“The movies make trucking so glamorous. It ain’t though. I want my boy to see what it’s really like.” Dysart’s Truckstop in Bangor, a Maine institution for truckers and locals. “From Kittery to Canada it’s the only one.”
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Cover photograph by Ken Kobre
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The magazine about the really important people in Maine.
The View from Pier Road

John McPhee's Maine

Writers don't speak if they can avoid it. When they become famous enough or dauntless enough, they balk at painful speaking engagements. Words are for pages.

An exception this fall was John McPhee, *The New Yorker* writer with 18 books to his name, who came to Salt to talk to students. His was a quiet visit, no fanfare, no autographs, a time when a mature but diffident writer was generous to young would-be writers.

"I have a lifelong affection for Maine. That is why I write about it so often." As a boy, he spent his summers in the woods of New Hampshire, going by canoe into Maine.

"Ninety percent of my interests now are those from when I was 16 or younger," he said.

Looking at his range of subjects — from the Maine woods to a Georgia road trip — the link was simple. "The subject is people and they matter, by definition."

He spoke no litany and had no presumptions. His only unbending position was the difference between fiction and his own genre of nonfiction, sometimes referred to as the "literature of fact."

"You try to get it right. If facts are played with, then it's fiction." He shrugged. "I've heard nonfiction writers say there's a higher truth that matters. They can't be bothered with a pesky little detail." His voice reflected disdain.

"The power of nonfiction rests on the fact that you know it's real. There's a certain responsibility that each nonfiction writer owes to all other nonfiction writers."

That, he made clear, is to get the truth down right. Part of John McPhee's own truth is that writing is hard. Hard to break into, hard rewards. It took him ten years of trying before *The New Yorker* hired him (Continued on page 62)

The Three Salts

What is Salt? A magazine? An educational experience? An archive of Maine folklyfe and culture? The answer is all of the above. Salt is not one, but three. The three Salts interact and build on each other.

At Salt, college students and their teachers study and record the distinctive culture of Maine as a means of returning what is recorded and learned to the people of that culture.

It is an idea that links teachers and students, Maine's people and scholars, in an exchange of learning and knowledge that provokes new insight and preserves traditions of the culture of present day Maine.

At the Salt Center for Field Studies in Cape Porpoise, Maine, Salt Magazine is published quarterly; educational programs are conducted in the fall and summer; and the Salt archives are housed. Salt has grown and evolved since it was founded in 1973, always working to strengthen its three selves.
CRAZY AVERY GOES TO NEW YORK

Avery Kelley is called "Crazy Avery" by his friends because he will go to almost any lengths for a laugh.

Avery is the great great grandson of Barney Beal, the Maine giant of legendary strength, who could fell a horse with a blow, lift boulders and haul boats single handedly. Avery grew up to tales of Barney in a house that had been Barney's on Beal's Island.

Avery himself is often the butt of his funny stories. And though he casts himself as the country bumpkin bungling through a sophisticated world, the country ways come out on top in the end.

This is not the humor of the cosmopolitan outsider who summers in Maine and tells stories about Mainers. It is not "Bert and I" humor.

Avery's stories are real Maine humor, "insider" humor. They are told by a Maine storyteller to an audience of locals. We found Avery through his fishermen friends, who said, "If you want to hear some awful funny stories, go see Avery Kelley."

By Jill Harvey

If Avery had stayed at home, perhaps he'd be just another one of many local storytellers. But Avery took himself beyond the island. By then he'd been busy fishing for three or four years.

When he was 18, he went to New York City and introduced himself to the world beyond. Avery didn't make the trip alone, though. "The boys" Warren and Milton, decided Avery was right. They needed to visit New York, together.
"We thought the big deal was to go to New York City. It was the biggest city, supposedly, in the world, an' I said, 'That's the place ta go!'

"I said, 'We don't even know what life is until we know. This is United States, an' I've read a lot about it, an' we need to go to New York City.'

"Well, it was in October, an' I hauled ma traps. We was gonna take Sat'day off. Well we got inta the car. I never forgit it, I 'member it jus' like it was yest'day, prettiest car in the world I ever known. Anyway, we got inta this car an' we struck a dust.

"Well, anyway, we got down New York that night. Well, we try an' work our way down, course, 'round here you take landmarks pretty much, ya know. Well I got, I could see the city an' we got goin' down on the Hudson River.

"It was early, well, it was 'round twelve o'clock [midnight] when we first got there. An', we was chasin' traffic, lot a traffic. Things seem ta really be bustling. Well, you got inta line. Well next thing ever I knew, it said George Washin'ton Bridge. Well Judas, 'fore I knew it, we's on George Washin'ton Bridge, we paid fifty centers, an' we was across't it.

"Well I said, 'Judas, now we're in New Jersey! We want ta go New York!'

"So I git down there, git turned 'round real good, get on 'cross the George Washin'ton Bridge, pay 'em fifty cents, git over, make a circle, an' next thing I know I'd be right back at that toll booth. I'd pay him fifty cents. I done that five times ta one toll booth!

"Finally the man says ta me, 'Ain't I seen you before tonight?'

"I said, 'Seen me! How in the hell do I get off a this bridge?'

"'Well,' he said, 'when ya git over there, git in that line a traffic, an' then you'll get right off.'

"'An' he didn't charge me that time around! 'Well, we was in the city an' here we are, in the middle a night an' oh man!' Avery leans forward, eyes open wide, story current flowing.

"Well finally we paid off, we hit. We come down into it, a place, an' it was a long buildin', a train tracks, an' all these trailer trucks would back in ta this freight yahd was what it sort a was.

"Well, that's where everybody goes parking in New York! It was an education in itself, I can tell ya. But anyway, this is where everybody goes parking in New York, is in these freight yards. I didn't have a clue.

"Well we drove down in'nere. Well Judas, this is one or two o'clock in the morning, we're tuckered out, we drove all the way from Maine down there. An' I gotta have a nap.

"So we backed in 'nere like everybody else is, an' these people would drive in, an' go about
the...business, an’ the car would shake, an’ we’d look in ’nere an’ look at. An’ these people wouldn’t pay bit ’tention, they’d drive right up to it, park, do their...an’ that was it!

“I said, ‘My blessed lord, I never see nothing’ like this in my life, never.’

“NEXT MORNING, SUN COME UP.

‘Now,’ I said, “I know just what ta do.’”

Avery winks and growls under his breath, “Little did I have a clue what ta do! I says, ‘Boys, we gotta find a place, a pahking area, leave that cussed car, an’ go back an’ git ’er when we’re done.’

“Well, ‘at sounded pretty logical. An’ I said, ‘What you do, you ride on underground trains, or subways.’

“Well, ‘at was pretty good. So finally we drove around. First thing, the car went into a spell, an’ the carburetor flooded, an’ we stopped in the middle a the street. An’ I said, ‘This is it.’

“You didn’t dare git out...cars goin’ by both sides, people honkin’ their horns, shakin’ their fists there.

“I never seen such a wild, crazy crew in ma life. Finally, the cops come an’ shut off the traffic, an’ got us over ta the side a the curb. We got the car going, got out a that mess.

“So we got ta this parking place. You could drive in through and when you come out, you got a ticket. I asked a man, I said, ‘Where do you git ta git underground ta git in one a them subways?’

“We went an’ jigged along the sidewalk an’ got up there an’ went underground an’ got down there. Well, we just, what you do, you see what everybody else done, an’ you done as the Romans done, see.

“Well we got in the subway, an’ we started ridin’ along. Jeez, all of a sudden, that thing come to a schreechin’ halt an’ jumpin’! Oh, a lotta people got off. People shove sa quick t’ go through the door.

“Why,’ I said, ‘Judas, we must be gettin’ close ta city.’ Well, sir, the next time she stopped, that door opened, we didn’t know a thing, we was landing right out onta the wall. “Well,’ I said, ‘here we are, we’re out.’

“An’ when we come out, we was right ‘cross the road an’ it said Radio City Music Hall in New York.

“I said, ‘Judas, what a good hit.’ I said, ‘We’re right dead center! We’re right dead center.’

“I hauled my traps an’ we struck a dust for New York!”
"WELL, WARREN SAID, I'M ALMOST starved.' An' Milton said, 'I've had it, I can't take another step, we gotta eat.' "'Why,' I said, 'food! There's all kinds a food in New York City, that ain't no problem!' "So we went into a thing an' I think they called it a deli-ca-testen. It was a thing I never'd seen before. We went in, set down at table. Well jeez, all kinds a food, but we wasn't gittin' any! An' nobody come.

"Well, what in the hell's goin' on here, I never'd seen a place like it. It was...you had ta git in line, git your food, an' then come, git your food an' pay an' then go' set down. I never'd seen nothin' like that in my life, never! We always went in a rest'runt an' somebody waited on us.

"Well, we set there a while an we soon figured we was goin' git hungry if we didn't do what they done. They was gittin' in line, goin' git their food, an' set down.

"Well we got in the line, an' got our food. Sa' down there. Well, that tasted pretty good, an' we come out. We started jiggin' 'long.

"'Now,' I said, 'it ought be pretty easy ta find that Empire State Buildin'.'

"Well we jigged along a little farther. We kep' a goin' an' a goin'. An' finally we saw'r it, but we jus' couldn't git to it!"

"I said, 'It's over there, but we can't quite git 'round enough corners.'

"So finally, by Judas, we got there an' there it was. It said Empire State Buildin' an' all kinds a policemen, everything. So, we go right in, just as big as a billy. Chum, if we'd been the Rockefeller's we wouldn't a felt any better. We was in New York City, an' we had found the Empire State Building.

"SO THERE WE WAS. WE WAITED AN' waited in line ta git up in that elevator. Got up in the elevator an' away we went ta the top. We got up there an' we looked down.

"'Now,' I said, 'boys, we got pay 'tention what's underneath us here because, I said, 'you see them ships comin' up that Hudson River?' I said, 'That's the d'rection we gotta go ta waterfront. It's a long way down there an' we could get lost in this city.'

"'There's no question,' I said. 'I can git 'round the woods, but this has got the woods beat a mile! There ain't no way, I can't see head nor tail.'

"'I said, 'I think I'm pretty clever, but,' I said, 'I can't get 'round this.'

"'I said, 'I don't know what, how I'm goin' ta that waterfront there. It's a long walk.

"Well, we come down out the Empire State Building, an' we started down the sidewalk. We kep' on walkin'. We kep' a jiggin'.

"The next ever thing ever I knew, I didn't realize sa much time 'ad gone by, it was in the afternoon. An' the people kinda looked a little bit different, an' there was nobody talkin' English!

"'I said, 'I don't understand this. I'm in America, I never seen a place like 'is. Everybody's talkin' an' I don't know a word that they're sayin', not one word!'

"Well by an' by I said, 'It's almost four o'clock! What time we gotta git that car, what's the scoop?'

"We got the ticket out, five a'clock the place closed. An' here it was, almos' four a'clock, an' we didn't know where we was!

"Well, I went up ta the first person an' I tried talk to 'em. Lord, they jabbered away an' that was it. I said, 'Cussy good job. Are we in the United States, or where are we? I ain't got a clue.'

"Well, I guess we was down in maybe the Puerto Rican section or somethin', and not one of 'em could speak a word of English. If they did, they wasn't goin' to, anyway, ta satisfy us. Well there we was in a cussy good mess an' we didn't know what way to turn, what way ta go. Well, then we was scared. So here we are runnin'.

"Well finally I said, 'It's no use. We're licked. More we run, the worse we's gittin'.

"We was gittin' further back an' further back. An' we wasn't gittin' nothin' looked more like the city. We was gittin' out in the slums, worse! An' people was shabby.

"'I said, 'This is it, we've had it. They'll kill us! They'll kill us, this is it, right here. We've gotta find a way out a here 'fore dark.'

"Well, finally, only thing saved our neck, I took a look an' here come a mailman. 'Now,' I said, 'by the blessed glory, that man's gotta know English. If he didn't, he wouldn't be a mailman. That's the only salvation we have got. If we can find that mailman, git that mailman.' Avery jumps out of his chair and throws his arms out.

"'Why, I run up there an' I said, 'Sir,' I said, 'we're in trouble, we're lost.'

"'He said, 'I'd say you're lost, all right. Where ya from?'

"'I said, 'Maine, an' if I ever live t'git back there, they'll never git me out a Maine again. I tell ya, that is it. I've 'ad it.'

"Well, he gimme a whole lot a d'rections ta get to an underground subway. Well, I said, 'Lord I can't remember all them d'rections! That was just like talkin' in Spanish to me. I said, 'No, the best thing for me to do is memorize three d'rections.'
"So I got the three d'rections, go ta the corner, an' I set there an' this person come by. 'Bout the tenth person, they could speak a little English. "I said, 'Can you tell me how ta git to the subway?'

"Well he give me three more d'rections. I went an' stood on that corner. An' there was about five people come, an' then I got a one that could speak a little English.

"'Now,' I said, 'we're doin' better! We're goin' back to America boys, we're doin' good, but time is runnin' out an' fast.'

"Well anyway, we got on the subway, an' we got goin' an' I kept talkin'. There was a girl, a woman an' another woman ahead of us. I give her that ticket, an' I said, 'M'am, would you have a clue where this subway goes?' She didn't. She only knew the stop where she needed to get off.

"'I said, 'That's a funny thing. People ride this subway, an' they ain't got a clue where they're goin', an' they ain't got a clue who's sittin' next to 'em. I know everybody on Beal's Island, an' there ain't a soul knows nobody on this damn subway.

"I know three people an' there ain't nobody else knows three people, so see how much smarter I am than they are!'

"Well anyway, it come to a screechin' halt an' we bailed outta that thing, just as fast as we could an' up outta ground. When we come up, I looked right over where the parking lot was, an' there was a fella an' he drove out through in his car an' was lockin' the gate.

"I said, 'HOLD IT, Mister.' I run right out in front the car, I said, 'Hold it, mister.' I said, 'Let our car outta there just as fast's you can.'

"He said, 'You got a ticket?'

"I said, 'Yes, I got a ticket. You just open that gate up, an' git us outta here. We'll pay you whatever you want, an' we're going for Maine, just as fast as I'n get there.'

"Well we got in the car. 'Now,' I said, 'look. Now I tell ya, it's a Sat'day night. If you want see a good time tonight, we'll go down New London, Connecticut.'

