Hot clouds clamp a lid over the wild blueberry barrens of Maine. A bumper crop ripens too fast, 45 million pounds in a vast oven. Two thousand rakers race the heat. "Beat the sun. Ya gotta beat that sun, cause she'll wear it right outta ya . . ." (page 16)
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Cover photograph by Lynn Kippax, Jr.

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SHORT TAKES

TO BE ALIVE AT 100 IS an experience most of us won't have. To be alive and in good spirits and in full command of our wits and beautiful in the eyes of the world, who would dare to hope for that?

Alberta Redmond has done it. A few Saturdays back she greeted hundreds of her friends and neighbors who came to wish her well at the American Legion Hall in Cape Porpoise. Five generations of her family were there.

Three years ago, when she was 97, we published a feature story about Alberta in Salt. We followed her about as she tacked up posters and gathered contributions for a community fair. At day's end she was fresh and we were tired.

At her birthday party, Alberta was looking rosy and excited in a crimson gown, receiving guests through the afternoon. No prompting needed to fit names to faces for the indomitable Alberta, who recited her favorite poem without a hitch shortly after each of her five children proposed a toast to their mother.

With her iron constitution, we expect to see our friend Alberta Redmond once again presiding over Memorial Day services in May, keeping George Bush and all the rest of the wet-behind-the-ears dignitaries in their places.

JOHN PIKE GRADY rolled into town the other day. That's the "eccentric" John Pike Grady we wrote about in our special issue Eastport for Pride.

PHILIP THOMPSON OF 7 Ship Channel Road, South Portland wrote us a note we kept posted near the coffee pot for a month. "Dear SALT-Y, "Your in-depth reporting of local yokels and eccentric sociological and cultural "lags" gives heart to the possibilities of the survival of "rugged individualism" in the Northeast. The pressures to quench that spirit abound in all other media. Thanks."

WOULD HAVE BEEN here earlier, but . . . " Grace Chewning rattles into the Salt office, explaining herself. She's been coming to Salt since January, developing a preliminary index of our tape recorded interviews and transcripts.

Grace has taken on the noble task of putting order to our archives, a mess of papers and cassettes dating back to Salt's inception in 1973. Inevitably, she comes in later than she intended because she's had a late lunch with her daughter-in-law at Hennessy's or she was helping out with the inventory at Bradbury's Market, across the street. No matter, because as often as she's tardy, she'll be the last to lock up at night.

Grace retired to Cape Porpoise from New Jersey, where she was a librarian, but clearly she hasn't let her library skills atrophy. Her work at Salt, two or three hours a day, four or five days a week, is as a volunteer. She's keeping her hand in.

Grace finished categorizing our archives into four indexes before she left for Europe on a vacation October 17.

She used to tell us a story about the library in New Jersey, where one of her coworkers was also named Grace. "There's that Grace," she would say, "and I'm Dis Grace." Hardly. We're thankful for her skills, persistence, and presence, and we know why she's running late.

Letters and comments for "Short Takes" are welcome. Send to Salt, P.O. Box 1400, Kennebunkport, ME 04046.
ON THE WILD BLUEBERRY BARRENS of Maine, tradition reigns like a sleeping monarch. For a hundred years, old patterns of work, old loyalties, old fiefdoms, old links to the land have dominated the barrens without so much as bestirring themselves, so powerful is their slumbering presence.

Men like Bud Randall have lived their lives in fealty to the old ways. Bud whose father was steward to the same tract of land for 69 years, and then, on his death, passed it to Bud. Men like Hillman Foss, who unhesitatingly follow Bud, because Bud has made him a steward.

Men like Clarence Bagley who have raked the barrens for sixty years and will continue to rake “as long as I’m able”. Men like Jim Knockwood, whose Micmac parents and grandparents have come to harvest the barrens “for a hundred years”.

Women like Michelle Comeau, who have come hopeful to the harvest in their youth to make their first bundle of dollars. Women like Nelly Lefay, who have brought their menfolk from the Maine potato fields to the ready gold of blueberries.

In the last five years, abundance has come to the barrens and with it, a challenge to the old ways. The bumper crop of 1985 is part of an agricultural revolution that has arrived late on the barrens. New farming practices are changing the face of the barrens. Yields have increased dramatically, from 15 million pounds in 1950 to 45 million pounds in 1985.

Abundance deposes the old monarch. It brings big business, corporate overlords, fierce competition for markets, a price squeeze, and the attention of government regulatory agencies that overlooked a small crop.

The result is new forces at work on the barrens today, forces that will demand a mechanized harvest by 1990. The last large scale hand harvest in Maine will end (the harvest of trees and potatoes has long since gone mechanical). Only 20 to 25 percent of the present number of hand rakers will be needed to pick land too rough and hilly for machines.

Gone from the barrens will be the Bud Randalls, the Nelly Lefays and the Jim Knockwoods. The sound of the blueberry harvest will change, from the tonging of a single rake against a tough plant’s undersides to the roar of engines across the open fields.

—Pamela Holley Wood
QUILTING
PATCHWORK ART

By Mary Thorsby

Quilters have more in common than sore, calloused fingers and a weakness for fabric sales. They have rekindled a traditional art that—until a decade ago—was almost lost.

Quilting was once necessary to provide warmth in the home. Today women turn to quilting as a relaxing art form, a creative expression and a link with the past.

"You can talk to another woman who quilts," says Sharen Clark from West Kennebunk, Maine. Sharen discovered quilting three years ago. "You know you always have something to talk about. It's like an instant rapport."

The rapport among quilters has resulted in 48 local quilting chapters with 1,000 members across the state of Maine. The chapters, such as "Backroads," "Strip Piecers," "Country Quilters," and "Friends and Needles" have representatives who attend the state-wide meetings of the Pine Tree Quilters Guild in Augusta to plan such events as the annual state quilt show.

This year's show in July, with over 200 quilts, brought an estimated 3,000 people to Waterville. Some quilts were the work of professionals, while others might have been sewn with a crooked eye. The quilts included traditional designs such as Dresden Plate and Log Cabin, as well as the newer forms of applique and stencilled quilts.

Quilters who live close by each other meet regularly to work on their quilts while drinking coffee, eating a few too many brownies and passing on a little local gossip. They look forward to sharing ideas about color combinations, patterns, and techniques, and to the support they give to one another.

Here in the home of Sharon Soule in Cape Porpoise, seven women ranging in age from 30 to 82 sit in the den working on their projects with their bags of sewing on the floor beside them.

Sharen Clark, who sells many of the quilts she makes, cuts tiny hexagons for a miniature doll quilt, using the Grandmother's Flower Garden pattern. Joan Danckert, from Goose Rocks Beach, sews applique pieces on her baby quilt. Bertha Clough, from Cape Porpoise, works on a quilted pillow. At 82, Bertha is the oldest quilter in the group.

Her daughter, Linda Maling, of Kennebunkport, sits across from her, straightening the backing of her quilted table cloth. Kathy Jones, also from Kennebunkport, works on a latch hook rug. Kathy is the only member who doesn't quilt.

Shirley Bradbury, of Cape Porpoise, tries to balance her four month old baby while pulling a needle and thread through fabric. And Sharon Soule, who is hostess this morning, makes sure everyone has a full cup of coffee.

"It's a creative outlet. You can do an awful lot with color and patterns."
The women resemble an encounter group—trading ideas, joking about the amount of time it takes to finish a quilt, and encouraging each other to keep at it.

They talk about their children and their husbands, and share their own attitudes and feelings about their craft.

"I think it's, for the average person, it's a creative outlet," Shirley says as she juggles her baby from one knee to the other. "Most of us aren't painters or sculptors or any of the higher art forms, but you can do an awful lot with color and different patterns. It's a more comfortable medium for most people."

"And it's practical too," Sharen adds. She puts down her scissors and begins to sew two of the pieces together. "It's something that you'll have a use for."

"It's like an alcoholic. Once you start you can't stop!" Sharon jokes as she brings in the tray of coffee and sweets. "My husband keeps telling me too, that it would be cheaper if you start you can't stop!"

"It's always solved the housewives' dilemma for having an outlet," Shirley says. "The prairie women had no color or anything around them, and quilting's about the only thing. Not only was it practical, but it provided something beautiful in their homes."

"And they could get away with it, too," Sharen adds. "It wasn't just a frivolous thing."

Along with its practicality, Sharen sees an aspect of quilting which most art forms lack. "You can touch it," Sharen says moving her hand across her fabric. "It has a third dimension to it that just a painting or something might not have. You have this sculptural effect. That's one of the things that keeps me going to finish a whole big quilt, you know, watching it come together as one unit."

While the possibilities for quilting may be endless, the amount of time women have for quilting is not. Especially those with small children.

"You get needled a lot," says Shirley, mother of three girls. "'Mom, can I have a cookie? Mom, I want to go out. Mom, come help me.' I get about five stitches done before they interrupt me. I usually don't bother!

Finding time and avoiding distractions are just two considerations that go into making a quilt.

"Another is probably incentive," Linda says as she threads her needle. "I know that it's going to take a long time to get it done, so I just don't pick it up. And I'm the kind of a person that I do things in spells. I'll be really interested for a while and then I'll just put it away and won't get it out again."

"Don't you think you interrupt yourself with other projects?" Joan asks the group.

"Well, it's just like Terilee at the quilter's meeting said she counted up her unfinished projects. She had 63 and still going!" Sharen laughs.

"I'm gonna do that at home and I bet it will be in the hundreds!" Shirley says.

"Yeah, that's what happens," Joan adds.

"It preys on you because sometimes that fabric sits in front of you and it calls to you and says 'Put down what you're doing and come get me started!'" Sharen says. "And, sometimes you just have to do it so you can get it out of your system."

The women in this group have learned to quilt within the last ten years. Most of their mothers sewed, but quilting was not passed down in their families.
The younger women hope their daughters will carry on the tradition.

"Alicia loves to quilt," Sharon grins. "She's seven. She can't really thread a needle. She uses like, a darning needle to get it through, but she'll take all my scraps and sew them together. They don't come out straight, you know, they're crooked, but they are cute."

"I haven't started teaching my kids to sew yet, but I have a whole bunch of big bags of scraps and I've let them have one," Shirley says. "They're all real small pieces that I just don't dare throw away. And I find them sticking out of drawers and under things, and they just carry them all around and play with the colors."

"I find that with my girls, they're not interested right now," Linda says. "And even with clothes because it takes too long."

Linda turns to her mother. "Weren't you made to quilt?" she asks.

"Made to sew, yeah," Bertha answers.

"And you hated it, right?"

"Yes, 'cuz the first thing I had to make was underwear," Bertha remembers. "And that wasn't fun. They were the homeliest things you ever saw." As she adds that final "r," Bertha leaves no doubt about her birthplace.

"I think that was important because my mother did teach me to sew clothes," Sharen remembers. "And that was important learning, just having the fabric around and just the example, I think, of having your mother sitting there sewing."

"My oldest has a Barbie Doll and she just hands it to me and says, 'Mom, will you make this?'" Shirley says. "I think that's how kids with mothers who sew are. Usually it skips a generation. They grow up with it and they're not interested in doing it."

"And besides, it's available," Joan adds.

"You can't make somebody want to sew," Shirley says. "It is tedious. There's a lot of things that I can't stand, but I can sit and go blind with a needle and thread!"

"Some of it's personality," Joan says. "You need to be rather quiet and patient."

"That's my explanation for not sewing!" Kathy jokes.

Sharon gets up and offers the group more coffee. "More sugar and cream?" she asks.

"No thank you Sharon, I'm fine," Bertha answers.

The women are quiet now, each concentrates on her hands—pinning pieces together, making knots at the end of thread, cutting fabric and sipping coffee.

"You think a lot while you're sewing," Shirley says. "People think you're sitting here almost doing nothing, but your mind is racing about things you should be doing or things you want to make. Our minds never stop."

"Or just trying to figure something out, you know," Sharen says. "It's almost as good as meditation in a way."

"I couldn't possibly sit and watch television without my hands being busy," Joan says. "I don't think you need quiet for quilting. You make your own quiet."

"You make your own quiet for quilting."

The women aren't the only ones with an eye for quilting. Some of their husbands have learned to appreciate the craft to the point of recognizing quilt patterns.
"You can always talk to another quilter."

"My husband has developed an interest, he really has," Joan says. "He's started to say, 'Oh, there's a Bear's Paw,' if we'd go to a quilt show. And he's been, you know, 'When is the quilt show this summer? Up in Waterville, isn't it?'"

"You'll have him quilting before long," one of the quilters jokes.

"No, I don't think I'll do that! But he's very supportive, really."

"And they love picking up the pins!" another jokes.

"My husband will not sit on that couch," Sharon says. "'Cuz that's where I sit. He always picks the rocking chair because he's sat on pins so many times."

"I remember Sharon, your saying that you saw a pin stuck in your husband's sock, and tried to remove it before he saw it," Joan laughs.

"My kids know," Sharon says. "They check before they sit. But he doesn't seem to learn that."

"My husband has picked up an interest out of self defense," Sharen says. "I always took an interest in his woodworking hobbies and projects, so I told him, 'Well, you can take an interest in mine.' So, surprise of all surprises, he did!

"He comes up and says 'Those corners don't meet,' or something encouraging like that."

The women may have their husband's support while they are sewing, but when it comes to buying fabric, husbands are harder to convince.

"He's beginning to complain," Sharen says. "Kathy over here just had a sale and he said, 'Oh, you can't buy any more fabric, we just don't have any money. You just can't buy any more fabric at all.' And so I said, 'Okay, I'll get out all my big pieces and see, you know, what I'm going to make for some comforters to sell.' So I got all my fabric and I laid it all out on the floor and I had the patterns out that I wanted to do. I didn't have enough of one thing that went together to make a whole big quilt. And he looked at it, and even he could see it. He said, 'Well, gee, I guess maybe you better put some aside if you can.'"

The women admit to their desire to go to craft shops not only to buy fabric, but also to study the designs and colors of antique quilts.

"You get ideas from other people all the time," Sharen says. "Color combinations and patterns that you might have never even thought of. Plus I'm nosy," she confesses. "I want to see what other people are doing. And, if they're from a different part of the country, then they have a different tradition than we have up here. Some of them have had families that have quilted umpteen generations back. You can come across something that's a little different."

"Quilting is a link with the past," Shirley explains. "You know historically that women made quilts and took them across this country. It's a feeling that you get of 'I'm doing this just like women before me have always done.' A very nice bonding with people that you don't know and yet, if you ever find an old quilt in a trunk or anything, you feel like you do know them somehow, because you understand what went into it."

MARY THORSBY, a senior at Stephens College in Missouri, studied at Salt during the past summer.
TEACHING

IN HER ATTIC QUILT SHOP in Alfred, Maine, Janet Allen helps her customers choose color combinations, fabrics, and patterns. A collection of antique quilts is stacked on a round table. Bolts of cloth lean along one of the walls. Two long tables stand in the middle of the room for use during Janet's quilting classes.

Janet, born and reared in Alfred, has the ruddy glow of a farm girl who is used to hard work. She has converted her 183-year old home into a Bed and Breakfast. The rooms are furnished with antiques—each bed covered with a quilt.

But it is with her Calico Cat Quilt Shop that Janet seems to find her greatest pleasure. And it is here that she shares her art with anyone who has a desire to learn.

“You know, there’s a lot of love put into a quilt, there’s a lot of tears,” Janet says looking around the room. “You never know why a quilt is made. I have a friend whose husband was exceedingly ill and she made one of the most marvelous quilts while she was going through that period, so you never know when you see some of the old ones, you know, what has happened. What has driven women to do it.

