In southern Prince Edward Island, the Trans-Canada Highway follows the curve of the shore through a characteristic island landscape of rolling hills cut by small lakes and salt marshes. This part of the island was settled early in the 19th century, when the map showed dozens of villages, many of which have all but disappeared. One or two houses or a church and sometimes a white frame church or an empty schoolhouse are all that remain of many of these early settlements.

The village of Eldon, however, is still a lovely spot, with its post office and general store and maybe a dozen houses standing close to the crossroads, all surrounded by fields and patches of woodland. Eldon is about 45 kilometers southeast of Charlottetown, and it's here that Lord Selkirk (who was later to send settlers to Manitobia) brought his first group of Gaelic-speaking Highland Scots in 1836 on a ship named the Poly. Many stayed where they landed, founding the village of Eldon, which has survived ever since. (In 1922, it was integrated into the rural region—or community, as it officially termed—it-of Belfair.)

Eldon is a village where past and present are in close touch and history is well remembered. Even the schoolchildren are likely to know that it was near here that the famous Belfast riot took place in 1845. The riot, which occurred on March 1, an election day, claimed at least four lives and seems to have been impelled by those island standpatters—politicians, religion and rum. A by-election had been called after "wearing irregularities" had caused Parliament to declare the riding's general election results void. Tensions rose as candidates supported Catholics against Protes- tants, landowners against tenants, and reformers against Tories.

The incident had ended by the next day, and fortunately, that kind of ethnic and religious strife has not occurred in the area since.

In the days before the automobile, Eldon was a crossroads village, like Eldon were the vibrant centers of life on Prince Edward Island. "Eldon was a big place," said one elderly resident when he was interviewed by a couple of local historians about 20 years ago. "I remember when I came to Eldon first. Right after the [First World War] war. We had a bank and we had an Orange Hall and a Masonic Hall. We had a doctor, a tailor, a blacksmith and a harness maker. Right in the village. And then, shortly after that, we put up the Belfast Hall. The courthouse was at Eldon, where the Royal Bank was, and Moore's old store. And Haldane's Wharf, that was quite a business spot then."

Things have changed over the years. In 1996, when I moved here, one of the first things I did was to buy a newspaper from the local store, and it was The Guardian, the weekly publication of the Island. It's a village where past and present are in close touch and history is well remembered.
noticed was the empty house next door—a white frame house at the edge of the woods just behind our yard that had peeling paint and no electricity (although it was still furnished and had curtains on the windows). The story is a typical island tale. When the father of the family died—maybe 75 years ago, leaving no will—his daughters, following the path of many other islanders, packed up and went off to Boston to find work, taking their mother with them. The last of the daughters, feeling the loyalty to home that most islanders do, kept the house and made occasional visits. In old age, she got too weak to make the trip, but she never sold or altered the house.

Charlotte Ross, who told me all this, lives just across the road from me in another white frame house. Freshly painted, hers is perfectly kept and has a green lawn and tidy garden full of flowers and vegetables. Her late husband, who turned the land between that house and the sea, was a descendant of the area’s original Scottish settlers and a member of the Ross Clan of Prince Edward Island. When she was younger, Charlotte ran a successful beauty parlour just across from the corner where her daughter-in-law now runs the post office.

From Charlotte’s house you can see a road sign saying that a turn towards the water will take you to Halliday’s Wharf, but if you take it, you’ll find the paving comes to an end at the top of a hill; from here, a steep red-clay road leads down through a little patch of spruce and birch, stopping at the edge of the water. The wharf—road sign to the contrary—is long gone. At low tide the old foundations are visible, stretching out across the dark red sandstone.

Jim Halliday farms the land at the top of the hill. He is the living presence of the past. Now 75, he still resides in the house where he was born. Look at the 1980 map of the area and you’ll see the name Halliday on this piece of land. In fact, the family’s P.E.I. history goes back well beyond that. Early in the 19th century, the Hallidays were given the land in exchange for an agreement to raise, along with their own children, a girl named Mary Cochrane, who may have been Lord Selkirk’s illegitimate daughter. There’s no official proof that the girl was the earl’s daughter, but the provincial archives there is a copy of a fascinating letter sent in 1855 from Thomas Halliday to Lord Selkirk. In it, Halliday describes the way in which Mary Cochrane is being raised and tells the poignant story of how he had been unable to take possession of the land he had been promised by Lord Selkirk. The letter makes clear that even then there was gossip about the girl’s relationship to the earl.

In response to Thomas Halliday’s impassioned letter, Lord Selkirk evidently gave instructions to his man of business, and Halliday got his farm. And when Mary Cochrane died, in 1859, she was buried in the local churchyard. At her daughter’s instructions, the gravestone was inscribed with the name Mary Douglas—Douglas being the earl’s family name—and the words, “the only daughter of Lord Selkirk.”

Now, working with his son David, Jim Halliday raises cattle on the land that was given to his ancestor by Lord Selkirk. In the fishing season, the two can be found out on the water, doing what Jim has been doing for 45 years—setting lobster traps. The combination of farming and fishing is a traditional one here.

The old government wharf, one of the things that made Eldon such a thriving town, was named for the Hallidays because it was built next to their land. Jim has memories of travelling from the wharf across to Charlottetown on the twice-weekly steamer—the Herring—so his mother could take him to the dentist. The steamer stopped running sometime in the 1930s, but Jim has photographs of it and of the old dock.

Another of his photographs is of a crowd of people dressed in their Sunday best in the field between his house and the water. It was taken in 1903, the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Polly, when a grand tea party was held in the Halliday field to raise money for a monument to the first settlers. The monument was built just up the road on the hill near St. John’s Presbyterian Church.

