FLEA Markets are as Maine as pine trees and lobsters. What's a flea?

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Cover Photograph: Tonee Harbert
Maine's Boatbuilding Tradition

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774-7338
1030 Congress Street, Portland

Western Maine Graphics
PRINTING

P.O. Box 153, Norway, Maine 04268
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FAX (207) 743-5061

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A NOTE ON PRODUCTION

Salt is typeset in 10 point ITC Galliard ® from the Adobe Type Library with 2 point leading. Type output is by G & G Laser Typesetting in Portland on a Linotronic 100. Interior page stock is 70 pound Mead Moistire. Cover stock is 80 pound Warren Lustro Offset Enamel. Issue Number 36 was printed and stitched by Western Maine Graphics, Oxford.

SALT, NUMBER 36
(Volume IX, Number 4), August, 1989.
ISSN 0-160-7537.
Salt is produced jointly by college students and professionals as part of a cultural and educational project of the non-profit corporation, Salt, Inc., 19 Pine Street, P.O. Box 4077, Station A, Portland, ME 04101. Established in 1973. Salt also maintains an archives of approximately 1,200 hours of tape recorded interviews, their accompanying transcripts, and well over 100,000 photographic negatives. Second class mailing paid at Kennebunkport, Maine.

Individual subscription: $12.00 per year (4 issues). Library subscription: $18.00. Membership dues: $30.00 per year and includes a subscription to Salt Magazine. Postmaster: Send address corrections to Salt Magazine, P.O. Box 4077, Station A, Portland, ME 04101. Contents © Salt, Inc., 1989.
Our list comes entirely from unassigned and unattributed reviews. We wouldn't pay a nickel for any of them. And though it was suggested, with merit, we’ve resisted mentioning Burger Kings. This is an informal guide to places where locals feel comfortable enough to sit, eat and talk and not have to worry about looking right, eating right or their wallet. We reply on suggestions from readers. We welcome others. ‘Tell us about the place, what goes on and how it came to be.

ALFRED
Leedy’s. Route 202 in the center of town. Everyone takes their mother here on Mother’s Day. It’s mobbed. The two seaters at the counter are different. Avoid the pies. Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 7 A.M.-8:30 P.M.; Friday and Saturday, 7 A.M.-9:30 P.M.; Sunday, 11 A.M.-8:30 P.M.; closed Tuesday.

ANDOVER
Andover Variety Store. “Can’t understand why they call it that because it’s a place to eat,” says Monty Washburn, who tests his fishing stories at the counter every year. “Maybe it’s that you can get a variety to eat.” Addie Fenner opens at 6, closes 13 hours later at 7 and does it all herself at age 70. Coffee and hot chocolate go for 25 cents. Ham, eggs, toast and coffee cost $1.50. There’s one lunch special every day.

BIDDEFORD
Christo’s. 66 Alfred Road. Can you believe it? After all these years as the Colonial Hut in downtown, milltown Biddeford, the restaurant owners have joined the “ethnic” restaurant bandwagon. We understand their children are the culprits. Christo’s is the name of the husband-wife team. You’re waiting for Pat’s (the wife-owner) name to be given equal space. Other than the change of name, the building is the same. What’s different is the expansion of the restaurant’s trademark of Greek food. Pat and Roger are still cranking it out. Try their homemade spinach pie. The Franco-American club Richeleau still meets here weekly. Hours: 8 A.M.-10 P.M. every day except Saturday when open until 11 P.M.

BINGHAM
Thompson’s Restaurant. In the center of town on Route 201. The kind of town on Route 201 where people still talk about the deer that broke through the front plate glass window 20 years ago and ran into the men’s room sending the occupants out with their trousers down. Hours: 5:30 A.M.-8:30 P.M. every day of the week.

BRUNSWICK
Miss Brunswick Diner. 101 Pleasant Street. Fourteen (10 + 4) stools front a long and short counter. Also several booths. Daily specials listed on board. Mexican food offered. A Budweiser beer costs $1.25. Placemat is a puzzle of finding presidents/vice-presidents’ names from a maze of letters the shape of a U.S. map. People in three booths were heavily into it. Hours: 4:30 A.M. 9 P.M. Sunday through Thursday; 24 hours Friday and Saturday. Early Bird Special: 4:30-8:30 A.M., 2 eggs, toast and hominy, $1.25. Dinner listings available from 11 A.M. to 9 P.M.

CAMDEN
[New Listing] Marriner’s Restaurant. 35 Main Street. We’re in the heart of Camden. It ain’t exactly positioning itself for the windjammer crowd. Signs in the window attest to this. Signs such as, “The Last Local Luncheonette,” “Not Fancy, Just Fresh, Fast and Friendly,” and “Down Home, Down East No Fries, No Quiche.” Two large eggs, toast, juice, coffee, $3.35; clams, $7.25. Special: Early Bird Breakfast and Daily Dinner. Open, 6 A.M. to about 2 P.M., Monday through Saturday.

CAPE NEDDICK

EAST NEWPORT
[New Listing] Log Cabin Diner. Old Bangor Road.Began as a tiny take out stand in 1946, the diner now boasts three generations of owners. The crackers and cheese are still the greatest. The thick pies with thick topping of whipped cream are still the greatest. Counter area has the closest feel to the old Helen’s. Menu: breakfast 6 A.M.-11 A.M.; lunch 12 noon-4 P.M.; dinner 6 P.M.-10 P.M. every day of the week except Sunday when open at 7 A.M. Bar is open until 1 A.M.

LEUCER
Tip’s Lunch. Say it isn’t so, but Tip’s has changed hands. The restaurant and name are still the same, though. On the land side of Water Street run next to the Lubeck Narrows. Straight food. Put your feet on a chair and you’ll be told to remove them. Just as you should be. Counter stools and tables. Hours: 5:30 A.M.-6:30 P.M. every day except Sunday when it’s closed.

MACHIAS
Helen’s Restaurant. Unfortunately, now the New Helen’s just north of the center of town on Route 1. Nothing like the great old Helen’s. But the thick pies with thick topping of whipped cream are still the greatest. Counter area has closest feel to the old Helen’s.

MILBRIDGE
The Red Barn. Route 1 in the center of town. Straight food and a large salad bar. Has a wishing well out front where coins are tossed in. Eat blueberry pancakes in wild blueberry barners’ country.

ORONO
[New Listing] C.D. “Pat” Farnsworth’s Cafe. 11 Mill Street. Established in 1931, then selling ice cream and confections. Later became a restaurant, adding pizza to its menu in 1953. Now Pat’s Pizza chains are dotted throughout the state. This, however, is the original, and littled changed since the ’50s. Tin ceilings, a long bar with worn formica counter, high red stools, a
WOODEN CIGAR CASE

During the war, wooden cigar cases were used to store and transport valuable documents and other treasures. These cases were often kept in special rooms or vaults for added protection. Now, they are often considered antiques and are sought after by collectors.