“Quilts have a lot of stories to them,” she says. “We all have heard of a young girl who before she could get married had to have 12 quilts made. Her 13th was her bridal quilt, which was never done until after she was engaged.

“That’s one of the wife’s tales that comes down, and I think it’s probably pretty true. In some of the older antique auctions you will find maybe a collection of 13 or 14 quilts.”

Along with telling a story, quilts often reflect the attitudes of the times.

“You find a lot of your older quilts are made during stress times, war times, sad times, and it shows in them. But, you see very happy quilts—children’s quilts and things.

“And you had your period of quilters in the late 1800s or mid 1900s—your Victorian crazy quilts, which have marvelous, marvelous workmanship. Good ones. You know, like your Drunkard's Path. I suppose the way it curves and curves and curves, I suppose they thought they were following someone home who had one too many.”

Janet believes women today turn to quilting with hopes of finding some sense of the past.

“People are very, very sick of the fastness of this life right now,” she says. “And quilting will take them back to a time when it wasn’t. And if they want to do it bad enough, despite the jobs, the working, everything else, they’ll do it. And they put just as much love into it as they did years ago.”
LEARNING TO QUILT

ALICIA KNEELS ON THE floor surrounded by colorful squares of fabric, her scrap basket, her pattern and four strips of a quilt that she began making two days ago. It’s summer, and she gets to go barefoot. She concentrates on threading her needle while her straight brown hair falls in her eyes. Her mom brushes it back.

“Told didn’t brush my hair this morning,” Alicia giggles. “I might have brushed it when it was wet, but not when it was dry.”

Alicia, who just finished the first grade at Kennebunkport Consolidated School, says her mother, Sharon Soule, taught her to quilt “quite a long time ago,” although she doesn’t remember exactly when.

“I promised my mom that when I grow up I’m gonna sew,” Alicia says as she pulls the thread through her needle. But she pulls too far.

“I lost that thread again,” she laughs. “Here it is.” She picks it up and rethreads the needle.

“I make a whole strip of six,” Alicia explains, holding up her quilt. “But one of these (rows) have five ‘cuz they fit, so I just put it in! It fell apart today and my mom sewed it back together.”

“That’s because sometimes you forget to make the knot at the end,” her mother reminds her.

“I keep on forgetting to pin, too!” Alicia says.

The thread falls out of her needle again. Threading is the hardest part, Alicia says. She tries to push the thread back through, but this time she can’t.

“‘I keep on forgetting to pin, too!’” Alicia says.

The thread falls out of her needle again. Threading is the hardest part, Alicia says. She tries to push the thread back through, but this time she can’t. Threading the needle isn’t the only frustrating part of quilting. Alicia, like many quilters, has a hard time keeping up with her needle.

“Sometimes when I lose my needle I have to take my scissors and go like that,” she says as she drags her scissors across the floor. “The needle sticks to it. But most of the time I just use my hands, and all the time I try to find it I prick myself because I put my finger right on the tip. It takes some skin off it.”

Lost pins are a problem, too.

“I just lose them, and see that there isn’t any pins there and I just sit down on that spot and then I search for them. I go round and round and I put my knee on them and I go AH!”

Alicia hasn’t decided how big to make her quilt, but she and her mom have plans for finishing it. “We’re going to, me and my mom are going to put the background on it together.”

“And, where’s that heart?” she says, looking through her pile of squares. “There’s a heart and I’m putting it in the middle. But I don’t want it to cover (one of the pieces) because that’s my best material. It’s only one kind.” She finds the square with a light purple design. “It’s my favorite, and I want my mom to get me some more. Right mom?” Alicia asks.

Her mother nods.

While Alicia likes to quilt with her mom, after a while she finds it hard to keep her mind on it.

“When I get tired I, um, I just get all my stuff and put it away. And then, I, um, go watch T.V.”
FOR EUNICE McCabe, an 82 year old quilter, learning has no age limit. She learned to quilt five years ago.

"Sewing's always been easy for me," says Eunice. "The only thing that's hard is making myself keep at it and do it."

"I went to the class to learn how to do it right," Eunice says as she leans back in her velveteen recliner in her trailer home in Lebanon, Maine. "And then I found that I actually liked the stitches and keeping my hands busy. And also liked all the companionship of all those classes. I do it as, you know, just to forget reality the way some people sit and read a book," she says as she picks up two small triangles of fabric and begins to stitch them together.

With four children, 17 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren, Eunice uses her creative talents around Christmas time to make gifts instead of buying them.

"I try to (make them) because I can't afford to buy things, being on Social Security," she says. "But that's my Waterloo. I don't get 'em done. So now I try to get into making Christmas ornaments and either send one to each child or to each household."

Over the years, Eunice has picked up hints from other quilters to make her task easier.

"We were taught to wax our thread," Eunice says as she pulls her thread through a wax container. "It doesn't knot as easily. So I try to do what I'm told."

She also uses a special technique for making a knot.

"You put your thread around your needle and then you wind it around about four times and pull your needle through. And there's your knot."

Eunice tries to go to as many classes as she can, but says she does it for "no particularly good reason."

"That's my trouble. Every time something new comes up, I want to learn how to do it."

Learning has been an important part of Eunice's life. She earned a nursing degree at Simmons College in Boston in 1926—a time when few women continued their education.

"My father always wanted my sister and myself to go to college," Eunice remembers. "He felt that he wanted us to be equipped to earn our own living if we had to. And so when he died, my mother wanted to fulfill what he wanted.

Eunice puts down her sewing and pulls out a worn scrap of paper from one of her many bags of sewing gear.

"It's um, it's a little article that my mother always used to tell us, which I saved."

An intelligent superficiality is more to be desired than an indiscriminate thoroughness.

"That's what they always said about me," Eunice laughs. "She first showed us this back when I was in high school when we rented rooms and she had the dining room. Well, my sister would wait on tables and I was elected to wash dishes. Well, we'd get the dishes all out of the dining room and I'd scrape 'em and stack 'em up beautifully. By the end of the time everybody was eating, I still had to wash the dishes! That was the indiscriminate thoroughness."

"I have to do it right," she says. "I can't do it the other way."

Learning has no age limit.
SALT MARSH DIKES
By David C. Smith

David Smith, Professor of History at the University of Maine at Orono and a member of Salt's Academic Board, flew down to Salt weekly during the fall of 1984 to lecture and work with students. His visits were part of Salt's visiting professor and lecturer series funded by the Exxon Education Foundation.

Several of David Smith's talks were about salt marsh dikes that ranged along the coast of Maine from the late eighteenth century into the
TEN YEARS AGO, I wouldn't have known a dike from a chair probably. I didn't think there were any in North America. No one had ever talked about it. There's nothing in the literature about it. And then suddenly we found one and they asked me to date it and I dated that first one. This was in Machias.

When people came to this area, they were interested in making as much money as they could. These giant salt marshes were a potential source of hay for cattle, especially if you could stabilize it. They developed a technique based on the same technique that was used in Brittany and the Netherlands and the south of England, translated that technique here and salt marsh lands became some of the most valuable lands along the Maine coast.

Before a dike, it's all salt marsh. Once you dike it, you're controlling the salinity, and thus controlling the grasses that grow. They knew this zonation business, and so the deeds talk about thatch grass which is the lowest level because you use it to thatch houses, though they didn't thatch houses in Maine. Then there is browse which is winter feed, very salt hay. And then salt hay. Then English hay.

You can't do anything with those salt marshes until they are consolidated into one or two hands or families' hands. You can take hay off them, but you can't control them or manipulate them. Once that consolidation occurs, we find that within a year or two, you get a dike on the land.

Three men, on a river bank that needs to be diked, organize themselves so that one person cutting sods—usually about 14 inches long and about six inches wide—cuts sods away from the bank, about 20, 30 feet. He cuts those sods and the diking spade is designed to hold one sod. He passes the sod on his diking spade to the middle man who accepts it, turns around and gives it to the person who is laying the sod, brick fashion, building up the dike itself.

The dike usually has a more or less even, perpendicular front side, that is, the side near the water. Whereas the back side slopes away towards the hole where the sods have come. The dike is built up (two or two and a half feet) until it's quite far above any salt water incursion, except a very abnormal tide or a storm.

About every 50 feet, sometimes more, occasionally less, the dike is breached and a square box of wood is laid down in the dike with a swinging door hung from the top. That device is called a flapper valve. It allows the dike to drain itself on an automatic and regular basis whether anyone's there or not.

That works really through a kind of specific gravity. You're dealing with fresh water on one side and salt water on the other. There is a difference in specific gravity between the water coming out and the water going in. As the tide goes out, it hits the flapper valve and it goes open. But as the tide comes back, the valve closes.

If you just let it go, what you've got is salt water coming
out, no salt water coming in except underneath, and ultimately you'll get fresh water marsh there.

It allows the persons owning the dikes do one or two things. They either can control the amount of salt water they have which gives you a steady flow of grass. Or if you want to, you can drain it entirely which is the way the Dutch have done to get fresh meadow eventually. The process to create fresh meadow out of salt marsh is about 20 years, until the land is leached.

There is an economic value to both ways. If you're going to be as the Dutch have been, in the dairy business, you may want fresh meadow in order to insure that the taste of the milk is kept constant. On the other hand, if you're using it for a supplementary feed, the amount of the grass rather than the quality is more significant.

If you go out on a salt marsh today in low water, there's a great deal of sponge and give to it. The more you control the drainage—it'll still be spongy, it'll still be on top of peat—but it won't have so much water in it. You could go on the dike and cut it with a scythe, but the problem is to get it back.

So it needs to be firm enough to support a horse or to support a wagon or alternatively to create a place where you can store the hay and then when it freezes come out and get it.

Once you've cut the stuff, you can't let it stay out there in the wet again. So they developed a technique of building a haycock on the marshes, but settled on cedar or oak posts driven into the marsh that stayed there all the time. The hay is laid much as you were putting in a barn with a oval cupola so that it will shed water on top. And it set up in the air probably 18 inches or 2 feet. The hay would be then above the high water mark.

So you've got two methods. One is that the hay is cut, laid in wind rows. Then you put the horses out with your wagons, usually through a corduroy road. But then you've got to collect the hay out here. If it's narrow enough, you can just move the hay to the wagon that stays on the corduroy road.

Or you've got to get the horse off the corduroy road, which means you've got to give him something so he won't sink in. They experimented and developed what they called bog shoes which are essentially a snowshoe for horses.

The ones I've seen are about a foot across with a place for the horse shoe in this flat piece of wood, and then strapped up to the horse's leg, up almost to the fetlock so that the horse is walking along with these bog shoes so that he wouldn't sink down. Apparently the horses had no problems with this.

The last working dike in Maine was in Addison. They were still using that as late as 1946 as a source of hay to burn blueberry fields in Northfield and those areas. He stopped doing it because Number 6 fuel became cheaper than to hay it. Obviously in his case, he wasn't repairing it. The last time this had been repaired was 1914.

I talked to two men who had done it. The fascinating thing was to meet these two men, in their nineties, who had actually done some of this work and could describe it for me. This is literally recovering the world we have lost.

[Cartoon images: Haycock driven into the marsh, He gathers the hay, in winter with horses, that wear bog shoes.]
HOT CLOUDS CLAMP A lid over the wild blueberry barrens of Maine. Under the lid, a bumper crop ripens too fast, 45 million pounds turning purple in a vast oven of 100,000 acres.

The white August clouds burn rivulets of sweat from the backs of two thousand rakers who race the heat, bent to the ground to comb low, ungiving plants.

"Beat that sun."

"Ya gotta beat that sun, because she'll wear it right outta ya."

"Go full tilt the first three hours in the mornin', just BURN."

"That's the whole secret is BEAT THAT SUN."

The sun is enemy. It saps rakers and hurries the harvest.

A week ago, at harvest's start, the sun was friend.

"The weather's too damn good." Wendell Torrey squints at the sky, mops his brow with a dusty kerchief, gnaws from a plug of tobacco, and begins to string a new field.

He crosses land bellied flat by marauding glaciers that took trees, mountains, topsoil. What is left is powdered rock, thin nurture for only the toughest, wildest plants.

Here on the barrens, in this place of holdover fiefdoms, Wendell is a "lease holder" in name, a crew boss in function. His rakers sign on with him because of old loyalties or because they think he'll do right by them.

Wendell belongs to old harvest patterns that are changing rapidly on the barrens. The bumper crop itself is part of an agricultural revolution that has come late to the barrens. Other changes pluck migrant workers from their traditional isolated, primitive barrens camps, placing them on U.S. Department of Labor approved compounds and — ultimately, will replace 50 to 75 percent of them with machines.

In the harvest of 1985, most of the traditions of the blueberry harvest are still in place, co-existing with change and impending change. Wendell Torrey is one of the traditions.

He was dropped on the barrens. A wild muskrat. His beard is untamed, tawny thongs of hair fall from a cap mortared with sweat and dust, his clothes blend him with the dusty fields he strings, and he treats gingerly his left forefinger, stumped when he was working in the woods last winter.

He sees with keen blue eyes as far as the barrens stretch to meet the horizon, keeps the easy judgments of a practical man, the thick accents of Washington County, and an Indian wife, who helps with his books, as most lease holders' wives do.

"If we got wuss weather, some rain, it'd slow things down to where we might could handle it," Wendell grumbles to his cousin Charlie, one of two cousins who work for him.

The rest of his crew of 40 to 45 are young locals and Indians from Canada, mostly Micmacs, many relatives of his wife. A crack team of Micmac rakers signed on with Wendell this year. They rake clean, no mashed berries, no clumps left behind. Jim Knockwood, Peter Paul and Joe Gould can match or beat any rakers on the barrens. They race against each other and themselves.

The blueberry harvest is Washington County's biggest recurring race. A race against time, nature and freezer capacity of the factories. It is a race enlarged by expanding technology, limited by the first freeze that will come any time after the full moon at the end of August.

"Jesus, we got three weeks, maybe a little more, that's it."

For three weeks the throbbing race continues, powered by two thousand jacknifed rakers combing the barrens from early dawn until daylight fails. Trucks roar across dusty trails dropping thousands of colored boxes to be filled for the freezing plants. Red for Wyman's, yellow for Cherryfield Foods, gray for Maine Wild Blueberry. Loading platforms at the freezing plants gorge with fruit, trucks wait in line to unload through the night. Inside, three shifts clean the berries, sort, freeze and package.

Bosses work seven days a week, clerks, rakers, lease holders, truck drivers, plant foremen, sorters, packers. Days have no names. Time is one unending stretch from the first day of harvest till the last.

The towns on the barrens join the rhythm, emptying their teachers, young people, fishermen, clammers, wives into the harvest. Barrens towns like Milbridge, Harrington, Jonesboro, Gouldsboro, Columbia Falls, Cherryfield.

Photography by Lynn Kippax, Jr.
“They got us stuck on this little concentration camp. It’s just hemmed everybody right in there.”

TALL ERECT INDIAN walks from Morse’s Service Center in Cherryfield to his car. His bumper sticker confirms the knowing flicker of humor in his eyes. “Indian Affairs Are The Best.”

He carries coffee at dawn to his wife in the front seat, sodas to his young sons in the back. He glances casually up Cherryfield’s main street, lights a cigarette, smiles, relaxes. His clean white T-shirt proclaims, “I’m a raking machine, fast and clean.”

His composure, his shirt and his bumper sticker are a challenge to old and new myths on the blueberry barrens.

“Dare to call us dirty ignorant Indians” is the challenge of the bumper sticker here on the barrens, where four to five hundred migrant workers are Micmacs and Malecites from Canada, joined this season by 100 to 150 Passamaquoddies of Maine.