"'What in the world's goin' on down in New London?'

"'Oh,' I said, 'that's the place ta go! I got a feelin', New London, Connecticut.'


"Well we got down to New London, Connecticut, an' we pretty near, damn near starved death. We hadn't et since we was in that delicatessen. Well we went in this rest'rant, set down to eat.

"An' while we was in New London, Connecticut, we saw one girl, an' she was with a cripple officer, he had a cane." Avery snickers with sheepish recall.

"An', that's the only female, other than the waitess, that we saw in New London, Connecticut, on a Sat'day night. An' we was gonna have such a good time!"

"I said, 'Boys, we made it this far alive,' I said, 'I'll drive a hundred instead of a hundred an' ten ta git us home!' I cut every inside corner there was. We got back home, an' I tell ya, we was hard looking pills!

"So we got home. After a few days we got brave. We said, 'Now look, we gotta have another trip, New York ain't nothing! We gotta go to Florida for a couple a weeks!'

"But we never ever went, because we was kinda chicken in the back of our mind." Avery's leg kicks out straight as his head tilts back in laughter. He understands his role as visitor to the outside world.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

JILL HARVEY came to Salt from the College at Purchase, State University of New York.
DYSART'S TRUCKSTOP

"Got a load yet?"

"Nope. Ain't nothin' up here
today. If I don't get one by
supper, I'm gonna head down and
find myself one."

Photography by Ken Kobre
"So, where ya headed?"

"Oh, south. Ain't nothin' but south from here."
“Holidays you can’t get near the restaurant. But they always leave one table open just for truckers.”

“So what’s good tonight?”

“You oughta try the Leroy special. Eighteen scoops of ice cream. It’s named after Leroy.”
"Hey, did you come up through Vermont? Now there's a nice drive, the mountains and all."

"Whaddaya mean 'nice'? You talking about good scenery or just plain hard work?"

"Yep. People think you ain't got nothing better to do than wait. I didn't come all the way up here for the view."

"I seen five guys come in here the other day and split one. But now Leroy, I seen him eat the whole thing himself."
"That's the thing about trucking. People think it's glamorous. They think you get to see a lot. But you don't. You're sitting around loading, unloading, getting a load."
"Not much on C.B. tonight. Where's everyone tonight?"
"Got a load yet?"

"Nope. Ain't nothin' up here today. If I don't get one by supper, I'm gonna head down and find myself one."

Photography by Ken Kobre
AROUND THE CLOCK AT DYSART'S

By Traci Timlin

GOING IN TO EAT?" the man in gray coveralls and cap asks as he holds open the door to Dysart's Truckstop Restaurant. "Here's 87 cents off your meal." He smiles as he hands his fuel credit coupon to a perfect stranger.

"Have a good day now." He nods and hurries outside, weaving his way through the gridlock of revving engines that clog the parking lot. His is just one of the thousand or so trucks that wheel into the truckstop daily off exit 44, just south of Bangor, Maine.

It is morning and the breakfast rush is on. A feeling of early morning laziness envelops the place, despite the chatter of many conversations, the clatter of dishes from the kitchen, the bustle of the waitresses and the traffic in and out the door.

Men come and go constantly, usually alone, sometimes in pairs. There is an air of comraderie at the long tables running the length of the room. A cardboard sign hangs from the edge of one red and white checkered tablecloth. "TRUCKERS ONLY."

Thick white coffee mugs, turned bottom up, mark place settings among the organized clutter of condiments: ketchup, sugar, cream, butter, jam, salt, pepper, water pitchers, and thermal coffee pots.

A man in a Dysart's cap sits down and fills his coffee mug. Almost immediately, there is a waitress at his side.

"Morning, Mike. How are
you today?"
"Oh, not bad. How 'bout yourself?"
"Same as always. What'll it be this morning?" She scrib­bles his order and rushes off to fill a coffee pot that has run dry at the far end of the table, picking up empty plates and dropping a check with a smile as she passes.

Behind the truckers' tables, a thick brick wall with a now unused fireplace acts as a barrier between the truckers' dining area and a room for the general public.

Walking into the second dining room is like walking into another world. The checkered tablecloths have given way to the natural wood of the table and small paper placemats, the thick coffee mugs to cups and saucers. Gone are the thermal coffee pots and water pitchers. The tables are grouped in sets of two, four and six.

It's quieter on this side of the brick wall. People talk softly among themselves or read newspapers. No one calls greetings across the room. No one calls greetings across the room. The country and western music from the transistor radio on the truckers' side doesn't carry this far. Noise from the kitchen is muffled.

Outside the truckstop, the air is filled with the dull rumbling of engines, the hiss and groan of shifting gears as one trailer slides away from the service island and another pulls in to take its place.

A truck grinds to a stop alongside a gas pump and its driver jumps to the ground. He nods hello to the station atten­dant who carries over a step­ladder and climbs up to wash the windshield.

The driver stands nearby, stretching, watching for a mo­ment. Convinced that his truck is in good hands, he goes inside to make a phone call, passing a group of truckers in the doorway.

They stand, hands in pockets, talking.
"Like I said, I woulda been gone this morning," says Joseph Morrow, whose friends call him by his middle name, Simon. "But this guy, he needed a hand, so I helped him out. Yeah, I'll be headed outa here pretty quick now."
"Oh sure he will," the man next to him kids. "That's what he said three hours ago, and he's been here two days!" The men laugh good naturedly. They make no sign of leaving.
"Yeah. I'm going real soon," Simon repeats, rocking back on his heels. He's been coming to Dysart's for about 16 years now, almost as long as Dysart's has been here.

Through the doorway to the left is the supply store. The rows of shelves hold everything from Yosemite Sam mudflaps and billy clubs to antacid and toothpaste.

A young man in a blue work­shirt walks through the circle of men in the doorway into the sunlight. He has just bought five bottles of apple juice. Jugg­ling them with one hand, he digs keys out of his front pocket.

He saunters to his cab, opens the door and tosses the juice into a cooler on the passenger seat. He walks to the front of the truck. One foot on the bumper, he pulls at the grill and the enormous hood falls forward, exposing the engine. He checks the oil. Wiping his hands on his jeans, he makes a quick circle around the trailer, kicking tires as he goes.

Satisfied that everything is set, he puts both hands on the hood and with a big heave of his entire body, sends it spring­ing back in place with a dull clank.

Upstairs in the lounge it's quiet. Jimmy Rakes is reading the newspaper. The sections are scattered across the brown beds­pread that covers the couch.

Jimmy's a young looking man with bright eyes and a full blond beard. A trucker from North Carolina, he doesn't get up to Bangor very often. Two other occupants of the room relax in worn vinyl chairs that flank either side of the sofa and face the television.

The three truckers are waiting. Waiting to be loaded, unloaded or for their dispatcher to match them up with a haul. "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" works its way through the static on the t.v. screen and tries to capture the attention of the truckers.

"So, where ya headed?" Jimmy asks the Texan in the recliner.
"Oh, south." He chuckles. "Ain't nothin' but south from here."
"Got a load yet?" Jimmy's been here since yesterday.
"Nope. And if I don't get one by supper, I'm gonna head down and find myself one."
"Ain't much of anything up here. I was supposed to pick up a load here this morning. No one seems to know where it's gone to though. Yep. People think you ain't got nothing bet­ter to do than wait. I didn't come all the way up here for the view."
"Hey, did you come up through Vermont? Now there's a nice drive, the mountains and all..."
"Whaddaya mean 'nice'?"
You talking about good scenery or just plain hard work?" The men chuckle to themselves thinking about pulling a fully loaded trailer through the mountains.

"Yeah. Those mountains are something else. I tell ya though," the Texan stops in mid sentence to take a long drag on his cigarette.

"You get down to the Florida coast, now there's a good drive. He flicks his cigarette and leans forward, vinyl creaking as he moves. He sits poised, elbows on knees, hands outstretched.

"I was deadheadin' down there in the Keys once. Had some spare time. Thought I'd give it a look and head down. Thought I was nearly there and then I see this sign for the Keys. Seventy miles it says. I couldn't believe it. You can drive forever out there. Real scenic."

"You know," Jimmy says. "That's the thing about trucking. People think it's glamorous. They think you get to see a lot. But you don't get to see that much. You're sitting around loading, unloading, getting a load. You don't get to take the time to dump your trailer and drive around and see the sights."

"I hear ya. You're right ya know. Once when I was in Dallas..." The Texan takes over as the conversation drifts from coastal California to the Boston harbor, each man sharing his version of the best and most scenic drives in the country.

Somewhere along the road, the static has eaten away at the television screen leaving nothing but white noise. No one seems to notice. The truckers find their own stories far more compelling than the "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

"Once I got this call to deliver a meat shipment," the Texan breaks into a fresh story.

"It was Tuesday morning and they told me it had to be in Boston by the next day. I was in Indiana. Can you believe it? So I ask this guy, 'Does it really have to be there tomorrow morning?' and he says yes it does.

"Well, I thought about it. The price was good and I didn't have a load right then. You have to make a buck when you can. So I said I'd do it.

"Now I've been on these wild goose chases before with guys that think everything has to be there yesterday. And I knew I was gonna check it out myself beforehand. Last time I busted my butt to get a load on time, I delivered a load of pipe to this construction site.

"They told me it had to be there Friday or construction would be delayed. Well, I never checked with the receiver and I stayed up all night driving.

"When I pull in early Friday morning, these guys just look at me and say, 'What are you doing here?' They told me they'd unload me, so unload me.' And this guy says, 'You'll have to come back tomorrow.' They still just look at me.

"Finally one guy says, 'Let me show you something.' So I follow him around this building and there they've got pipe stacked as high as the building.

"'We ain't even used all this yet,' he tells me. 'The crane ain't due 'til Monday morning. I can't unload you 'til then.'

"'So there I am, stuck for the weekend. I tell ya that's the last time I've ever hurried to deliver something without checking with the receiver first.' Leaning back to flick his cigarette, the Texan pauses, gathering his thoughts before continuing his story.

"So anyway, I pick up the meat shipment and head out to Boston. A ways down the road I give the receiver a call to see what's what. I get this guy, a Mr. Johnson or something.

"'And I ask him if I get there tomorrow will he unload me? He tells me if I can get there before noon he'll do it.

"'I say, 'Look, I'm in Indiana. You can check with the receiver before coming.' And then I see this sign for the Keys. And you want me there by noon?'

"'He just tells me, 'If you're here by twelve, I'll unload you. If it's 12:05, you wait till Thursday.' So I figure it's worth it and start out as fast as I can.

"'Well, I pull into Boston about ten thirty the next morning and the loading dock is empty so I pull right in. This guy comes over and he says to me, 'What are you doing? You can't park here.'

"'And I say, 'Oh yes I can. I delivered this shipment and they told me they'd unload me, so unload me.' And this guy says, 'You'll have to come back tomorrow.'

"'Now I'm getting fed up with this so I go inside and I say, 'What's the problem? They tell me out there that they can't unload me.' I talked to this Mr. Johnson on the phone and he says they can.'

"'This lady at the front desk says she can't do anything for me, so I say, 'Where's this Mr. Johnson?' She says, 'He's probably upstairs in his office.' So I start walking up these stairs and she's yelling after me, 'Hey, you can't go up there!'

"'And I just keep walking. It was kinda funny. Here's me, I look terrible, haven't had any sleep and I'm walking around these guys in suits looking for
Mr. Johnson.

"He's not in, so I say, 'You tell Mr. Johnson that I'm here. I'll be in my truck sleeping.'

'So I go out to my truck. I leave both doors open so there's a nice breeze and go to sleep. Pretty soon there's a knock on my door and this little guy about four feet tall and carrying a clipboard is standing there. 'You Mr. Johnson?'

I ask.

'He says yes and I say, 'Look, you promised me if I was here by noon you'd unload me. By my watch it's quarter of eleven. So as I see it, you got to unload me.

'I've been driving all night and I'm tired. I'm going to sleep now. When I wake up, I better be unloaded or I'm gonna take all that meat and stack it outside by the dock there and leave it. Whether you unload me or not, I'm pulling out of here as soon as I wake up. I'm not waiting around 'til tomorrow.'

'So I lay back down and go to sleep. A little while later, there's another knock on my door and I peek my head out again and say, 'Yeah?'

'This guy says, 'That'll be $150 to unload you,' and I say, 'Okay,' and he just stands there. And I say, 'Look, I don't know who's gonna pay your $150, but it ain't gonna be me. All I know is you're going back to sleep and when I wake up I better be unloaded or all this meat's gonna get stacked up right over there. You're not gonna use my truck and my gas for storage.'

'So I lay back down and go back to sleep. I musta slept, oh about ten hours or so, 'cause when I woke up, it was dark. I sit up and climb into the front seat and I think, 'I wonder if I'm unloaded?'

'I get out of my truck and it's pitch dark. No one's around. Everyone's gone home. So I go around to the back of my truck and sure enough, I'm unloaded. Still don't know who paid that $150."

He leans back in his chair, laughing to himself.

"Yep. That'll teach 'em to rush an order. Any time you get one of them rush orders, you tell 'em what you want and they get it to you. Then you find out when it really has to be there!"

"From Canada to Kittery, it's the only one."

DINNER HOUR HAS arrived. The tables in the restaurant are nearly all filled. A man in a blue t-shirt stands in the kitchen doorway.

"Not too much ice." He cups his hand to his mouth and calls after a waitress who disappears into the depth of the kitchen.

On the wall next to the kitchen doorway hangs a large red sign. White plastic letters advertise the day's specials along with a long list of homemade desserts: strawberry shortcake, blueberry pie, pineapple upside-down cake, jello.

Dennis Dugan sits at the table under the sign. He lights a cigarette to go with his after dinner coffee. Dennis is from Sterling, Illinois. He isn't often in Maine. A second man takes a seat one chair away, a frequent Dysart's customer just stopped in for a generous helping of Daisy Mae bread pudding.

The two men begin talking. Conversation turns to debate over the advantages of the large chain truck stops over the smaller privately owned versions.

"You get down to Ohio where they've got those Petrol stops. You should see the lounges those places have. Large screen t.v.'s and everything. And they have game rooms like arcades. Not two pinball machines like here.

"Their parking lots will hold a thousand trucks easy. You even send those street cleaners out in the parking lots. They keep 'em nice and clean," says Dennis.

