grade of oil.)

“This is an interesting place to work — you learn a lot,” says Al Dedesko, who, as manager of crude oil supply and marketing, heads the group. “There are not many jobs where you can sit down with another trader and within a few minutes hammer out a deal for 52,000 barrels of crude oil worth more than a million dollars. And despite the large amounts of money involved, the verbal deals that people make are binding. In this business, once you hang up the receiver the deal is done.”

Barrett has been selling Cold Lake bitumen since, as he puts it, day zero — “before there was even a pipeline to Cold Lake.” It has occasionally been an uphill climb. After all, in the great petroleum screen test, bitumen is not exactly a show-in for a starring role. Possessing larger hydrocarbon molecules than light crude oil, it is as thick as molasses. But to Barrett’s eye, this son’s cut of the oil patch is really just a thinly disguised silk purse.

“It’s one of the world’s superb crude oils for making asphalt,” he notes. “And for a refinery with the right equipment, bitumen can really be quite valuable stuff.”

Barrett’s Rolodex is filled with the names of people who buy crude oil for refineries with that “right equipment.” Most of these plants are large and complex — equipped with the cokers and other sophisticated “pens and kettles” that enable them to transform carbon-laden bitumen into high-grade petroleum products.

“I could probably put billion gallons into one of some of those refineries and get gasoline out of the other,” quips Barrett.

Just down the hall from Barrett, Ray Bosco, manager of oil sands marketing, is trying to find a profitable home for some of Imperial’s 50,000-barrel-a-day share of production from the Syncrude heavy oil plant in north-central Alberta. As crude oil, the Syncrude product is as distant from bitumen as alpha is from omega. While Cold Lake bitumen is presented to the world more or less as nature made it, Syncrude’s oil stream-on-tap benefiting not so much from makeup as from complete cosmetic surgery. (Although it comes from an oil sands deposit looking even more like molasses than the bitumen at Cold Lake does, Syncrude oil undergoes an upgrading process to remove some of the carbon molecules and add some hydrogen ones. What eventually moves down the pipeline from the massive plant is a crude oil lighter and “sweeter” — containing less sulphur — than most of nature’s own. As such, it’s of interest to refiners for a variety of environmental and technical reasons.)

“Syncrude’s oil contains only about a third of the sulphur of a typical light, sweet crude,” notes Ron Dobbert, a market planner with the supply and marketing group. “That makes it very attractive for many refiners, because they can process it in combination with larger quantities of lower-cost sour crude and still meet environmental and product-quality standards.”

Chuck Spangenberg’s job is to sell the 100,000 barrels of conventional crude oil Imperial produces every day. About 95 percent of it is bought for the company’s own refineries by Larry Merzau, a member of Al Dedesko’s group. “Conventional oil” is the term applied by the industry to all crude oil other than bitumen and synthetic crude. It can be light, sour or heavy and generally can be pumped without special treatment to the surface. Alberta’s oil industry was founded on and sustained for many years by conventional crude oil, and although it is in declining supply, it still constitutes an important segment of the industry.

Imperial alone operates about 2,300 wells that produce conventional oil and has a part interest in many others. From these wells, oil streams into Edmonton and other collecting centres from virtually every point of the compass. From its field at Norman Wells, N.W.T., which lies about 100 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle, the company produces 32,000 barrels a day of some of the highest-quality crude oil to be found anywhere in Canada, oil that reaches southern markets by way of a pipeline running along the Mackenzie Valley. From Judy
Today's motorists have come to expect their local service station to supply them with gasoline of a consistent and high quality. The challenge facing the refiner is to provide this quality and consistency from a wide range of crude oil under competitive conditions. Fortunately, not all the crude oil produced in Canada is of the quality produced at Imperial's Norman Wells field. Today much of Canada's production is conventional heavy oil, which, as the name suggests, is much heavier than normal oil but still flows freely under normal reservoir conditions, and sour oil, which has a higher sulphur content than the sweet crude oils.

Natural, these heavier and more sour crude oils command lower prices than their "cleaner" counterparts. Nevertheless they find a ready market these days. The reason for this is to be found in the economics of petroleum refining, where a cost-saving of a cent or two a litre can make the difference between an operating profit and loss. In response to such pressures, Imperial's refineries have over the years installed equipment that enables them to run heavier, more sour crude oils.