Reality backs the dare. Many of the Indians are college graduates. Every field has a heavy sprinkling of teachers, office workers, construction people, even a few Canadian Mounties. Two Indian chiefs are crew bosses.

The bumper sticker mocks a lingering bias in country that knows redneck flareups. People still talk about the Indian who was run down, they say, by a security guard for one of the companies after a brawl.

Racial rancor is an episodic event against a longer tradition that has seen three generations of Indian families return to Maine for the blueberry harvest. This is the view of longtime managers like Burleigh Crane of Cherryfield Foods [formerly Stewart’s] and Bud [Leslie] Randall of Northeastern Blueberry Company. It is also the view of the best lease holders, like Hillman Foss, who has over 100 Indians on his crew.

A lease holder’s effectiveness is measured by how well he can enlist a good crew, hold onto the crew and harvest his fields. Since rakers themselves choose their lease holders — rather than drawing company assignment — and since the harvest is heavily dependent on migrant Indian rakers, a redneck lease holder on the barrens is a liability. Tradition and practicality have clasped hands on the barrens to force a public stance of racial respect and affability.

The T-shirt carries another kind of message, one that challenges change. Its words link all rakers, migrant, Indian, local. “I’m a raking machine, fast and clean.”

The T-shirt mocks ten ungainly machines on the barrens this season that rake “dirty”, crushing plants, leaving berries, scooping up sand, weeds, rocks. The crude machines are an open threat to human rakers in their tireless, experimental rumble across the fields.

They are a threat to livelihood, a threat to old ways of doing things on the barrens that go back to earliest recorded times three centuries ago when European settlers found Indians harvesting the barrens.

For Maine’s wild blueberry harvest is a hand harvest in an age of machines. The rhythm of the harvest builds each season. But its full throated sound is as hushed as the movement of a single wrist or a single footfall on dry stems.

Its sound is the tonging of a steel rake against a tough plant’s woody undersides, the rustling of leaves by steel
fingers, the snapping of stems, the roll and plop of berries against the trough.

Jim Knockwood broke the record yesterday—unofficially. He's not announcing he raked 90 boxes, even though he figures he did. That's eight more boxes than Peter Paul's top of 82, ten more than Harold Sock did on the Hillman Foss lease yesterday, several more than Raymond Simond, Hillman's top raker.

It's unofficial because Jim always pools with his family. Yesterday Jim, his wife Muriel and his sons Billy and Dean, who are 14 and 15, raked 180 boxes. Jim usually rakes half the family total. Call it 90 boxes. For their record day, the family made $450 at $2.50 a box.

Jim is a college graduate whose family has come to rake the barrens "for a hundred years." Not all days are 180-box days for the Knockwoods or anything like it. But they are hard workers, they are experienced, and they pace themselves to work long days.

"We come out and we do a ten hour day and that's all we do is work." Jim's soft inflections contrast with the punch of what he says. He is a man in his prime. For 28 years, since he was five, he has come to the barrens. Before him, his parents and grandparents came.

"It's been a good thing for the Micmac people in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, because we come here and for a month it's a change for us, place to get together, place to meet, and a place to make some money, where we don't have a chance in the Maritimes."

Jim majored in sociology, and anthropology at St. Thomas University in Fredericton. "When I started going to university, there was a demand for people with that kind of education. And when I graduated the demand was gone. So that's what happened to me."

As Jim talks, the swing of his rake is steady. "Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. He is sweeping in long even strokes.

"Up around home, there isn't much there. Doesn't matter if you go to university or not. You either leave, head out to the city or if you like it around home, you got to stick around and do the kind of work they do.

"So when I'm home now, even though I'm a university graduate, I'm a carpenter, lumberjack, anything I can do, because I want to stay there."

He glances at his sons bringing pails to the winnowing machines. He and Muriel have two other children, ten years and two years old, too young to be allowed on the barrens, who are back at the Wyman compound.

Jim has stayed on the reservation for family reasons. "They were of a certain age and I wanted to be around them. And I didn't want to move them out to the city."

His steady stroke continues. He rakes bare to the waist in red boxer shorts and running shoes, a red bandana tied around his forehead to catch the sweat when the day is hot. His voice makes English as musical as his native Micmac, even when it trips over consonants.

"We manage to do pretty good. It gets us through the winter, where we can't usually afford anything with what we make around home, so we

"Ya gotta beat that sun, 'cause she'll wear it right outta ya."

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usually end up borrowing. And we come over here, work hard, and we go back and pay off what we just borrowed and get us through the winter.”

Jim chose to sign on with Wendell Torrey as his crew boss this year because Wendell is “flexible” and because Wendell works with a small crew.

“We have to have a crew boss that we can get along with. A flexible crew boss. I’ve worked with crew bosses ... that are just strict. They won’t bend for any of the rules at all. I’m not sayin’ this particular crew boss bends the rules, but he’s a flexible person to work with.”

He likes a small crew. “They have these gigantic crews of 200 people and you just can’t make money on those gigantic crews. Sometimes you got to walk a mile to go change your section.

“And with a small crew, you can move right along. The blowers [winnowers], they’re always empty, there’s no competition at the blowers.”

Jim started Billy and Dean off with the old fashioned raking stroke called the “scoop”, going under the plant and pulling upward. “You use that kind of rakin’ more times than anything else.

“But now since they have the Valpar fields [cleared by Valpar weed killer] where there’s no bushes in the field, you can sweep them right along. But I’ve saw a lot a people do what they call sweep and their berries will always be soaking wet because they don’t know how to do it. They just brute force right straight through.

“You have to go through easy and more to the top unless they’re down low to the ground. I can rake all day and I’ll never get wet blueberries.

“Wyman crew bosses, you’re not allowed to sweep at all. But I know some of them that tell their crews, if your berries are dry, you can sweep. If your berries are wet, we don’t want you sweepin’.

“Lot of people just overload their rake. They’re developing a new rake now where it’s supposed to stop a lot of squashing of the berries, and that’s from overfilling. It’ll be the same size rake, this part here [the trough] they’re gonna extend it out to here [a few more inches] where the rake will hold more blueberries.

“Some people, they’ll go right close to the ground,” Jim demonstrates, “and they bring up everything. I’ll just sweep along the top and go through.

“And I can do that all day. And I usually do it all day. That’s why we get so much.”

A steady stream of old cars and trucks snort to a stop outside three small stores in Cherryfield for cigarettes, coffee, gasoline, cokes and doughnuts. It is not yet six. The sun is already heating the insides of gas guzzling vehicles that have barely cooled from yesterday’s heat. Blueberry buckets and rakes litter back seats and floors.

Three sun streaked Cherryfield kids tumble out of Morse’s laughing, drinking cokes, chewing gum. The blonde short girl wears a red T-shirt. She is a raking machine, fast and clean. They peel off to the Wyman barrens, ten miles west over a freshly tarred road.

Cherryfield calls itself the wild blueberry capitol of the world. On two sides of a now defunct railroad track, the two
big processing plants of the industry freeze 525,000 pounds a day around the clock for the short four to six week season.

The pioneer plant started by A.L. Stewart in 1868 freezes 125,000 pounds a day. It is now owned by a Canadian company doing business as Cherryfield Foods. Its old rival, Jasper Wyman and Son, freezes 400,000 pounds daily in a spanking new plant across the tracks with state-of-the-art equipment.

The tracks and Route 1 slice Cherryfield east and west, while a rocky river bed slices the little town north and south. Besides the two blueberry plants and the three small stores catering to blueberry rakers at dawn, the town has few other businesses. A second hand store on one corner that offers “all you can put in a bag” for one dollar, a deserted car agency, the offices of Cherryfield Foods, Inc., a half hearted antique store, and a motel with cafe that has seen better days. For entertainment, Cherryfield has pinball machines in the lobby of the motel, a pool table at Morse’s Service Center and the library in the old Cherryfield Academy.

Graduates of Cherryfield Academy tell stories like “We waited offstage for graduation. Four girls in one closet and three boys in another.’” Graduates of today’s new consolidated high school several miles away tell stories like “Wanta know how we won the state basketball championship? The coach made us practice in our clamping boots. When it come time for the game, he let us take ‘em off and could we fly!”

Rising hills that look down on the Narraguagus River in Cherryfield lift skyward the finest small town collection of Victorian houses in Maine, houses built with blueberry money, with lumber money and with canned herring money. Some are shabby today. Others are ready for the next hundred years.

The barrens lie to the east and to the north of Cherryfield. The two largest landowners on the barrens are the owners of the processing plants, Jasper Wyman and Son and Cherryfield Foods, each with 5,000 acres of blueberries. The third largest in Washington County is Northeastern Blueberry Company, now owned by the Passamaquoddy Indians of Maine, with 3,000 acres of blueberries.

Five miles from Cherryfield is Milbridge, where Hollis Wyman, now in his 80s, has a comfortable home and a collection of Cadillacs and antique cars. Many of the managers and bosses of the blueberry industry now live in Milbridge.

Milbridge has attractions for migrants as well. It has the day school for children under twelve who aren’t allowed on the barrens by the U.S. Labor Department. It has a laundromat. It has two big chain grocery stores. It has the only movie house for miles around, open three nights a week. And it has the state liquor store.

“SOMEBODY UP THE street said, ‘Christ, he hasn’t got blood in his veins. He’s got blueberries,’” Burleigh Crane laughs. “Somebody” was talking about Burleigh himself.

Burleigh is “Mr. Blueberry”, the man who brought to wild blueberry cultivation the intelligent changes that are producing bumper crops on the barrens today. At 67, he knows more about the overall management of blueberries than anyone else on the front lines.

If Burleigh is scratching his tan balding head over a wildcat harvest he can’t handle in the factory, he has himself to thank.

Back in 1950 when Burleigh came to Jasper Wyman and Son, cultivation was as primitive as in 1796, when Alexander Baring wrote in his journal about “a plain...which is perfectly barren” with “the appearance of being burned. The nature of the whole is singular and different from anything I ever saw.”

Until the last ten to fifteen years, the crop was as promiscuous and unreliable as other American crops had been a hundred years earlier, before the land grant state universities got to work studying fertilizers, disease, weeds, breeds and pollination.

What happened to the cultivation of wheat and corn has happened to the cultivation of wild blueberries during Burleigh’s lifetime. He took over the management of the largest tract on the barrens — 40,000 acres — and brought to it the lessons being learned at the University of Maine’s experimental farm and his own shrewd judgment.

“We’ve increased yields dramatically since 1950,” Burleigh says. Total wild blueberry yield has risen from 15 million pounds average then to this year’s 45 million pounds.

“New practices in my lifetime” he ticks off are changes in pruning practices, weed control, introduction of bees to increase pollination and irrigation.

Burleigh smiles at his secretary, signs papers and continues talking. His voice re-
sounds through the open offices of Cherryfield Foods, with teller-height glass panes rising from five foot partitions that partly enclose oak desks, tables and chairs. People are used to working around the sound of Burleigh's voice in this office that can't have changed much since Mr. Stewart was around.

Burleigh Crane comes from management stock. Born in Whiting, Maine, he helped run his father's box factory, then managed a sardine factory in Lubec. When he came to Wyman and Son, Hollis Wyman turned to politics and left the blueberries to Burleigh, who worked there until his retirement in 1980. Two years later Burleigh was back in the business [though never entirely out, since he has his own blueberry farm] helping the Canadian owner, Oxford Foods, run the former Stewarts.

"Customary pruning was wildfires," Burleigh says of his early years. This was replaced by controlled fires, and then in recent years by mechanical mowing on land that is flat and rockfree. Up to 60 percent of the barrens can be flail mowed today.

Burleigh seems about ready to hoist himself up and head for the blueberry plant two blocks away. He has blueberry stains on his hands, barrens sand on his shoes. Then he remembers Ralph Wilson and he remembers the wildfires.

"Mr. Wyman owns the north half of Cherryfield and all of Deblois except the settlers' lots... His field superintendent, whose name was Wilson, he was a fantastic man. He'd been on the barrens since he was 14 years old, he told me, picking blueberries. And now when I came around he was the Bud Randall for Wyman. He was active well into his seventies, 75, 76.

"So he had a wealth of experience on the barrens. He knew the barrens, he'd tell ya, he always knew where the good clones were, they'd always had a crop on it. Great sense of humor. Nice man." When Burleigh asked what the budget was in those early years, this was the answer:

"Well, he use ta let me have an axe and a box of matches and some fuel oil and maybe a few dollars," Burleigh quotes. "That was the way they operated these lands that now are tremendously — my God, they've gone from two or three hundred thousand to probably
this year five or six million pounds!

"And the custom was to start a man, with a burning iron, on each side of the road, just above the factory there and they'd walk to Deblois [ten miles].

"And my God, you've never seen such a fire in your life. Fire almost as far as you could go. So, that was one of the things that to me seemed awful. And we had fires all over the place. And there was always an uproar.

"And I came from a lumbering family who hated fires. So I said, well, first thing my job is gonna be is to control the fires, because we had 40 thousand acres and no trees on any of it. It was just awful. And we only had five thousand acres of blueberry land out of forty. So we were burning 35 thousand acres to get five thousand acres of blueberry land.

"So we started controlling the fires. And what an awful job it was, because this had been going on for a hundred years.

"First I put fire lines around and said, well, you're not gonna burn over the fire line. And if it got over the fire line, Bud [Randall, the field manager] said, 'Well, what difference it make, just run down in that swamp, it might burn for a hundred acres, but we've been doing that for a hundred years.'

"But anyway now you go up there, you see trees. And then we started planting trees into these barren areas and we've got a forest started up there that never had a forest. So now we only burn the part or prune the part that's used to produce blueberries.

"Only within the last three to four years, we've found a weed killer that was a selective weed killer that would allow the blueberry plants to live and kill most of the competitive weeds. This was a great breakthrough."

The chemical is Valpar and its usefulness on the barrens was discovered by accident. "It was made to control any woody weed and someone noticed, hey, it kills everything but blueberry plants.

"And so we've seen some interesting things. And we brought into the thing the irrigation, and we brought the honey bee thing —" he plunges to a halt.

"They have to be crossed, because one clone stays there all day, nothing happens. So the limiting factor on these
barrens year after year, the only of 'em ever to have a bumper crop was when you caught the peak of the bee population with the peak of good pollinating weather. Then you had a bumper crop."

Burleigh and other growers began to bring from Florida "ten to twelve thousand hives of bees, which is kind of mind boggling. When we first did this, the bears came out to meet the trucks and we had a heck of a time with bears.

"You can imagine what a truckload of bees, of honey, would do. The bears went crazy. We imported bear hunters from as far south as the Carolinas.

"These are the things that we go through. Since then bear hunting got to be very popular, so the bear population's been pushed down. But jiminy there were some funny bear stories. We had tremendous bear populations here at that time and we'd have bear hunters out every night.

"This was a funny one. I was at home entertaining some friends from New York and we were having dinner and I think it was Bud [Randall] called and said the bears have gotten into the bees up on Popple Hill. And so I said — my guests were listening — would you send someone up there to kill the bear. And he said I'll go and do it myself.

"So the next morning I took them to the barrens and I went by Bud's house and there was this tremendous bear hanging up there. They couldn't believe it was simple as that. Most of them had never even seen a bear."

HILLMAN FOSS IS jumpy today. So jumpy that he thinks a couple of journalists who come seven miles down the dusty road to his lease are Pine Tree Legal people about to deliver migrant complaints.

That or field reps for the Department of Labor. Either way bad news.

The morning began with bad news. One of his good pickers blew up about the camps. Or lack of camps.

The fellow quit. He has worked for Hillman for years. Hillman likes him. He's basically a nice guy, a Malecite, a school teacher who feels put upon. He blames Hillman and the Northeastern Blueberry Company. Hillman blames the government.