"Yeah. They may be bigger,"
the other trucker responds, "But it's not the same. I can deal with Dave Dysart. If I'm in a bind, he'll help me out. I'm an individual. I'm just one person and I own my truck. It's not just me, I know a lot of the guys.

It's like a country store compared to a supermarket. Some people just go in to socialize and talk to the people. With a big place, you're in..." He gestures with his fork. "And you're out.

"If you have the money you do, if you don't, well?" He shrugs his shoulders as if to imitate the indifferent attitude of the industrial size truckstop.

He takes the last bite of his Daisy Mae pudding, pushes his plate forward, and leans back in his chair. End of conversation. A newcomer joins the table.

"So what's good tonight?" "You oughta try the Leroy special." The dessert eater suggests, reaching across the table to point at the first page of the menu.

"Eighteen scoops of ice cream. It's named after Leroy, ya know. I seen five guys come in here the other day and split one. But now Leroy, I seen him eat the whole thing himself."

By now there is a waitress at the newcomer's elbow. "Ready to order? What'll it be?"

Just seconds after taking the order she returns with a basket of thickly sliced home baked bread and a glass of iced tea. Not more than five minutes later she is back again with a large oval platter filled to capacity with what you'd swear to be Mom's home cookin'.

"One thing about it, you don't leave hungry." Chuck Rhoddy remarks as he leaves the restaurant, his ten year old son Jamie in tow.

"Holidays you can't get near the restaurant. But they always leave one table open just for truckers."

Chuck Rhoddy has been a trucker for 22 years. This summer Jamie is riding with him. "I want him to see what it's like." Chuck explains. "Any kid you know, they see the trucks and they want to get up and take a ride.

One winter I wanted to take Jamie with me. So I call up his teacher and ask if he can't miss a week of school. Well, I tell ya, he learned more in that week than he ever did in a week of school."

Jamie likes riding with his dad. It gives him time together. He gets to see a lot of different places.

"Once we saw a big convoy. It was really neat," Jamie says as he plays with a plastic toy truck. Jamie wears a black t-shirt with a big truck silk-screened on the front. He's got another almost like it in the cab.

"The movies make it [truckin'] seem so glamorous. It ain't though. I want Jamie to see what it's really like," his father explains. "I used to take my daughter with me too. Ever since she was three years old."

Chuck smiles to himself, remembering.

"Once this waitress sees me with this three-year old. She can't believe anyone would want to drive around with a three-year old. I did though. She's married now."

"That's my son-in-law's truck right there," he points over his shoulder. "He pulled in right next to me. Never know when you're gonna run into someone you know. Matter of fact we're waiting for him right now. When he's done with dinner, we'll leave.

"We're gonna ride together for a while, 'til the next stop. Here he is now...."

IGHT HAS FALLEN on Dysart's. Traffic slows down. A few men linger in the dining room, drinking coffee, smoking the day's last cigarette. The crowd that usually fills the doorway has disappeared, leaving empty space and silence.

The heavy rumble of engines has stopped. Few trailers sit under the glowing white light of the service islands, and when they pull out, no replacements come.

Music drifts from the open garage door. Spotlights on the back wall silhouette the mechanics in slow motion, putting tools away, getting things in order.

At the edge of the parking lot, small squares of light mark a long row of trucks in the darkness. Truckers relax in their cabs, some reading, some just sitting. Not much but static on the c.b. radio tonight.

"Anyone out there?" a disembodied voice breaks the silence. "Where's everyone tonight?"

A trucker flicks off his c.b. and hits the switch on his dome light as he crawls over the driver's seat into bed. The truckstop looks deserted. Most of the darkened cabs shelter sleeping men.

Their trucks are their homes on the road. Ask any trucker where he sleeps. He'll say, "Where else would you go?"

TRACI TIMLIN came to Salt from St. Mary's College in Winona, Minnesota. KEN KOBRE is a photojournalist who taught at Salt for the summer semester, 1986.
The John P. McCurdy Smokehouse in Lubec, Maine, juts its body into the swift saltwaters of the Narrows. Painted bright red trimmed with white, it is the last of a breed in the United States.

Where once every breach in the shore along this far eastern coast of Maine was littered with the smell of herring being smoked, only a few graying hulks of the smokehouses remain. They stand waiting for sounds they will not hear again.

The slish, slish of herring being strung onto a blackened wooden stick. The tick of those sticks hitting a table. Their former workers grow old with the sounds still in their heads.

For the houses, there is only the whistle of the wind and the lap of the tide.

Except at McCurdy's.

And McCurdy's herring are hidden under a maze of wraps. If you go into a fish market anywhere in the United States, the chances are you will not find any of their boxes of packed herring. If you go to Lubec in the middle of July and ask at the fish market there, they will tell you that they haven't any either.
If you look to ask at the McCurdy plant itself, you will have equal difficulty. There is no listing for the plant on the main street where it is supposed to be located. Locals have no need for such listings.

You ask for directions at the Western Auto hardware store in the center of the street, and will be told you have passed the plant four times. So you ask at the plant, which includes two former main street stores with a series of smaller wooden buildings on a wharf behind. You say you'd like some boned smoked herring. You will be told they haven't any.

If you do find some in a fish market or if you return to Lubec in the early fall when the packing of the smoked herring begins each year, you will be handed a plain box made out of wood shooks that bears the stencilled words:

BONED SMOKED HERRING
Net Wt. When Packed 10 lbs.
McCURDY FISH CO.
LUBEC, ME.

It will cost you 20 bucks. When you open the boxes, you see a mass of golden brown to brown strips of herring meat.

What you do not know is how the strips got there. To say the herring are hand packed like a sardine is packed in a can does the McCurdy operation a decided disservice.

John P. McCurdy, the owner, and Henry Ford are about as far removed from each other on a scale measuring automation as two people can be. McCurdy's plant is a rhythmic pantomime of hand movements. It is as if John P. McCurdy signed a church pledge years ago to resist the temptation of any automation of any sort whatsoever, much as he might sign a pledge to spurn liquor.

To give an idea of the absolute reliance on the hand at McCurdy's, each single strip of meat that you pick out of that box and begin to chew, went through over 20 separate hand motions as it was processed.

That herring when it was whole was lifted in a dipnet by hand from a tub of salt brine and dumped into a basket. The basket was wheeled on a two basket cart by hand over to a table where it was spilled across the top.

Individually the herring was picked up by hand, gill opened, and slid onto a stick held in another hand. When full, the stick was placed on a cart which was wheeled by hand to a smokehouse where it was hung by hand over a smoke fire that was kept lit and tended to by hand.

Later that same stick of herring was rehung higher up from the fire. Still later it was passed down by hand to a man who placed it on another cart. The cart was wheeled to a room where the herring was taken, again by hand, off the stick, its head cut off, split in two, its skin peeled off, and placed in a box which was then taken one at a time, by hand, to a scale for weighing. A cover was then nailed on top.

By hand.

When you consider that each box holds somewhere around 100 strips of herring and that in 1983, McCurdy packed about 16,000 boxes (160,000 pounds) or 1,600,000 strips of herring meat, you begin to grasp the magnitude of moving hands.

What is even more amazing is to learn that your chances are fair that the same strip of herring meat you continue to chew was first strung onto a stick and at the end, cut, split, skinned, and weighed by a

Angie has strung herring for 64 years.
single woman now in her seventies who has worked in a smoked herring factory for 64 years.

**T**hat woman's name is Angie Sawtelle. On the morning of the 25th of July, 1984, she is found in the McCurdy building at the end of the wharf that sits over the Narrows. This is the stringing room.

To get there you pass between the two store fronts and a smokehouse on either side. It is a low single story building, painted red, with a wet dark interior lit by bare electric bulbs.

Inside, three men and a woman stand with Angie in a row along a stretch of two trough-like aqua colored tables. They are the entire stringing crew today. At its largest, the crew numbers only two to three more, or eight in total. They string all of the herring that are strung at McCurdy's.

The only sound is the slish, slish of stringing herring.

Angie works near the middle of the line of stringers. Her smallish frame is bent slightly. She is intent on her work, seemingly oblivious to what is around her.

The fastest stringer here today is Angie. A hand darts out, runs over the pile of fish in front of her before selecting one. The hand closes over and slides up its back, the point of the thumb opening the gill.

It's lifted upwards by its head to where the pointed end of a stick held in the other hand drives through the gill and out of the mouth, the hung fish slid down the stick.

Slish, slish like a knife being sharpened on a whet stone.

A black apron, tied at the waist, covers a light green blouse and plaid pants, and protects Angie's front from the wet and grease of the fish. Ask her how long she has worked stringing herring and she does not look up.

"Oh, my god I couldn't remember. Ever since I can remember I guess." When a neighboring stringer suggests it's been 62-63 years, Angie yields, "Yea, just about, I guess."

"That's a while," is a response.

"I should say so," laughs Angie from her work. "Too long I guess."

Clifton "Bill" Wallace works to Angie's left, separated from her by an aisle. He wears green work clothes from his neck to his boots, and a gray hat that covers his brown hair. A piece of plastic serves as an apron, tied at his waist with a length of rope.
He has lived in Lubec all his life, or as he puts it, “Almost 56 years of it.” He started stringing herring as a boy in one of the big smokehouses that used to stand in Bailey’s Mistake Cove—10 miles distant.

Unlike Angie, he has not strung continuously year after year. “No, I've been every­where, different jobs. Then I started again here last fall.”

To the right of Angie is Harold Moores, a thin man with a face made striking by a shock of clear white wavy hair. Like Bill, he wears a plastic apron that is tied behind at the waist and extends to his feet.

He has been stringing herring for 45 to 50 years, “off and on.” He adds, “I work when there's no work in (the sardine) factory.”

Angie’s brother, Ralph Sawtelle, works alongside Harold. His is a leathery face, topped by a red cap that covers his gray-white hair. A pair of black hip rubber boots corral his legs. A light blue apron wraps his front. He is 74 years old.

Like Bill, he worked at one of the big old smokehouses at Bailey’s Mistake.

Debbie Moores, the lone young person of the crew, works to Ralph’s right. She is a bulky woman with black hair pulled tightly to the back of her head. She has not worked at stringing long. “I've just been at it, oh couple three years.”

The five work facing the troughs, four together at one trough, Bill alone at a smaller one. A black wooden wall hangs down from the ceiling to within a foot of the trough top and divides the trough area in two. It separates the workers from the rest of the building beyond.

Above each worker and within their reach are a series of blackened slots filled with bundles of stringing sticks that are also black. On the side of each worker, in front of them on the trough, each has brought down and placed a pile (15-20) of unstrung sticks.

Whole herring are dumped from a plastic basket by another worker, Leeman Wilcox, at the end of the troughs or behind the wall with a watery slap splattering. They are pushed up and down the troughs.

Each worker has his or her own method of working. Only Angie wears a glove, a yellow rubber one, on her left hand. She alone is left handed. In her right hand, she holds a wooden stick that is pointed on one end, blunt on the other end. Not all of the sticks are the same as Harold speaks of coming across a “big flat one.”

An empty stick is first held near its pointed end where the
fish is first speared. Gradually as the stick is filled, the hand moves towards the middle of the stick. The fingers and palms of the workers' hands are worn black by the herring grease and blackened sticks. Herring too small to be strung are picked aside and thrown into black plastic baskets alongside each worker.

The stringers began work at seven o'clock this morning, the same time they begin every morning that they work, arriving at the McCurdy plant at about six-thirty.

In another building on the wharf, John P. McCurdy speaks about the job of stringing. "That's a real hard job. I mean, jee, you stand there all day, put those individually one after the other on those sticks, you know. By jeez, ya gotta have 'em on there or ya can't do the rest of it." He laughs as he finishes.

"After they're [the strung herring] in the smokehouse, we don't have much trouble. I mean, we get more boners [people who split and skin a finished smoked herring], people that are willing to come in here, the women or men that would want a bone, but they don't wanta, or they don't anyway, they don't string.

"Get frustrated. I mean, ya gotta pick em up, they watch 'em how they fall in,[the pile in front of them] there, they'll pick 'em up just so, you know, they'll hit 'em with their hands often, least when they're gonna grab 'em by the head.

"You watch 'em, they'll slip their fingers right up, without even thinking, you know, just, the way they take hold the fish, they'll pick it up, and just go like that, and the gills open.

"So they don't even look. I mean I seen those fellas, and like I say that one man down there, god, he can just slap those on there just like that, he'll be talkin', he won't even be looking at.

"I've done it, but I have ta keep lookin' at the end of the stick. I have ta pick the fish up, hold it up there, see where the end of the stick is every time.”

That "one man down there" isn't there today. Those that are there speak of the man, Charlie Holmes.

"Charlie ain't here," says Bill.

"He's really fast," Harold adds.

Debbie is discouraged by such talk. "I wish I could pick up his knack. I got one speed.”

THREE BRIGHT RED low lying carts rest behind the workers. One is behind Bill, one behind and between Angie and Harold, and the third behind and between Ralph and Debbie. Each cart consists of a wood horizontal and rectangular frame resting on a set of rubber wheels in the front and two legs at the back.

When a stick is full, the worker turns around and places the stick in a line over the edges of the frame so that the herring hang vertically in between the frame.

Talk in the room turns to how little change the industry has seen over the years.

"All the one style," says Bill. "It's always been the same thing," Ralph concurs.

"Same old thing," agrees his sister, Angie.

"I've often thought why someone hasn't come up with a machine, stringin'," muses Bill. "Really."

There have been some minor changes. "They never use ta have those carts, we use ta have ta carry 'em," Ralph remembers. The carts are a relatively new innovation.

"After you see one loaded, you'll know what we carried," Bill challenges a visitor.

He continues. "Well, it's the same way with takin' fish outa the boat. Ya use ta have ta scoop 'em in them tubs and heist the tub up. Now they drop a line in there and suck 'em up [by a pump]. Yea everything's changed."

"Except," begins Angie. Her brother Ralph finishes for her. "Except the stringin'." The room erupts in laughter at the remark.

"That's changed," insists Bill. "The stringers are older, they ain't as young as they were." Big laughter stirs again.

"That's right," agrees Angie. "That's the only thing that's changed is the age, that's all."

"Yes sah, boy," says Bill. A visitor asks if they get faster as they get older.

Angie answers. "No, we get slower. I can tell ya that much."

"No," agrees Bill. "You're like the car, ya don't drive 'er so fast after ya get a little age on 'er."