The buying process starts when an Imperial refinery places an order for the ideal mix of crude oil - light or heavy, sour or sweet - it needs to meet customers' requirements most economically if the types of oil are consistent and of high quality. The challenge facing the refiner is to provide this quality and consistency from a wide range of crude oil.

It's clear that crude oil sales are not only a major factor in the Alberta economy but in the economy of Canada as a whole. In 1994, total Canadian oil production was valued by Statistics Canada at nearly $12 billion. Canadian oil exports were valued at more than $7 billion, and even after deducting the cost of oil imported into eastern Canada, the country's trade in petroleum brought in foreign exchange of $2.5 billion - a major contribution to our balance of payments. That's pretty big deal, even by Calgary standards.

Creek, just northwest of Edmonton, about 11,000 barrels a day of light crude oil are swept out from the reservoir by hydrocarbon solvents injected as part of a $150-million enhanced recovery project completed in the late 1960s. And oil still flows, albeit in reduced quantities, from such long-established and well-known fields as Pembina, Redwater, Rainbow Lake, Swan Hills, Boundary Lake, Minusie, Borealis, Ming and Wizard Lake - a veritable oil industry hall of fame.

"Imperial has a unique perspective on this industry," says Larry Mierau. "We're not only Canada's largest producer of crude oil, we are the largest buyer as well."

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Dancing for Joy

Since moving from being a dance performer to a creator of new works, Vancouver’s Judith Marcuse has established an international reputation as an innovative choreographer.

By Brian Preston

IT SEEMS A CONTRADICTION AT FIRST, WATCHING A pair of sleek, graceful dancers imitate an animal that is the antithesis of sleekness and grace. In a rehearsal hall near Vancouver’s False Creek waterfront, two dancers from the Judith Marcuse Dance Company are imitating a pair of raccoons. Stretching, scrutinizing their surroundings, nuzzling a good-morning greeting, they rise to face the day and scurry about the space playfully.

Watching attentively from a chair against the wall is Judith Marcuse, who has choreographed this scene as part of a larger work called States of Grace. Marcuse, who possesses the face of a inscrutable tomboy and the tiny, lithe body of a born dancer, is 48 years old and hasn’t performed publicly in four years. But she’s still dancing. The act of choreography is practised by Marcuse as a dance itself. When the three dancers conclude the piece—the raccoons have been joined by the heroine, a young woman named Grace, whose “states” the work celebrates—Marcuse is on her feet, among the performers. She has them recreate a moment in which the male raccoon lifts the female over his leg and the two are intended to look at each other as if startled. “I was more...” She demonstrates that she wants them to twist away from each other and then turn back more sharply, using her body to show rather than words to tell. The dancers, still breathing hard from the run-through, watch and nod at her rendition of a pronounced double take. At another moment, the three dancers line up in single file, then kick sideways simultaneously. “This kick should be a little more...” Marcuse kicks sharply, precisely, showing them the quickness, the suddenness that she feels the movement requires.

Dance is arguably the most intuitive and collaborative of art forms, and the oldest. As the English essayist Havelock Ellis observed 72 years ago, “Dancing and building are the two primary and essential arts... their origin is far earlier than man himself, and dancing came first.” Dance preceded language and remains the human animal’s purest medium for expressing emotion.

Perhaps Judith Marcuse’s success as a creator of new dance can be attributed to the fact that she started to choreograph while still a child, before she could even read or write. Her mother is a pianist, and her aunt, Elsa Salomons, was a dance teacher and one of the early contemporary dance pioneers in Canada; she had studied under the German choreographer Kurt Jooss while he was in exile in England during the Second World War. Judith was dancing in her aunt’s Montreal school by the age of three. So Marcuse—fully a third of those classes consisted of making up dances, which was part of the whole Expressionist movement—you know, do-it-yourself creativity—

Marcuse remembers making up dances to Beethoven’s Bagatelles and Mozart’s Country Dances when she was five or six. “I had a little milkmaid dance I used to do with a broom,” she says. “Then, in elementary school, I choreographed a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Much, much later I was making guest appearances as a soloist with the Oakland Ballet, and I just got a heavy-duty urge to start creating dances. What happened was that I had stopped performing for eight months. I’d just come off an Asian tour as a dancer with the Tel Aviv-based Bat-Dor Dance Company, and I was exhausted. The urge to create came out of that hiatus. And since then I’ve been creating dances—22 years.”