Hillman is Northeastern's largest lease holder. He manages crews of 150 or more on several hundred acres of land. He is Bud Randall's trusted lieutenant. Bud manages Northeastern.

For 27 years, Hillman has been a lease holder. He trained under Burleigh Crane and Bud Randall at Wyman's, then followed Bud to Northeastern nine years ago.

He is so glad these journalists who drove up aren't Pine Tree Legal or the government that he gives them a royal welcome. Just Salt Magazine. A funny little photographer who already has the rakers mugging for him. A friendly woman who wants to meet some of his pickers. A fellow with a tape recorder from Washington County who knows the score.

He leads them over to meet Clarence Bagley who, at 69 can rake 55 boxes a day. He talks about his top raker, Raymond Simond, who rakes in the 80s. He introduces them to Harold Sock and his children, Darlene and Dwayne. Harold raked 80 boxes yesterday.

Hillman shrugs and looks around him. "My pickers said, 'If we'd come to spend time in a motel, we'd get one. We came here to rough it.'"

The big amiable lease holder turns slowly to let his glance fall on the rakers, some near, some in rows a half mile away. "All these people are friends of mine," he says of the Micmac Indians on his crew who come from the Big Cove reservation in New Brunswick. "My wife and I, we go up there for vacation. Stay right on the reservation. They make us feel so welcome."

CLARENCE BAGLEY'S blueberry rake has a tooth for every year he's raked on the barrens. Clarence has a 60-tooth rake. He's raked at least 60 of his 69 years.

"I'll tell ya what I like about it." His voice has a cheerful gusto, a let's-get-the-job-done ring. "I just enjoy gettin' out this way in the open.

"I'm not a person that cares for workin' under a boss too much. With this job here, you feel as if you're more or less on your own."

Neither Hillmans Foss nor Clarence's immediate field boss, Walter, give him much trouble.

"Long's ya do your work right," says Clarence. "And ya get a change.

"I been out in Connecticut working. I had the easiest job there was out there one year. I was workin' down round bolts and stuff, didn't have a thing to do outside of fix the bolts and help pull 'em out, paint 'em once in a while.

"Sometimes all I had to do was sit around or mow the boss's lawn after somebody else mowed it. One time they took me down on an island to do about two hour job, left me there all day.

"I said that's enough for me.
That got to me 'nough and I come home. I have to do something all the time."

Clarence brings a vanful of neighbors and their children with him from Milbridge each harvest, his own little field crew. He trains them and watches after them, working on fields his parents brought him to when he was a boy.

"I've raked these things in the fields — I don't think I've missed over, probably three years at the most from the time I was, well five years old, when I started in, with the parents, campin' on the barrens.

"I still got the rake I used when I [started] that's no larger than that right there," Clarence points to a 24-tooth rake.

He looks around him at the barrens. "Course it's changing so now. We used t'tent. Used t'tent out, used ta cook our meals over the open fire. This is all open barren from what it was.

"Wasn't cleared off, a lot a bushes, trees those days. You wouldn't believe the change here if you, not seen it." Clarence scans the horizon. "I wouldn't dare say where I had the tent, because I couldn't find the place today."

When Clarence raked years ago, the barrens weren't divided by twine into strips for the rakers. "They used the wooden laths. They'd take a stick, one up here, and then they'd go off, maybe far as that bucket [30 feet] put down another one and they'd keep going.

"You was supposed to stay between the laths. But when they used to get to the good blueberries, there was laths sometimes would line up the wrong way," Clarence belts a laugh. "This twine is a lot easier, better. Got to stay be-

that's sittin' right back, they won't go and earn the money. They earn so much money that they're allowed, then they'll sit right back and they won't earn another nickel until the Food stamps [come]. And that makes me disgusted."

But Clarence is far from disgusted with his own little crew. "'I always bring a few long with me. Last year I had six or seven of 'em. I had two here last year, those two girls could pick blueberries. They was little workers. They never took their head up, and they would get 25, 30 boxes."

Clarence himself is no slouch. Even at his age, he regularly rakes 55 boxes a day and has hit over 70 on a good field a couple of years ago.

"I plan on pickin' every year as long as I'm able. Don't know when that's gonna change," he laughs. "I just think one year to the other."
SEVEN MEN WEARING summer suits and crisp white shirts sit at a stretch of tables arranged for Saturday night Beano in Cherryfield's American Legion Hall.

They represent the Farm Labor Enforcement Committee of the U.S. Department of Labor, here for their yearly hearing.

Tonight people will talk about the new migrant housing regulations. The barren is abuzz with anger about them, pickers and growers alike.

Last year the Labor Department condemned the primitive barren camps provided by growers, imposing fines of up to $10,000. Tonight the USDL will hear migrant reaction.

The seven government men look out of place. They belong behind large walnut veneer desks in Boston or Washington. Except for them and a few reporters, the hall is largely empty. They talk in a desultory way amongst themselves. They glance at the hall doorway, like hosts awaiting guests who come unforgivably late.

Outside the hall, knots of people lean over truck hoods talking, many of them Indian. Pelkey brothers, Norman, Tom and Paul, with their families, all Malecites from Houlton and Canada. As dusk quenches the burning sky, more people arrive, but they stay outside in clusters.

One of the dignitaries steps out on the Legion Hall porch. "You gentlemen should come inside now if you have some-
thing to say. We should start the meeting.” They don't like him. His dark blue suit. His patronizing tone. His “you gentlemen”. He could never say the right words to them in the right tone of voice. But they come inside, straggling, leaning back into the night, jostling against each other. They wear clean work clothes and their hair is wet from the shower.

They sit at the ends of three sets of tables that are the fingers of an E to the speaker’s table, as far from the seven bureaucrats as they can get. An empty no-man’s zone lies between pickers and the government men.

All seven government men speak. Beginning with Walter Parker, regional administrator for Region 1, they say what it is their particular division or agency has the authority to do. They explain they are here to investigate labor conditions in the field. Tonight they have come to listen, not to talk, they say.

The pickers are impassive during their words. They bunch together in the back, grouping themselves by where they work and where they come from. At least 40 of the 60 here are Indian, Micmacs, Malecites and Passamaquoddy.

Burleigh Crane hunches in a corner, wearing clothes that say he is not a bureaucrat, dust colored shirt, dust colored pants. The growers were invited, along with the workers. Burleigh is here for Cherryfield Foods. Gary Willey is here for Wyman’s.

Nobody represents Northeastern Blueberry Company, the company that is taking the brunt of the storm over migrant housing. Neither Francis Nicholas, spokesman for the tribal owners, the Passamaquoddies, nor Bud Randall, who has managed Northeastern for nine years.

The ironies of the meeting are abundantly clear. Outside someone said it, “The way it is now, the way the government’s got it now, it looks like the Passamaquoddy Indians are screwing the migrant Indian workers by taking their camps away. Why now? Why are they picking on Northeastern?”

Growers argue that the migrant camps are used only a scant two to three weeks a year, standing idle 50 weeks. Why should they have to meet expensive standards set up for migrant camps in areas with much longer harvest seasons?

The person who carries the ball for the government is William Smith, who has doffed his jacket and is in shirt sleeves.

“We did an investigation here last year,” he says to the crowd, “and the housing conditions were pretty poor to say the least.”

A barrage of interruptions hits him. The crowd is hostile. “What happened to the camps in the Northeastern fields?” calls a man.

“The Northeastern Blueberry Company apparently closed them down,” replies Bill Smith.

“Are you the people who decided it was okay to live in the tents?” The question is from a young Passamaquoddy woman whose voice is intense with emotion.

“No,” replies Bill Smith. “You don’t understand. You are from Washington. You don’t have to live in these tents.”

“We are very worse off thanks to you people.”

“We have stepped back 15 years in living conditions.”

Bill Smith denies that the Labor Department forced Northeastern to close the camps. “We didn’t know they were going to do it. We met with them in the winter and they didn’t tell us they were going to do it.

“It was never our intention to put growers out of business or employees out of work.”

Stacked on the end of a table are copies of the OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) regulations and migrant protection laws that resulted in the closing of Northeastern’s non-complying camps on the barrens.

They require hot water, showers, electricity, laundry facilities and dryers. They also, in effect, require communal cooking in cook houses, since they prohibit cooking in camps that have less than 100 square feet per person. A family of
four must have a camp 20 by 20 feet to cook inside. None are that large on the barrens.

Wyman's and Cherryfield Foods have responded to the new law [1983] with varying degrees of compliance, though they face fines and even jail sentences if the law is rigorously enforced.

Northeastern has greater difficulty complying than the others. Its camps are almost eight miles from available electrical power. To bring in electricity will cost about $150,000, other required improvements another $100,000.

Northeastern's response was a crisis response. It simply closed its migrant camps, selling off the smaller camps, stockpiling the larger 14 by 20 foot camps for a future season.

Burleigh Crane at Cherryfield Foods, the oldtime management man on the barrens, responded characteristically to the threat. He rolled with the punch, doing what he could and bargaining for time. He put shower houses and hot water near some of the camps. Then he simply hauled the stoves outdoors, since the camps aren't big enough to meet regulations for indoor cooking.

Wyman's, with new management highly sensitive to public relations, also responded characteristically. Wyman's made the big gesture. It moved all its camps within one centralized compound, surrounded the compound with fencing, installed four cook shacks and built shower houses.

Nobody is here to complain about Wyman's new "concentration camp", though plenty of complaints are heard in the field and in the compound itself. People here tonight complain because they have lost "a roof over our heads" and because they have to cook outdoors.

"Why do I have to cook outdoors in the rain?" presses a Malecite woman.

"You have really hurt these workers who come down here from the Maritime Provinces," says George Paul to the bureaucrats.

A young local, David Dodge, is livid. "This is the fourth meeting I've come to like this. What I've seen is a whole bunch of experts come from everywhere to tell us what to do.

"You came here and told people how to run things and you made it worse. I'm very tired of having you people treat us like idiots."

Norman Pelkey crosses the no man's zone to pace up and down in front of the Labor Department men. His white shirt and dress pants mark him as a spokesman for the Malecites. He has come to the barrens from Houlton for 25 years.

"You scared these people off," he warns the men. "You better take a look at what you're doing. There ain't gonna be anyone here next year if you don't.

"It's the children that have to suffer. The children in those hot tents on a hot day."

Applause greets each of the speakers. Control of the meeting is almost out of hand. Bill Smith continues to argue that it was Northeastern, not the Labor Department, that closed the camps. He also says, "We have made it better for some.

A small woman keeps her hand raised to speak for ten minutes. Her husband, Leslie Lefay, says loudly to Nelly Lefay, "They think you're wavin'." The couple are from Houlton, Maine. "We have worked for five years for Burleigh Crane," says Nelly. "I have no complaints about the camps. They are good camps.

"My complaint is about the cooking. I don't like to cook outside with the bugs hopping in the food and the rain coming down. Yesterday we had mosquitoes in our pancakes."

Many women join her. They want their stoves back inside under a roof. Walter Parker, the USDL chairperson concede, "I think the regulations may need to be stretched on that."

A tall man sitting with the Lefays stands, Thom Parke of Amity, Maine. His voice is slow, measured, educated. The trace of slight Indian ancestry shows in his cheekbones, but is more openly acknowledged in the red headband and swinging brown hair.

"I would like to ask you gentlemen what you have learned here tonight."

Nobody at the speaker's table will respond to that.

"I hope that you have learned something tonight. You didn't ask the people in these camps what they needed. You told them. And it is not what they needed."

He sits down. The buzz continues. The meeting winds down. A few more complaints. Speakers summarize, invite people back, thank them for coming.

Workers move outside into the night, indignant, unconvincing. Who is to blame? And the press flocks to the front table to talk to the USDL officials. The headline reports the meeting: "USDL inspectors say pickers' housing better."

(Continued on page 37)
"I been on the barrens all my life."
“YA BETTER BEAT THAT SUN!”
“I STARTED COMIN’ TO THE BARENS WHEN I WAS FIVE.”
“Let the seagulls get ’em. Let the coyotes get ’em.”
"I'LL JUST SWEEP ALONG THE TOP. I CAN DO THAT ALL DAY."
"I like pickin'. I enjoy gettin' out in the open."
When he's blueberrying, he pitches a tent near a gravel bed under some alder trees and when he's clamming he's got a little place in Town Hill on Mount Desert Island.

Wherever he is, Charlie Torrey takes it as it comes.

"I don't work at it too hard," he says without a flicker of a grin. He didn't when he was younger either.

"I just more or less raked for what I got and that was it. "Just like clammin'. I go out and dig what I can dig and that's it. If somebody gets two bushels and a half, and I only get a bushel or a bushel and a half, that don't bother me one bit." He might be coughing or he might be laughing.

Charlie is so spare of meat that his nose and ears and chin knife the sky. His back is gullied. He wears a flaming red felt hat that curls rakishly on each side, the only shape remotely suggesting roundness on Charlie Torrey. He wears the hat year round, usually orange, but he couldn't find an orange one this time.

"I was born '41 and I went down on the blueberry barrens with Leslie Randall [Bud] in 1942." He's not coughing. "I was born right up here in Beddington. Grandmother's house." Grew up next door to his cousin, Wendell Torrey.

There's one other thing Charlie Torrey does. "Do a little trappin' in the fall." As for blueberries, he has one yardstick.

"I can rake 30 if I want to. Yea. I try to make same amount a day as I can make when I'm clammin'."

Jim Knockwood is off stride. Two days of bad raking and a week of living on the new Wyman compound for migrant workers has him riled. His mild voice is no match for the intensity of his feeling.

"Gettin' harder and harder every year around here. There're new rules, there're new laws. We're caught in between Human Services and Wyman Company. So we get, to put it bluntly, the shitty end of the stick.

"We, I mean we like this kinda life though. Now they got all new regulations out. They're tryin' to make it a factory system out here. Numbers. Lotta change in the last twenty years out here." The changes Jim has seen since he was five.

"We gotta punch in now, time clocks, cards, numbers, and we have to stay on the compound.

"We used to be able to stay out on the barrens before, anywhere you wanted to. And it was nice out there.

"Now they got us stuck on this little — we call it the concentration camp, that's what we call it. It's just hemmed everybody right in there. Got no place to go, and you got no peace and quiet. You get on a Saturday night, there's four or five hundred people in there. Lotta people to be tucked in one place with.

"Where before we used to stay out there anyways. Tar paper shacks. Anything, lean-tos. Now you gotta come all modern equipped, or Human Services gets on their case and Wyman's gets on our case.

"So we're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't!"

"Boy it's hot on the barrens today!" Burleigh Crane exclaims. He just gave a lift into Cherryfield "to two kids who hitch-hiked here from Michigan to pick berries. Nice kids."

Burleigh's clothes are wilted, but his voice is crisp and so is the brim of the jaunty hat he always wears, with its paisley ribbon around the base.

Like everybody else, Burleigh is talking about the Labor Department meeting last night. "This is major when they come down here with, I think they had maybe eight, ten people out in the field in addition to the ones they had here last night.

"They've been in every camp, kicked every screen door, done everything.

"Course they're supposed to be working for the workers, not for — they were not too happy with the response the workers gave them. And the workers I think attacked two of the people [Labor Department field investigators] over in Northeastern and beat them up. It was fairly serious."

But the biggest news on the barrens today is not the confrontation over camps. It's the growing realization that this year's crop is going to be much bigger than the average crop predicted.

"The feedback now, my God it is all of a sudden we're up to here in blueberries!" Burleigh measures just below his chin. "We estimated the crop at 26 million. Looks to me like it's gonna be 35 million, maybe more." Each day the figure rises as abundant fields pour thousands of pounds into the factories. It's even rumored the crop will equal 1983's bumper crop of 45 million pounds.