SACO

The Plaza. Main Street. Not to be fooled by the fancy new front. The Plaza is a great old girl in a new hat. The steam that clouds the windows on a winter day comes from the same 50-year-old coffee and water urns that began belching out strong black coffee in 1936. Wooden booths and teak wall paneling are also that vintage. Mashed potatoes, meatloaf and real gravy from a can in the two dollar range.

SEBAGO LAKE

[New Listing: Galli's Variety/Cafe. Inter-Section of Routes 35 and 114. $1.69 breakfasts 6 A.M. - 11:00. Lunch and dinner 11 A.M. - 9 P.M. Twenty five cent coffee all day long. Real food for real men. Local fishing stories exchanged daily; both fact and fiction.]

It's 7:00 one recent morning and a portly, bearded man walks in wearing an orange cap, baggy blue trousers and a black and red checkered jacket. He smiles broadly as he rounds the corner to find his friend Walter mixing with some locals over coffee.

"Hey, how are ya Walt," he says.

"Not too bad, Ben. I'd be better if this rain wouldn't let up. What've you been up to anyway?"

"Took my youngest out on the lake last week and it was a crowed Sunday brunch," says one of our Steve's. If you like brunch. Or whenever. A single pancake fills a plate and you. "Wacky decorations," Steve adds. Usually requires patience for tables to clear. Good Bach and jazz music. If that's your music.

Joe Philippi's Ye Olde Pancake Shoppe.


PORTLAND


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CONTRIBUTORS

THIS ISSUE is what the editors around Salt refer to as “eclectic.” That translates unrelated articles. The issue demonstrates that a good story is a good story and can stand alone, without any help from what surrounds it.

Each of the three major stories in the issue were gathered as part of a larger project. The story about Jamaican apple pickers was part of a fall project to collect materials about ethnic groups in Maine. Much of this material will be published in a special issue of Salt next November, but there was too much for one issue. What to publish separately? Lisa Rathke’s story about the offshore apple pickers shows us a migrant group living between two cultures. But it also stands alone as a statement about work and about life.

The other two major stories were gathered as part of a special research project last summer on the interaction of folk or regional culture with popular or non regional culture. The bulk of that was published as a special issue of Salt (Number 35). Two were not. Edite Pedrosa’s story about flea markets is indeed quintessential Maine regional or folk culture. But it also tells us how flea markets work and why people are drawn to them. Harry Brown’s study of Peaks Island shows the metamorphosis of an island lying in the wake of the larger urban culture of Portland. But it is also a story about a place which piques our curiosity. Thus we have this issue. Eclectic.

HARRY BROWN, who wrote the Peaks Island story, took part in the 1988 Summer Program at Salt prior to his final year at Friends World College in New York City. He represents something of a link between the past and the present at Salt. An older brother of his took part in Salt activities when it was at the high school level at Kennebunk High School in the 1970s. Harry grew up right around the corner from Salt in Kennebunk, Maine. He spent much of his final year of college in Africa and Asia.

JIM DANIELS took the photographs of flea markets. He is a freelance photojournalist living in Yarmouth, Maine. He worked for several years with the Providence Journal. An exhibit of his photographic work in South America entitled, “Ninos se venden (Children for sale, Dreams for sale),” was held earlier this year at the Visual Arts Center at Bowdoin College. He is no stranger to Salt. Not only has he lectured to students, but he has contributed photography to earlier issues of Salt Magazine as well.

TONEE HARBERT last fall undertook an extended photographic look at Jamaican apple pickers in Maine. The results form the photographic center section in this issue and accompany the written story. He also shot much of the photography of Peaks Island. Toneye came to Maine as the winner of Salt’s photographic fellowship last fall. This issue shows his first major work from this period. More will appear in future issues. Originally from Oregon, he holds a degree in photojournalism from Ohio University. He now lives and works in Portland, Maine.

EDITE PEDROSA wrote and researched the article on flea market culture. An Ada Comstock scholar at Smith College, Edite grew up within the Portuguese-American community of Peabody, Massachusetts. She attended the 1988 Summer Program at Salt. Using some of the skills she learned during the Program, Edite is tape recording interviews with members of her own family still living in her native Portugal.

LISA RATHKE researched and wrote the article on the Jamaican apple pickers. She participated in the 1988 Fall Semester Program at Salt, after graduation from Colby College and a year of work in Portland. After leaving Salt, she headed west to Vermont where she nows works as a reporter for The Mountain Villager in Jericho, north of Burlington.

DAVE READ contributed photography to the Peaks Island story. He grew up in Bingham. He teaches photography at the University of Nebraska, where he is a professor in the Art Department. In the fall of 1988, he began a year’s leave of absence to photograph in Maine. His photographs will become part of a book that he describes as “about the Maine that exists in my memories.” He taught a photography course at Salt during the 1988 Fall Semester Program.
“PAST FEW YEARS I’VE WORKED HERE AT THE LANDFILL, I’VE NEVER SEEN A SALT MAGAZINE IN THERE. EVEN WHEN I WORKED IN THE RECYCLING CENTER—NEVER SEEN A SALT MAGAZINE COME THROUGH THERE.”

NATHAN GALLANT
SANITATION WORKER
TOWN OF FALMOUTH
LANDFILL AND RECYCLING CENTER

SALT is a KEEPER. Nobody, but nobody throws it away. Sometimes it gets stolen—er, borrowed—and sometimes those center sections full of tremendous photographs end up on somebody’s wall. But chucked in the trash can. NEVER!

Anybody who reads Salt can tell you why. Salt collects stories and photographs about Maine people that you’ll never find in any of those magazines that go to the recycling center. Stories that last. Stories about real people like you. People who tell it like it is, the good and the bad, the funny and the sad, the stuff that makes them see red, the things that are important to them.

So that’s why Salt goes from hand to hand and never goes to the dump. On the average, every copy is read by four to five people. One copy was read by a whole shipload of Merchant Marines!

Now if you don’t mind waiting your turn, you’ll find out what others already know. Salt is habit forming. And it’s the kind of magazine you keep around forever. Some people have every issue since we started publishing in 1974.

If you DO mind waiting your turn to read Salt, there’s an easy solution. Subscribe and get your own copy. Twelve dollars gets you four issues. It’s as easy as filling out the order form enclosed in this magazine, or call Tim at 207-967-3311.