Because the road that once led to the wharf is a dead end, there’s little traffic—perhaps only a tractor returning from work on the land. At Cooper’s store, at Eldon’s main intersection, however, there’s likely to be a crowd of cars. Although it’s in a large modern building, Cooper’s is a traditional general store. The proprietors, David and Glenda Cooper, live in a pleasant apartment upstairs. They are up and serving the first customers not long after seven in the morning and keep working until eight or nine at night.

David’s father, Max, bought the store in 1960, and David has been managing it since the late sixties. Shopping there, you’ll often hear someone who has just picked up a couple of items asking one of the Coop-
Looking Ahead

Imperial Oil chairman Robert Peterson discusses the year-2000 issue and the measures the company has taken to help ensure a smooth transition into the next century

BY ROBERT PETERSON

The prospect of mass disruption occurring on a wide scale has raised concerns that many computers and other date-sensitive devices—which are now an integral part of so many operations worldwide, from power plants to communications systems—could malfunction in large numbers simultaneously.

Like those of most major enterprises in the world, Imperial's operations have become increasingly dependent on computers. It's not difficult, therefore, to appreciate the scale of the disruption that could ensue if the Y2K glitch was not addressed—although I have to say that to me some of the doomsday scenarios that have been advanced sound needlessly alarmist.

A quarter of a century ago, when computers came into general usage, the identification of years by only the last two digits was undertaken by computer programmers as a cost-saving measure. Looking back, we might be tempted to regard the decision as being harebrained and sound. But we shouldn't be too critical of those pioneer programmers, who, in light of the extremely high cost of computer memory 25 years ago, it could cost as much as $400,000 to buy a megabyte of memory for a mainframe computer; today it costs about $1,000, made what could only be seen as a sensible decision.

But the fact remains that it is a decision that is providing us with considerable challenges today. The Y2K problem has been described as the most expensive glitch in history. The total bill worldwide is expected to be as much as $1.5 trillion (U.S.). For Canada, the government estimates that the price could run as high as $50 billion—the federal government alone has had some 11,000 employees working on its Y2K readiness program, which is costing an estimated $2.1 billion. And this activity, of course, is mirrored in the private sector. The preparation, however, has paid off. According to the 18th Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, published last May, Canada's 10 largest hydroelectric utilities are well prepared, and oil and gas companies are progressing well. The report also noted that progress had been made by both small and medium enterprises—albeit at an area of concern in previous reports.

The petroleum industry has been preparing for the coming of Y2K for several years. This has been essential, as computers and other electronic date-sensitive devices are used in virtually every aspect of our business—producing crude oil and natural gas, in pipeline operations, in the refining process, in the transportation of many different products to market, in selling these products to motorists and other customers and in hundreds of other operations.

At Imperial, where we have been working since 1986 to do everything we can to ensure that things will be working normally when January 1, 2000, arrives, we have spent close to $40 million on Y2K-associated matters. As you might imagine, ensuring that our systems are Y2K compliant has been an enormous job, involving many people and much time. In addition to reviewing all our mainframe computer operations, we have inspected every single piece of equipment containing date-sensitive components, replacing or modifying them if there was the slightest doubt of their ability to function properly when the clock strikes midnight on December 31. We have been through each of our four refineries with a fine-tooth comb. We have examined relevant components in every distribution terminal, in every natural gas plant, in each of our production operations—in fact, in every building and facility we operate.

In many cases, the manufacturers of the date-sensitive equipment and computer systems we use at Imperial have done their own Y2K testing. For devices or systems in critical areas of our business, we have taken the additional step of restating the equipment ourselves to confirm the supplier's findings. In a number of our operations, we have actually turned the clock forward to test our equipment's capability to roll over to the new century without a hitch. For example, we advanced the clock on three of our computer systems in one of our refineries to make sure the computerized control logic responsible for adjusting valves would continue to function properly (it did). To ensure that consumers would be able to conclude credit card transactions successfully at the pump after 1999, our systems experts tested the use of credit cards dated to expire after the end of the year, using a variety of simulated dates in the next century.

You could say that in many areas, we have seen the future and it looks fine.

The time-consuming task of checking every date-sensitive electronic device and millions of lines of computer code was completed on schedule by the end of the first half of 1999. In the course of this task, we discovered that although many lines of programs were fine, code was modified, less than one per-
cent of the thousands of pieces of field equipment (the individual components that make the refinery and other operating facilities work) in use at Imperial presents a problem of any kind. Those few that did were either fixed or the component was replaced and then the equipment restored.

Based on all the work that has been done and on a thorough review of all our operating procedures, we are confident that, so far as our systems are concerned, Imperial is ready for the next century.

But, of course, no company can provide an absolute guarantee that there won't be any Y2K-related problems. Our business is, like many others, critically dependent on a variety of external suppliers. For example, we depend on local electrical utilities to supply much of the power we need, and therefore, a long-term disruption of power supplies could have an impact on our operations. We are, however, encouraged by the state of readiness shown by our major suppliers, with whom we are in frequent communication.

What is also encouraging is the way in which industry, governments and emergency response organizations are all working together on what is in many ways a shared problem. Companies associated with oil and gas production and distribution, for example, formed a Y2K team early this year under the umbrella of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Members include the oil and gas producers themselves, the pipeline companies responsible for product movement and the power and telecommunications companies that support their operations. The team has identified areas of mutual dependency and the actions that could be taken in the event of problems occurring in any one of these areas. For example, pipeline companies and oil producers discussed the extent of their ability to store oil in tanks in the event of a pipeline shutdown, enabling oil producers to keep production facilities in operation. The knowledge gained has and will be used to improve individual company contingency plans.

In addition to addressing specific operational needs, the team is also developing a process for facilitating communications in the event of a problem so that appropriate action can be taken as quickly as possible.

Early in 1999, the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute (CPPI), an association that represents the refining and marketing side of our business, stated that it was very encouraged by the industry's readiness for Y2K and that it did not expect there to be any major problems in supplying consumers.