Predicting the crop is a group effort. "They get the current directors and the ex-directors of the university blueberry advisory committee, they meet just before the first of August.
“And everybody puts his name down and then how many blueberries he has and he comments on how the blueberries are in his area and we go on through this. “These are all the experts. We’ve never hit it.”

Burleigh’s laughter is rueful. He strides to his truck and heads for his home in Milbridge, where there might be a breeze blowing off the river.

“We plugged her. The other night we didn’t have a box. In fact they’ve been hauling some of ‘em to the dump.” Wendell Torrey lifts his cap to vent his head and claps it back down again.

“Yes. Throw ’em away.” Some are “maggoty”. Others are less than Grade A berries that would be juiced or processed in some other way if the factories weren’t “plugged”.

“When I left there last night, the floor was full. Right full. And I don’t think there was room enough to get another box in,” Wendell tells his cousin Charlie.

“I don’t know where they’re gettin’ ‘em all. We figured they’d be, well, a good average crop. We got better. Yep!” Might be a bumper crop.

“Two years ago we had to leave ‘em in the field,” Wendell grunts. Couldn’t get ‘em all in. We won’t get ‘em all this year either,” he warns Charlie.

“I got all the growers mad and the lease holders mad and berries sittin’ there,” Burleigh Crane explodes into the telephone.

He is talking to a friend in the blueberry business. “So you don’t have to ask that — you know how I am! I’m just exactly how you are.” His laughter vibrates through the office of Cherryfield Foods on a Sunday morning. He jots 125 on the corner of an envelope [125,000 pounds capacity in the Cherryfield plant], then 100 beneath it [100,000 pounds capacity for the Hancock County plant his company owns at Washington Junction].

“I can only freeze 225,000 pounds a day. Christ, I could pick 600,000 pounds, but what good will that do?” He pauses to listen to the response.

“So we’ll get through it,” he says with the crisp assurance of someone who has gotten through it since he came to work at Jasper Wyman’s 35 years ago.

“We’ll get through it.”
Joe Gould, Wendell Torrey and Leonard Getchell

"It don't do no good. I'm gonna keep 'em up home this year. See if I can get 'em goin'."

Michelle Comeau passes by carrying two pails to a winnower that works. Wendell nods at the girl and says she's a good raker. "She can get 40, 45 boxes a day. I'd like to have 20 just like her. Be enough really."

He changes his mind with a grin. "Well, ya couldn't keep up with 'em. There's always somethin' goin' haywire. Huh. "Yep. Winnow machine's broke down, truck broke down or no string out or somethin'. "But that goes with it."

"HOLLIS WYMAN TOLD me the story when Bud Randall's father died and he went up to see him just before he died. And he said, 'I know, Mr. Wyman, that you'll take care of Bud and that he'll have my lease.' "And Hollis said, 'Oh yes, Mr. Randall.' "This was the way of life here in Cherryfield." Burleigh Crane leans his chair back into the heat of a 100 degree August day. "To come into the business. The first five years I worked, it took me so long to learn the customs. Okay this goes back to Mr. Stewart's time. These lands were original grants by the Governor of Massachusetts to come down here and settle. "So if you were Hillman Foss back in 1860 you would lease a section of this land and go up there with your match and burn it and harvest the berries and bring them into the plant on your horse and buggy. "Well since then the companies have purchased the land. This lease thing has always stayed on. The block of land — sometimes the fellow that had leased it from the old grantor, might be in his family, might still be Hillman Foss lease because his father and his grandfather and great grandfather leased it before him. But in the meantime, he is no longer a lessee. Actually what he is is a crew chief who supervises the harvest and the gathering of the blueberries and getting them to the plant. "I've been trying to change the name to get away from this lease, they call them leaseholders and they're really not because they have no money invested in the thing. And there's no contracts. General agreement. "It's a funny thing, but they've stayed. Many times it's gone through two or three generations in one family. "I used to have a crew chief who, when I used to go up to see what was going on, he was always asleep under the truck." Burleigh's laughter is hearty and long. "And I came back and I said to Mr. Wyman, 'God, that man sleeps all day and the Indians kinda run the show and they decide where they're gonna pick.' "'Yes,' but he said, 'his father had it before him, and his grandfather had it before him. Plus he's the ________ of Cherryfield. So let him sleep.'"
THE HUNTER IN HIM takes to the top of the hill. He sits there in his blue pickup truck scanning the barrens. His hunting rifle lies on the floorboard behind him.

Bud Randall lights his pipe and inhales the blueberry fields below him, a spiny mesh of green-blue that will burn red in October. Bright scarves and hats dot the immediate fields, cries of rakers rise in the wind, a village of tents and trailers huddle on a distant hill under spruce trees.

His big face is still. Here is where he dwells. An infusion from the barrens rises into his broad frame and puts back some of the energy 72 years of living has taken from him.

Little wonder that — of all the white men who have built the wild blueberry crop the last 50 years — it should be Bud who guides the Indians as new owners of Northeastern Blueberry Company.

He is closest to the land. A steward, like his father, Augustus Randall, who was a lease holder for 69 years. He has the Indian blood-link to the land, the link that gives ownership not to a single man but to generations of men.

"Father was up to Wyman's 69 years. Augustus Randall. Been dead 'bout 40 years now. But it'd be interesting if some of those old fellas could go back and see the way things are, the way the land's in shape. The Pineo Field, the biggest year he ever had, the year before he died, he got 44 hundred bushels. And that same lease up there, when I was there, picked 35 thousand bushel each year. So you can see the improvement that we done on the land."

He points out the improvements. Irrigation, bees, fertilizer, weed control, levelling the land with sand, removing rocks.

As a practical man, he gives a measure of credit for the changes to university research. But not all. Unless you know the land, this new scientific advice doesn't work.

"There's a lot to the blueberry business that doesn't meet the eye. They can tell ya up t'University that you got ta put on so much fertilizer and you do so much of this, but the land's all different.

"They really can't sit up there and tell ya, you know. You got ta be used to the land. You come to a peak when you got ta drop back on your fertilizer. Or if your bushes get short, why you got ta know when ta step 'em up.

"Fertilizer, you can put on 'nough fertilizer right out there, after the black, after we burn it, so you don't get a berry on it. It's stickly stuff. Put it on too strong, it grows the bushes in the fall, then you get the winter kill.

"So you got ta be careful. You got to know your land and land's all different. Some land you can spend thousands a dollars on, and it's no different now than it was before. It isn't blueberry ground."

Bud can't define blueberry ground, just as oldtime cooks can't say how much flour fits in a hand or how much salt goes between two fingers.

"I don't know as I could say." Laughing, he takes the easy way out. "The ones you get the best crop off of." He starts to tell more — "It's really interestin', really" — and stops himself.

"My wife says all I can talk about is blueberryin', and huntin', fishin' and trappin'. I asked her what else is there? I don't know of anything else."

He laughs. "The only time I talked was the way I like to. She says, 'Well, you talk blueberries.'"

Soon Bud will shoot down the hill in a cloud of dust to talk blueberries, to push them faster into trucks and into the freezer. He'll have to see his lease holder Carl Hoffses, down below, whose crew has fallen from 125 last year to 31 this year. All because of the camps, he says.

Carl blames the Feds, not Bud. "I think he's been gettin' a raw deal. This whole company is. Passamaquoddies bought the land, they're tryin' to make a go of it. And here everybody is jumpin' on their case and tryin' to put 'em in the hole, far as I can see."

Bud pads through the ruckus like a hunter whose game has turned on him. He has done what he can to change the scent. He has raised the box price from $2.50 to $3 for his pickers to try to make up for the loss of the camps.

He has kept his cool and he is moving fast. Even with a heavy loss of workers, he's ahead of Wyman's and Cherryfield Foods in getting his crop in. He started harvesting earlier, to get the early prices, which are better.

Next season, the wind is likely to change for him. In the meantime, he hasn't lost his zest for blueberries.

"I could've retired 20 years ago. I worked for Wyman 33 years. I drove the first tractor they had, mowing bushes. And they put me on foreman and then they give me a month off to do my lease for awhile, four or five years. Then they wanted me on field supervisor over all the leases, and so I stayed there till '76. I had a gall bladder operation and I thought I'd retire.

"I fished all that fall, sum-
mer and then I hunted all hunt- 
in' season. I found out when 
you could do that all the time, 
it wasn't so much fun. So they 
wanted a manager over ta 
Northeastern, and I been over 
here, this is the eighth year. So 
that makes 41 years.

"I like it or I wouldn't be 
doin' it that many years."

Wendell's Crew is mad. Only half 
showed up this morn-
ing. They don't want another 
day like yesterday. Raking 
badlands.

"The torrential forest. It was 
awesome. Twenty-four years 
I've never raked a field like 
that, never. I was twelve 
boxes!"

Peter Paul's eyes flash. He 
speaks with a ready tongue 
and tight, triggered energy. He 
is not tall nor is he slight. Peter 
first came to the harvest from 
the Micmac reservation in 
Nova Scotia when he was five. 
He is 29.

"It's an insult to me, you 
know. I can do that in almost 
a half hour, for god's sakes. It's 
ain't good." Michelle's voice 
twitches in the early dawn. Her 
brown hair flips at Peter's in-
dignity. "I went from 42 to 
eight."

"The condition of the land is 
terrible. I don't even know why 
they're pickin' it. Maybe the 
man needs a tax break or 
something. We got 130 some-

Wendell is late. It's past six 
at the Jasper Wyman com-
pound where 400 migrant 
workers are housed for the 
harvest. Most of the trucks and 
cars have already gunned out 
of the compound, filled with 
rakers, boxes and winnowing 
machines.
Nobody on the compound is happy. Last night the air was thick with complaints. Jasper Wyman has taken all its pickers off the company's flat productive barrens and put them "outside" on little fields of independent growers. Jasper Wyman Company owns 40,000 acres on the barrens, five thousand in blueberries, with 2,500 acres harvested each year. Why go "outside"?

Last night Hermie West and some of the other bosses went around trying to explain, trying to cool people down. Hermie is a tough man in his forties who started picking berries when he was eight or nine. He grew up on hard work and doesn't see anything wrong with it — for himself or anybody else.

Hermie knows why the rakers are mad all right. Off the barrens, the fields are scrappily and poor. They yield a box an hour instead of six or eight or more.

He tells them the factory is plugged. Trucks can't unload. Got to slow down the harvest.

Couple of days of slow picking outside, he says. No more. Day after tomorrow you'll be back on the barrens. When words can do no more, Hermie, the field boss, pitches in with them. He rakes badlands all Tuesday afternoon.

"What's this I hear, Hermie," teases a stringer back at the compound. "You raking?"

"They were feelin' low," Hermie says. "I like to rake."

The cluster of people around Jim Knockwood’s pickup truck stirs uneasily. A slow start for a bad day. They are being sent to the boonies twenty miles away in Gouldsboro.

They laugh when Wendell rattles through the gate in his old truck, tease him. Old scruff. Late. Can’t you get your act together? Wendell is a "hot ticket". He is not the cause of their problems.

The small caravan takes off, first Wendell in his truck filled with red boxes and winnowers, then Leonard in a stake truck with 12 to 14 rakers, a couple of small cars and the Knockwood pickup, with Peter Paul, Michelle, Dean and Billy in the back.

They halt on a thin back road. "Ooooh my goooood," says Peter Paul, holding his temples as he looks at the wild bushy incline.

"We're lost. We're lost," calls a female voice with relish.

"There's a guy in a red pickup, supposed to be here, take us to the place."

The guy is Hermie West. Hermie pulls past with his jaw set. He leads the way up a hill to a freshly painted farmhouse. From it comes a laundered young man in white shirt and new jeans held up by new suspenders. Harry Cunningham looks uneasy. This is the first year Wyman has picked for him. A neighbor used to do it and then he had a crew one year. "It's a lot to keep track of." He knows "the fields are getting pretty weedy."

The field is a four acre hill behind the farmhouse, rocky, untended, full of scrub.

Wendell’s crew climbs to a ledge below the peak and stands, balky against the horizon, feet planted apart. Rebellion grows. It is a strike. Below, the landowner and Hermie and Wendell confer.

"We go back on the barrens tomorrow, Herm?" the arrow shoots from the ledge to them.

"Even if the field isn’t finished?" Martha Francis demands.

"I think so, no problem," Hermie yells back.

"Even if the field isn’t finished?" Martha presses.

"Well, they gotta be done," Hermie says. "I mean —"

Leonard cuts in, "We can clean this."

"Let’s rake," yells Peter Paul.

"I don’t care, let’s rake," agrees an older man.

"Let’s rake, you guys, come on," urges Peter Paul.

"Yeah, Brownie points today," says the older man.

"We can get this field easy," says Peter.

"How many acres we got here?" asks Jim Knockwood.

"Four."
"Well let's get it goin'."

"Let's do it!" rallies Peter Paul.

"Ain't gonna do anything standin' here."

But many still stand, smoking, staring sullenly at the scraggly field. Leonard hustles. "We're gonna start stringin' out here, Wendell."

"Yeah, see what you can get offin this end of her," Wendell shouts.

Below Hermie and the landowner still talk. The unconvinced stay unconvinced. Even at yesterday's raise from $2.50 a box to $3.00 a box, many of them made less than $20 for a full day of hard raking.

“Well we talked them out of half a dollar.”

Joe Gould's voice is mild. "Finish it today and get back. Then we're back into the double digits again,” says Jim Knockwood. The thought of climbing back up from six or eight boxes to 50 or 60 changes the mood. Even so —

“Well, I'm not comin' back here tomorrow.”

“Finish or no finish.”

“That's right.”

“Pick up my check and keep on goin’.”

“Well we came all the way out here this mornin'. We gotta rake.”

“If we can finish this today.”

“Let the seagulls get 'em.”

“Seagulls don't want them things.”

Below Hermie and the landowner still talk. The unconvinced stay unconvinced. Even at yesterday's raise from $2.50 a box to $3.00 a box, many of them made less than $20 for a full day of hard raking.

“Let the coyotes get 'em.”

“Hell WE don't even eat 'em.”

Placid on the rocks sits an older woman, Yvonne Augustine Torrey. She is Wendell's wife of 16 years. She is a tiny woman whose weight has begun to drift down her body. Sometimes she speaks in Micmac, sometimes she taunts and mocks in English with the others. She is angry for her people today.

“The Indians come down here to make money. And this is what kind of treatment they get. I hate to see 'em when they come over here and put 'em on these pieces like this.” Her young brother and other relatives are among the holdouts.

“Oh god, it was even worse yesterday,” she says. “God you couldn't even see anybody when they started walkin'. All you see is the top of their heads. Bush. Way out in the willywags and we couldn't go nowhere to get no water.”

Hermie's voice yells a new message from below. "Three fifty!"

"Is that three fifty we hear?"

"Three fifty," promises Harry Cuningham.

“All right troops, three fifty,” says Yvonne Torrey with finality.

“Well we talked them out of half a dollar.”

Peter Paul leaps nimbly to the first strip on the field. Michelle takes the second. "Smiles, everyone. Smile," Peter shouts.

“Aw shut yer face,” yells Martha Francis. “Stop brown nosin'.” But she too gets up to rake and the laughter that follows her lip is good natured.
“This is a promise,” Yvonne’s voice tines like the rakes against wood and rocks. “We’ll take you to a better field tomorrow. I bet it on my life!”

Francis Nicholas eases himself gracefully into a straight backed chair beside Bud Randall’s empty warehouse desk. Not even in his manager’s absence will Francis Nicholas take Bud’s more comfortable chair. Francis doesn’t have an office of his own.