Subscribe to Salt and help solve Maine’s growing trash disposal problem. Because nobody EVER throws Salt in the dump.
LETTERS

We start a new feature page this issue with a regular Letters to the Editor section. Past letters have been published as part of the View from Pier Road, but we have been getting so much reader response of late that the letters deserve a place of their own. We welcome your comments, advice and criticism and invite you to interact with us and other readers in these columns.

ON PAUL BUNYAN AND POP CULTURE

"Last week we received at the Bangor Daily News the latest edition of Salt and it was worth the wait. Brett Jenks interviewed me last summer on Paul Bunyan and after reading his terrific feature I can see how much work he put into it. I laughed frequently while reading his candid comments on Paul and 'other people' in Bangor. Please encourage him to write more. Several of us at the News especially liked the color graphic of the Bunyan statue and the inside black and whites."

Dick Shaw, Bangor

"I am very much pleased with the work of Brett Jenks and Tonee Harbert. It was most pleasant getting to know them. I am very flattered. Thank you all."

Henry P. Van DeBogert, Bangor

RURAL POVERTY

"Bravo! Fantastic edition. We need to be reminded. We need CONSTANTLY to be reminded. I would like to send Kristin Myers a little note of encouragement. Would you please forward it to her for me?" Priscilla Skerry, Kennebunk Student Osteopath University of New England

"I am relieved. Issue number 34 was realistic and it was good and I am very, very proud of you. This is profound. This is real. Thank you. You tried so hard and you really did it.

I remember going to the one room school. I skipped a grade there, because I could READ. But when I was 12 years old I could not read anymore and that lasted for more than a score of years. I actually became an illiterate like all my friends and neighbors.

When I was in the middle of the fourth grade, we all got on a yellow bus and left school behind. And then I began to notice the dirt embedded between my fingers. Filth. And I remember being introduced to shampoo during that same year, from rich city people who moved into our neighborhood. They didn't stay long, though.

"My parents are not poor now and I am proud of them for that, because they have lifted themselves up from what we had to suffer when we were children. But we always had a cow and twelve hens. The garden vegetables never lasted through the winter, but they were wonderful in the summer. The well water never lasted through the summer, but it seemed okay in the winter.

"My mother would drive the car to the Augusta Fire Station once a day for water for the cow, with milk cans and pails and any container she could find, so the cow could have water. We came next, and the cleaning never came at all. Certainly we could never take a bath or shampoo our hair or wash the floor.

Now I can read. Perhaps I should write the book that my eldest son wishes I would write. Maybe someday I will. Meanwhile I am content to read what you are writing and to admire Carolyn Chute. Keep up the good work."

Deborah Caldwell Pendleton, Boston

"I am amazed and pleased with the professionalism of your students. This semester I taught Contemporary Rural Problems to a group of students who had little concern or understanding of the social aspect of being low income in a rural area. Some of them got the message during the semester and did outstanding term papers. Several were similar to your 'Piecing Together a Year'."

Lou Ploch, University of Maine at Orono

"I do indeed remember visiting you in Kennebunkport two years ago and talking about poverty. It now causes me no end of delight to see what you have made of that brief discussion. I am very, very pleased by the result. Salt number 34 is precisely what Maine needs at this time, not to mention Kennebunkport! I hope that it will be widely read and taken to heart."

Richard Barringer, University of Southern Maine
In that year, colonists built their first ocean-going vessel. Christened the *Virginia of Sagadahock*, it sailed from a little shipyard just twelve miles down river from the present site of the Bath Iron Works. Since its founding in 1884, Bath Iron Works has added many "firsts" to Maine's catalogue of maritime achievements. And through the years, we've made the hallmark "Bath-built" a synonym for shipbuilding excellence.

In the years to come, we will build ships in Bath and repair others in Portland. And each ship will carry a part of Maine's proud maritime heritage to the oceans of the world.

Thanks, Maine, for a great shipbuilding tradition.

*A history of Bath Iron Works is on exhibit at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.*
This is the last "View from Pier Road" column. The reason is simple. By early September, Salt will have completed its relocation—the fourth in our 16 year history—away from this road in Cape Porpoise.

In 1973, when Salt began, we operated out of Pam Wood's classroom at Kennebunk High School and sometimes the back barn of her house. Five years later, in 1978, we purchased and moved into the Baum Boatyard in Lower Village, Kennebunk. Beginning in 1982, for two years, we rented the Pinkham store building on Pier Road in the center of Cape Porpoise—hence the name of this column. In the late winter of 1984, we moved again. This time, a few hundred feet down the road into the James Freeman house that we'd bought early that New Year's Eve. By the time of our latest move, we will have been there almost five years.

The latest move will be different. We won't end up yet again in yet another spot within the Kennebunks. This time, we'll have moved to a three story brick townhouse built in 1849—Number 19 Pine Street in the heart of Portland, just off of Longfellow Square. In a lot of ways it has the comfortable old shoe feel of the Freeman house that we've enjoyed kicking around in so much. We've been planning the move for nearly two years.

In one sense, an end to an era has come for Salt. No longer will we be as closely tied to the communities where we began and where so much of our earliest material was gathered. Our past will be less directly visible, less directly felt. Fewer of our students will drive by our offices each day. We will see the people we interviewed first less often.

In another sense, though, our latest move merely marks one more step in the direction Salt has pursued for the past decade. Since 1980, we have operated on the college undergraduate level. Our students have come from outside of the Kennebunks—from other parts of Maine and the United States. For the last ten years, our magazine has covered material throughout Maine, not just within the Kennebunks.

Pressures and growth from that chosen direction have led to our latest move. We've needed to be closer to the rest of the state—both physically and connectively (public transportation is entirely lacking in the Kennebunks). We've needed to form closer alliances with colleges within Maine, something we believe will be easier to achieve from Portland. We've needed to be closer to our supply and printing sources, closer to research libraries.

At the same time that Salt has been changing, the Kennebunks have changed as well. Tourism has become a more dominant force. There is less of the old Kennebunks. There are fewer Harvey Bixbys, fewer Maurice Gordons, fewer Reid Chapmans. We don't know that we will find more of them in Portland, but we do think the diversity of people within Portland will continue and that no one economic force will become dominant.

We don't expect Portland to be easy for us. But we will adjust. We have our work cut out for us the next couple of years. Part of which involves putting Salt on firmer long term footing. We expect our location to help in this regard. We're off to a good start. The Betterment Fund of New York has made a very substantial commitment towards the purchase of the Portland building. The Davis Family Foundation of Greater Portland has agreed to help with renovation costs. We have spent the last year beginning to lay the groundwork for this future.

Salt won't change greatly. We'll expand over the next few years, not radically or rapidly, but gradually. Our new building will allow for such growth. We will continue to do what we do best—teaching, documenting, preserving.