But no matter how confident we are in our preparedness, I believe that Imperial's customers and the public at large have a right to expect that we and the rest of the industry will not only take every possible precaution to avoid supply disruptions but will have in place sound contingency plans to minimize the impact of disruptions should they, for some unpredictable reason, occur.

As individual companies and through the CPPI, the petroleum industry has been developing contingency plans for some time. The first area being addressed has little to do with technology but is very much a Y2K issue. The thought has been voiced that consumers' perception – or misperception – that there could be a disruption in fuel supply might lead to a sharp increase in demand for fuel during the latter part of December. If every motorist in Canada decided to top up his or her car during the last few days of the month, some stress would be put on our industry's ability to deliver product in a timely manner. We expect to have plenty of fuel available – the challenge might perhaps be to replenish bulk supplies at, say, service stations more frequently than usual. In a sense, it will come down to the availability and effective use of delivery trucks during the crucial period. One step that is being considered is the early delivery of product to customers with on-site storage, such as heating-oil consumers, which would help free up more trucks for replenishing service stations during times of high fuel demand.

When the subject of Y2K comes up – which it does with more and more frequency these days – friends sometimes ask me whether there are likely to be gasoline shortages at the end of the year and how best to prepare. My answer is simple: "The supplies will be there, but it's best to fill up early and often." It makes sense to keep one's gas tank topped up during the winter anyway, and by doing this you will help to reduce the likelihood of a last-minute rush at the pumps. Although shortages, if any, would likely be brief – the time it takes for a delivery truck to get supplies to a service station – we want to avoid any inconvenience to customers if at all possible.

Through the CPPI, the members of the petroleum products industry have agreed that in the unlikely event of significant Y2K-related disruptions come January 1, priority would be given to supplying products to essential services such as the police, ambulances and firefighters. This was the second area of concern. A task force was specifically formed to address these needs and work with emergency measures organizations. In discussions, the group was of two minds whether to make this a formal plan. On the one hand, few believed that it would be necessary for these types of measures to be implemented. On the other hand, the remotest possibility of the Y2K glitch's affecting essential services led everyone to err on the side of caution and prepare for what is a "worst-case scenario." I suppose we were all guided by the lessons of the 1998 ice storm in Eastern Ontario and Quebec, which clearly demonstrated the value of advanced planning.

That being said, I am confident that such practical precautions as this company and the petroleum industry in general are taking, along with the plans we have in place to safeguard our supply chains, will go a long way toward making sure that our customers suffer little, if any, interruption in the supply of fuel and other products.

During the course of our efforts, we have discovered the Y2K cloud to have an unforeseen silver lining for Imperial. The undertaking has provided opportunities for us to dispose of much of our redundant computer code, to upgrade the efficiency of many of our systems and to implement operational improvements. As a company, we will continue to reap the benefits of these measures well past the turn of the century.

In the past, Canada's oil and gas industry has proved itself to be experienced and effective in managing supplies of petroleum products. With a track record that includes the safe and reliable supply of fuel to some of the world's most northerly communities and the barely noticeable daily transportation of oil and its products across this vast land via tanker, truck, barge and pipeline, the public will, I hope, be able to share my confidence in our ability to meet the Y2K challenge.
A Song in Their Hearts

A choir made up of homeless men, Montreal’s la Chorale de l’Accueil Bonneau has earned acclaim in Europe and North America.

By Shona McKay

As the 22-man choir completes the refrain of “Oh Happy Day,” the last song of its program, the audience at Toronto’s St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts jumps to its feet in appreciation. The members of the troupe, attired for the occasion in black pants, white shirts and a whimsical array of red berets, spangled baseball caps, tartan scarves and gaudy bandannas, smile and wave their thanks.

Ovation, as it happens, are not out of the ordinary for la Chorale de l’Accueil Benneau, a unique and quite extraordinary ensemble of musicians from Montreal. Made up entirely of men that society has come to refer to as “homeless,” the choir has won accolades and hearts not just in its homely journey but also around the world. As well as travelling to engagements in cities across Canada, the choir has taken its eclectic repertoire — everything from the Mamas and the Papas’ “California Dreamin’” to Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” — to New York and Paris.

The Montreal Mirror writer Philip Prevost, who caught the choir’s act at the Montreal Bookers Festival in 1997, captured the charm of the singers when he wrote, “They don’t much look like a choir when they perform. They don’t stand up straight and they tend to shuffle back and forth as they sing. But they...”
of the few members of la Chorale de l'Accueil Bonneau who studied music as a youngster, Lacroix is a soloist in the choir

"We believe that music is very good for the soul. I thought that music might be a particularly effective way to help the men who were destitute."

The "idea," originally conceived when Anthian was a volunteer at Paris's largest shelter, la Mie de Pain, was to create a choir of homeless men. "As anyone who has heard the Mormon Tabernacle Choir knows, music is an important part of my religion," says Anthian, who was once director of a church choir in Cannes, France. "We believe that music is very good for the soul. I thought that music might be a particularly effective way to help the men who were destitute. I hoped that involvement in a choir might provide them with a way not only to earn a little money but also to gain self-confidence and dignity."

Using word of mouth, posters and leaflets, Anthian put out a call for choir members among Montreal's street community. The announcement stated that no previous musical experience was necessary. Neither was talent. All that was required from potential members was that they show up for the first rehearsal on time and sober.

As the appointed hour, only three men appeared. But it was a beginning: "The day after, seven men came, and the day after that, we had 12 members," recalls Anthian. "By the sixth rehearsal, we had a group of more than 20." And so la Chorale de l'Accueil Bonneau was born.

With a hastily put together repertoire of four Christmas carols, Anthian and his rag-tag collection of choristers, whose members have ranged in age from 19 to 68, took their voices to the street -- or at least the metro. The first performance occurred on December 17, 1996, at Bern-UQAM metro station in Montreal, which has become the unofficial home concert hall of the choir.