But he sits on the hottest griddle of the blueberry season. A man so mild of voice, so retiring in manner, so quiet of footfall, so fastidious in his pronouncements that he could be taken for a tree surgeon or a watchmaker instead of the titular head of Northeastern Blueberry Company.

Francis can be seen doing the homeliest chores for the company, running to Bangor for “towelets” required by the Health Department, handling the scheduling of trucks. He says he’s learning the business.

“See Bud Randall has about a hundred years of information up there,” he taps his head. “I’m tryin’ to put that in mine. Transfer the information into my computer. I’m learning quite a bit. Bud’s teaching me the ropes. Learn something new every day.

“Bud, he’s goin’ stay with me as long as he can. As long as he’s able to work. When and if his health fails, we have a plan where we would go into a, whad’ya call it, advisory. He would work one, two hours a day, whatever.

“But he said when he goes he wants to be standing on the blueberry fields smokin’ his pipe.”

Today, sitting in his straight backed chair, Francis looks weary. For over three weeks he’s had the migrant camp problem nipping at him. Blaring headlines, investigations by the Labor Department and the final straw, a damaging article published by the Boston Indian Council warning Indians against coming to work for the Passamaquoads because of the removal of the camps.

This is not the first time Francis Nicholas has been on the battle lines. He was drafted into the army in 1950 and stayed there until 1971. Most of those years he was a paratrooper. The final eight years he was a Green Beret.

Since then he has worked for Georgia Pacific, served as tribal governor of the Passamaquoads for four years, and, most recently, been a commissioner of the tribe’s housing authority.

“People thought the problem started when we pulled the camps. But we had a reason and the major reason was economic. We didn’t have the money to do what the Department of Labor wanted,” says Francis.

The cost of doing what USDL wants is estimated at $250,000. To make the improvements will require a loan backed by tribal investments as security. This means the tribe must agree to the loan.

“With the help of all the publicity I had,” Francis grins wryly, “there’s no problem of them coming in to help me now. I know they will because I been talkin’ to ‘em. All we got to do now is sit down with the tribal governors and the board and submit our plans to ‘em.”

When Bud Randall enters the office, the two men banter in a friendly way that speaks of a good working partnership.

Then Bud warns that Northeastern trucks are backed up at the freezing plant, Maine Wild Blueberry Company in Machias. When a hole develops at the loading platform, they aren’t moving in fast enough to grab the hole. “They’re just sittin’ there, Don says.”

“I’ll get right on it,” Francis sighs.

“YOU MAKE MONEY but ya gotta work hard for it, real hard. If ya wanna come here an’ be lazy, ya won’t make nothin’. It’s not a place for a lazy person.”

“They don’t usually last any longer than a day. After the first day, their back goes. It’s pretty strenuous on the back, an’ your knees.”

Mike Clifford drives his rake through the puckerbrush with a young man’s energy. He works steadily, but not with the sinuous strokes of Jim Knockwood in the next strip. He is a Cherryfield native.

“I just like the money for a couple weeks. I drive truck in the winter. Good exercise, that’s about it. ‘Cause I set on my butt all winter an’ then I get out here an’ work in the summer.

“If you’re a good worker, you actually got potential to make a thousand dollars a week out here. If you’re a hard worker. Like that family,” he nods toward the Knockwoods. They rake, probably 150 boxes a day between all of ‘em.

“Hundred to hundred and fifty boxes at two fifty a box ain’t too shabby.

“I pretty much know most of the bosses around here. I’ve had my chance myself, but I don’t like damn bossin’, not out in the blueberry patch.”

Getting a job is easy. “You hire on with the crew leader. If
he hires ya, then the main office will hire ya. So ya go to the main office an' they give ya a number and everything. And ya gotta have a card, agricultural card.

“Ain’t too strict on who they hire really, though. They just wanna get 'em before they freeze, cause once it freezes, then the berries are no good.

“First freeze, ya got about three or four days after that. An' then they all start to shrivel up.”

WHAT THE INDUSTRY needs is a good hard freeze this weekend, but we won’t get it. The forecast is in the fifties.”

Charles F. Davis, the new president of Jasper Wyman & Son, speaks rapidly and without hesitation. He knows precisely what he wants to say. There is a fierce directness about him.

“We’ve really got enough crop,” he says firmly on August 26. Wyman’s still has 10 to 15 percent of its crop in the field, maybe as much as a million pounds, but he’s willing to lose it.

“You have outer limits of how much can be financed and sold and stored. So there is a point where it doesn’t make sense to keep raking. And the whole industry would be better if it could limit its production.

“But it’s so contrary to the heritage of a farmer or a fisherman to not fish or farm when the product’s there. I’ve been in the large scale fishing business in the past in Newfoundland and in the West and, if the cod are running, you send your fleet. So that’s part of the heritage.”

When Charles Davis took over the management of Wyman’s two years ago, he says it was “running down hill rather fast. The company has had to have a lot of changes over the last couple of years.” Now that this is done, he will have the time to turn to “my forte, which is marketing.”

As stewards of the Jasper Wyman blueberry empire, “Chuck” Davis and Burleigh Crane are about as different as they come, though there was a three year gap between Burleigh’s retirement in 1980 and Chuck’s arrival in 1983 to discourage comparison. Three years that presumably started the Wyman down spiral that Charles Davis speaks openly about.

The two men have an entirely cordial working relationship, none of the suspicion and secretiveness that characterized the companies of Mr. Wyman and Mr. Stewart on the two sides of the track in the early days of the industry.

So it is quite unintentional when their separate perspectives point a quizzical finger.

“The sales side of this industry was a piece of cake up to three years ago,” says Chuck. “The product sold itself. You generally sold out in two months.

“People did it from their back porch, didn’t have to aggressively market, didn’t have to look for new products, because it was basically short. And look at the prices. The prices were in the eighties and nineties [per pound]. Different ballgame now,” says Chuck.

Where the two men differ most is in their basic fealty to blueberries. Burleigh can’t let a day pass without getting the stain of blueberries on him. Charles Davis is not a blueberry man. The “nuts and bolts” person at Wyman’s is Everett Ramsdell, production

Old harvest patterns are changing rapidly on the barrens.
manager. "He's the fellow that came up with me as a boy," says Burleigh. "He was the fellow that I trained.

"Chuck's two years off a fish operation. He wouldn't know a blueberry from a flying machine. No disrespect to Chuck, by the way."

Charles Davis is a corporate leader. He has arrived just as the industry has learned much of what it needs to know about growing and processing berries from old and new blueberry men.

He does not spend part of each day on the barrens as Burleigh does. Nor does he go to the bustling blueberry plant as Burleigh does. Neither is he likely to pick up kids hitchhiking to or from the blueberry fields, learn their names and how many boxes they picked that day.

He has other tasks he has set for himself. He is impatient to impose change.

"The problem is that the ability to grow these little guys has so dramatically increased in the last three to five years that the marketing side and the product development side has not kept pace.

"It's a classic agricultural supply-demand imbalance, really." He sees "many encouraging signs, however". One is that the cost per pound has decreased as yields have grown. This has moved blueberries from a gourmet market to a general market.

Consumption of blueberries in North America is up 49 percent the first half of 1985 over 1984. "So it's very encouraging that people are eating more berries. And that trend is likely to continue, because in a cost value sense the product is a good value."

Other than marketing, the big revolutionary changes Charles Davis wishes to bring to the blueberry industry are crop prediction and mechanized harvesting.

Mechanized harvesting is such an iron given in his mind that he wastes few words on it. He says 70 to 80 percent of Wyman's blueberry land is flat enough to flail mow rather than burn. "And that means ultimately mechanically harvestable. The next farming breakthrough has got to come in harvesting."

The new president of Wyman's is testy when it comes to crop predictions that are far off mark, as this year's were. "Crop forecasting is so poor!

"You'd think that people who have been in this industry, collectively thousands of years - people that look at the field, that we could better project the crops, because it has so much to do with your planning - financing, sales, harvesting, outside purchasing.

"Doesn't make sense. There've got to be indicators. I think it's a scientific challenge and a big one. It's not just guessing, it's not going in the field.

"It's probably counting buds that are gonna harvest or bear fruit next year, it's probably analyzing the number of seeds potential within a bud, getting historical weather patterns.

"It's never been big enough to be worried about in the past. Now it is. We're sitting on top of bombs."

The bombs he sees are small and blue, and next year there might be 50 to 55 million pounds of them.

Two yapping little dogs tumble down the hill from the Lefay camp. Nelly at her clothesline calls them back. She and Leslie and their boys and their friend, Thom Parke, have just finished eating dinner.

They point in well-fed good humor at the bugs gathering in a skillet on the stove outdoors.
They think the rule that forced that stove outside is "dumb." But their biggest concern is not about bugs but their livelihood.

For the Lefay family and Thom are heavily dependent on the blueberry harvest to get them through the year. The Lefays earn a steady $5,000 each season, Thom gets 80 percent of his income for the year. $50 a day. That's a good day, seven to five with a half hour off." Picking blueberries, he doubles that.

"The rules are making it easier to drive the migrant workers out and bring mechanized equipment in," says Thom.

"You understand why we don't want OSHA to push us out," Nelly says firmly. "For this family that's gonna mean $5,000." Their four sons pick and so does Nelly "though I'm not very good at it." Leslie grins, "Well, she makes her cigarette money anyway."

"The camp's better than my camp at home," drawls Thom. The only sore point is that stove sitting outdoors. For that they blame OSHA, not Burleigh Crane. And they blame OSHA for forcing Cherryfield Foods to turn to mechanical harvesters with their rules that drive the price tag for migrant housing too high.

"The machines are coming in and they'll give us the shit work," Nelly warns. "We'll see it, three, four years."

"I wish someone would blow them machines up," Leslie grimaces. "I heard some of 'em been sabotaging them."

"Blueberries are gold compared to potatoes," he says. "Potatoes, most I can make is
NELLY IS RIGHT. FIVE years from now, the wild blueberry harvest in Maine will not be anything like this harvest.

Mechanical harvesters will rake the low flat fields of the barrens, replacing a thousand to 1,500 of the pickers.

One has only to look at the jut of Chuck Davis' jaw at Wyman's when he says, "The next farming breakthrough has got to come in harvesting." He will push relentlessly for the machines to reduce the field cost of berries so that he can build new mass markets.

The new Canadian owners of the old A.L. Stewart Company, Oxford Foods doing business as Cherryfield Foods, may push toward mechanization even faster than Wyman's. Machines are already used more extensively in Canada than in Maine, although some argue they are more suited to the hard packed soil of Canadian blueberry fields than to Maine's boggier fields.

Burleigh Crane of Cherryfield Foods says, "I'm hoping we can do half our acreage with them in five years. Chuck Davis of Wyman's sees 70 to 80 percent of Wyman's land as "mechanically harvestable".

Some oldtime skeptics argue, "They've been trying to make a machine that would work for 50 years. They can't do it and they won't be able to do it for another 50 years."

But that was before the industry grew to its present size, when big capital wasn't riding on it. Today's managers will finance the engineering changes needed to make the machines work on the Maine barrens.

In today's market where supply exceeds demand, Maine's wild blueberries compete with cultivated blueberries from Michigan, New Jersey and other states. Competition has forced processed prices down from the 80s [cents per pound] in 1983 to the 60s.

Last year growers lost money as field prices dropped to the mid 20s. Northeastern Blueberry Company estimates its field costs at 28 to 32 cents.

A profit margin can be built in two ways. Yield per acre can be driven up from lows of 1,000 pounds per acre to highs of 3,000 pounds per acre. And the cost of harvesting can be reduced by doing away with the hand labor costs of $2.50 a box and substituting machines.

In the meantime, the big growers will hedge their bets.
They will make enough improvements on their migrant camps to stay out of trouble with the U.S. Department of Labor and to continue to draw migrant labor to the barrens. They will need this labor for a few more seasons as the harvest begins to shift to machines and as the industry experiments with technological improvements.

All growers say some of the barrens can never be picked by machine, fields that are too hilly or too rough. These are the lands that yield the least income for hand rakers. Slower raking and fewer berries.

The present estimate is that about 400 to 500 hand pickers will still be needed after the mechanical harvesters dominate the barrens. That's about one-fourth of the present work force.

Nelly is right. “The machines are coming in and they’ll give us the shit work.” She has seen it happen in Maine’s potato fields in her lifetime and she will see it happen on the blueberry barrens.

“GET A LOAD OF THIS. I was down in New Hampshire, Daley and Sons in New Hampshire. This was the most prettiest blueberry land I’ve ever seen in my whole life,” says Peter Paul.

He is telling how he raced a mechanical harvester in August and won.

“Fell right in love with their land, was a 600 acre farm. The whole thing was surrounded by a rock hedge fence on the blueberry land that they hand-picked themselves. And the only rocks that were in the field either a machine couldn’t move ’em or they were just there for good.

“And there was nice low land for sweepin’, nice and level. And they had these machines in there. I heard so much about ’em over the years.

“And I said as a kid they’ll never make a machine to beat a blueberry raker.

“So I seen that machine and I was sittin’ there and I had my first twenty buckets and I looked at it, and kinda timed it.”

Peter Paul’s grin is deliciously wicked and his eyes roll. “So I went over and I stood beside it and we talked to each other and I said, ‘Okay, I wanna try [to beat] this machine.’ I said, ‘I hear so much about ’em.’

“And so we took off.” Peter imitates the sound of his sweeping rake. “Whfff, whfff, whfff, whfff, whfff.

“Forty-three seconds later I had a bucket and I was sittin’ down smokin’ a cigarette! And at four minutes ten seconds, he was just toppin’ his bucket.

“So I went over and shook the guy’s hand and he says, ‘You’re the most awesomest person I ever seen rakin’.’”

Peter’s laughter explodes.

“And so it made me feel real good inside.

“So I went right back out there and I went crazy. And I got 80 buckets that day, yeah. 80 buckets!”

PAMELA HOLLEY WOOD is the editor of Salt Magazine.
TOOTS MAKES MUSIC

Story and photography
by Dana Frederic Gillian

TOOTS WITH HIS MICROPHONE. When he is singing and playing, the microphone stands between his knees, reaches up between his body and the piano, between his arms extended to the keys, and he sings right up close to it, whispering in its ear.
Then, when he is not singing, he drops his head down beside it, his cheek brushing it. All the while his eyes are closed or nearly so. Coming to the end of a song he looks back over one shoulder to his dancing audience, back over the other shoulder to the band—Dicky laughing away at the accordion, Ben intent on his fiddle, Marc tapping on his drums and cymbals without thought, watching the players, watching the dancers.

Tonight as it has been most nights for this band for the past thirty years, the audience is French Canadian, from Biddeford, Maine, or nearby. They sit at long folding tables around the dance floor laughing and talking, switching from French to English, English to French.

Toots Bouthot’s singing is smooth, though not really mellow; neither is it blue or mournful. It is vibrant, well-supported, and tuneful; especially, it is rhythmic. His words are articulated and the length of his notes precise, even when he takes on Hoagy Carmichael’s happy-go-lucky style, or a rockabilly hiccup. Most of the time he uses his piano as a rhythm instrument, not as a melodic lead—one hand keeps up a walking bass line while the other beats out chords.

Dicky leans down into his accordion, then raises up and away and rocks back, grinning. Sometimes he points at someone dancing who’s shouted something to him. He laughs a lot, throwing his head and torso back, closing his eyes; he and Marc laugh together.

Marc, Toots’ son, is not flamboyant in his drumming, his hands are barely an inch above the drum head, one or the other sometimes rests right on the drum. His attention seems to be completely on the dancers; sometimes he smiles, sometimes he laughs. Sometimes he watches Dicky or Ben or Toots as they play a solo, smiles broadly when he hears something inspired.