We will be at this for a long time to come.
IT'S A STEAMY SUMMER
Sunday at the Montsweag Flea Market in Woolwich, Maine. The field boils with color, people, clutter. Beach umbrellas spouting from cement bases shelter dealers from a sizzling sun. They sit on lawn chairs or in the gaping backs of trucks and vans fanning themselves, drinking iced drinks that soon turn warm.


“What's a flea?”

“Flea's almost anything. Almost anything that's been used and abused and ready for resale.”

Bargain hunters, tourists, local people out for "somethin' to do.”

Bodies move slowly through the thick heat. Eyes dart trying to focus. There is too much to see.
IN THE ICE CREAM SHACK, Norma Thompson Scopino dispenses iced drinks. Hot sweating bodies carry off cold sweating cups. During a momentary lull she folds her arms on the counter and peers out over a teeming field through the gaping eye of her wooden shack. The heat distorts things at a distance. The market is a blur of color and movement. “I love the flea market,” she says.

Twelve years ago Norma was out of a job and wondering what to do for work.

“I was out here on my tractor one day mowin’ the field and a neighbor came up and said, ‘Ya oughta have a flea market out here.’” Norma didn’t know anything about flea markets. She had never even gone to one. But she thought it was a good idea. She started with five tables which she rented out on Saturdays and Sundays.

Today Norma runs the market four days a week between May and October. She has 130 tables set end to end in serpentine fashion on the nearly four acre field out in front of the yellow farm house where she was raised.

The field slopes up toward Route One, the major route to Boothbay Harbor and other seacoast resort areas. During the summer months the traffic is nonstop. Every passing vehicle has a bird’s eye view of the color and hodgepodge of the Montsweag Flea Market. It is considered one of the best run flea markets in the state.

FRIDAY EVENING IN ROCKLAND, Sturgis Mahoney is tending customers at Tower Island Collectibles, the shop he owns with his cousin. It is time to begin thinking about the coming day at Montsweag.

“I go for the head count. The more people you get, the more chance you have to sell something. I get more people there inside of three hours than I get here in a week.

Sturgis is tall and lean. His direct blue eyes scan the shop. What to load? The big plastic boxes of collectible postcards are a must. But what other items will attract a buyer’s eye?

“It’s really stupid because I got all week to get ready for Saturday and Sunday at Montsweag. I say to myself, ‘Why do I do this? Why do I keep putting this off?’ I think one of the reasons is because I’ve found that the items I pick, when I pick ’em in a hurry, turn out to sell better. You know. I pick ’em on impulse. And people buy on that impulse.”

Sturgis adjusts his blue cap. He moves slowly around the shop collecting dollar items into a cardboard box. A clear glass wall lamp. A tin cup. A milky white bud vase. There is a slight limp to his long left leg.

“I always set up a dollar table on Saturday. The bargain hunters are out.”

He wraps breakable items in paper for protection, loads boxes into the car. It is usually ten or eleven o’clock before Sturgis makes the ride to his lakeside cottage. On the way he wonders about what he has forgotten to pack.

At home he grabs a sandwich and glass of cold wine.

“Jeez, I should’ve taken that dish with me . . . and why didn’t I pack that box of books?” The blood pressure is up a few points. He goes to bed on that.

He’s up at a quarter to five in the morning to make the forty mile drive to Montsweag. Some mornings he wonders why he’s doing it. Some mornings he longs for that extra half hour of sleep. He asks himself, “What’s a half an hour gonna be down there?” But he knows the answer.

“A half an hour is gonna be, you’re gonna be that much later settin’ up. The buyers will be in there and you’re gonna miss it. And if you’re stupid enough to miss it, you shouldn’t be doing this.”

So he throws his coffee on, shaves, and takes off down the road. Invariably he swings by the shop and grabs something that has stuck in his mind.

“Once I clear the city, a whole transition goes in place. I am at peace and I am happy because I’m going down there and I’m going to beat them suckers.”

Sturgis laughs. He goes on to talk of his morning commute as a meditative experience.

“I’ve come across the Wiscasset bridge, with the sun just up high enough to clear the trees on this side of the river, and you have never seen anything as pretty as the town of Wiscasset looking across that bridge. The church steeples come out. There’s a house that’s got a lot of red on it off to the right. And you can’t ask for anything more beautiful.
“And once in a while before you get to the island there’s some worm diggers out there. Two weeks ago I noticed the pond lilies. You know. A little vapor lifting off the bog. And these white flowers had just opened. And it’s fantastic. It’s beautiful. I’ve seen deer. I’ve even seen eagles.”

LACY VEILS OF MIST rise from the field and seem to snag on pine and fir. The sun has yet to clear the tree tops. At six-thirty in the morning, Norma is on the field. She is a short, neat woman of calm demeanor. On her face is an ever-present, subtle smile. Over her jeans she wears a three pocketed apron. A portable phone hangs on her hip. One hundred and thirty barren tables spread before her—expectant.

Loaded vans, trucks and station wagons begin to arrive. The Montsweag dealers are pulling in. Norma takes her list out of her apron pocket. She is ready. Assisted by her husband, Leo, she greets and directs every one of her dealer customers. The ring of her portable phone follows her about the field as she takes calls about tables and weather conditions.

Soon Montsweag is transformed. Vehicles of every size and description form colorful corridors on the grassy field. Dealers greet each other. Speculate on the day.

“Mornin’.”
“Looks like rain.”
“Oh, it may clear up.”

They pull out crates and boxes. Set up their wares. Wooden duck decoys, Cobalt blue glass. Stamp albums.

About ninety percent of their treasure is sold to antique shop owners, collectors and other dealers on the field. Only ten percent is sold to “retailers,” the tourists and local people who come to the market on weekends as a form of recreation.

Early mornings, with ninety percent of their customers arriving on the field, they have to hustle to get their merchandise displayed.

“The dealers are there and they want to see everything and they can’t fool around. They can’t wait. And really, it’s part of a courtesy for them to have things out.” Ken Hallowell is a big man, heavy set. Words stream from him like water from a liberated fire hydrant. He drives from Windsor with his wife, Cathy, and her daughter, Sandy, four days a week to set up at Montsweag.

Rain or shine, dealers and collectors converge on Montsweag field. Unlike the “retailers” who stroll leisurely through the market, trying to focus, buying little, dealers scurry through with swift purposeful strides. They have no trouble focussing.

They can spot a coveted item from across the field. Beeline for it. If the buying goes well, dealers make multiple trips to their cars with the morning’s finds. Like purposeful ants carrying food back to anthills.

KEN HALLOWELL SETS OUT weathered wooden clothes dryers. Cathy drapes them with old linen and patchwork quilts.

“I’m superstitious,” Ken declares, feigning embarrassment. “I kiss Sandy and I kiss Cathy before we make any sales. And, it’s the blue pen, that’s the lucky pen. We use that pen, we sell well.” Ken laughs at himself. “Isn’t it weird?” he asks through his laughter.