The reaction of Montrealers was immediate -- and positive. Enchanted by the choir, metrogoers readily parted with their loose change. In the first two hours, the fledgling troupe earned an astonishing $800. "The money fell into the cap to the cadence of the melodies we sang," recalls Anthian, smiling warmly at the memory. "People were laughing and crying. It was quite astonishing."
in a Montreal orphanage, Allaire says, "I drifted through life."

In fact, the choir is the first job I have had in my life"

notes Anthian. "My mother wrote recently to say she
had seen it perform on television." The Bonneau choir members succeeded in hav-
ing an enormous amount of fun in Paris. "It was quite
wonderful to be part of the excitement," says Anthi-
ian. "Only one of the choir members who travelled
to Paris had ever been on a plane before. A couple
of the older fellows were particularly blown away by
the experience. And they all adored Paris — every-
things from the old cobble-stones to the Eiffel Tower
to performing at the residence of the Canadian
ambassador. Many of the men were also over-
whelmed by the courtesy they were shown. They
were not used to such treatment."

In a spacious, high-ceilinged room on the third
floor of the new Bonneau shelter, the members of
the choir have gathered — as they do every morning each
week — to rehearse. Along with Anthian, a score of
men are present.

After warming up, the singers work their way
through a running and surprisingly lyrical rendition of
"New York, New York." Again and again, they harmonize the phraseing of "king of
the hill" and "those vagabond shoes." It's an
appropriate song to practice given that
the following week the choir is scheduled to
tavel by bus to New York City, where
it will perform in venues ranging from the
United Nations delegates' dining room
to the grounds of Lincoln Center.

During a break, Anthian, who has
reduced his own work schedule by one-
half in order to meet the creative and
administrative needs of the choir, takes
a moment to share his thoughts about the
men who have become his friends. "If
people take the time to look, they will dis-
cover that many of the men and women
who live at the margins of society are real-
ly not that much different from anyone
else," he says. "Yes, some of the people
on the street drink and some have drug
problems. Some have trouble with the law.
But I have found that these difficulties are
often the result, and not the cause, of
their sad situations. In many cases, the
men we see begging for money or sleeping
in doorways have simply been unlucky
than you or me."

Certainly luck has been a scarce com-
modity in 59-year-old Claude Lacroix's
life. One of the few members of la
Chorale de l'Accueil Bonneau who stud-
ed music as a youngster, Lacroix is a
soloist in the choir. A native of Montre-
al, he served as a cook in the Royal

Throughout the following year, la Chorale de
l'Accueil Bonneau continued to sing and attract a
following in Montreal. However, it took a tragedy to
propel the choir into the national and interna-
tional limelight. In June 1998, a gas explosion at
l'Accueil Bonneau killed three people, injured 33
and destroyed the shelter. "It was very surreal,"
remembers Anthian. "It was luncheon when we
smelled gas. We decided to take our plates and go
outside and across the street. No sooner had we
done this than there was a huge noise. One moment
the building was there. The next it was not." Shocked
by the disaster, the people of Montreal
responded generously. Within months, $3.5 million
was raised, enough to replace the old, down-at-the-
heels facility with an attractive, modern building.
The choir, which staged more than a dozen con-
certs in support of the shelter after which it was
named, made a major contribution to the fund-ras-
ing campaign.

Encouraged by the success of his creation, Anthi-
ian initiated a bold plan to take the choir to Paris. "I
began to dream of the Paris trip for two reasons,"
says Anthian. "To begin with, I hoped that the
choir would inspire the homeless of Paris to form
their own choir. I also thought the trip would be fun
for everyone." Through careful planning ("We booked rooms in
a very cheap hotel on the outskirts of Paris," says
Anthian) and the benevolence of others, la Chorale
de l'Accueil Bonneau made its Paris debut that fall.
Happily, Anthian saw both his objectives real-
ized. After observing the Montreal choir perform, a
small group of homeless Parisian men took the ini-
tiative and formed la Chorale de la Rue de Pain.
"The French choir has become quite well known."

Léo Paradis

A cabinet-maker by trade, Paradis relocated to Edmonton with his wife and child
in the early 1980s. "I was working steadily until the recession hit"
Bonneau choir has given me many things,” Lévesque says. “It has given me friends and a sense of hope”

Canadian Air Force and later worked as an accounting clerk. At age 50, he was married to a woman he loved and was father to a young daugh-
ter he adored. “And then my baby drowned in a pool,” says Lacroix, his face crumpling at the mem-
ory that never seems to leave him. Deeply depressed by the tragedy that occurred eight years ago, Lacroix found his life unbearable. His marriage col-
lapsed and so did his job. His troubles were com-
ounded by a retreat into alcohol, and Lacroix soon found himself on the streets.

Good fortune also appears to have passed by choir member Léopold Paradis, a 45-year-old who grew up in Victoriaville, Que. A cabinet-maker by trade, Paradis, attracted by Alberta’s booming economy, relocated to Edmonton with his wife and child in the early 1980s. “I was working steadily until the recession hit,” he recalls. “When that happened, I was the first person fired.”

According to Michelle Latraverse, a Paris-based public relations consultant who helped the choir organise its engagement in the French capital, it was indeed the unusual sight of homeless men endeavour-
ing to help themselves that appealed to French fans. “Parisians are quite used to encountering homeless people on the streets,” says Latraverse. “But they are not used to these people trying to help themselves as the members of the choir were so obviously doing.”

Lévesque points out that there is one other re-ward he has derived from his association with the choir: “It is the sense of satisfaction that comes from being able to give to others,” he says.

The rehearsal over, the majority of the choir-
isters have moved to the ground-floor dining hall at l’Accueil Bonneau. Over a free and appetizing lunch of soup, chicken, pasta and fresh strawberries, the men begin to discuss among themselves the importance of the choir to them.