"When ya get 75, why ya bound ta slip little bit," laughs Angie as she continues to work.

"Ya use yer brakes more often," finishes Bill. There is more laughter.

They conclude thinking more has remained the same than has changed in their lifetime.

An account of the smoked herring industry around the Lubec area nearly a century ago in George Brown Goode's classic multi-volume work, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States (1887), bears their conclusions out to a remarkable degree:

"In stringing the stick is held in the left hand by the blunt

(Continued on page 37)
SMOKING HERRING
Photographs, Heather Coryell, page 29
Scott Vlaun, pages 30, 31 and 36
Lynn Kippax, Jr., pages 32, 33, 34 and 35

Design Mary Anne Hanlon
end while the fish is clasped by the right hand and held with its back away from the stringer. The left gill-cover is then raised by a movement of the thumb and the pointed stick is inserted and passed out through the mouth, the fish being moved down to its proper position. It requires some time to become expert in this work, but after one has the knack he can work very rapidly, as only two movements are necessary to complete the operation.

"The most rapid workers will string 1,000 sticks in from eight to ten hours, while an average day's work for a professional stringer is from 500 to 700. Each stick holds from 25 to 35 fish, according to their size, while a hogshead (5 barrels) of herring will make 80 to 90 boxes of herring when smoked. The stringing is usually done by boys and girls who are hired for this purpose, though the fishermen have leisure they frequently string their own catch, or, in some cases, they hire men for the purpose."

**STRINGING HERRING** are scarce this year. The herring strung today are part of only the second lot of herring that have come into the McCurdy plant so far.

The length of the stringing season depends on two factors: the time when the particular size of herring fit for stringing are obtainable, and cold weather. There is no wall insulation or heating device in the stringing room. Obtainability sets the starting point of the season, cold weather the ending point.

In the most recent years, the season has run for five months, from July to November. Formerly it ran two months longer because the herring were available earlier, from May to November. No one is sure why the herring run has changed.

In the slots above the workers' heads, each bundle of stringing sticks numbers 100. For every 100 sticks that a worker fills with herring, he or she gets a punch that is worth five dollars. On bigger herring than those strung today, John McCurdy says he pays less. "Where these ones here are kind a messed up, yer expect to pay a little more."

Today, Wednesday, the stringers are on their second day of work for the week. They expect one more working day before the week's end. It takes little calculating to figure just how little the workers may earn stringing herring during a poor, short season. But all five stringers here today also work at skinning the smoked herring that begins later in the year.

"Before you can take 'em for stringin' herring, they ought to be at least that long," explains Bill. His hands spread to about 10 inches apart. "But some of them down there mixed in. It's only 'bout that long [4 inches] we have to throw 'em away. They're good fish for the factories to pack, sardines, but they're no good for a smoke herring."

Angie recalls the herring found earlier in the year. "Way too small."

"Too small, way too small," agrees Bill. "Ya got ta take some ta get any at all, if we didn't you wouldn't get no fish at all. Ya got ta put up with somethin'.""

"Then July and August, September and October," continues Angie, "last year we got done in November stringin'. The 20th of November."

"It was pretty cold then," remembers Ralph.

"I tell ya it was cold," Bill says with emphasis. "Man." Angie laughs.

Beyond the black wall, John P. McCurdy, leans over a wooden tub full of herring in brine and talks to a visitor on a tour. He is a sturdy man in his fifties and speaks with force.

"Not all these fish aren't anywheres near the size we wanted, see lot a sardines in these things here. We had ta take 'em. We got a have 'em nine and a half inches. Don't see one."

But eventually he does and he picks it up out of the tub. "Now that right there's about 10 inches. I can span nine, see, that's pretty good, that's what we'd like ta have and bigger."

"Now there's all these little ones scattered through here."

But eventually he does and he picks it up out of the tub. "Now that's really too small. They'll throw that out, put it up for lobster bait."

He picks up another large one. "This is what, that's the kind a fish, that right there is known as a stringin' herring."

See we had a whole boat load a ones just like that, that's what, and as I say you can get 'em too, I mean we just don't happen ta have this year."

McCurdy looks to the smaller herring again. "See what happens. This is where all the trouble come this year in the fish, sardine business. That's right there would be a nice five fish [sardine] can there, four or five.

"Now see what's happenin'. That thing's full of feed. Every fish over there off Nova Scotia where these fish are comin' from, they're all feedin' on shrimp. Well, what happens, the small ones gouge themselves I think more than the big ones, perhaps tryin' ta grow.
and they get overfilled and that feed, that shrimp will eat right through the fish. "See, it ruins the fish. You take that shrimp and that water right there, leave them in there any length a time, and they'll weaken the gill on that fish, so when they string 'em out there, we get a lot a drop." By drop he means the herring's gill will give way and the herring will drop off its stick.

"Now if you got weir fish down here on the shore somewhere that's all been shut up two or three days then you don't have this condition cause the feed goes out. That's what we want right there. If we could have a boat load a those, we'd be in real good business here. But in a year like this, ya gotta, like I say, we just have to ta take anythin' that's all.

"Lobster bait market is, ya know, and you can get yer money back out a the waste there, I mean, yer not gonna lose there too much."

Typed on a sheet of paper tacked to a post in the “boning” room (where herring that are through smoking are split and skinned) is a list of bait prices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bait 1984</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>55 gallon drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>1 barrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1 bushel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5 gallon bucket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) bushel</td>
<td>1 barrel</td>
<td>70 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) barrel</td>
<td>1 hogshead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A man comes into the stringing room and asks if a Richard Munson who works in the smokehouses proper is there. He isn't. And talk turns to where he and his co-worker might be. Probably watching television they say, maybe Perry Mason or "Maybe Reagan's got a story on there or somethin.'" The talk shifts to Reagan and the poor. "The only thing about it," says Bill, "if he gets back in he can't hurt us cause he can never make us any poorer than we are. Yea, he's gone his limit right now. So if he gets back in, we'll never be any poorer than we are now."

Ralph turns and says, "Says unemployment's already down, did you see that in the paper?"

"It has. Christ, it's been down now for the last ten years," grinds Bill.

"Yea," responds Debbie, "they can't sign up."

"That won't bother me too much," replies Bill.

"Anybody can fish," offers Ralph.

"I don't want to sign up, anyway, I don't want 'em tellin' me how much I can earn, the hell with 'em," continues Bill.

"Five hundred and thirty seven dollars and fifty cents in two different quarters, sixteen hundred and twelve dollars and fifty cents for a year," says Debbie.

"Yea, unemployment's gone down," someone quips.

"I would say it's gone down on both ends," says Bill.

"Fifteen hundred and somethin' and there's a good many of 'em won't make it," says Ralph.

"Prob'ly nobody make it," says Angie.

"Oh, you can't make that, Ralph," says Bill.

"No."

"You can't do it."

LUBEC IS A TOWN whose fortunes have declined in the last 75 years. In 1910 the population stood at 3,363. Today, it's about 2,000. Bill Wallace laments the change.

"That's all ya got left now, is this and two sardine factories.

Had American Can, cat food, three or four smoked herring stands going then. We must've had what: one, two, three, four, five, six sardine plants here. And they're all gone.

"Bowlin' alley, movie
theater, drug stores, and clothin' stores, and jewelry stores, and" his voice rising, "radio shops, bicycle shop, and barber shop, and what have you got, nothin'."

Angie laughs.

"Plywood shops," says Ralph.

Bill continues. "Yea. Plywood front street. Yes, had one, two, three, four restaurants. All kinds a stores, ice cream parlors. Oh, yes, Christ, they had everything. Now you ain't got nothin'. Next year there won't even be the foundations left prob'ly.

"I can remember when I was old enough to run around on my own, 13-14 years old, you
couldn't walk up the sidewalk cause there wasn't room enough. Ya had to git on the road ta git up the street. It's hard thing ta believe. But Ralph can remember that, too.

"Oh, yes, oh, there was always, yep—big difference."

And Bill again: "My boy, so many people. Now you can ride a motorcycle up and down there anywhere, ya don't have ta worry 'bout hittin' anyone cause there ain't nobody."

"He's advertised it well, hasn't he?" Ralph asks of a visitor.

"He's tellin' it as it is, of course, but—" says Angie.

"It's true all right," nods Ralph.

Bill finishes. "Tellin' ya the truth."

Two years later, a town waterfront project will refurbish the main street area, bringing some hope for a better and new era for Lubec.

In back of the wooden wall dividing the troughs, Leeman Wilcox watches, bringing up baskets of salted herring to the troughs when the piles empty. He's younger than the stringing men, perhaps in his forties, a man with a continuously jovial face and a developing paunch.

A green cloth working cap tops his head. Hip green rubber boots ring his legs. He says he has worked at McCurdy's for at least 20 years, and worked there when his uncle did.

Around him are a series of wooden board brine tanks where the herring are brought for salting by a pump at the end of the building and the wharf from a herring carrier boat and through a water driven sluiceway. He stands leaning on his dipnet smoking a cigarette.

There are 26 tubs of different sizes. All total, they hold almost 100 hogshead of herring. Wooden posts stand in the corner of each tub, plugging a hole cut in the bottom floor when the tubs are filled with fish, removed when the tubs are cleaned.

John P. McCurdy continues talking to visitors in this room. "These are all hogshead tank, so many hogshead. Now this one here," pointing to one, "happen ta be two and a half. "This [lot of] fish here come in here last, it was last Tuesday wasn't it?"

"Yea, last Tuesday," answers Leeman.

"Week ago Tuesday. When they come in like that the tanks will all fill full, then so much water left in there too, ya see, to make a brine." Salt is added to the water to make a brine.

"We put well, in that tank, was there seven 88 pound bags in there. They'll be in there five days. See, we can't start [stringing] em till five days. Now you see, it's takin' us longer. We don't get 'em all out in one day, that's where we have to start 'em, then we just keep goin' along workin' until we get 'em done.

"Then every other day we come in here, what we call break em up. Take a little spudger, and just keep hittin' em, just push 'em down, push the salt down off the top, then put another bag on top of 'em. Every other day. Ta keep the brine up. Make sure the ones on the top get salt. If they didn't, they just left 'em there, the ones on the top would hardly have any salt at all.

It is nine o'clock, and the stringers break for coffee up to the deserted "boning" room at the land end of the wharf. John McCurdy remarks, "If Peacock [sardine factory on a neighboring wharf] hadn't been working this morning, we'd have had three-four more [stringers], we'd be all done by now."

A big, overweight young man lumbers into the stringing room and begins to wheel one of the red low lying carts that has been filled with strung herring. He picks up the handles and pushes it toward the door and out to the open air.

His name is Dave Marston. He has worked at McCurdy's since August of 1978. Prior to that he had worked there summers. When he left school, he went to Bangor, but he says couldn't find much work there, and returned to Lubec. He worked for a time for the Budweiser Beer company and in construction.

He works one day a week elsewhere and five days a week at McCurdy's. Once he worked nine hours at the other place and made 50 dollars, and worked two days and made 110 dollars. For five days work at McCurdy's he clears 125 dollars.

He wheels the cart out onto the wharf surrounded on three sides by the stringing room on the east, and the two smokehouses on the south and north. The strung herring are parked in the sun for an hour or two so that the gills of the herring harden before they are hung in the smokehouses.
BRIGHT RED, THE SAME red of the stringing building and low lying carts, washes the outside of the two barnlike smokehouses that border either side of the wharf. They are capped by pitched roofs of ridged silver colored metal. Inside one smokehouse, two men work beneath black canyons that are empty except for three rows of strung herring on the bottom.

Cool darkness hugs the room. The men lay fire piles about the floor, three or four logs to each and a half basket of sawdust on top.

The older man, Richard Munson, is the smoketender. He walks from pile to pile carrying a tin jug full of kerosene and a long poker like stick. He dips the end of the stick in the kerosene, lights it, then touches it to a sawdust pile doused with the same kerosene.

He works quickly. Quietly. In no time, 14 small fires of hell blaze about him in the dark room. The fires hiss. It is an eery scene of changing light and darkness cut by fire, smoke, men, and fish.

Richard delights in this work, laughing, "I'm the only one who has a trade like this. I'm the only one can go around and light fires and not get arrested. You can call me a legalized arsonist."

He finishes. To extinguish the stick, he pokes it into an unlit pile of sawdust. Bob Case, the other worker, and he step outside, shutting the door behind them.

ARTS OF HERRING greet them on the otherwise deserted open wharf. The fish glitter in the high sun. John McCurdy steps from a building with a visitor. He pauses to take a measured glance of the scene. "This is lovely right here," he says. "You take a rainy day it's terrible on us, everything is greasy here and slippery.

"Just the minute the rain hits those fish, the freshwater will weaken the gills again. That's all we worry about is those gills.

"That's, keep 'em dry.

"But right there, that's out here for an hour or two, it's just as good as bein' in the smokehouse, you know, 'n firin' it. "Just saves you a lot a money, 'cause they'll dry right here and that brine that's on there will just kind of, see that, how that drippin' right off 'em. "Let them dry out here.

"But you gotta be careful. If it's too hot, you leave 'em there like over noontime, they'll sunburn the gills a those. They'll get too hot, an' they'll burn 'em. Then when they go to hang 'em up after dinner, they'll all fall off the sticks.

"You gotta be very careful."

SMOKEHOUSE WORKS much like a modern woodstove. Both revolve around a self contained firebox with finely adjusting draft and air controls.

To operate either well demands a certain skill. What type of wood is used to build the fire is important. How it is built is, too. How much and when air and draft vents are opened plays a role. Both smokehouse and woodstove have to be checked and tuned regularly.

The room where Richard and Bob work lighting fires forms only part of each smokehouse. Each is divided into three self contained sections or rooms known as houses. Each house is further split into a series of bays—the black vertical canyons the width of a herring stick that descend from the top of the smokehouse to within seven or eight feet above a ground level open area.

One of the smokehouses contains two houses of nine bays each, and one house of eight bays. The second smokehouse contains 22 bays between its three houses.

The ends of the sticks of herring in a smokehouse rest on wooden slats that line the sides of the vertical canyons, each slat separated from one below or above by about a foot, or slightly more than the length of a large stringing herring. Rows of vertically hung herring can then be placed on top of one another within each canyon.