Ben’s chin is pressed hard into his fiddle, his face is hard and tensed, but his arm is fluid. He is sideways to the audience but he knows about them; he does his smiling when a song is finished and he releases his hold on the fiddle.

They are all happy in their playing, they tell jokes to each other and about each other, one or another fools around with a riff until someone finds something he wants to play and shouts it out to the others and they’re off. And then, when one or two or all of them end a song too abruptly or a measure too late, they
hang their heads in mock shame and squirm with unbounded laughter.

I first saw Toots when I walked into the main tent of the Kermesse, a festival nominally celebrating Biddeford’s Franco-American population, but which on that night seemed to be celebrating the ability to move, to dance, to talk, to sing, to clap your hands and stomp your feet.

Toots was at the center of all this. When I watched him with the band, saw his daughters dancing together, heard, when they spoke to me, how proud they were of their father’s music, saw Toots dancing with one of them after the show to music piped over the amplifiers while I was speaking to the other daughter, and dancing past me he said to me (whom he didn’t know), “These are my daughters,” I knew that this was a man who had music in him the way I wanted to find music. Not the blues—from listening to him I could almost certainly it wasn’t blues—but music as a force.

And so I met the man, talked to him, tagged along after him to some dances. It is true that music is not to him what it is to me, but maybe I wish it could be. At any rate, what is to him makes sense to me, even if I could not think of it myself. When I asked him what music is to him, I liked his answers.

Anyway, it is from these talks and from following him around that I know whatever it is I know about Toots, can say some things with relative certainty.

Lionel “Toots” Bouthot was born July 19, 1929, in Biddeford, Maine, a mill town of 20,000 people, some 70 percent of them French Canadian or of French Canadian descent. Toots has lived in Biddeford for 56 years now. He’s been putting himself in front of a mike since he was five years old; he has made good money, steadily, doing so; he has never wanted to go on the road, to make music full time, and so has always had at least one other job.

As a performer he started out with vaudeville, moved to swing with the 40s, in the 50s switched to country and Texas swing, and played a little jazz on the side. The music he’s played in the past ten years, with Dicky Morneau, Ben Guillaume, and his son Marc, he describes as a mixture of everything from Lawrence Welk to gospel, “songs x number of years old that nobody knows who wrote.” He’s played bass in the past and probably still can; he usually plays piano and/or guitar. He’s always sung.

Toots can speak and sing in either English or French, and many of his audiences can understand him in either language. For twenty years he played a Saturday night dance every week in one or another of Biddeford’s French Canadian fraternities. He has played in bars and clubs, for weddings and anniversaries, has even sung at funerals. (“I guess we get you coming and going,” he says.) He has played with his seven children, in his basement, after supper. He dances with his grandchildren.

It’s not the “facts” that come to mind, though, when I think about Toots. It’s one night when we talked—night, his fly-tying gear shoved in one corner of the room, a fan blowing softly from a screen door, a clock on the wall ticking into our hearing during pauses, renewing in us the pleasure of night, of talking to midnight; outside there was the night, and we were inside, it made us companions, so that he was happy in answering my questions, as I was in hearing his answers.

Then, when it was already after midnight, we were both a little sad when I had no more questions. Toots fixed hot chocolate and raisin toast for us both and as we ate he talked about his 27 years in the insurance business and how he quit when he saw the business grow top-heavy and lose concern for “the little guy”; about some of the techniques he uses to sell things in the hardware store where he works now; about how fishing partners, when dead, can never be replaced. And through all this talking, and the talking that preceded it and the talking that followed, I was learning what music is to Toots.

It is joy and dancing, it is not hidden or buried or something you have to mine for, it is on the surface of everything, it is everywhere prevalent as light. It’s a gift from God. I said, “Last week we were talking and you said something about, ‘It’s kind of rewarding if someone comes up and tells you that they enjoyed a certain thing that you did ... you feel you’re doing your job right.’ Well, what do you think your job is?”

And Toots said, “It’s really, it’s not the word ‘job’ as ‘job’ would be applying to something. It’s more of, you have to, this is strictly my opinion, my thinking—all right? It’s nothing to do with ... .

“I was brought up in a kinda religious upbringing, okay; and to me you were put on
earth to fulfill a position or a certain aspect in life. And to me, if I was given this talent—and I call it talent loosely but it’s something of a talent—I have, my position is to do what I’m s’posed to be doing with it—spread it out. So. If I was born to be, let’s call it entertainment or an entertainer or so forth, my job is to entertain people, my avocation or whatever you want to call it, whatever word you want to use—I’m not using it as flattery to me.

“You say, ‘Well, this is what I was put on earth to do, and I’m gonna do the best I can.’ You may not always do the best you can, but you try to do the best you can. And if you’ve given 50 people, 100 people, 200 people, 400 a good time by what you’re producing, that’s what I’m s’posed to do. Then it’s like, I look at it as if I’ve done my share of the community thing or whatever I’m supposed to be doing, that night. Okay? So. It’s done.

“You may not, ah,” here he sighed deeply, “well, a lot a people say, ‘Well, what the heck are you doing playing in a dance hall, or playing for’—and I did play in honky-tongs call ‘em, whatever you wanta call ‘em, bar rooms or, whenever the job was booked, that’s what you played for—you know, ‘What are you really doing a job for?’

People need an outlet. May not be the greatest thing in the world, but this is what today’s Christianity is coming about. That they took the guy out a the great white ivory tower and put him down in the street and say, ‘Look. Go help the little fella.’ And. Y’know, the image of the local pastor driving in a nice black Buick all shiny on Sunday afternoon—that’s gone. They’re back with the people now, see.

“And with me I never really relished going out and playing for society. I want to play for the guy that I work with, or the guy on the street. Not necessarily as we’re referring to street people today, but in the small towns—the neighbor.

“You know, it was Charlie Brown’s daughter that got married, so, ‘Okay. Let’s give the Charlie Brown family a hell of a good time for what they’re paying me.’ I gave ’em a dollar’s worth of music for the dollar that they paid me.”

Marc, as though people knew these guys and had been waiting for them and knew that when they played it was okay to dance, everyone would dance: couples who circled about in a polka to every song and rhythm; a chubby couple, he about six inches taller than she, who could not figure out how to hold each other when they wanted to slow dance; a Greek dance to “Never on Sunday,” the line of dancers led by a plump woman in a knee-length Indian-red quilted coat, the only one of the 50 dancers who really knew the steps; a tall homely woman in her 30s and her older, slightly-drunk husband—they were gliding while couples around them stepped, she followed his lead perfectly, they ended with a dip.

Rita and Bill, who were celebrating their 27th anniversary, were given the floor to themselves for a waltz (“Can I Have This Dance?”). They danced one verse alone and she began to sing quietly along with Toots, and then other couples came back to the floor. Probably some of them knew Rita and Bill; probably all of them knew Toots.

Maybe it’s all part of the reason they dance—because they know the couples around them, because they know the boys in the band. And because Toots the musician wants them to dance. He doesn’t judge the worth of a song by what he hears from himself or the band but by what he sees in the audience. He turns away from his piano, his head over his shoulder, and watches. He says, “Watch what the amount of participation is on certain numbers. And if you don’t accomplish what you wanted to do, you kind of adjust to it. . . .

“Sometimes if something isn’t going over too [well], there’s no participation, instead of doing two choruses or double it or whatever case may be, cut it short, that’s not what they’re looking for. You see?

“On the other hand if you’ve got a whole mess a participation, instead of playing this three times you might end up playing it five times—you know, certain verses, certain choruses, what have you. It’s all geared to, y’know, if you got ’em participating in something, make it last.”

He coaxes them, too, warms them up, immerses them slowly into the night. “With us we start out with a waltz. All right, so get them on the floor to waltz, and then work up tempo, but you don’t start the up tempo quick and then go to a waltz, that’s backwards. That’s
how, I've always done it that way and that's how you get the participation.

"At the end of the evening, 11 o'clock—if you're playing till 12, as an example, or 12:30—the end of the evening you can get away with a hell of a lot more stuff. That's the way we do it. That's the reason I'll look to see the participation. That's the only way I can tell. When we get the number done, if there's 50, 60, 70 people on the floor, there's good participation. If you've got four couples waltzing...."

When Toots plays, people come and speak to him while he is playing, they bend down over his piano bench to his ear, or come straight up to him if he is playing guitar. They sit beside him on the piano bench and clap their hands. Sometimes they want to get right up on stage with him to sing or play (this happens especially at weddings) and he is glad to let them, even when they sing off key or can't figure out where to come in. He may be somewhat dismayed by this, just as he is with people who want to fox trot but don't know it and so keep asking him to do a fast waltz, a really fast waltz; just as he is with having to play the same song several times in a night.

Still, this close contact with his listeners is what Toots has based his music-making on, and I think it is possible he would not be a musician at all if he could not get that contact. When he plays a dance he knows he'll have contact; it is not necessarily so with a concert, and he is cautious about them.

"Sometimes a concert, it's nice, but it depends what length of time they require and how cozy it can be. If you do a concert and you're sitting down, you're doing something and the person that's watching is 15, 20 feet away, it's great.

"If you're on a stage, you're on a huge pedestal and first person that you can see is a hundred feet away, I can't look in their eyes, I don't know what's going on, I can't picture, I can't see. You do your thing and you do it as best you can or watch the rest of the boys. I'm never nervous, per se, at least I don't realize, I could be. But if the crowd is right close to you, it takes a lot of the pressure away. There's no problem in talking or performing before two, three hundred people, if you can see them. I mean, look in the eyes, see what's going on."

Toots not only looks to his audience, he listens to them. On any night there are only two things the band is certain to play—their closing song, and whatever people ask for.

"You never know what you're going to do

"I want to play for the guy that I work with or the guy on the street."
for an opening, you never know, you just—the only song that's about sure is the closing song. 'I Wanna Go Home.'

"Everybody has a song or a tune or a melody or whatever that pertains to their certain era in life, you know... 'In the Mood,' by Glenn Miller. It brings back a lot a memories, to a lot a people. Now 'In the Mood' to a 25-year-old doesn't do much. They may like it, they may not, by 40 years from now somebody's going to play 'Yesterday' and they're gonna say, 'Well, gee, there's my tune.'"

Yet there is more to music than memory. Once Toots and I talked about what country music is exactly. I wondered if the only thing that makes a song "country" is the twang in the singer's voice. "Well, maybe so," Toots said, but "the lyrics have a lot to do with it, they're basic lyrics, it's always the same thing. I mean, how much can you write about. Y'know they're—actually, it's basic poetry of life. If you listen; take all the words. Most songs are."

When Toots is pressed to pin down what music is, what it does for people, how it acts on them, he says:

"Well, it brings joy, let's face it. Y'know. The only time you hear sad music's at a funeral. No matter how it's done. I spent half my life singing, really. And playing. I do it at work, and unintentionally I'm humming.

"I don't know, it's in your blood, I guess. You do fulfill a need. Y'know. People. And you've kinda built up a reputation, also, over the years. This is something I always took a lot of pride in.

"You'd give it all you got because, not necessarily because they're paying you. You're not doing it for the love of money, cause you'll never get rich. Unless you go big time. But you get a reputation of, when you hear it, it makes you feel good, in a sense they say, 'He's gonna be there, we're gonna have a good time.'"

"So, they kinda depend on you to provide—then everybody comes over and talks while you sing this, and you're part of them."

The audience is always Toots' standard in music. Some musicians play for the instrument, trying to live up to it. They sometimes know that the instrument itself is far beyond their abilities; they go as far as they can to meet the music inherent in the instrument and they know they don't go very far at all.

Toots plays for his living listeners, for men and women who want to talk and sing and dance. Virtuosity has nothing to do with that attempt; feeling and rhythm has everything to do with it.

"Y'know, the need to be an extraordinary musician or better than average musician or whatever you want to classify it as—who in the hell rates those? What is normal, what's abnormal, what is high, what is low? You know. What sells—is, seems to be a hell of a lot more important because there are thousands of unemployed great piano players. And there are fellas that pound the piano and got all kinds of work. You have to put everything into a, put it together and put a mixture in; it's a combination of playing piano to blend with this, all right. I've seen fellows that could play beautiful piano. Terrific piano. Couldn't back up anybody.

"You know, I've backed up from church music to country to Dixieland—all this put together. Over the years that's become experience. If there's something I didn't know, I would sort of learn it somehow. I played with guys that were graduates of school music. You know you could have done this this way, could of got that—I got by. And I got by to a point where they say, 'Well, look, our next job is...'. Now if you weren't cutting it, you would have been dumped.

"It's more or less teamwork. When everything blends, when one guy knows what the other guy's doing, the other guy knows what he's doing, you don't need to be that proficient, if it's all put together.

"Now if you gonna be soloing all night long in a piano bar, then you need to know what you're [doing]. But you take that fellow, put him up with four, five pieces and lot of 'em—fuck, forget it. The don't keep time. They're not accustomed to playing for dance music, that's the thing. It's "Peg 'a My Heart" I don't care how you do it, the 'Ta da da da/ ta da... but the minute they would start playing with two, three, and four pieces, where there's a steady beat and somebody's dancing, all of a sudden, 'Geez, what's the matter with this?'" (Here Toots holds out his arms and looks around, as though he is a dancer suddenly surprised with finding himself out of step; possibly he has trod on his partner's toes in astonishment.) "And this, the reason is that they're not following meter. Now, could be the greatest [music] reader in the world, knows all the right chords, knows everything, everything's put to-"
Toots and the boys always keep the right beat. For this, and for the songs they play and their willingness to do requests, for their ability to joke with and tease their audience in French as well as in English, and because they have been around long enough that they are playing weddings for the third generations in some families, for this they are rewarded. They always have someone to play for. To their listeners there is certainty in their music, even inevitability.

"Well, I think a lot of the work we get is that somebody, to be perfectly honest with you, we built a reputation over the years. When they think music, they say, 'Oh, Toots,' and, 'Toots can take care a that for us.'"

Biddeford, Maine, has always had music. So much so that it is music Toots speaks of when he describes the town.

"It's basically a mill town. It was the type of a town where you work hard and you play hard. Yeah. And I suppose I could very easily see the comparison here between the steel workers working hard, playing hard, and with us, it was the cotton mills, when we were small.

"Cotton mills and what today is known as Maremont, which used to be Saco-Lowell, which made spinning frames and cast iron. They had a foundry and all that. Either you worked at that mill—the cotton mill—or you worked at [Saco-Lowell], and a few shoe workers and so forth. It was basically a real heavy blue collar town.

"And they were very clannish. You know, they had Hibernians for the Irish people and you had the snowshoe clubs and the Catholic foresters, as an example, the St. Jean de Baptiste, which were all fraternity clubs, real heavy.

"And everybody maneuvered somewhat for Saturday night activities and all kinds of other activities to generate togetherness, and money. And make their little kingdoms more prosperous.

"You see, in those days no drinking on Sundays, so you didn’t have the Sunday business. Everything had to close at twelve and they weren’t allowed the Beanos that they’re allowed today, y’know.

"All these little things put together were all geared to the band that’s gonna make the money for you if you hold dances. So if you hold a dance and you got a bar and it’s inside the club Saturday night you can sell the liquor, you make money at the bar. So this created activity and they claimed a club that had activity was a live club.

"It was very common years ago to have six or seven dances going on at the same time in Biddeford, one spot to the next to the next. And whoever catered to the public, 'cause they [the public] wanted to hear the music, got the crowd.

"Very simple."

When I was a young kid, you know, five, six, seven, there was no TV, very limited radio. We weren't from the wealthy family. We never suffered or anything, but we were brought up in a neighborhood where a buck was a big thing.