All of those present credit the choir with bring-
ing a new sense of order and structure to their lives.

Whereas many of the men previously lived a nomadic existence and barely fed themselves with-
out a bed for the night, all but one of the current choir members are now receiving regular social assis-
tance and all but two have secured permanent living quarters in rooms or apartments.

There is also a consensus that involvement in the choir has introduced a new sense of dignity into the lives of the members. Choir member Michel Voin recalls being so overwhelmed by the “magnif-
icence” of the beds at the Crowne Plaza hotel (which housed the choir free of charge) in Toronto that he “almost slept on the floor.” But he also remembers how “good” it felt to be sharing eleva-
tors and “good mornings” with nattily attired busi-
ness travellers.

Yet, like Lévesque, other choir members agree that the greatest benefit of belonging to the group is the opportunity to give to others. Says Lacroix: “Through the choir, I feel that I am doing something not just for myself but for others. That makes me feel very good.”

“Yes,” adds Paradis. “It’s hard to describe, but when I see people smiling so they listen to us, I feel a great joy inside. It’s a kind of magic.”

Allaire, a favourite among the choir members, nods his head in agreement. “That’s right,” he says. “It’s wonderful to sing and to know that you are touching others in some way. You know, I used to be a sad man. But these days I feel much better. The choir has made me happy.”

As the choir members finish lunch and re-
turn their trays to l’Accueil Bonneau’s kitchen, Anthan turns his mind to the future of the choir. In the short term, he says, there is an upcoming tour of France, Switzerland and Belgium to organize. As well, there are plans afoot to capitalize on the choir’s proven ability to raise funds for worthy causes in Montreal and elsewhere in Canada. And, he hopes, there are more homeless choirs to inspire.

Smiling, Anthan says he also has a long-
term vision: “I dream of raising enough money to establish a trust fund that will pro-
 vide the choir’s members with a retirement income,” he says. “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were able to give each old man $5,000 a month for the rest of his life so that never again would he have to worry about where he was going to sleep or whether he would have enough to eat? Wouldn’t that be truly wonderful?”

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A Sort of Human Triumph

In the 1950s and '60s, thousands of Inuit victims of tuberculosis were sent to southern hospitals for treatment. Mountain Sanatorium in Hamilton, Ont., was one such hospital.

By Al Purdy

At WOODLAND CEMETERY IN HAMILTON, Ont., there was a memorial service on June 11, 1999, for 37 Inuit from the Canadian North. All were tuberculosis (TB) victims who had died at Hamilton's Mountain Sanatorium (now the Chedoke Hospital) during the 1950s and early 1960s. A pyramid-shaped monument of grey granite, three metres tall, was unveiled. Until this time, the wooden stakes that marked the graves had been the only testament to the Inuit lives that ended in this southern city. Civic officials came to realize, however, that such meagre recognition was inadequate and moved to amend the situation. The story of the Inuit who came to Mountain Sanatorium is one of both tragedy and triumph. It is also a reflection of the times and the evolution of attitude.

I watched a Vincent of the service three years after it took place. The Reverend Brian Burrows, who had spent 13 years in the North, speaks Inuktitut and was once a victim of TB himself, delivered the bimodal service. Various civic and federal government officials attended, along with 30 relatives of the dead Inuit patients who had flown in from the Arctic.

At one point the camera focused on the visiting Inuit. They wept, some with their bodies pressed against the ground, as if they were taking strength from the earth itself. They heeded their love and loss into the warm June air, a lament that rose above every other sound, a great choir of grief. It seemed an inspiration for the camera to be photographing them, along with invisible memories and scars that were alive still in that mourning farewell.

Only a few of the Inuit at Mountain Sanatorium (said to be the largest sanatorium in the Commonwealth between 1954 and 1963, when 2,741 Inuit patients were treated there) could speak or understand English when they arrived. Their relatives often had only a vague idea of what had happened to them and, even if they did know, communication with loved ones was minimal. The Inuit patients were "strangers in a strange land."

When the C.D. Howe, a government vessel that patrolled the eastern Arctic and vicinity, anchored off Pangnirtung in the late summer of 1957 it was snowing. Located just south of the Arctic Circle on Baffin Island, Pangnirtung at that time was an Inuit community of less than 500. The C.D. Howe had come to the village so the ship's doctor could examine the residents and give them a TB x-ray.

The C.D. Howe's arrival was a big event for the settlement. The ship had to anchor far out from shore in Cumberland Sound because of the seven-metre tide fall; its helicopter ferried people back and forth.

Fred Lee was 19 years old and a history student at Hamilton's McMaster University at the time. That summer he had a job on the vessel developing x-rays, and the experience remains vivid in his memory. "We visited many of the Inuit communities in the eastern Arctic and northern Quebec," he says. "Everyone was x-rayed. Anyone who tested positive for TB stayed aboard ship and was taken south for treatment. Families were broken up and separated. There was no chance for people to get back to shore, snatch up clothing or a memento or say goodbye to relatives or friends. The ship had a limited time to stop at each settlement. Of course, a few of the Inuit didn't want to be tested, and they just slipped over the hull and vanished farther inland."
THE INFLUENT CALLED IT THE "COLLABORATING ELEMENT," AND THE "WHITE PLague." IT was highly contagious. During the early decades of this century, TB was one of the world's worst killers. By the 1950s, at least one-third of the Inuit population of Canada (about 10,000 people at the time) had the disease. Why? one may ask.

The English explorer Martin Frobisher first visited the Arctic in 1578. Afterwards, many Europeans were to come to the region (whalers, explorers searching for the Northwest Passage, military personnel, Hudson's Bay Company staff), bringing with them a veritable circus of diseases (measles, smallpox, whooping cough, influenza, etc.), most of them killers for the Inuit, who had no built-up resistance to these strange bugs. As a result, by the middle years of this century, many Arctic communities had been decimated.