“And like the old Jewish merchants did, I believe that the first person that comes to you... a serious buyer... you must sell to that person. Even if it means selling at a loss. So the first person that comes to me and picks something up, they buy it. If they don’t, I’m bummed out all day.”

“So it’s good to be your first customer,” declares a woman who has overheard Ken’s confessions.

“Right, I can’t believe I’m saying this,” his laughter returns. “So I sell that and I smile. Then I get the book out. Write that down. And I have Cathy write the date. Then we start.”

A NEW BEIGE VAN pulls onto the field, drives slowly past the booths already set up, backs in at tables 15 and 16B. People flock to the van before the driver has had a chance to alight. It’s Carol Kelley just in from Belfast where she has a shop. Carol has a reputation in the flea market culture.

“She started out with lawn sales and got to this point. Husband runs around to the auctions and buys. Carol is a seller. And she’ll sell short. And people know

Norma Thompson runs the Montsweag
Flea Market in Woolwich four days a week between May and October. She has 130 tables set end to end in serpentine fashion on the nearly four acre field out in front of the yellow farm house where she was raised.
"Sturgis Mahoney is a regular at Carol's van. "I've bought of'n 'er."

"Carol is very knowledgeable. She works hard at what she does." Bob Jones is a dealer up from Pennsylvania.

"She's got a shop somewhere. I'd like to find it and go up there and spend a few hours with her pickin' some things."

Carol Kelley eases out from behind the wheel, walks slowly round the van calling out greetings to the awaiting flock, slides open the door. People begin pulling out merchandise. They break from the crowd with treasures in hand. Pull out magnifying glasses for close inspection. Carol weaves slowly among them setting things out on the table. Piles of old magazines. Clocks. Odd pieces of china.

Ken Hallowell approaches the table under a darkening sky. He leans over a cigar box filled with jewelry
and old political pins. His index finger works the box. He pulls out pieces and displays them on the upturned lid.

“Carol, what do you want for this box?”
“The whole thing?”
“Ya, the whole thing.”
Carol puffs on her cigarette. Thinks for a second. “I gotta get thirty dollars for all of it.”
“All right, I’ll see the boss.”

“There’s some nice stuff in there.” Like her movements, Carol’s words come slow and easy.
She leans against a nearby car smoking a cigarette. One hand is stuffed into the pocket of her green army jacket. Her long graying hair flows from under a corduroy cap. Through big red rimmed glasses she watches the crowd of dealers work her stuff.

“Got some trade cards for ya, Norm,” she calls out to Norman Coad, who is sitting on the open back of his truck.

Norm is “nearly seventy” years old. An artist and cabinet maker who built houses for over thirty years. His weathered skin and long white hair and beard give him a seafaring look. But he’s “never been on the sea a day in my life.” Norm wears a string tie with a huge silver and turquoise clasp. He has turquoise rings on every finger. His passion is collecting trade cards, small cards that were inserted by manufacturers into the packaging of their products between 1850 and the early 1900s.

“I like ’em for the artwork. The artwork is beautiful. And I got an idea that someday they’ll be worth a lot of money. They’re hard to find now. Course I probably have most of ’em. I’m the only darned fool who collects ’em.”

When Carol’s crowd thins, Norm goes over to check out her trade cards. She hands him a dilapidated scrapbook. He looks through it. Pasted on the crumbling pages are pieces of old valentines and trade cards for Stickney’s Mustard, W. W. Burdett & Company Dry Goods, Home Sewing Machine. A little boy in top hat and tails rides a rocking horse. Another perches atop a 19th century bicycle. A tiny girl in plaids dances a Scottish jig. Norm runs his beringed fingers lightly over the colorful prints. Many of the cards are in good condition.

“How much do you want for it, Carol?”
“Oh, fifteen dollars.”
Norm closes the album and sets it in the van.
“Well, if I make some money today, I’ll come for it. I haven’t made a cent yet.”

Norman Burt used to work at the dump. He started “pickin’ up stuff and more stuff and sellin’ it.” Now he gets his stuff from yard sales and carts it to Montsweag on the weekends.

“I love it because you meet interestin’ people. It’s a lot of fun and you meet a lot of good people. There’s a lot of good people in this world.”

He leans back slightly to support his massive belly. He easily weighs 300 pounds. Perched on top of his head is a dark cap. Small eyes peer out from the center of a round face made rounder by a mass of scraggly beard. Norman is from Poland, Maine.
"I'm a Polish Mainer, I guess."

"How much is this fifty cent one?" Red Footman, a dealer from across the way, picks up a bronze plaque from the table. Norman looks at him and bursts into laughter.

"They pick up a ten dollar item and they say how much is the fifty cent one. See? That's the fun part."

Norman is asking five dollars for the Masonic plaque. Red holds it in his hand with an air of indifference. He puts it down and looks at other items on Norman's table. Picks it up again. Goes around behind the table and sits next to Norman on the tailgate of the station wagon.

"You know I can't afford that." Red is a Mason. He collects the plaques. He and his wife Ardis are full time dealers who specialize in silver and gold.

Norman's response is laughter.

"It's like this," Red continues. "I like it. But what are you going to do with it?" He tries to belittle the plaque—an old bargaining trick.

"Where are you goin' to put it?" Red peers from under the brim of the camouflage cap that covers his red hair. "You can't put it on your house. You can't put it on your car."

"Sure, put it on your car. Why can't you put it on your car?" Norman gets up to demonstrate how Red can attach the plaque to the back of his car. "Come on, come on," he wheedles. "Break down and spend five dollars."

Red makes himself unconvinced. He scratches his stomach and looks around the market through dark plastic inserts on his glasses. Norman gazes at him expectantly.

"Well I gotta get back," he says after a period of silence. Slowly he gets up, slapping the plaque conspicuously on the palm of his hand. "Gotta get back."

Norman ignores him. Talks to other customers at the table.

"Well," Red says theatrically, "I have to put this back."

"Get outta' here," says Norman with feigned disgust. "Have to put that back, Rockefeller."

"Don't know how you'd use it," Red slaps the plaque on the table. He slips the plaque under another item on the table so that it is out of sight. "If you don't sell it before the day's over, I'll come back."

"Nobody can see it like that." Norman shakes with laughter as he points to the place where the plaque is hidden. Red hasn't cracked a smile throughout this exchange. He turns and walks slowly back toward his own table, leaving Norman shaking his head.

THE RAIN COMES. Dealers scramble to cover their tables with tarps and pieces of plastic. Carol Kelley's demeanor and pace never change. She makes a series of slow migrations between the table and van. Gets paper goods and other damageables under cover. The rest is left to the weather.