The floor of each house is made up of two parts. On top lies a layer of gravel about a foot thick over a floor of logs and planks. Gravel is there not only for the fires, but also for the falling grease and brine from the herring. After a while the gravel floors get too hard to absorb the grease and must be changed. So every year the gravel in one or two of the houses is shifted. That works out to shifting the gravel in each house about every third year.

The wood used for building the fires is primarily spruce and fir. Driftwood is preferred. It will burn longer and better. On the open area of the wharf are several piles of four foot spruce and fir logs. One pile of driftwood is there, picked from off the beach of nearby Campobello Island. Why the driftwood is better, John McCurdy doesn't really know except to say that it must have something to do with the wood lying in the saltwater for so many years.

The sawdust put on the logs in a fire pile is central to the smoking operation. It is Ralph
Sawtelle who provides the clearest explanation.

"Just the clear wood, you'd get quite a fire. Just the wood will burn fast. But ya put the sawdust on there, and it burns slow. You don't get so much heat, not in the summertime, be too much.

"And that's what that does. It smokes 'em in there."

The sawdust is kept under cover in a small building next to the southern smokehouse. You can't smoke fish well with wet sawdust or wet wood. Until recently, the sawdust was hauled in from Ellsworth, some 80 miles to the west. Now it's obtained from a mill in Lubec.

Smoke fires are evenly spaced over the gravel within each house. The smoke rises up through the canyons of herring and out through a narrow covered opening running the length of the roof peak. Along the sides of each smokehouse are a series of other vents the shape and size of windows. They can be partially or totally shut by sliding wooden doors.

For the house where the fires were lit, the window vents are half closed. John McCurdy lends a hand, using the end of a long wooden stick to butt into a notch in the wooden door covering more than 10 feet above him. He has difficulty, hobbling the doors across the vents.

"I'm not like you old pros here," he says, excusing himself.

The two men who build the fires also hang the herring in the smokehouse bays. Richard is in charge and Bob Case helps him.

Bob is a young native Lubecer with some scruff of beard on his face. He came back to Lubec about five years ago from Boston where he had worked 12 years at Boston City Hall, including two years as a correction officer. He says that work is as hard as his work at McCurdy's.

Besides hanging sticks of herring and tending fires, he helps split the wood logs, using a four foot wood splitter. This afternoon, he'll get 200 bags of salt. He also gets sawdust for McCurdy's.

He, Richard, and Leeman Wilcox made the boxes used to pack the smoked herring. The box shooks come pre-cut and they make them in the spring of the year. It takes about a month to make enough boxes for the year.

Richard Munson, is a master of the dead and dumb voice brand of humor. He looks the part. He appears to be in his late thirties with a balding head and several missing teeth on a roundish face, and clothes both old and plain.

An example of him at work:

Richard to John P. McCurdy: "Can you lay me off so I can draw unemployment?"

John: "Yea."

Richard: "Good."

John: "Yea."

Richard: "They got a good deal goin'. They serve drinks now."

John: "Where?"

Richard "[I was] up to the unemployment line, look come a Bert. Bert left 10 o'clock ta go sign up. Noontime he was down there with a drink in his hand." Richard laughs. "So I think I wanta sign up."

John: "He didn't look too good this morning ta start with."

Richard laughs again. "His eyes 'bout the color a one a those [red] carts."

Richard has his job because of the problem of herring dropping off their sticks inside the smokehouse. As he tells it:

"There was one year, fella that was firin' before me, he went in that smokehouse there and he picked up 16 a those baskets a fish and never got 'em all. He just said, 'Hell with it.' It was on a weekend. He closed the door and walked off."

Not that Richard hasn't seen plenty of fish drop himself. He has. "I've seen 'em [herring] sa feedy before that when you hung 'em up, you'd have drops for a week."

Richard and Bob break from their talk to begin hanging sticks of herring in the house to the east of where they lit the fires. Richard grabs one of the filled herring carts on the open wharf and wheels it in through the door of the house. There are no fish yet in this house and no fires lit.

Bob, in the meantime, has climbed a side wall inside and stands straddling the center bay, his feet resting on the lowest slat on either side of the canyon. Richard passes strung sticks up to him three at a time and Bob places them in a row four slats from the bottom beginning from the far wall and working back.

Watching the two work from the outside on the wharf, John McCurdy tells his visitor what goes on inside. "Now our year's process, to put enough herrin' through this thing between now and say November when the fish run will stop in November, we'll fill that [smoke] house full, along both sides over there, and then empty it, and in the meantime while we're emptyin' that, we're gonna fill this [smokehouse] up full, then try ta go back and fill that one up again.

"Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't."
"It's hard to explain to people how this works, because everybody wants to know, you know, how long it takes to smoke a herring, see," says John McCurdy running his eyes over the smokehouse building.

"Well, it isn't that simple. "If you had 'em right here on the bottom [slats] here, take ya about a month, see, maybe month or six weeks, in ideal weather, you know, it wasn't wet.

"Well, what we do, we just start 'em out here, up on this [bottom] slat here to keep 'em up off the fire you know, so they don't get too hot.

"That's one a the big worries, especially in the summertime is gettin' 'em too hot 'n burnin' 'em. Once you burn 'em, you got ta throw 'em away. They're just no good. They're just ruined.

"They'll come in here like these fellas are today and they'll hang 'em, say, one, two, three, four in here, four [bottom] slats. And we'll leave 'em there a week or ten days until they dry on the, the gill will dry right on that stick, make 'em hard, so they won't fall off.

"Then after that, we'll put three or four men in here and they'll stand up in there, then they'll just pass 'em up into the peaks here. Then the next week, what we're doin' right now, again, we'll come right in here and do the same thing all over again. Put 'em down here, then fire 'em for a week, then put them up.

"Even when we're smokin' 'em, we don't wanna dry 'em out. That's the thing we gotta be careful of.

"Oil content is in 'em. But you got ta have that in 'em, as I say ta, that's all has ta do with the makeup, the consistency of 'em, that's all.

"If you don't they'd dry right out just like a piece a wood.

"As they keep goin' up [in the smokehouse], see they're gettin' a little bit different consistency, see. Ya have ta keep checkin' 'em all.

"After a while a 'course the texture will be just right, then you can hear 'em rattle in here, you take a stick, you can hear it, when you touch it, it'll all kind a rattle. Then ya take 'em down and bone 'em.

"And that's the end a the process.

"Ya can either under smoke 'em or then the other way, you can over smoke 'em.

"Under smokin' I think is the lesser a two evils.

"Over smoking, ya just ruin the fish. Oh, it looks like the devil, they go ta take the skin off.

"When the skin comes off that, it all comes off nice and smooth. And then the piece a fillet that you have there, got a nice piece a flesh on it, there's silver along, you know, on the back.

"Where if they're over done, then when you go ta take and skin 'em, an' take that skin off, they'll pick off, you know, sa rough, that's all, it just doesn't look good at all.

"That's what we worry about more than anything. They're all ragged, they just don't, I mean the fish is there, and I say, the texture and everything, but it just doesn't, you know, the looks part of it is what, that has a lot ta do with [marketing]—"

John looks back inside to Richard and Bob at work.

"How come yer puttin' 'em up three at a time?"

"Quicker," Bob replies.

"Huh?"

"Quicker."

"Those fish, I figured they'd drop there pushin' 'em up."

"No, they're holdin' good," reassures Bob.

"No, they're holdin' good," Richard echoes. "Normally we wouldn't do it."

"But they're light, too," adds Bob.

John McCurdy moves on. He opens the door to another house to check the fires. Turning to his visitor, he continues his explanation.

"All we wanna do right now, this time a year particularly, just keep a little heat in here, not too much, just very, very slow, you gotta have heat to cook 'em, that's the main thing, you gotta give it to 'em very slowly.

"See they [the smokehouses] just have ta be opened up here during the day, like I say, when he's firin' here, just a little bit, 'nough ta keep the air going through 'em.

"If you buttoned this baby right up, put those fires in there, they'd burn 'em up.

"And you can't have 'em open like this," he points to several open window vents, "a 'course when the winds a blowin' and fan those fires down and then you have ones on the ground.

"This house is filled right full now, right from the top to the bottom, this one. Every day they'll just keep right at this, that's the one we'll work on first, see, we keep a firin' that, like it is today, the whole month of August, prob'ly by the last week, maybe, prob'ly first week a September we'll be able ta start workin' on 'em ya know, start process 'em.

"You get everyone a these houses all full, you have quite a lot a work ta do just in the mornin', start all these fires up. I mean, ya got every house here, and they'll burn what, prob'ly two or three cord, well, take a cord, prob'ly two cord just ta fire 'em in the mornin'.

"How'd you like ta be my fire
insurer, huh?

“They come down here, look in the door, huh? No wonder the rates are high, huh?”

JOHN McCURDY LEAVES the smokehouses and walks up to the empty boning room. He has been in the smoked herring business about 20 years. He has been the driving force that has kept his firm continuing while other smoked herring businesses failed. His grandfather, John McCurdy, was in the smoked herring business in the early 1900s. His smokehouse was in Lubec, but not at the present site.

In between the two John McCurdys was the father of John P., Arthur McCurdy. He, too, was involved in the smoked herring business. “He was the one, he had two or three a these places around,” says John P.

“He really built this up, I mean, the rest a 'em [smokehouses] were all goin' down, see, years ago, he just kept pushin' away at it there. We've had this one here, one out the road, one up North Lubec.

“At one time I can remember several of 'em bein' around Lubec. But I think prob'ly the height of the smoke fish season business prob'ly back in the late 30s and 40s prob'ly. There were about 30 a these stands around you know, some smaller.

“We had one that burned here back 'bout eight, ten years ago, another one just like this and some kid set off one.

“Well, that kinda put us right back down here ta one shop again. The way the market's been, this is plenty. This all ya need really.”

John P. doesn't know how long the present McCurdy smokehouse has been in existence, but it has been a considerable time. A Kelley family owned the plant years ago.

“When I was young, I use ta go down here, oh, goin' ta high school or somethin', you know, come down here, doin' what these fellas are doin', worked in the bays. Fact I still do when we get shorthanded.

“There's nothin' here that I haven't done anyway.

“I say, there's a lot a things here that, you know, work well.

I say, I got three or four fellows worked for me for a good number a years. I've got ladies here that worked here for, Christ, for years and years and years, lots of 'em.”

He looks out a window. There are his smokehouses and wharf. “Maybe that's the only reason there's one left in the country here, prob'ly.” He laughs. “Just too much handling.” He laughs again.

He looks to his wharf again. “This wharf here, just a terri-
ble expense really, this day an' age. This thing [would be built today] up on dry land somewhere. But years ago, everything was outa here by boat. Nobody ever thought about building anything like this on land and then just havin' a little small dock come out, you know, to land a boat to which they do today."

John McCurdy looks beyond the wharf to the Narrows.

"I like that, really of all the things here, the fish are in the bay. I know they're mine when they go in the tank. When they call ya on the phone, say they've almost got 'em," he laughs, "that doesn't mean much. It doesn't mean much if they're just tied up out there, 'cause the pump might break down.

"When they're goin' in the tank, they're mine, huh. I kinda light up wheres they make me feel good, you know. I say, least ya get the dust outa those tanks.

"And it is, say you watch 'em just kind a flutter in down there in those tanks, it's kind of, think that they were just out there just a short time ago, they were just swimmin' around."

C L I C K, C L I C K, C L I C K.
Scissors slice through smoked fish bodies. Short metallic clicks. Like the snips of scissors in a barber shop. The "boning" operation has begun.

Boning usually starts each year the last of August, first of September. In the case of the 1983-1984 season, it ran through to January and then finished up beginning in April.

The third of October, 1984 finds the boning room full of men and women. There are 14 who work directly with the fish, five others who either move the fish or skins from place to place or cover and strap the filled boxes.

Tin covered benches line the walls on two sides of the rooms. Tin also covers a swatch of the wall in front of the benches. Flourescent lights flare from the white ceiling.

Four who were stringers are at work boning. There is no stringing today. Angie Sawtelle works in the middle of one side of the room, separated on her left from Harold Moores and his wife. To her right are six women. On the opposite side of the room, are Bill Wallace and Debbie Moores. Then comes another woman. Last is Charlie Holmes and his wife.

In the middle of this group is the scale where filled boxes are weighed. On one end, the covers are nailed shut and box lots of four are strapped.

All but two of the workers stand. They work in set patterns. To use Angie as an example, on the bench in front of her, left to right, are a pile of smoked herring, a space to cut fish, then a pile of waste.

Behind the cut fish, towards the wall, is a wood shook box in which the herring are placed. Several workers, including Angie, have raised the rear end of the box up a few inches to keep it off of the un-cut fish and the tin. The box is lined with a paper to keep it clean and free of grease.

Angie uses a big pair of scissors to cut her fish. She wears the end of gloves on her fingers: on her right thumb and the next three fingers, on her left thumb and the next finger. Rubber bands keep them in place.

She moves quickly. She picks up a herring in her right hand and cuts it with her left. The fish is held in the middle of its back by the right thumb and first finger.

Then, twirling the fish toward the scissor blades, Angie cuts the head, the belly, then the tail off. It's done in one motion, usually one cut of the scissors for the head, a slide of small cuts up the belly, then a quick cut for the tail, and then the click of the scissors closing.

To split the remaining fish, Angie twists and bends it while holding one end in each hand. While twisting it, she slides her thumb down and up the belly of the fish, ripping it open.

Flattening the fish, she takes the skin off the back with her hand. If the skin is too tough, she uses a knife that looks like a paring knife, resting the fish in the space between her and the wood box.

The fish is flipped over, its bone and insides scraped out with a knife or picked out with a finger. The fillet is separated in two, the sides scraped free of skin.

Angie fills her box and goes to weigh it on the scale across the room. There are enough fillets for almost two 10-pound boxes.

By nine o'clock, the crew has filled 20 boxes. In a corner of the room, Leeman Wilcox cranks thin metal strips around four of the boxes at a time. He also dumps baskets of smoked herring from the smokehouses on the workers' benches.

Workers are paid $3.00 for each filled 10-pound box. By 11:30 in the morning, Angie is on her ninth box. She started five hours earlier at 6:30. With good smoked fish, Angie says she can fill 13 boxes on average during a day's work.

She says she can't with the fish today. Their skin is too tough.
Gossip rises and falls across the room. Bob Case and Richard Munson come in and take away the baskets of herring skins. Richard kids and taunts the women. He puts his greased black hands around and in front of one woman's face. People laugh. But they're also annoyed.