That leaves a few years uncounted for some of them Marcuse spent as a self-described “bunhead,” training in the rigorous traditions of classical ballet. At 15, she left Montreal for London to study...
at the Royal Ballet School. "There I was in a Victorian institution with a hierarchy the likes of which I had never come across — it had a class system all its own," she remembers. "On top of that, the theory of the school in those days was 'knock em down, pull em apart and reform them.'" She survived the "hectic battering" of her ego and performed at the Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden district. Ballet, she says, was extremely seductive to a young Canadian abroad. She remembers being a teenage extra, "swimming at the base of a throne, watching Margot Fonteyn, the greatest ballerina in the world, perform on the same stage. Very alluring!"

Then, during her third year in London, Marcuse fell down some stairs and broke a number of bones in her foot. The injury failed to heal properly, and there was doubt about whether she could continue as a dancer. She returned home to Montreal. "Thanks to some very early use of hydrocortisone and a lot of patience, I did get back to dance," she remembers. "As I was getting back into shape I was invited to join Les Grands Ballets Canadiens."

At the age of 17, she was earning $66 a week as a professional dancer and toured every state in America except for Alaska and Hawaii — 29,000 kilometres in three months in a bus. "Now that was touring with a vengeance," she recalls. "We were travelling with a chort and a small orchestra — a huge trip. It was my first tour, something not to be forgotten."

Then followed eight vagabondish years dancing with five companies on three continents. In, the Royal Ballet in London again, Switzerland's Ballet de Genève; the Butl-Dor Dance Company of Israel; California's Oakland Ballet; and, finally, Baton Rouge's oldest and largest Ballet Rambert (now the Rambert Dance Company), which has a reputation for being an innovative training ground for choreographers. At Ballet Rambert, Marcuse was offered a chance to choreograph a new work with a commissioned musical score. "The first piece I did with Rambert had a full orchestra ensemble, a set designer, a costume designer and wonderful lighting. I was collaborating with David Hersey, who went on to be the lighting designer for Enrica, Les Misérables and all the rest."

As she faced the pressure of creating a daunting first at Rambert, Marcuse says, "I just swallowed it whole. I was so naive. I think the first couple of years for many choreographers is just a spilling over of all this work — it's a huge cathartic experience. Plus, much of my early training with my aunt involved making up dances, so it wasn't something I'd never tried before."

For another work for Rambert, titled Four Working Songs, Marcuse was inspired by a book by the American author Studs Terkel. She was invited to remount the production in Montreal for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, receiving for her work the Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award, one of Canada's highest choreographic honours. Marcuse was married by then and thinking of returning to Canada with her husband.

"She has no regrets about returning to Canada. "I had had one or two years a year, but I wanted to follow my own path" — it felt like an open field here, where I could just run and frill and fall and not have to pay attention as closely, not have to worry about history. England is tighter."

Since then, Marcuse has created works for, among others, Les Ballets Jaz de Montreal, the National Ballet of Canada, the Netherlands Duth Theatre, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the National Ballet of Portugal and at Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. In 1984, she formed the Judith Marrese Dance Company (she had formed its precursor, Judith Marrese Dance Projects, in 1980)."}

**MARUSE REMEMBERS BEING A TEENAGE EXTRA, "SITTING AT THE BASE OF A THRONE, WATCHING MARITZ FUNKEN. THE GREATEST BALLERINA IN THE WORLD, PERFORM ON THE SAME STAGE"**

**Arctic Sarcast**

Granta Stane, who spent 25 years as a soloist with the National Ballet of Canada, later becoming the company's resident choreographer, and who in May of this year received the Order of Canada for his contribution to Canadian dance, says, "Marcuse's work is what I would call contemporary ballet rather than modern dance, although the direction of her company is modern dance. It's rooted in a ballet technique. She demands a lot of company members — her dancers have always been extremely well-chosen. Her choreography has evolved over the last 15 years. It has become more inventive in terms of movement — she doesn't just arrange what she already knows. She's digging deeper into the emotional core."

"It's fascinating, the alchemy by which a wordless invention takes shape in a choreographer's mind and is passed on to the performers. "Don't you have an idea and then say, 'I need movement to express this idea'"? she asked. "Is it as conscious as that?"