"The rain is washin' em for me." She grins.

Carol sits on the back bumper of her van leisurely licking an ice cream cone. As raindrops thicken, she moves to the back of Norm Coad's truck. The open rear window of the cap provides a little canopy. Norm's legs protrude out of maroon polyester shorts and cross at the ankles. His right arm is folded across his chest, providing an elbow rest for the left one, which is upraised and smoking. Carol continues licking her cone. Norm puffs on his menthol cigarette. Like two graying children, they sit side by side, chatting, surveying the soggy market.

The field is devoid of all but the most serious shoppers. Folks visit each other, talk shop, share stories. Norma's ice cream shack is a popular place to gather. It has a little roof overhang. Don's tent, an expanse of blue vinyl stretched over aluminum piping, is another. It is large enough to shelter three tables and lots of people. The vinyl roof over Joe and Cathy's tool stand can accommodate a crowd.

During these rain spells one can ingest flea market lore in concentrated doses. It only takes one flick of reminiscence to spark the telling. Stories flare up and fly.

"REMEMBER THAT GUY set up in here one season sellin' bird houses? He had 'em on poles. One he had on a twenty foot pole."

"It was nestin' season. And the barn swallows would come in and they'd make nests in 'em. He'd set up in the mornin' and all day long they'd work on 'em and then he'd pack 'em up at night."
“Poor swallows were desperate.”
“One day one swallow chased him as he drove out. Probably had built the nest and probably laid the first egg in there. There’s the guy drivin’ his truck out. And there’s the swallow chasin’ him down the road.”

“Once I sold an old burned up cigar. It was in a little box. And it had a little note in there said, ‘This was saved in a fire back in 1812.’ Or somethin’ like that. They’d had it in a safe all them years. I thought, why’s anyone savin’ that, you know. I think I got twenty dollars for it.

“They thought it was a real relic, I guess. I paid a couple of dollars for the box lot and there was all kinds of stuff in it. This was in the bottom. Someone had thrown it in there. Had a big box of bones and skulls, too. Same guys bought the cigar bought them, too.”

“I say to myself, “Why do I do this? Why do I keep putting this off?” I think one of the reasons is because I’ve found that the items I pick, when I pick ‘em in a hurry, turn out to sell better. You know. I pick ‘em on impulse. And people buy on that impulse.”

“Funniest thing I ever sold . . . I went to this antique show and I had this old, old doll. It was dated in the 1800s somewhere. The head was off it and the body was . . . filled with straw. The legs were off and the arms were off, and they had each thing in a separate bag.

“I put it out in a box. And this lady next to me, she says, ‘Aw, that terrible lookin’ thing,’ she says. ‘I wish it I didn’t have to sit beside someone’s got somethin’ like that on the table.’”

“Well it is an antique,” I says. ‘It’s dated.’”

“I know, but,’ she says, ‘how do you dare to bring somethin’ like that to an antique show?’”

“Well,’ I says, ‘you have these doll collectors,’ I says. ‘You’d be surprised what some of them’ll buy. Don’t let it bother you,’ I says. ‘I’ll cover it over if it bothers you that much.’”

“Well about an hour later I said, ‘Do you suppose you could watch over my table while I run to the bathroom?’ She said, ‘Sure.’ So anyway, I come back from the bathroom and she says, ‘Oh,’ she says, ‘you know something? A lady was here and she wanted to buy that terrible doll.’”

“I says, ‘Really? Did you sell it to ‘er.’”

“No,’ she says. ‘I wouldn’t pick that up . . . she’s comin’ back.’ So she come back and she says, ‘How much you want for that doll there?’ And I said, ‘Oh, I don’t know. Seventy-five bucks.’

“I’ll take it,’ she says. And that woman almost had a heart attack. ‘Oh my god,’ she says. ‘Here I have all this beautiful stuff on my table and you got those old lookin’ things. Seventy-five dollars!’”

“She had all this real expensive stuff on ‘er table. She made a mistake, though. She put a sign on the table says, ‘Do not touch anything on this table unless you intend to buy it.’ Of course no one did touch anything. No one bought anything.”

“You DON’T KNOW ELMER? Elmer’s Barn up to Coopers Mills?” Ken Hallowell is incredulous. “Aw you gotta meet Elmer. He’s crazy. Has a big barn filled to the top with stuff. He sells anything. Weird stuff.”

“Ya, Elmer is pretty crazy,” Cathy agrees.

“They thought it was a real relic, I guess. I paid a couple of dollars for the box lot and there was all kinds of stuff in it. This was in the bottom. Someone had thrown it in there. Had a big box of bones and skulls, too. Same guys bought the cigar bought them, too.”

“Elmer sells cow skulls. Thirty-five for the good ones. Eight dollars for the poor ones. He says, ‘Never sold a poor one.”

Elmer sells cow skulls by the hundreds. They are strewn about on the furniture and other merchandise throughout the barn. And, those visitors to the barn who persevere through room after endless room of dusty treasure, following hand scrawled signs that declare "more upstairs," up rickety flights of steps, will face an awesome sight. A massive mound of bones—cow skulls and pelvises—heaped in one corner of the top floor.

“I handle most of the skulls anywhere . . . people
draw 'em, use 'em for science projects." Elmer describes his bone sales tactics when he is at a market.

"I have a pile of skulls here," Elmer points to a place on the floor slightly left of his shoes. "One here," he makes another imaginary pile in front of him. "One here," another, to his right. "Three piles of skulls and this $35, this $15 and that $8. And a woman comes up and she says, 'How much are these skulls?'" Elmer repeats, calling out the prices for the imaginary piles.

"The $35 ones are the same as the $8 ones, you know what I mean? But they always buy the $35 ones, he pauses, leans forward, lowers his voice, 'cause they're better."

Elmer apologizes for the "small" pile which consists of about a hundred skulls. He's sold a lot of the bones recently. He aims to get more.

"I have a guy in Nova Scotia brings me a lot of bones. And I have all the bottle diggers and hunters and all them people haulin' it to me. I'm going to Texas, I think, this year to pick up a load of skulls. Ya, they say out there you can find a lot. Here, there are so many trees you can't see 'em, you know?"

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TURGIS MAHONEY KNOWS Elmer. "Ya, I dream of the day Elmer will come into my shop and walk around saying I want that, that, that." Sturgis points toward each item. "He did come in one time. Bought every weird thing I had in the place."

"One time down to Brimfield, I owed Elmer a hundred and forty dollars," Ken Hallowell recalls, "so I ran into him over to the cookhouse. I says, 'Hey, Elmer, I'll go over to your table later. Sell me somethin' worthless for a hundred and forty dollars.' You know, freak those people out."