Later, in a smokehouse, Bob and Richard stand high within a bay. They hand herring sticks two or three at a time to Dave Marston who stands on the floor below. Richard works with a swaying motion and sings,

*This is the way we take them down,*
*This is the way we take them down,*
*This is the way we take them down,*
*This is the way we take them down, so early in the morning.*

A set of sticks is passed downward. Then three more are picked off from the slats. Dave fills a cart, the same kind used to bring freshly strung herring from the stringing room. He hangs the sticks first on the frame, then lays them in stacks of about six sticks deep on top, in one direction and then in the opposite direction.

Still later in the day, two teams (Richard and Bob, Dave and Leeman) put sticks up higher in a smokehouse bay. The two men of each team work facing each other. They move the top four rungs of the lower hung fish up by four rungs or more, up to the fish in the peaks of the house.

The four rows of fish at the very bottom of the bay are left for a week, when they, too, will be moved up.

**AS IF THE STEPS OF producing a smoked herring were not enough to manage, later come the equally demanding steps of producing and marketing the product at a profit.**

While McCurdy's may be the only smoked herring operation in the United States, it is not alone in the world. There are several in neighboring New Brunswick, Canada.

John McCurdy estimates that about 400,000 pounds of smoked herring are produced each year, his production of 160,000 making less than half.

Marketing is not a simple matter.

First, there is the problem of a shrinking market. John
McCurdy thinks there are simply fewer people eating smoked herring than there used to be.

"People are goin' inta fast food. I think prob'ly people's eatin' habits have changed a lot.

"One time, like I say, this was big seller in the South 'cause what it is, just a low cost protein that was all. 'Course now, almost becomin' like a deli food. She's expensive now, people go out an' buy it.

"So they don't buy it, I don't think, for the same reason that they use ta, say years ago."

Then there is the problem of being at the beck and call of that market. Until very recently, there was no holding of the supply, until demand strengthened. There still is little.

"The thing that's bother-some, marketwise, is that no one has any carryover from one year ta next.

"Like the sardine people, they're carryin' over stock which, that's just in the nature a the business.

"But in this business here, for years and years and years, we just sold from hand ta mouth. Just the minute they got 'em down in here, which was wonderful, you know, we sold 'em right out the door. Had trucks here that was takin' 'em 200, 300 boxes to a lot, all the time.

"But now, I say the last few years it hasn't worked that way. I mean, now we're holdin' on ta some product all the time, you know, buildin' up, put it in the cooler." McCurdy recently converted a room next to the boning room into a cooler.

"I called New York. They called me and Christ they wanna sell 'em for, like I say, what, we were gettin' 17 dollars once, then they went down to 16, then they went to 15—this is the last four or five years—then it went to 14, last year it went down to 13, and I sold some for 12, I think I realized about 12.50.

"Taday I called New York and the guy's gettin' 'em down there for 11 dollars and 10 cents outa Canada.

"There's no reason at all. If everybody was putting a lot a stock away every year an' inventoryin' this and buildin' it up—course everybody's clean, after every year we're clean, the whole industry practically.

"We should somewhere you know level off on a price that's realistic, that's profitable. I don't say exorbitant. But I mean something that makes it worthwhile to work for.

"But that's never going ta happen."

A third problem lies in the buildup of the Canadian supply. John McCurdy questioned whether the demand justified the expansion of supply.

"The Canadian government built the smokehouses up on the north shore [New Brunswick] and, I mean, in other areas. It was just for the U.S. market, that's all, I mean, they just built 'em up, they didn't have any market in Canada."

And the fourth problem is the money exchange rate. In the summer of 1984, the Canadian dollar is worth 85 cents of the American. That, to John McCurdy, means that he has to compete with Canadian processed herring in the American market at a 15 percent disadvantage. Today, with the Canadian dollar worth only about 70 cents American the disadvantage has doubled.

That disadvantage, though, turns into an advantage for John McCurdy, just like it does for other Americans, if he buys Canadian. He buys a lot of Canadian raw fish.

"Last year we got every fish we had outa Canadian waters. That's why I can't make too much noise. I mean," he laughs, "they're keepin' ya alive in one side [supply], then they're killin' yer over here [selling]."

John P. McCurdy's business philosophy is a fifth problem. For all his belaboring of the market demand, the exchange rate, the oversupply of product, he is going to put up as much smoked herring as he can. Regardless. He is in the business of putting up smoked herring. And that's what he intends to do.

He doesn't view his attitude as a problem, instead he thinks he has little choice.

"You can't not take the fish. I'm gonna take just as many this year, pack, like I say, when you see things goin' kind a haywire, I think lot a times bet­ter, instead of kind a go at it kind a cowardly, you know, and kind a sit back hopin' this thing—I think the first, the more you drive at somethin', jesus, then, huh?

"That's the way I am anyway. I'm gonna put up more fish this year I hope than I ever did. Huh?

"Now if exchange rate or what, I don't know what the hell's gonna happen, but I don't wanna sit back and just say well, I didn't [buy fish] somethin' happened because I didn't take the fish.

"'Cause ya gotta have the fish regardless, if you're gonna be in the fish business."

HUGH T. FRENCH is an editor of Salt Magazine. He is a native of Eastport, Maine, which is a few miles from the McCurdy Smokehouse in Lubec.
FRANCIS O'BRIEN
PORTLAND'S PHILOSOPHER-BOOKMAN

By Sarah Collins
with Salt staff
Photography by Mary Anne Hanlon

"TAMERLANE? HE'S JUST A BABY. Four months old. Quite a tartar," Francis O'Brien says as half a pound of bristle and sharp teeth bite into his wide hand.

He isn't scolding the kitten. In fact, he's just finished playing with Tamerlane. Small claws swipe at the white mustache that divides Francis's broad ruddy face in two, the reflective eyes above and the friendly mouth below.

"Hee-a-hee," he chuckles when Tamerlane aims for his blue eyes, protected by sturdy glasses. Francis manages to catch Tamerlane by the scruff of the neck, then sets him carefully down on the floor.

The "baby" notices a stack of books and tries to hurdle them. All of a sudden, Tamerlane's midsection disappears under Francis's hand. Anywhere but the books.

Francis O'Brien's books have the run of the house. He doesn't mind the old cigarette butts in the ashtrays, or the trash in the fireplaces, or the dust that's settled on the threadbare Oriental rug, but the books are kept almost religiously clean.

Francis O'Brien is the undisputed dean of antiquarian booksellers in northern New England. "I was the only one north of Boston when I started" some fifty years ago. "Now there are about 200."

He began his career of collecting books as a ten year old, hanging around Saturdays at A. J. Huston's old book store in Portland. There were "wonderful bargains in those days for ten or fifteen cents."

Now his 100,000 books are everywhere in this house on High Street in Portland, Maine, and they also fill a country place in Hiram. Books fill ceiling high shelves in his back parlor and a long ell that used to be the house's carriage shed. They make stacks on the end tables and on the floor of the back parlor and flow into an equally crowded living room.

Francis can summon up any volume's vital statistics: who published it and when and how many are left.

"Certain Maine histories you can almost bank on," he says. One of them is Saco Valley Settlements and Families printed by John Valentine "a couple years ago, and that was the second time it had been reprinted, first time was by Tuttle in Vermont ten or fifteen years ago. They were done in Japan, too ...."

He does not have to struggle for business now. He draws people. He draws the maiden aunt looking to sell the family Bible, the retired Aroostook County potato farmer searching for books about potatoes ("He wound up with three or four thousand books, some of them in German," says Francis), the man in shabby clothes who arranges to buy Williamson's History of Maine on the installment plan.

His customers must know about Francis to find him. No sign marks the brick house on High Street. Initiates make their way up a drive to the back door, where they find three back doors. They must remember to open the one with the string latch and unrepaired screen that lets cats in and out. They have been doing this since 1952, when Francis sold his downtown bookshop.

Yes, people visit Francis O'Brien now, knowing he can track down even the most offbeat requests.

"My wife will say sometimes, 'Aren't those books in Norwegian taking up a lot of space up there?' and I'll say, 'Don't forget there's always that Norwegian sailor on a tanker down here in the harbor who's coming by some night....'"

But you don't go into this business to attract crowds. Books from this house in Portland don't sell in the massive quantities of shopping-mall bookstores. Mostly they sell one at a time.

It wasn't until 1969 that Francis got around to selling the collections which he had been
"Books, life, history are interconnected, like a honeycomb."

gathering for 25 years. He sold 60,000 books that year, "and my wife packaged and sent every one of them."

FRANCIS O'BRIEN IS MORE THAN A seller of books. He does what he does, believing there is a difference between being a bookseller and being a bookman.

He is at his most eloquent when he tries to define a bookman, a good bookman. First he reaches for simple words to describe the difference between a book merchandizer and a bookman.

"Living with books, understanding what they are, knowing something about the background of them. How they rank with other books," he says. Then his mind catches a metaphor and his words roll with ease.

"It's like a huge screen, or a backdrop on a stage, with millions of little cubby holes, little slots or cubby holes, each one of them filled up with something. And they all interact with each other. They're all part of the same thing.

"They're like a honeycomb—they're all part of the same thing. And you know, no matter what the subject is, whether it's medicine or history or whatever it is, they're all interconnected. Just like everybody in life is interconnected. History is interconnected.

"Now it probably sounds very immodest for a small bookseller in a small town to even think in these terms, but nevertheless, I think that's the way a good bookseller should think.

"Not quite cosmologically, but certainly from the point of view of everything that's happened, and everything that exists in the world, even though you can't possibly know everything there is to be known about these things."

Francis O'Brien leans forward in his chair. He confides, "It's too late to be a renaissance man." There is regret in his voice. "You know, the last renaissance man was probably in the late 18th century when it was still possible to encompass practically all human knowledge. It's too diversified today. No one can know all those things.

"So you have a grasp of things. And at least you're respectful about things. But today, most people don't think very deeply about things. They're not—people are not encouraged to think.

"Everything is immediacy. Enjoy the present. And people are beset upon, you know. They have to live their lives. They have to take care of their families. They don't have time for any of these things."
“So that anybody who is fortunate enough to seize the time, or to have been allowed to take the time to do these things, is fortunate.”

And so his visitors know. Francis O’Brien counts himself among the fortunate. He has been able to “seize the time,” or closer to the truth, “allowed” to do it.

It all must have begun when he had tuberculosis, an illness that put a nine month pause in his life in 1934, releasing him from “immediacy” and the pressures of the present.

His wife, Constanze McDonnell O’Brien, took hold of the present, going back to work as an accountant. It is she who has allowed Francis to “seize the time.” After he recovered in a sanatorium in Maine, he opened a bookstore on Congress Street and has been a booksman ever since. The unpressured life of an antiquarian bookseller has been his wife’s gift to him.

Francis is the first to point it out. “To tell you the honest truth, I never really made a very good living out of books. If it hadn’t been for the fact that I had a very good wife who worked and supplied the necessities—I mean I supplied what little luxuries we had. A lot of books.

“But it took a long time to be able to make a living out of the book business. I think I was in it probably twenty years before I was able actually to say I could support a family. Unless you have a lot of money, it’s a very difficult business to get started in. And we had next to no money. For the most part we did it ourselves.

“A lot of it is due to my wife. She put this whole thing down, I mean, she depreciated the whole business, said it didn’t amount to anything, but nevertheless, she went along with everything I wanted to do. So I was fortunate.”

His wife is as curt with visitors as Francis is loquacious, as suspicious as he is trusting, as practical as he is reflective. “Don’t mind me,” she says dryly. “I’m in the midst of painting. I’m about ready to kill someone.” The visitors laugh, but she doesn’t.

Francis introduces a student from Vassar to his wife. “Who was her father, mother and her cousins and her uncles? Have you figured that out yet?” she asks him.

“Well, we’ll know all before we get through.”

Jesus! He goes into your whole biography.”

She is like the mate of an artist, who knows her husband serves another mistress. For Francis is as irresistibly drawn to the pursuit of his books as an artist to his palette. His wife is no match for the obsession.

Together they share an affection for their cats and their children. All else may be at odds, except the daily admission that she, no less than he, is connected to the books in this house.

To put together the collections Francis O’Brien has put together over the years calls for an anatomical knowledge of books mixed with a detective’s taste for the search.

The best way to see how it happens is to let Francis tell you. He describes a visit from Jim McCampbell, librarian of the University of Maine at Orono. “Jim really wasn’t what you’d call a bookman, but he was what I would call a bookman’s librarian in the sense that he was really eager to know about books. He was primarily a custodian.

“Around that time they had a number of black students at the University of Maine and one of the first questions that McCampbell asked me was, ‘Do you have anything on the history of the Negro in this country?’

“And I said, ‘Yes, as a matter of fact, that’s been a particular interest of mine for many many years.’ I said, ‘I have quite a lot of stuff on Abolitionism.’

“And he said, ‘How many items?’

“I said, ‘About three thousand,’ and I went on to tell him that among other things, I had once been very fortunate in discovering what was left of the collection of a very important lot of Abolitionist literature.

“It had belonged to a man named General Fessenden, Samuel Fessenden. Father of William Pitt Fessenden. Samuel Fessenden was one of the most noted lawyers in Maine in his time and he’d started out as a Whig, as a very conservative sort of politician.

“So Fessenden, from being a Whig and a conservative, had become very much interested in the Abolitionist movement. He was influenced by William Lloyd Garrison, and of course the way the Abolitionist movement in those days was split in two—”

He stops to explain. “There was the so-called colonization movement, which was in favor of sending the blacks back to Africa and that
eventuated in the establishment of Liberia.

"And the other group were the Garrisonians, the militants. Great divisions between these two, in fact they hated each other, really. Fessenden, who also happened to be a general in the state militia, was a very militant figure. I won't go into his whole background, but anyway over many years he had collected or had sent to him hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pamphlets and books.

"And these had been stored in a summer cottage over at Crescent Beach, which is Cape Elizabeth [Maine]. And the house had been used by several generations of Fessendens, who were a very well known family in Maine, and all of whom became senators and congressmen and clergymen, and one thing and another.

"At one point I was asked to go over there and look at some books by a lady from Mon-
treal who owned the cottage. And when I got over there, I found just sitting on an ordinary table in her living room a whole bunch of pamphlets, including a couple that had the signature of John Wilkes Booth!