"It is as conscious as that and it is also less conscious than that,” she replies. "In States of Grace, for example, I knew I was going to be working with animal imagery, so I started exploring how penguins move and how poodles and pigs and raccoons move. It was conscious exploration of movement there. On the other hand, when a dance has to do with an emotional landscape, I don't do any of that — I simply find myself in that emotional landscape and start moving. I get the artists I'm working with to start moving. So that comes from a more kinetic base. I have to develop a vocabulary for each piece I do, and that's usually pretty tailored stuff." She smiles broadly. "It's very hard to talk about this!"

"She agrees with the notion that the act of creation is a mystery. 'That's what makes it so attractive. Part of the joy is also working with other people — you are not alone. I mean, you are alone ultimately, but the input you get from the artists you're working with could send you in a completely different direction. The unpredictability is so attractive. Then, at a certain point, you have to close it off because you don't have any more rehearsal days — you've got to pull it together, and that's when it all gets pretty hairy.' Marcuse contrasts modern dance with musical theatre (she has choreographed staging and movement at the Shaw and Stratford Festivals): "For musicals and plays, there is a script, right? Here the canvas is bare. There's no point, just a bunch of smears."

Kathleen Pritchard, the 27-year-old dancer who plays the role of Grace in this presentation of States of Grace (it was originally commissioned for the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria), uses the painting metaphor herself later when asked about Marcuse's collaborative approach to choreography. "She's definitely open to hearing dancers' ideas. That's important, because dancers are so individual and so different from one another that it's really important for choreographers to key in to what's special about each. Dancers are not instruments so much as interpreters. That makes our role not too like a paintbrush.

Another dancer, Jean Guy Corsette, 13, a Quebecer in his fourth year with the company, describes Marcuse's working style this way: "She allows her dancers freedom, and she respects them a lot. That's not always the case with other choreographers. If I feel something doesn't work for me, I'll say, 'Maybe if I do this other movement it's better for my body.' Most of the time she will agree because it flows better."

"More than half the dancers in Marcuse's company today were not members when States was last presented less than a year ago. A dancer's life in Canada can be tentative, and Vancouver is a tough city for a dancer to make a living. 'The arts community in Vancouver is in a crisis of the kind we've never seen,'" Marcuse says. "The present infrastructure is collapsing, and a new infrastructure hasn't yet evolved. The artists and performers suffer enor-
Dancers are able to extend their careers these days, thanks to an improved understanding of health and nutrition, plus advances in sports medicine and the treatment of injuries. Marcuse likes working with older dancers. "If you get older, your dexterity, focus and your focus gets clearer," she says. "It becomes harder because you're a much more severe editor of your own work and not as easily enthralled with what you're doing." Eighty days later, States of Grace opens at the new Norma Rothstein Theatre in Vancouver. Alberta and Milne have recovered their zest of raccoon symphony, a week's rehearsals having taught them how to partner by touch. States of Grace was intended to appeal to people of all ages with varying degrees of understanding of the art form; Marcuse is delighted that there are many children in the audience and that they remain engaged throughout the performance. Later, she says that she becomes very sensitive when a piece isn't working. On this day, however, she says she was quite comfortable because the piece was in good shape. "This is the time I really get to watch the dancers at work and see what they do with what I've given them. There's great joy for me in that."

During the last few years, Marcuse has turned her talents to the screen, creating several dance films, including Second Nature, winner of the Silver Award at the New York Film and Video Festival in 1994 and At the Races, which won the same prize in 1995.

More recently, Marcuse has been involved in the Kio Project, a dance festival she inspired that took place in Vancouver in January and February of this year. A project of which Marcuse is particularly proud, it was designed so that creators and performers in Vancouver could share bridges, share resources and take more responsibility for the vital task of arts education — without which, says Marcuse, there would be no audiences. "It was really exciting. Eighteen new works were commissioned, eight from playwrights and ten from choreographers, each of which was five minutes long and continued on one kiss. The project also included several other performances, three workshops for rank beginners, open rehearsals, a retrospective of theatre photography and an interactive media installation. It was really an outreach festival."

The project was an enormous success, and plans are being made to repeat it next year in an enlarged format. With a wry smile, Marcuse likens the festival to a dating service. "We tried to bring people together who might not know of one another's existence," she says. "That's why the metaphor of the kiss. Making contact."