In the 1920s, doctors began warning the federal government about a new old disease in the Arctic, a killer that knew no boundaries of race or colour. Eventually, the government responded to the threat, and in the summer of 1940 the Hudson's Bay Company supply ship the Nanook, under the auspices of the Inland Health Service, started taking doctors, dentists and X-ray technicians north to conduct medical surveys.

The Nanook, however, didn't have facilities to develop X-rays, so the film was taken south and developed over the winter. Those whose X-rays were positive were collected the next summer and brought south to be treated.

In 1947, the Nanook sank on a rock near Cape Dorset on Baffin Island. The 42 Inuit being transported south were transferred to planes and small ships to complete their journeys.

The C.D. Howe made its maiden Arctic voyage in 1950, when its staff X-rayed more than 1,000 Inuit. By 1958, half of the Inuit population had been X-rayed. When Fred Lee was on the ship during the summer of 1957, X-rays were taken of 1,394 Inuit, 93 of whom were found to have TB and one case of cancer.

The C.D. Howe itself deserves some comment. It had a length of 90 metres, a weight of 3,628 tonnes, a crew of 114, and a cruising range of over 16,000 kilometres and a bow that was reinforced with concrete, making it, says Lee, a "semi-oceanbreaker." The vessel had a crew of a dozen and a half.
Macmillan is emerging as a nationally, if not internationally, respected composer — and he is just hitting his stride. He has already written several classically oriented pieces, notably a work for choir, two pianos and electric guitar entitled Thé Three that Seek My Heart, a violin concerto called Echoes and a piece for a string quartet, which he has just completed. But his most ambitious work to date is the Celtic Ode for the Sea. A compelling fusion of Celtic texts and melodies, the mass is written for a chamber string orchestra and choir along with a Celtic ensemble of harp, pipes, mandolin, fiddle and guitar. Brinkenden created the libretto, incorporating ancient Celtic poems and prayers, which exuberantly celebrate the life of the waters covering our planet but also express an urgent modern concern for the health of the oceans. The most arresting line in the mass, which is chanted over and over, is in contemporary as the collapse of the coal factories: “If it who travels on the world’s trestles on himself.” These words, attributed to St. Columba, are from the sixth century.

Macmillan is emerging as a nationally, if not internationally, respected composer...
Keep 'Em Flying

Since the early part of this century, Imperial Oil has played an important role in Canadian aviation.

BY PAUL MILLER

Early on the first transatlantic flight made by a woman, refuelled with Imperial fuel at Terceuse Bay, Nfld. Wiley Post and Harold Gatty, during their record-breaking nine-day trip around the world in 1931, took on Imperial fuel not once, but twice — at Edmonton and at Harbour Grace, Nfld.

By the time of Lindbergh’s Quebec visit, Imperial had already established a solid reputation as the company to turn to for aviation products. A decade earlier, it had begun to promote both flying and aviation products through air shows and other special events. At Toronto’s Sportsmen’s Park in June 1918 the company sponsored one of those horse-racing-train-type competitions that seemed to fit the popular imagination of the day. Only this time, the improbable contestants were an airplane, piloted by Ruth Bancroft Law, and an automobile, driven by the racing-car driver Gaston Chevrolet. The racing car — given a one-lap lead and able to spin sharply around a tight track while the plane had to make two lay, looping turns on every circuit — won the race by a third of a lap.

Behind the thrills and excitement of special promotions, however, the company was quietly building the solid foundation of refining capacity and distribution facilities needed to supply the rapid growth in demand for aviation products. Cisterns of fuel were strategically placed in remote locations, supporting early bush pilots in their pioneering exploration, mapping and prospecting treks.

Not content just to supply others, Imperial had begun to build an air fleet of its own by 1930. The initial impetus was the company’s drive to explore, in its search for oil, the enormous sedimentary basins that sweep from the U.S. border to the Beaufort Sea and from the Rockies to Minnesota. After one geological party required the better part of a summer to reach a promising drilling prospect on the banks of the Mackenzie River (where, the following summer, exploration drilling discovered the oilfield at Norman Wells), N.W.T., which is currently the company’s largest single source of conventional oil), Imperial decided to invest in two German-built Junkers all-metal monoplanes, the Vic and the René, which would chart the travelling time to remote locations from weeks to days.

The inaugural mission, however, was not a particularly strong advertisement for the use of aircraft in rugged northern areas. As Elmer Fullerton, one of the pilots, recounted in a 1934 edition of this magazine: "At nine o’clock on a bright, promising morning [March 24], the René and Vic took off from the aerodrome at Peace River, Alta., ‘for points north’. The promise of the morning faded quickly as a series of blizzards forced the expedition to take shelter first at Fort Vermilion, N.W.T., and then at Fort Providence, N.W.T.

“Taking off from Fort Providence we encountered a new difficulty,” says Fullerton in the article. “The snow was so deep that we could not get up enough speed to get the aeroplane into the air. After two unsuccessful attempts, we turned back to the starting point and two of us, assisted by some of the inhabitants, on snowshoes, walked up and down until we had picked the snow down to a surface that would support the aeroplane skis”

In 1928, Charles Lindbergh (above) refuelled in Quebec City with Imperial Aeroplane Spirits. The René and Vic (below, on the Mackenzie) were brought by Imperial in the early 1920s.
An Imperial crew created a propeller (right) for the René from sleigh boards and moose-hide glue. Pat Reid (below left) was key to Imperial's early aviation business, running the René from the Gander terminal in 1945. (below right)

The discouraged party then winged on to Fort Simpson, N.W.T., where, as Fullerton described it, with beguiling understatement, "real trouble was encountered."