"And I said, 'What are these?'

"And she said, 'Well, they belong to the family that used to own this place, the Fessendens.'

"And I said, 'Oh, was this the summer cottage?' It was really an old house, an old Cape Cod type house.

"She said, 'Yes.'

"I said, 'Well, is there much more of this kind of stuff?'

"She said, 'Well, there used to be loads of it up in the barn chamber, but every summer, my father would take loads of it down and take it, burn it up in a trash burner out in back of the barn.'

"I said, 'You know, is there anything left there?'

"She said, 'Well there may be. There may be some material in a trunk.'

"So anyway, she took me out to the barn. Well the barn was half collapsed by that time. But we managed to get up onto the second story of the barn and crossed a narrow beam and got over into this little chamber.

"And sure enough, there was a trunk that was loaded with pamphlets and also with a lot of torn broadsides, little broadsides announcing a reward for the return or the discovery of a pet peacock, dated 1869 or some such date.

"This is part of my collection. It included a lot of wonderful rarities like things that had been published by the underground in the South before the Civil War, when even the possession of Abolitionist literature would bring some pretty heavy consequences.

"So anyway, McCampbell said, 'Well now, is this stuff for sale?'

"'And I said, 'Well, yes, I guess it is.' You know, with all my work on these collections, I hadn't really gotten to the point of view to thinking about selling them. I knew someday I'd have to get rid of them, but I really didn't know what I was going to do about it.

' 'Well,' he said, 'Do you have any idea what you want for this collection?'

'Well, I was so naive in a way and I was a grown man, God knows, but I was so naive about values that I thought, 'Well, I know it's worth a lot of money. Now what is a lot of money?'

'And I kind of went back to my father. My father was a railway mail clerk. He had a good job, he brought up a big family. But I don't suppose he ever made in his life more than $65 a week, although it was a time when $65 a week was quite a bit of money.

'He would run into some old friend of his every once in a while and he'd say to me, 'You know, that fella's done awfully well. I know he's got a couple of restaurants out in Denver.'
Or in Salt Lake City or someplace.

"He said, 'He's done awfully well. You know, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he had 10,000 dollars.' Ten thousand dollars in my mind became kind of the standard of wealth.

"So I said, 'You know I think I'd want 10,000 dollars for those.'"

"'Oh,' he said, 'that's no trouble.'" Francis laughs. "'No trouble at all,' he said. 'We'll take them.'

"His excuse for buying this stuff for the blacks was that he said, 'The blacks are beginning to get very much interested in their own history.'"

"And I said, 'Well, there's nothing new about that. Educated blacks have been doing that for a long time.' And I said, 'You know, they have produced some wonderful writers of their own.'"

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**FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY,** Francis O'Brien built his collections, close to a hundred of them, "some of them with several thousand items, some of them with maybe five hundred to a thousand items."

The range of his collections followed his own special interests: women writers of Maine, American journalism, Abolitionist literature, education, and of course his "hobby", Irish literature, a collection he says is "not for sale."

Early American printing interested him. "All over the country, almost every small town had its own print shop. And they would occupy themselves in the winter when there wasn't much else to do with maybe doing the New Testament or something like the "Tale of the Tub" or some very famous English classic. Sometimes translations in French.

"It's incredible the amount of printing that was done in these small presses. I settled on a number of titles that I knew had been widely printed. Oh, for example, Young's "Night Thoughts." It's a poem. Published in England about 1780. And almost immediately began to be reprinted by almost every small printer in this country.

"Before I got through, I think I had 75 editions. Before 1830. All over the country." Francis's voice rings with the excitement of the chase. He checks his visitors' faces. Yes, they are interested.

"In the meantime, I became more and more addicted to the study of bibliography, which, of course, is the basis of the whole thing. I wanted to have good reference books for every one of these specialties that I was interested in. Besides the old standard things that took in the most important subjects, even though I wasn't very likely to run into books of great worth, or great interest in these things, in Portland, Maine.

"So I had to always think of myself, not as a great bookseller, like Goodspeed in Boston, or Howell in San Francisco, but to think of myself purely as a small, provincial bookseller who is perfectly happy staying in his native place and doing the best he could for it."

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**HIS LARGEST COLLECTION WAS sold to the University of Maine library in Orono.** It was in the field of education. Francis O'Brien explains how he began the collection. His account is as rich with supporting information as a well prepared lecture, but this is merely Francis talking extemporaneously in his library.

"Since the 18th century, and the beginnings of this country, there have been tremendous efforts to expand—provide the means of education for the American people.

"Very primitive at the beginning, but as time went on, the 30s and 40s and 50s of the 19th century, you begin to get tremendous expansion of schools, academies, colleges and so forth."

With this growth came a "flood of printed material: theoretical works, histories of earlier periods of education, reprinting the books of some of the great pioneers, people of the 16th and 17th centuries.

"Just a flood of printed material, which included ephemeral material, you know, broadsides, the announcement of an opening of an academy, or the yearly printing of a list of the students at North Yarmouth Academy. Reports of departments of education, superintendents of education, tremendous amount of material.

"I discovered that there weren't too many organizations in the country that were collecting this kind of material. I knew the University of Wisconsin, the University of Minnesota had big collections and there were a number of others around the country. But most of your local libraries, your local colleges and universities were not too much interested in this.

"Usually the collections of this kind were sparked by some individual who had great per-
sonal interest in the thing, would start off, and he would be able to get together a representative collection and then it would grow and grow and grow and then in many cases he would leave it to his alma mater.

“So, anyway, I began to collect what I could find. Now the odd thing about most of this material is it’s throwaway material. The average bookseller doesn’t bother with it. He gets a few old textbooks, books about education or some of this ephemeral material, the broadsides and the pamphlets.

“He just tosses them out. Worth about a dime apiece or something. And he doesn’t want to bother with them.

“So I took a room at the farm. I built bookcases. And inside of 25 years, that room was virtually bursting at the seams with books and pamphlets and broadsides and a lot of manuscript material!”

FRANCIS O'BRIEN'S EARLY LIFE reads like that of the school-of-experience writers like Hemingway. He went to sea. He was a journalist. He collected material in Ireland for a book. He studied in France. He avoided formal college education.

He met and engaged in dialogue with some of the brightest minds of his time, some that later gained fame as writers. John Cheever, Merle Colby and Erskine Caldwell.

Above all, he was a self educated man. And in the end, he became a fixed man, anchored in his birthplace by his thousands of books, rerooted in Portland, Maine.

“I was born on Munjoy Hill, where my people had lived. My great, great grandfather had settled up there, in fact he was the first Irishman to own any land up there.

“He was kind of an interesting character, he came from Galway, he had no education, and he very soon established himself in business. He had a small vessel, mail packet he used to run to St. John, New Brunswick. His name was Barnie Daly, Bernard Daly.

“Then when the great mills were being built in Lewiston and Biddeford and Waterville, places like that, and the railroads were being built and all the hard work that required rough labor, the Irish were the ones who did most of the work, the recent immigrants were the ones who did the hard work.

“My grandfather was sort of a labor broker.
He would gather up these people and supply the labor for the railroads and for the mills and that sort of thing. For the most part, they weren’t skilled workers at all, they were just Nabbies. In England they were called Nabbies.

“"The Portland-Rockensburg railroad, which ran up through the White Mountains, was built with labor that he supplied. He did fairly well with it and when he died in 1875, he left a fairly good estate, which his heirs proceeded to spend, like so many cases.

“For the most part, we were not an educated family. Whatever education I subsequently had, more or less, I picked it up myself. I wasn’t much of a student in high school, because I rebelled against everything they did.

“But I was always very much interested in books. And even as a young kid, every Saturday I’d go to Huston’s Bookstore on Exchange Street, an old fashioned bookstore that had been in business since 1829 under various owners.

“Filled with wonderful old books, forty, fifty thousand of them. And Huston was buying great quantities of books in those days. He’d winnow them out and then things that he really didn’t think too much of, he’d put in the window for ten or fifteen cents apiece.

“By the time I was 16, 17 years old, I probably had a thousand books that I’d acquired. Some years later when I decided to go into the book business, when I was in my 20s, I more or less used my own books to go into business with.”

After Francis graduated from Portland High School, “I always had an ambition to go to Europe and study and I did spend some time over there. 1929. Kind of wandering around....I was in Paris for a while and I studied French at the Alliance Francaise, then I was in Heidelberg. I took a summer course there.

“When I came home, I went to work as a newspaperman. I’d done some writing over there, travel sketches.” The job was in Dorchester, Massachusetts, where “I wrote most of a small weekly newspaper.”

Other newspaper jobs were in Portland and Rockland, Maine. “While I was there, I felt so prosperous with this new job—actually two jobs, one was correspondence, the other circulation” that he got married.

Francis began research on a book about Ireland in New York and continued the research in Ireland. “Then our money ran out in 1933. We had to come home. We stayed in Boston.”

The Great Depression held the country in its grip. “Things seemed rather desperate.” Francis signed on as a seaman for several voyages. His wife helped run a boarding house for her room and board.

Then he saw the advertisement in the Boston Globe.

“THEY WERE SEARCHING FOR WAYS to put people back to work. The Roosevelt administration had just come into office. They started a thing called the Civil Works Administration, which eventually became the WPA.

“There was a project at the Boston Public Library to catalog books. And they were to pick ten people for the job. And, God, there must have been 200 people applied for it, but I happened to be one of the lucky ten. So I went to work out there in the so called treasure room of the Boston Public Library, which is the rare book room.

“I found myself with some rather interesting people. Several of them had been writers. One of them had written several best sellers.” This was Merle Colby. “He and his wife had gone to Europe and they’d spent their money and come back broke, like everybody in those days.

“He was our chief, really, our most experienced man. He’d been a bookseller. When he got out of Harvard, he worked [at the] old Alfred Bartlett bookshop in Boston, which was a very old and respected bookshop.

“I think most of us on the project when we got together for bull sessions or coffee breaks, somehow or other we all started talking about the book business. About going into the book business. Among them, incidentally, was John Cheever.

“When I knew Cheever, Cheever was very young and sort of adopted another spelling for his name. He used to spell his name ‘Jon’, which was sort of an affectation back in the 30s.

“I noticed he dropped that as soon as he became famous.” Francis gets up to answer the telephone.

“Cheever had a great gift,” he begins again, “but he was at war with himself all his life. Very uncertain about so many things, social status.” He turns to the student from Vassar who has said she is doing her thesis on Cheever. “Well, you know,” he nods. “You read the books, so you know something of his background.”
"I wrote to him, oh, probably 25 years ago and he wrote back. He says, ‘Francis, you’re the only one of that crowd that we worked with that ever wrote to me.’ But he had heard something about what some of the others were doing.

“So we kept up some kind of desultory correspondence over the years. When I heard that he’d been in the hospital for cancer, I wrote to him, knowing that he was in bad shape. I guess it was about three weeks before he died.

“I had a letter from him not more than ten days before he died, and it merely said, ‘Carry on.’”

Francis is silent for a moment. ‘Carry on.’ Then he died. I was really kind of shaken up by the book his daughter wrote about him.

“Very courageous book.” Suddenly he laughs. ‘I don’t know as I want anybody to expose all my sins and shortcomings and secret things that we all have, boy, that’s a rough thing. Not that I have that many, of course,” he smiles.

“We all have them. Mistakes that we’ve made, lies that we’ve told.”

“EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, SOMETHING happens that kind of surprises you.”

Three years ago, a woman called Francis to come look at some books. “Actually she had written to me about the books of a man that I had known over a period of years, a man that had taught at Hebron Academy. He had retired, gone out to the West Coast to live, and he wasn’t in the best shape financially.

“He left this large lot of books behind, about 3,000 books. He was just about my age at the time, so when she took me into these two rooms full of books, it took me back to my youth in a sense.

“Here were a great many of the books that I had bought myself or had wanted to buy in the ’30s, the ’40s, some of them I did own.

“So, I made an immediate offer for the books. And the woman said, ‘If you’re willing to pay that much for them, you may have them.’ I’ve had one or two other people look at them, and I didn’t get nearly that offer.’

“Afterwards, when we were starting to move the books, my wife said to me, ‘My God, are you out of your mind?’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘I had to have those books. I don’t think, actually, that I really paid too much for them.’

“Half the books were in French...(and) my wife kept saying, ‘You’ll have these French books, and you’ll die, and they’ll be in the back of the barn, and no-one will ever want them.’

“One day, a month or so later, a prominent lawyer up in Lewiston called me, and we got talkin’ about this particular school. He said, ‘Well, I went there, you know.’

“I said, ‘Did you know so-and-so?’ And he said he did.

‘He’s living out in San Francisco now,’ I said.

‘What happened to his books?’ he asked. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I have them.’”

The lawyer mentioned that he was the chairman of the board of trustees of the Lewiston Public Library.

“I think we ought to have those,’ he said. ‘But, first of all, I’ve got to take it up with the other members of the board. They’ll get in touch with you.’”

Four people from the board of trustees, “all Franco-American,” including a professor and a newspaper editor, came over to Francis’s house in Hiram.

“The university professor, she was a little snippy, she had a box of cards, three or four hundred cards. These were the present holdings of the Lewiston library in French literature. She said, ‘We already have a very fine collection.’

“I took her out on the sun porch where I had all the books on this very long table, and they all gasped when they saw the quality of these books.

“Now, Lewiston has always been a very Catholic town, and of course in the past there’d always been a lot of the Puritan attitude on the part of the Church, and most of the great French classics couldn’t even be recommended for the library by any of these people.

“Here was the gamut of French literature, Voltaire, you know, all the great writers of the past, and a lot of the great writers of the present.

“These people were really knocked out. No question about it. The books were sold.

“So, you never know. You never know.”

SARAH COLLINS, a resident of Bridgton, Maine, is a student at Vassar College.
The Deacon’s Bench

REMEMBERING TAD

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on a dial. We should count time by heart­throbs. He most lives who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

Philip James Bailey

By Thomas Bradbury

IT WAS 1977, AND AS I HELPED TAD DOW carry bags of groceries from Bradbury Brothers Market to his car, he talked about conservation. Tad seemed to be forever talking about the need for land preservation.