"So I go over later. The entourage is all around. I see Elmer give me the eye on a box of caps. Old caps from the old cap pistols, you know?"

"'Hey, Elmer, how much you want for the caps?' "Elmer says, 'I can't sell all of 'em. Too hard to come by.'"

"I say I wait 'em all."

"'What do you mean?' he says. 'Them's expensive. Old. The first caps ever made.'"

"So we made a deal of it. People's watchin', you know. I looks over the box."

"'How much you want for the box?'"

"Elmer says, 'Hundred and forty dollars. Wow!' Ken grabs his head. 'They couldn't believe it. Hundred and forty dollars for a box of caps."

"So I says, 'Is that the lowest you can go?"

"He says, 'Ya.'"

"'Okay.' I counts out the money into Elmer's hands." Ken grabs his head again, rolls his eyes. "They couldn't believe it. All the time was just payin' off my debt."

At Montsweag, the pranks and stories are part of the fun. Part of what keeps people interested in the business. Elmer goes to Brimfield more for the community and culture than for the buying and selling.

"It's like homecoming, family reunion, and story tellin' time."

Ken Hallowell paints a similar picture of Montsweag. "You know, it's sort of like a carnival atmosphere. It's fun, it's frivolous and all that. And it's like a fantasy land down here, you know?"

THE SUN IS BEING COY, indecisive. Eyes turn upward to coax it out. Carol mumbles about returning to Belfast to open her shop. Valada Johnson, who has a shop in Damariscotta, stands in the drizzle by Carol's van inspecting a depression glass bowl.

"Don't go, Carol. The sun will be out soon."

The weather forecast had predicted a hot, sunny day. Valada picks up a vase, turns it over to inspect the bottom. Rain water pours out in a torrent, splashing her skirt. Carol and Valada laugh.

"I'm tellin' you, that weather guy. If I saw him on the road, I'd run him down." Norm Coad shakes his white head of hair. He has bad arthritis, aggravated by the dampness. He drove 67 miles from his home and shop in Searsport to be here today.

"Ya, he's always wrong." Norman Burt leans heavily on Norm Coad's still empty table. Shows off the old umbrella he just bought from a neighboring dealer. There isn't a stitch of fabric on it. Just bare metal ribs on a wooden shaft. But the shaft is a beautiful piece of carved wood entwined with a brass snake. He asks for Norm's advice about turning it into a walking stick.

Sharing knowledge and advice is commonplace in flea market culture. Each dealer is a specialist in his or

Elmer Wilson went on a buying trip recently. He drove his pickup truck back to Maine loaded with thousands of dollars worth of antiques. But no cash ever changed hands.
her area. Sturgis Mahoney collects and sells postcards. He knows everything there is to know about them. Nellie Hamilton, a tiny woman with a golden face, knows old toys. On her table are two small metal tractors. A man approaches and looks them over. The paint on them is peeling. They are each marked $125. He walks off. A few minutes later he returns carrying a bag. He pulls out two freshly painted metal toys much like those on Nellie’s table. Holds them out in his outstretched hand.

“I bought these down to Kennebunkport.”

“Reproductions,” Nellie calls out across the table. She can spot them at ten feet.

Norm Coad know ephemera (paper collectibles) like he knows every ache of his arthritic bones. He also deals in silverplate. And he is the historian of Montsweag. He researches everything he sells. Norm once saved another dealer from selling a valuable piece of photography for two dollars. He was the only one on the field who recognized the tiny portrait of a man printed on glass as a rare piece of Ambrotype Photography produced between 1850 and 1870. It is valued at close to $100 minimally.

Success in the business depends on an impressive system of networking that extends well beyond the field. Each dealer is aware of who collects what. During the week when they are picking up merchandise they keep this information in mind. Each dealer can count on regular customers.

“I’ll have my normal people that come and buy from me every time I’m down here,” Ken Hallowell explains. “Like this morning. Mary, nice gal, has an antique shop and I tell Mary, I said, ‘Mary, I don’t have anything new.’ That means new to her, not new in age. So she walks off, says, ‘Thank you.’ Next time I might have something for her and I’ll hold it for her. She knows that.”

Norm Coad recently bought a bunch of trade cards that survived the great Bangor fire of 1911.

“I got a friend who’s a picker. Doesn’t own a shop. Just goes around to dumps and yard sales. Flea markets. Picks things out of the trash ‘round Camden. And he knows what everyone’s looking for. So he was up to Bangor. And they were tearing down a building. He found the cards in back of an old partition. Half of 'em were scorched and they’d already thrown a load of 'em away. He grabbed what was left.

Norm pulls a box out of his truck and sets it on the table as a man approaches. The man picks out pieces of silverplate. He is a regular customer. When folks come into Norm’s shop looking for a specific item that he does not carry, he directs them to another dealer without hesitation.

“It’s a lot of camaraderie, okay?” Ken adds, “We’re all in this thing together. As Ben Franklin said, ‘You hang together or you hang separately.’ And it’s true. So we try to help each other.”

ELMER WILSON WENT ON a buying trip recently to Massachusetts. He drove his pickup truck back to Maine loaded with thousands of dollars worth of antiques. But no cash ever changed hands. He didn’t use checks or credit cards either. Elmer carried away his booty on faith. He and his suppliers relied on an informal system of credit that is the custom among antique and flea market dealers. Elmer says they rarely get burned.

“If a guy don’t pay his debt, all you gotta do is say ‘RAT.’”

That spreads like wildfire through the network. Soon the dealer in question is pushed out of the business. “If he can’t buy, he can’t sell.”

Most dealers watch people closely and are good judges of character. They know who they can trust.

“I met a guy from Texas down to Brimfield. He was drivin’ a truck back. I says, ‘Is the truck loaded?’ He says, ‘No.’” Elmer cocks his head. Raises an eyebrow. “I says, ‘Let me load it for ya. You send me some money after you’ve sold the stuff.’ He was interested. You know. I told him how much I wanted. So he says, ‘How big a truck can you fill?’” Elmer shrugs. Makes an expansive gesture with his arms. “Big as ya got.”

“So he drives a giant U-Haul up to the barn one day. The biggest they make. I filled it up. He drove off. Few months later he sent me a check. I could’ve got burned. Didn’t know the guy from Adam. Just met him down to Brimfield. But I talked with him a couple hours. Knew I could trust 'em.”
Norman Coad says that in all his years as a flea marketer he has never had anything stolen. "I walk away from my table, you know. Anyone could come along and take something. But by and large, people are trustworthy."

There are those rare occasions when people are dishonest. Usually the person is not a dealer. On those occasions, if it isn’t too serious, dealers try to have a sense of humor about it.