The René crashed on landing, breaking its propeller and one ski. The Wei developed engine trouble and couldn't fly, so its propeller and ski were donated to the René, which took off again and subsequently crashed, destroying the propeller. Fortunately, no one was injured. Initially, the party decided it would be impossible to build such a highly technical and precisely balanced piece of equipment as a propeller at a remote outpost in the Northwest Territories. Then, contemplating the prospect of spending five wintry months at the outpost waiting for a new propeller to arrive from the South, they swung into ingenuous action. The result was the legendary construction - from a few old sleigh boards and moose-hide glue - of the replacement propeller for the René, which would carry the party back to Peace River and eventually find its way to the National Aviation Museum in Ottawa.

Of the many actions Imperial has taken over the years to become a leading supplier of fuel and lubricants to the Canadian aviation industry (a position it holds to this day), one of the most notable occurred in 1934, when the company hired Thomas Moreau "Pat" Reid as its western aviation sales manager. Reid had been flying with the First World War, and by the late 1920s was combing the North in the service of a mineral exploration firm. During this time, he became the first person to circumnavigate Hudson Bay by plane and the first to follow the course of the Northwest Passage by air without navigational aids. He conducted the first aerial search-and-rescue mission in the Northwest Territories and made scores of friends at trading posts and communities throughout the North.

Almost immediately after joining Imperial, Reid led the first Trans-Canada Air Pageant, a tour of every city in Canada where a landing was practicable, to drum up interest in flying by displaying the latest in civilian and military aircraft. Reid was a visionary with endless enthusiasm for the future of aviation. He was among the first to predict the global growth in air travel and to sense the strategic position that Newfoundland would occupy on any commercial flight paths between North America and Europe. As a result of the measures he proposed, when the first commercial transatlantic flight lifted off a Newfoundland runway in 1939, its engines were running on Imperial aviation fuel.

Cormac Staple retired as superintendent of Imperial's Gander terminal in 1976. In the meantime, a history of Imperial's first 100 years, he recalled that the company, by being the first to build a wharf and storage tanks in the area, was able to secure a major share of the burgeoning business of fueling transatlantic flights.

"Back in the 1950s, when they were still flying the old propeller-driven passenger planes," said Staples, "there was no airplane flying east or west across the North Atlantic could avoid Gander. I remember days when there were so many planes on the ground waiting to be refueled that there wasn't enough room for them all to park. At the terminal you'd see people from all over Europe. It was a jam.

With the arrival of the Second World War, Reid's marketing abilities became redundant (every drop of aviation fuel was needed to fight the Battle of Britain), and he was succeeded by the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which would graduate 45,000 pilots. At Imperial, employees refilled their sleeves to find ways to greatly increase the supply of 100octane aviation fuel, which, according to Andrew Neubom of The National Museum of Canada, was used, that is, to have been an important factor in the Battle of Britain."

In 1945, as the war was drawing to an end, Imperial's ceaseless quest to keep abreast of the latest technological developments in aviation again paid off when jet fuel manufactured at the company's refinery in Sarnia, Ont., powered the first jet flight in Canada, a 12-minute scream by a Glomer Meteor between Montreal and Ottawa.

In the years following the war, demand for aviation fuel exploded - growing from 296 million litres a year in 1955 to more than four billion litres a year in the early 1970s. The network of Esso aviation outlets grew - to meet the flourishing demand; today there are more than 100 Esso aviation sites from Inuvik, N.W.T., to Windsor, Ont., and from Victoria to St. John's.

As demand for aviation products grew, the market evolved into specific niches. "We really have two distinctly different types of customers for our aviation products," says Roger Purdy, Imperial's vice-president of marketing. "On the one hand are major customers such as national airlines and charter companies that buy large volumes of fuel but require very little in the way of refueling service - even providing their own tankage and refueling trucks. On the other are the thousands of corporate and private customers who not only require fuel, but also may need services ranging from hangar space to computer hookups.

Imperial serves both markets. A commercial aviation group meets the needs of the few major players, and a general aviation group supplies the remaining thousands of customers with products and, equally important, a full range of services.

"There's no question that the thing that differentiates general aviation from the commercial side is the level of personal attention and the range of services our customers require," says Allen Johnson, Imperial's manager of general aviation.

In this realm of exceptional service, Imperial has been a pioneer. In 1968, at its site at the Montreal airport, the company introduced - not only to Canada but to the world - a ground-breaking service concept called Aviate.

According to company lore, the Aviate name was inspired by Habitat 67, Canadian architect Moshe Safdie's innovative modular apartment building, which had been a highly acclaimed feature of the Expo 67 world fair in Montreal the year before.

The name not only stuck, it spread. Esso- and Exxon-branded associations in both the United States and Europe adopted the Aviate name and trademark, with the result that there are now Aviate sites at 60 major airports, largely in North America.

And the emphasis truly is on service. At an Aviate facility, customers will find such amenities as meeting and conference rooms, showers, business offices, a pilot lounge and flight centre, garbage space, catering, on-site customs inspection, ground transportation, a booking service for local hotels and restaurants and even sporting events and shows...
Today, there are 60 Aviat facilities, just as these as Gander (above right) and Toronto (middle and below), at major airports, largely in North America.

Nuptials to Remember

Pat Reid to promote aviation. Other aircraft included a Beechcraft, Stagger-wing, another promotional airplane flown by Pat Reid, which the company inquired to the main reason for owning a corporate aircraft. And the front-line service people at an Aviat facility can really enhance productivity through the arrangements they make to speed up people to their ground destinations.

Another attractive feature of Sosa aviation service, says Smith, is the Airworld credit card. "I can use one credit card at Sosa and Exxon outlets around the world. At the end of the month, I get just one statement that itemizes all my expenditures—catering, ground transportation and fuel. It really simplifies the bookkeeping."

Pilots appear to agree with Smith. In a recent poll conducted by Professional Pilot magazine that attracted more than 12,000 ballots, Aviat locations in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary were voted the top four aviation service centers in Canada, while Aviat sites in Ottawa and Gander were rated among the top dozen facilities in the country.