Of course, he had eminent qualifications to do so. He had been one of the leaders in an effort which raised $90,000 so that nearby Vaughn’s Island could be purchased and kept forever wild. He was the president of the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust, a group which had just completed the purchase of the River Green, one of the last open spaces in the village square section of Kennebunkport. And, as the first director of the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions, he was on his way to implementing the organization of over 200 local conservation commissions throughout the state of Maine.

As the last bag was placed in the back seat of his car, and as our conversation was drawing to its logical conclusion, Tad turned to me and said, “How would you like to become a Trustee of the ‘Portland trust?’”

I was caught off guard by his question. “Gee, Tad,” I responded, “most people just tip me a quarter. They don’t give me directorships!”

He remained serious. “I think you’d enjoy it,” he said, “and besides, there’s a lot that needs to be done.”

I was sure he was right. There was a lot that needed to be done. I just wasn’t sure that I was the one that could do it. Tad appeared to know just about all there was to know about land preservation. I knew virtually nothing. Consequently, I turned practical.

“How often do you meet?” I asked.

“The board meets once, maybe twice, a year,” he replied.

That, I thought I could handle. “Sure,” I said somewhat hesitantly, “if you think I could help.”

Two years later, Tad nominated me, and I was elected president of the Trust. We were soon engaged in raising over $100,000 in order to purchase Cape Island, the beautiful, outer island in the Cape Porpoise chain. The commitment meant that a core of volunteers had to meet frequently in order to make plans and organize events. Some work was undertaken towards our fundraising goal nearly every day for over three years. Tad was at the center of the effort.

Once, when all of us were feeling a bit tired, I reminded him of his “once, maybe twice a year” speech. He simply laughed.

Tad did not stop after the successful completion of the project. Indeed, the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust was but one of many organizations to which he was lending his knowledge and his ability to define a problem and then solve it. He had been appointed by Governor Joseph Brennan to the Department of Environmental Protection.

He was on the boards of Salt Magazine and its student programs, as well as the Friends of the Kennebunk River. He was serving on Kennebunkport’s Board of Selectmen and was helping to write the town’s new comprehensive plan. And, perhaps most important to him, he was awakening people’s consciences to the issue of growth and the resulting side effects it would be bringing to southern Maine.

Invariably, at the end of any one of these meetings, the time would come to set the date for the next gathering of either the full board or one of the multitude of resulting subcommittees. Tad would, without fail, pull from his breast pocket a battered schedule book. He would study it carefully and issue periodic suggestions as to when it might be possible for him to find a non-conflicting date.

Few pages in Tad’s book were empty. With Tad, it was never a question as to whether or not he would help. It was just a question of when.

The last time I saw him, Tad was home in bed, obviously suffering from the effects of his illness.

“How are you doing?” I foolishly asked, not at the moment being able to think of anything better to say.

“Fine,” he responded brightly, “just fine. I’ve got a few problems, but we’re working them out. He spied the papers that I had stuffed under my arm and he quickly changed the subject. “What do you have there?”

I unrolled some maps detailing the Conservation Trust’s latest projects and we talked
about future directions. He was once again the teacher, and I the student, just as it had been eight years before. He wanted to make sure that I understood the importance of controlling growth, and he offered suggestions as to how the Trust could extend its activities in the coming years. His thoughts were lucid, his opinions meaningful.

Two hours passed quickly and Tad was tiring. Besides, his wife Ellie had to take him to Portland for a radiation treatment. It was time to go. He held out his hand and I took it. “Come again,” he said, obviously wanting to remain in touch with the many projects which had meant so much to him.

“I will,” I replied, “I will,” but the chance never came.

When the chairs are pulled to the table for the next Board meeting of Salt, or Kennebunkport’s committee on growth, or any of the other meetings to which his input was so valuable, Tad will be missed. We will miss his insight and his quiet leadership. We will miss his keen ability to hit upon the key questions that need to be discussed, thus avoiding the superfluities. We will miss his charm and his humor. We will miss him.

And yet, don’t for a moment think that Tad is gone. He’ll be there whenever we see people enjoying the tranquility of the islands of Cape Porpoise. He’ll be with vacationers as they rest their tired legs on the River Green. We will think of him whenever we witness an Indian sailboat gliding gracefully down the Kennebunk River. That’s the value of living a life of service and one marked with accomplishments. You will never be forgotten.

He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth’s beauty or failed to express it; who has looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory is a benediction.

Mrs. A. J. Stanley

THOMAS BRADBURY is a native Mainer whose family has lived in Cape Porpoise since 1730.

(Continued from page 3) him. Even now, “I’m paid like a farmer, for the pieces I do.”

Eating chowder with Salt students at the Wayfarer in Cape Porpoise, John McPhee did more listening than talking. When he left, he knew as much about us as we knew about him, maybe more.

Readers Write:

Salt’s cover story about the conflict between lobster fishers and mussel fishers brought considerable response. Spencer Apollonio objected to our use of the metaphorical “fencing” of the sea, comparing it to the fencing of the West. Otherwise the head of Maine’s Department of Marine Resources thought the article was fair.

Benjamin Hyde wrote, “Please allow me to congratulate you on your most excellent article, “The Fencing of the Sea.” You have made some points which have cried out for publication for 10 or 15 years now. I only wish that there was some way your write-up could get even wider publication before the lobsters are completely exhausted by over-fishing. While the National Fisherman has continued to present dreadful statistics on lobsters each year, these do not quite carry the message of your article.”

Mr. Hyde is a 20 year summer resident of Tenants Harbor who lives in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

Another letter came from Lois Badger. “I would like to pass on a comment about your mussel story. One of my favorite haunts over the years has been Seal Bay below Winter Harbor on Vinalhaven. The seals always bask in the rocks there and have been a great joy to watch. This year, no seals — although they certainly are plentiful elsewhere. Common talk has it that the mussel harvesting is so intense in that area that the ecology of the sea has changed to the extent that the seals have moved out. I wonder. Perhaps we’ve hit bad days, but other boaters who have visited often this summer have noticed the change, too.”

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THE SALT PILE
Back Issues, Books & Binders

The Salt Book (hardbound, 430 pages) sells for $10.95 plus $1.00 for shipping. Salt Two (hardbound, 433 pages) sells for $14.95 plus $1.00 for shipping. The cost of back issues is $3.00 each plus $.50 shipping, with the exception of No. 21 & 22 (Eastport for Pride) that costs $6.95 plus $1.00 for shipping. Library rates for back issues are available. Binders (each holds 8 issues) are available for $9.25 including shipping cost.

No. 1: Sold Out.
No. 2: Sold Out.
No. 3: Maine Barns, Shrimping with Dave Burnham; Arundel Town Meeting; Restoring Ship Models (William Whorf); Smelting (Bert Graves and Harvey Bixby); Fishing Off a Sailing Vessel (Kenneth Hutchins).
No. 4: Farming with Clifford Jackson; How to Build a Lobster Trap (Stilly Griffin); Dowsing (Gordon MacLean and George Martin); Wildwood Chapel; Blueberry Hill Ghosts; Wild Honeybee Hunt (Monty Washburn); Charcoal Making (Ava Ross); Cottage Cheese (Eleanor Nedeau); Masonry (Willie Grendell).
No. 5: The Forks; Bear Trapping (Russell Kennedy); Old Bottles (Ted Towne); Willis Gowen's Drugstore; Making Flintlock Guns; Arthur Fretwell's Wooden World; Gooch's Beach.
No. 6: Sold Out.
No. 7: Maine Barn Raising; Bean Hole Beans; Perkins Tide Mill; Pericles Economos, Early Greek Immigrant in Maine; Snowshoe Making.
No. 8: Sold Out.
Nos. 9 & 10: (Bicentennial Issue) North Haven Island; Goat Island Lighthouse; Gill Netting; Sea Moss Pudding; Sam and Hazel Wildes; Designing with Shells; Ships in Bottles (Richard Nickerson); Boat Building (Herb Baum); Logging (Grover Morrison); Horse Pulling (Dick Wallingford); New Sweden; Making Maple Syrup; Cluny McPherson in Potato Land; Basket Making; Making Potato Barrels; Stone Walls; Country Auctions (George Martin).
No. 11: Dragging (Lester Orcutt); Fiddleheading; Making Bait Bags (Ada Foss); Making a Duck Blind; Willie and Elizabeth Ames; Whistle Making.
No. 12: Tuna Fishing (Kenneth Hutchins); Butter Making (Mary Turner); Stone Walls (Mortared); Fly Tying (Martin Pierter); Porcelain Figures; Sail Making; Sumach Sap Spiles.
No. 13: River Driving (12 chapter series); Cider Making; Old Time Christmases (interviews with scores of Salt's people about Christmas 50 and 60 years ago).
No. 14: Grandfather's Golden Earring; Marie Gallaros: 50 Years in the Mills; Felling a Tree; Paddle Making; Cod Liver Oil; Ken Berdeen's Lilacs; Swan's Island (Part I); Maine Diner.
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 Penobscots; Medicine Man (Senabeh Francis), Part 1; Ships in Bottles; Fishermen's Superstitions; Fire of '47; Metal Spinning.
No. 17: Friendship Sloops (Ralph Stanley); Rigging the Endeavor; Sam Polk; When You're Married to a Fisherman; Stenciling; Medicine Man (Senabeh Francis), Part 2.
No. 18: Cecil Kelley's Tales; Digging Clams with Jake; Greek Easter; Fly Casting; Wreck of the Schooner Charles; Sam Miller, the Minstrel Man; Alewives; Bertha Guerin; Lofting a Boat; Helen Perley.
No. 19: Mount Desert Island; Draper Liscomb; Bar Harbor's Art Deco Theater; Evelyn Turner; Clarence Roberts; Plastering (Maurice Gordon); Pottery Making.
No. 20: (Tenth Anniversary Issue) Gems of Cape Porpoise (Harbor Islands); Alberta Redmond; Tower Clocks of the Kennebunks; Salt's New Home; Semester in Maine; In Search of the 20th Century Penobscot.
Nos. 21 & 22: (Eastport for Pride) Eastport: Then and Now; Inside a Sardine Factory; Politics, People and Pittston; Revival of the Waterfront.
No. 23: I Could Never Call Myself a Yankee Five Immigrant Experiences: Italians (David Breggia); French Canadians (Antoinette Bernier); Russians (Ilsa Pasechnik); Greeks (John Anagnostis); Japanese (Suzuko Laplante).
No. 24: Shakers at Sabbathday Lake; Fitzhenry's Store; Weaving (Bessie Swain); Blacks in Maine (John Gaskill and Geneva Sherrer).
No. 25: Waitressing (Glady McLean); Island Shepherdess (Jenny Cirone); Island Sheep Drive; Lobstering (Casey Stender).
No. 26: Quilting; Salt Marsh Dikes; Wild Blueberry Harvest; French Canadian Musician (Toots Buthot).
No. 27: Beal's Island Storyteller (Avery Kelley); Fencing the Sea (Lobstermen vs. Musselmen); Maine Says No to Nuclear Waste (photographic essay); One Room Island School (Cliff Island); One Room School Teacher (Ruth Jackson Pinkham).
Salt's Field Studies Programs

Producing *Salt* Magazine from a fishing village in Maine, participants learn to interview, write, edit, research, report, photograph, and design as sensitive professionals of the future. They combine their academic interests—journalism, history, English, folklore, anthropology, sociology, photography or art—with the practical tasks of publication.

**SEMESTER PROGRAMS**

Semester programs are offered in the fall and summer (no spring semester). The semester programs are designed for advanced level college students who have chosen a major and wish to test their interests and build their skills in the field. Students take four courses in the summer, earning 12 credits. They take five courses in the fall, earning 15 credits. The summer semester of 1987 is from June 17 through August 7. Fall semester of 1987 is from September 14 through December 12. Credits awarded by the University of Maine System and cooperating colleges and universities.

**JULY PROGRAM**

This four week program, from July 8 through August 1, is designed for teachers, graduate students and advanced students who wish to engage in independent field research, practice oral history techniques and/or learn publication skills. Six upper division credits may be earned from the University of Southern Maine (ARS 493).

**FALL FIELD PROGRAM**

Designed for part time or commuter students who wish to engage in field studies, the program begins September 14 and closes December 12. Students combine independent field research with one of the interpretive skills (either photographic documentation or writing/editing for publication). Six upper division credits may be earned from the University of Southern Maine (ARS 493).

**COURSES ARE INTERRELATED AND COMBINE PRACTICE AND THEORY.** They add to and draw strength from each other.

**THE ORAL INTERVIEW**

Training and experience in interviewing and collecting original materials in the field. Designed to prepare students to gather the materials they will use in "Topic in Research" and "Independent Research." How to conduct an interview, finding contacts, mastering recording equipment, transcribing and archiving, as well as intensive practice and critiques.

**TOPIC IN RESEARCH**

Applying research techniques and analysis to a specific subject or problem. Students and faculty engage together in a research topic, producing a body of original material that serves as the basis for published work.

Maine: Myth and Reality is the topic for the fall of 1986 directed by Professor David C. Smith, historian, of the University of Maine at Orono. Topics for the summer and fall semesters of 1987 will be announced in the 1987 brochures and the spring issue of *Salt* Magazine.

**INDEPENDENT RESEARCH**

Original field research by participants, advised by Salt's faculty. Topics are as broad ranging as the culture. The course must be taken in conjunction with one of the interpretive skills courses and must culminate in a finished article or photographic documentary body of work.

**INTERPRETIVE SKILLS:**

1. Writing and Editing for Publication
2. Photographic Documentation

Participants are expected to master needed skills and theory toward the development of a significant portfolio of work, along with a finished, published article or a body of finished publishable prints as a culmination of their field research work.

3. Publications

Learning to publish *Salt* Magazine. Content, design, page mechanics, typesetting, printing, deadlines, circulation. Taught by Salt's staff.

**ADMISSION AND FEES**

Admission to all programs is based upon demonstrated interests, ability and background experience and education. For further information about the programs call 207-967-3311 or write Salt Center for Field Studies, P.O. Box 1400, Kennebunkport, Maine 04046.

A scholarship fund for Maine students to attend the semester program and shorter programs has been established by the Betterment Fund. To qualify, students must be Maine residents in need of financial assistance. Matriculated students in the University of Maine system are eligible for reduced tuitions equal to university tuitions. Non-Maine residents may apply for financial aid to the programs.
CONGRATULATIONS
TO
DAVID C. SMITH
VISITING PROFESSOR
AT SALT
AUTUMN, 1986
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
ON
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