"You know, depression time and so forth, so what transpired is you had a multitude of house parties and if relatives had any type of a musical talent in the families, you were invited to everything that went on, because you were the center of activity.

"Specially if you had the person that would back up, somebody that can play to follow all these tunes.

"Now I remember when I was five, six, seven years old, my grandmother was quite a singer of songs that everybody participated. The French Canadian have a ritual of songs that one person sings the certain portion of the song and then it’s repetitious again and everybody sings together the chorus and comes back to the [singer]. And it tells a story.

"These we used to do all night long. My grandmother used to sing a barrelful of 'em. And then I had an aunt that used to sing and then another aunt used to sing and another. These were the relatives and we were always invited to neighborhood things ... and this is how I got started.

"I don’t recall when I didn’t own a guitar, you know. And then my neighbor got a piano and he was quite friendly with the family. It was a living room thing, they moved the piano in with a rug and that’s all that was in that room. They both worked days, and I had a key to get into that room and pound the piano if I wanted to.

"It was my own little studio, so I took very good care of it. When other kids were playing baseball and doing other things, many the afternoon I pound the piano until I got the
method of transposing from guitar to a piano what I wanted to do.

"Now I had a sister that's been a nun for 45 years now and at one time, before the convent of course, she was a performer, tap-dancing and some little routines. She'd sing and she appeared on stage.

"There was an oldtimer by name of Pete, Blind Pete, was a fiddler. And he was a man that used to play for her. So he'd come up the house and whenever we could, we'd get together. And this is where I got the fiddle tunes doped out, learned from backing him. Whenever he felt like it we'd sit down, we'd play for half an hour, three quarters of an hour, whatever the case may be.

"And I remember this when I lived on Hazel Street, when we'd play that in the so-called shed. We'd sit, and I can still picture him today. Yeah. He was an oldtimer with a vest, an old vest. And in those days that was the style. Never took the vest off, I guess," Toots laughs.

"He could hardly see, that's why they called him Blind Pete. Half the time he didn't remember what the names of the tunes were, but we somehow got 'em worked out.

"You develop certain rhythms. Where I learned them along the line was ... my grandmother primarily. The second one was an old-time fiddler that lived on Hazel Street when I was a kid. That's another fiddler, not Blind Pete. We used to call him Pépère Oaks. He came from northern Maine.

"Every Sunday morning was ritual, nine to eleven-thirty. And he was in his 80s at the time. Sit in a straight chair and stomp his feet and he and I would play. And everybody in the neighborhood would sit on the steps around and listen. We'd play on the porch, the back porch. If it was raining, we'd play inside.

"This is part of where I got to find out what chords were, what key, what tunes were."

"My mom was always an optimist type of person, always looking at the bright side of things, always laughing and happy-go-lucky type a person . . . Always loved a lot of activity, lot of noise, singing. She could get you going very easily. That type of person."

Toots' mother made use of the music that he and his younger brother Donald inherited from their grandmother. She organized little shows within the house to keep the two boys occupied. In only a short time they moved onto a larger stage.

"The first time we appeared I remember that we did two French songs and one English song. That was our debut in an amateur contest and from song number one we were disqualified," Toots laughs.

"Tore the house down at City Hall, the five-and the four-year-olds doing things there. I can just picture the crowd, you know. So they disqualified us, paid us the full amount, first prize, and continued with the amateur contest. Brought us back [at the end, to perform]. And that was our first appearance on stage."

After this first smashing success, Toots and Donald were regularly employed. "We'd do harmony, like the Everly Brothers of the Stone Age. We had a whole ritual that we did that was never the same from one performance to the next, because nothing was planned.

"Donald tap-danced and sang and played a kind of bazooka type thing. It sorta sounded like a sax." Toots played the guitar and sang.

"We had no stage fright, so they just let us go. I mean, we'd normally get on stage and decide what the hell we were gonna do.

"It was a kind of a comedy type thing, you know. We'd argue what we're going to do, I'd bring a key and he'd say, 'No, no, no! I don't want you to do that number.' And everybody would listen. And you'd talk in French, you know, and everybody would roar. Then you'd sing in English.

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"I was like the straight man, he was a comedian. This was before Abbot and Costello and all this. Those are things that we did because you did once and people laughed. So you remembered that. You had like a built-in memory, so the next time you try it again. If they laugh again, well, you do it all the time. It was trial and error things.

"You know, like Donald would walk on stage with bubble-gum, peel it out and put it back in, and everybody'd roar. You got 'em laughing, got 'em going.

"These were things that [at] a lot of interviews you were asked, 'Who taught you these things?' Nobody had. It's just we did it once, we got a big laugh. We burst out laughing, stop in the middle of a song, burst out laughing, both of us. My mother'd go crazy.

"Another thing, too, we went to parochial schools, as all the French Canadian kids did, y'know. And whenever anything transpired that needed to raise money for the missions, in school, or what have you, we were on. [We went from] class to class, two, three songs here, two, three songs there, and it was a big power for the school." Toots laughs. "And we did this probly ten times a year."

"My mother used to take us out 'cause we were hired, we'd work probably three nights a week. The jobs were . . . let's say Rotary, Kiwanis, all these; and then the French societies and all that. We were in big demand for that type a work, because we'd put on a 20, 25 minute show for 'em.

"My father wasn't at all [musical]. My mother never played any type of an instrument. The only one that really [made music was] my grandmother. The rest of the family, forget it. I have an uncle on my father's side that used to play "Home on the Range" on harmonica.

"Well, maybe a couple other numbers, but I remember "Home on the Range" because—and that's the one that introduced me to fishing when I was seven, eight. So I used to bring a guitar for the front of the boat, he'd play harmonica in the back of the boat.

"My grandmother used to worry, 'When are they gonna come home,' cause we'd come home at ten o'clock at night. Many nights, from what they tell me, he'd have me—he's a kind of a rugged fellow—he'd have me over his shoulder because I was sound asleep, my guitar in one hand, and he'd take me home, put me to bed and we'd go fishing the next day.

"So I did not have a mean or lousy childhood. I mean it was great when you stop and think a the things that I went through. We were kinda well-dressed kids, 'cause we made more money.

"Actually, we ended up making more money than most people did working in factories locally. We used to get anyways from five to ten dollars a night to perform and we normally averaged three nights a week. You're talking in the mid-thirties to early forties. A lot a people worked in the Pepperell Mills for nine, ten dollars a week."

"It's a funny thing, you know, like a person learning to cook from a mother. You don't do that at ten o'clock in the morning, you don't do it in the afternoon, it's always after supper, you see. So. Something would start after supper, one would open a door and it would start everybody going, you know.

"'Aw, c'mon Dad, c'mon Dad,'" one or another or several of the kids would say. "The first thing you know, Dad was down there [in the basement] till ten o'clock. Da da da." Playing the piano, two or three singing, one tap-dancing. Putting on shows with opening and closing acts, dancers, pianists, guitarists, after a while even drummers.

"And this, what I used to do downstairs, my mother and my sister used to do with my brother Donald and I.

"I never pushed them into anything. But the instruments were there, if you want to fool around with something, they're there. It's a start. If they show any interest they're gonna horse around with it. And then you'd go from there.

"To say that I never taught them to do things—I did by doing the things in front of 'em, and come back a couple days later and find somebody pounding on the piano looking for the right chords. And I would, 'This no, this doesn't go here, goes there. Ra ra ra . . .' First thing you know they'd played that little aspect of it. Whatever little things we used to do.

"They'd come up and ask a question, 'How
do I do this and where does this go and how come it goes,' give 'em an answer, show 'em, bang! Walk off. Let them practice so that—I always felt that if you feel like learning an instrument, you’re gonna do so.

"I guess it came easy. I really don’t know, y’know. It’s one a these things where you turn your back and all of a sudden they’re playing.

"They always watched, had a good ear, and timing. My opinion, you can’t teach timing. You either got it or you haven’t. I can’t give you an explanation for that.

"How much of this you can transmit, I don’t know. Where did, why did I get it, and why did an older brother didn’t get it, and my sister’s a beautiful singer.

"Over the years your ear develops so that you remember.

"So. Over the years [my children] developed that same thing. I would assume. ’Cause you can’t fool ’em. They’ll sing right on pitch.

"I don’t have any, thank the lord, that are tone deaf."

"At Christmas time, Christmas Eve, the whole family here, it’s pretty noisy. You know, we don’t have a big house and it’s nothing for us to have 25 people in here and everybody, wall to wall people, and they sing and they dance . . . Just like the old times when I was a kid."

Toots is speaking of a room approximately 12 by 15 feet. "I normally take my fly-tying stuff away, and get in that corner there, and let them go around. We play music in that corner. They dance.

"You know, it’s one of these that starts at seven at night, and when you wanna quit, you quit, but they’re going. And the next day you look for somebody." Toots laughs and looks around. "They’re all gone. They won’t even answer the phones. Christmas day—it’s not Christmas day to us, it’s Christmas Eve, and Christmas day is a rest day.

"It’s part of the ritual, I guess. They love music and they love all kinds. Doesn’t make any difference. It’s a, it’s a family thing. We think nothing of it, you know."

"YOU KNOW, THOSE ARE THINGS you like to remember. It’s kind of another facet of it that says—well, you were asking me, ‘Why do you think you’re doing your job?’ Well, it’s part of that job. Part of that, part of my philosophy, in other words.

"That was one method—‘Okay, I did it for my kids, can I help something out that doesn’t have it?’ It’s something that stays with you.”

Toots laughs gently. ’I have a little kid whenever I go down river here. Came out a nowhere, he looked like he needed company, like a little pup. I nicknamed him "River Rat”.

"First time I saw him he was in the water, digging up plugs. So I got him some line, and I got him some broken stuff that nobody cared for at the store and fixed it up, and now he’s got a reel.

"He’s very, very streetwise. He’s 12. You know he, ‘Say, old man,’” Toots laughs again, ‘he calls me ‘Old man’.

"He’s going to high school this year. I introduced him to one of the teachers, who was fishing with me. He says, turns around and he says, ‘Don’t tell him that you call me River Rat, cause,’ he said, ‘that’s what he’s gonna call me.’ And he says, ‘I don’t want the kids to call me River Rat in school.’ So.

"It’s funny how he’ll cross the river to come talk to me. You know, he sits down and we’ll chat. It’s just one of those things. I started kidding him and I was singing while I was fishing, first thing I knew he was sitting watching me.

"Again, you know, the singing part got that kid involved to watch me, and then started asking questions and that. . . .

"And I do it, I don’t [know], it comes out. You know, I’ll do something and it reminds me of a song and I’ll sing part of that song. And the fellows I fish with get a big charge out of that. To me, I don’t know why, but it comes."

DANA GILLIAN, in his final year of a combined B.A./M.A. history degree program at Johns Hopkins University, spent last summer at Salt.
THERE IS NOT A MAINER ALIVE who doesn't love Indian summer, that wonderful period in late autumn when the weather is warm and the beaches are empty. But why is it called Indian summer? There are several theories.

Some people believe that the term came about because, in the early years of our nation, this was the last season when Indian attacks were made on white settlements. This is a catchy idea, but obviously wrong. After all, if it were true, why wouldn't we also have an Indian summer in the spring? This, of course, would be the first time in the new year when the Indians could leave their winter quarters and assault the settlers—a sort of Indian war pre-season.

Another explanation is that the Indians predicted these spells of weather. This too is nice, but I'm willing to give our forefathers some credit. Don't you think that, after four or five years, these folks would have realized that this trend towards pleasant weather occurs nearly every year? That being the case, the colonists could have predicted it themselves. They weren't above patting themselves on the back. They soon would have called it "settler" summer.

Then there's the idea that the name evolved because the season closely matches that of East India. In all due respect, who possibly would have cared?

Yet another theory is that the name was given because the haziness in the air at that time of year was thought to be a result of Indian fires. Is that to mean that the Indians didn't use fires for the rest of the year?

No, only one plausible explanation exists for the term Indian summer—mine.

Imagine if you will the coast of Maine before the arrival of the white man. Life was simple then. The demands on the average Indian were few. He could winter in such places as Norridgewock, and in the summer he and his family could vacation in a quiet spot with a beach—like the Kennebunks. He could hunt, fish, lie on the beach, canoe, and do it all without a soul to bother him. The mean average income of the Indians was low, but their lifestyle more than made up for any lack of wampum. Then, from out of nowhere came this fleet of fishermen. Life was never to be the same again.

The Indians must really have been put out when the first strangers to arrive in their town built their seasonal homes on the islands, because they didn't trust the "natives". And, to add insult to injury, the newcommers expected these same "natives" to look out for them. The questions and the expectations were endless.

"What's that you're planting?" the colonists would ask. "Would you show me how to grow it?"

"What's the fastest way to get to the next settlement?" "Would you mind taking me there?"

"Who cooks the best bear in town? Could you get me reservations for Thursday night?"

"Is there an outlet nearby where I can buy beaver pelts cheaply?"

The Indians tried their best to be helpful but, for all intents and purposes, their vacation was being ruined. There was no time left in the day for fun. They felt stressed.

A few bold Indians eventually went to the leaders of the white men and tried to explain their problems. "We sure would appreciate it if you white folks would keep a lower profile," the chiefs said, "and let my tribe members have a little more time to themselves."

The leaders of the whites were shocked. "Look, Chiefs," they responded, "don't you realize what our men are doing for the local economy? How many new mirrors did you people earn last month? Without us would you ever have got that picture of the King?"
Halloween at the Cape Porpoise P.O.

Come on,” they continued, “let’s stop talking foolishness!”

Well, thought the Indians, these white guys must know something or they wouldn’t have been able to come all the way from wherever they came from. So, little more was said. However, eyebrows were raised when a few of the fishermen bought some beachfront property for a few shells and a keg of whiskey and then turned around and said that the Indians could no longer come on it. Oh well, thought the Indians, we’ll just go someplace else.

Anyway, by the end of the summer season the Indians were exhausted. It was with great relief that they watched the fishermen pack up their catch and head back for their native land before winter winds trapped them in this savage country. Ah, thought the Indians. At last we can enjoy some of our own activities. No more questions. No more interruptions. No more insults. No more white men. Just a good, old (you guessed it) Indian summer.

Three centuries later my grandfather and I were sitting on the front porch one day in an attempt to relieve ourselves from an oppressive heat. As he rocked in his favorite chair, he nostalgically told me of the days when he and his favorite girl took a picnic lunch down lover’s lane out to the shore.

“Of course,” he continued, “Lover’s Lane is now part of the town highway system.” He started to say more, but he was suddenly interrupted by a car which came screeching to a halt in front of the house. A man leaned out the open window and yelled in our direction, “Hey, Buddy, could you point me the way to the nearest sweater outlet? And by the way, is there a decent place to eat around here?”

So the cycle continues.

THOMAS BRADBURY is a native Mainer whose family has lived in Cape Porpoise since 1730.
"Comin' from where I do, a little island called Bear in the Penobscot Bay, I can say THE SALT BOOK's great . . . It is the best book ever written about seacoast Maine."

—R. Buckminster Fuller

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No. 15: - Fish Cutting; Laying the Keel; Swan's Island, Part 2 (Ruth Moulden, Walter Stinson, Basil Joyce and Edwin Goot); Country Sawmill.
No. 16: - Indian Island; Madasa Sapiel, Clan Mother of the Penobs; Scots Medicine Man (Senabeh Francis), Part 1; Ships in Bottles; Fishermen's Superstitions; Fire of '47; Metal Spinning.
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Number 24

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Maine's 45 million pound bumper crop of wild blueberries is harvested by hand rakers. Salt explores the traditions and dramatic changes that vie on the barrens today.