Prime among the services offered at Aviat locations is a place to park your plane. At the cavernous Aviat hangar in Toronto, the spacious white floor is covered with what must be some of the most beautiful machinery on earth.

In one corner of the hangar sits the most recent member of the Imperial Oil family, a nine-passenger Canadian-built Canadair Challenger CLE60, acquired in 1988. Since the days of the Viscount and the Viscount, Imperial has owned a total of 47 aircraft, ranging from a Boeing 737, which was used for several years during the 1980s to ferry people and equipment to and from Norman Wells at the height of the oilfield expansion, to a tiny de Havilland Hornet Moth, leased in 1935 and used by Sirus not to have any air travel. They are lecturer's air travel—and a Leodester and an Electra—we have bought air travel for resource development in the years following the discovery of oil at Lebed. Also.

Not all of Imperial's aviation services provide the luxury of an Aviat facility. Some, like the Sosa aviation site in Yellowknife, one of the largest-volume sites in the country, are essentially just purveyors of fuel.

"Our Aviat aviation sites come in all shapes and sizes," says Brian Ahearn, Imperial's sales and associate manager of general aviation. "But they all share common elements that are very important to our aviation customers—high-quality products that are tested regularly to ensure on-spec performance, associates who are fully trained in maintaining product quality and dispensing fuel, and technical expertise that keeps us abreast of the latest technological advances and industry issues."

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FOR ME, FALL IS THE SEASON THAT I ASSOCIATE WITH WEDDING. THIS IS NO DOUBT because I was married in the fall. Although it was 20 years ago, it seems like yesterday that I made my way down the aisle of the little Toronto church. I can't say that I truly enjoyed being the bride (I have much preferred being a guest at other people's weddings), but I loved having all my family and friends gathered together and I am grateful for the memories the day spawned.

My children love to hear about their parents' wedding—about the friends who came unannounced from England; the song on the wedding cake that had set so hard that it shattered when my husband, Doug, and I tried to break it through it; and the magician we'd hired sight unseen who appeared bearing more resemblance to an officer of an outlawed motorcycle gang than to the refined conjuror in black tails we'd envisioned.

But Moray and Gideon's interest is not confined to our wedding. They are equally amused by tales of the weddings of friends and relatives.

Sometimes I'll tell them about my brother's wedding, at which I was a bridesmaid. His bride was of Ukrainian ancestry and this was a large Ukrainian wedding, complete with traditional dancing, dress and food. It was a great fun but had its challenges, the least of which for me was getting through the day in a dress two sizes too big. In the last of the bridesmaids to arrive at the bride's home to change. One dress remained and I hastily put it on. To my horror, it hung on me like a large peach. I tried to reach that someone else had taken my dress, but with the bride's father calling for us to leave, I had no choice but to remain in the voluminous gown. It turned out that one of the bridesmaids had lost quite a bit of weight and somehow convinced herself that her dress must be hers.

Later that summer, my friend Eileen got married, and I was a bridesmaid. The reception was held in her parents' garden. Unfortunately, summer had come late that year and the flowers that should have been in perfect bloom for the day were only green buds. Not one to be defeated, Eileen's mother, Mary, bought 250 gladiolus, which she and Eileen's various aunts and uncles "planted" in the garden on the morning of the wedding. It looked magnificent, and I can say that we can now know a mystical guest asking my father how Eileen's parent managed to get their gladiolus to bloom on the wrong day. "The kind of magic," her parents explained, "you need to know they have a special system of heating coils underground."

Mary was full of fun, and towards the end of the reception beckoned me to a quiet spot behind the garage. "We're going to have our own toast to Eileen," she said, uncorking a tiny bottle of champagne, which we sipped together in the fading light.

When Eileen's twin sister, Martha, married a few years later, Mary once again produced a tiny bottle of champagne and the two of us had a private toast to the bride. Two months later, I was married, and after the fairly formal reception dinner, Mary approached me and opened her purse to reveal one tiny bottle of champagne.

It is, however, the story of the wedding of our friends Chuck and Laura that amuses Moray and Gideon the most. Doug served as best man and I as maid of honor. It was a hot day in high summer, and on the way to the service we stopped to have photographs taken at what seemed to me a rather "creative" choice of location, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and then made our way to the Toronto club where the wedding reception was to be held. The minister had asked us to meet there promptly at 10:30 a.m., half an hour prior to the ceremony. We were there, but also, he wasn't. Guests began to arrive. Time marched on. But still there was no minister. At 11:15, when he still hadn't appeared, we decided to seek a replacement. Anthony to assist, the club staff produced the phone number of a minister who had married several couples there. Yes, she could do it, the minister told Chuck, but it would take her at least half an hour to get to the club. "I'm still my nightgown," she announced.

Arriving in little more than 30 minutes, she was a tall, fresh-faced woman wearing a flowing cream robe and a number of long strings of white beads. As we walked to the chapel, Chuck and Laura explained that they had in mind a traditional service. "I'll do my best," the minister said doubtfully. It was a lovely ceremony, although the rather unusual poem she introduced at various points was not something our friends would have anticipated. At the end of the day, however, they were married, which, of course, was the important thing.

WHAT I PARTICULARLY LIKE ABOUT WEDDINGS in this country is that they often offer glimpses of different cultures. Not long ago, while walking in Toronto's Edwards Gardens, I came upon an outdoor wedding reception. Many of the guests wore stunning West African dresses; others were in formal North American attire. Like the clothing, the music and food seemed to be a wonderful fusion of cultures. What a splendid reflection of this country's diversity, I thought, wishing I was a guest.

Recently, a wedding invitation arrived at our home. "Dinner and Irish ceilidh following the service," it stated. What a lovely occasion to look forward to as fall approaches. —Sim LadyLux