Don Miller from Oxford once returned to his table to find a man who wanted to buy a lampshade. "He said, 'I'll take this.' Pointed to the lampshade. Had a sticker on it marked a quarter.

"Now I hadn't marked it. Never use those stickers. Nothin' else on the table was marked. I was gonna sell it for a dollar. It was all I could do to keep from laughing. But I kept a straight face. Let 'em have it for the quarter."

THE FLEA market and antique business feeds on a chain of sales. Experienced dealers are all aware of the chain and take it in consideration in pricing their merchandise.

It's one of those unwritten policies of the business that insures everyone a place on the selling ladder and helps to perpetuate the near self sustaining quality of the flea market economy.

"The whole thing about this is knowing that you can't have the price so high that the chain stops. It has to keep going." Ken Hallowell demonstrates this with a story.

"Years ago down to Boothbay Harbor, I had an oak highchair. I bought it for fourteen dollars at a lawn sale. And I went down to the Boothbay Harbor [antique] show, and I sold it to a dealer before the show opened for thirty-five. She sold it to a dealer at the show for seventy-five. That dealer sold it for a hundred and a quarter. Okay? Last time I heard about it . . . saw it in a shop for two-fifty. I don't know what they sold it for. That's the way it goes."

The way Sturgis Mahoney sees it, "First money is the best money." If he can buy an item from the original source rather than from another dealer who has already purchased it from someone else, he realizes the widest margin of profit. "If I buy something of'n that gentleman there," Sturgis points to a neighboring dealer, "he's already purchased it somewhere, and his first money is the widest margin. Now I've got to buy it and at least double the price—and add ten percent for the 'But Jesus factor.'"

This is Sturgis' term for the margin for dickering. Dickering is accepted and even expected by both the buyer and the seller. It's part of the fun. Sturgis laughs as he demonstrates the process. He picks up an item from his table, looks at the price, makes a startled gesture. "But Jesus, I ain't gonna pay that for it."

WHEN THERE'S AGGRAVATION, it usually comes from "retailers," who account for only ten percent of the sales. Unaware of the rarity or value of the merchandise, they make unreasonable offers.

Ken Hallowell tells about the time he lost his composure with a customer who was interested in a wicker plant stand. "I had $65 on it. And they're going in shows for $125, all right? And this retailer came in. Nice person, I thought. I talked to her. She came back three times. And I told her forty dollars I'd sell it to her for. And she brought back her friend. She looked at it.

And I heard her friend whisper, 'My mother bought one for $25.' She offered me $30. I said, 'No, ma'am, you won't give me $30, you won't give me $40 now. It's $65 now.'" Ken gets emotional with the telling. "I don't need this. I don't like being distrusted. I got nasty. I really did. You do after a while. Even a mouse will fight back after a while."

Other dealers work off the frustration with humor—by devising a creative prank.

"The other day Tom Holmes put out a hundred dollar bill, a fifty, a twenty, ten, five and one. And the hundred dollar bill, he put a price sticker on it of $99. And on the fifty, he put $49.50, and on the twenty he put $19.95, the ten $9.95 and the one 99 cents. People walked by. Picked them up. Looked at the price and put them right back down." Ken laughs at the recollection.

"He'd had it with retail customers not knowing the price of things."

Sturgis Mahoney has a tactful way of putting customers in their place. "I very simply ask, 'What kind of
Each dealer is aware of who collects what.

car do you drive?’ and they say Mercedes, whatever. ‘Will you take five hundred dollars for it?’ ‘Oh no, of course not.’ ‘Now you know how I feel.’"

Unless they have some knowledge about the business, retailers do not understand the amount of time and effort dealers put into their trade. What they see is the dealers sitting around, appearing to have an easy day. In reality the market days are long. Dealers work hard to try to minimize losses. Often after a rainy day at the market and a long drive home, Ken and Cathy Hallowell spend hours repacking their merchandise to prevent water damage.

Somebody offer you a tenth of what it’s worth. You know? It’s ignorance on their part or arrogance. I’m not sure which it is. But it does hurt. People walk by sayin’, ‘My grandmother had this and we sold it. We gave it away.’

“I says, ‘Madam, that’s why it’s worth so much, cause everybody threw them away.’ There was one dealer in here had a sign said, NOBODY CARES WHAT YOUR GRANDMOTHER HAD EXCEPT YOUR GRANDFATHER.” Ken laughs. “Had it right on the table.”

THE SIGN ON DOT AND HERB’S tables says that and more. “Extra charge of $1 is imposed if we have to listen to: 1. What your mother had. 2. What your grandmother had. 3. What you gave away. 4. What you threw on the dump.”

Dot and Herb have been flea marketers for about eight years. Their grandson, D.J., was raised at Montsweag. D.J. is affectionately referred to on the field as the “Montsweag Brat.”

“He really isn’t a brat, though,” offers Norma. “He is such a good kid. Ya, Dot and Herb started bringing D.J. when he was about two years old. He would sit under their table and play in the shade. Now he’s nine. He sets up his cars on an empty table in the morning and he plays. When that dealer arrives, he just moves over on the grass or something.”

Ken and Cathy Hallowell, who were recently married, make flea marketing a family affair. They bring along Sandy, Cathy’s daughter from her previous marriage. At eight years of age, Cathy Hallowell’s daughter, Sandy Smith, is the youngest dealer on the field. This is her first season in the business.

On the field she makes up grab bags which she sells for $1 apiece. She also has a crib full of baby dolls to sell. Half of her profits are reinvested in the business. With investment profits in hand, she scans the market each day for items that have a good resale value. Currently she is collecting Barbie dolls from the early seventies.
The flea market feeds on a chains of sales.

The other half of her profit is saved or spent on goodies. She is a regular customer at Norma’s, where she alternately buys chocolate fudgesicles and orange popsicles.

DEALERS ARE PACKING UP. They swap talk about the sales and buys of the day. Norman Burt’s Masonic plaque is wrapped and packed onto Red Footman’s van. Norm Coad is now the proud owner of Carol Kelley’s old scrapbook full of valentines and trade cards. He bought it in spite of the fact that he “never did make a cent.” One dealer boasts of having had his “best day ever. Made $500 in the first hour.” Young Sandy Smith is delighted with her find of the day—a Barbie pool and garden set from the 1970s.

One after another the loaded vehicles stream by Ken and Cathy Hallowell’s blue GMC truck. They look as full as when they first arrived. They inch along the dirt road and hover on the top of the hill waiting for a chance to merge with the late afternoon traffic on Route One. Soon a multicolored metal serpent winds down the sloping road and backs up into the field.

By six o’clock the field is cleared of all but a few stragglers. Ken and Cathy Hallowell and daughter Sandy, Sturgis Mahoney, Arid and Red Footman. Their vehicles form a shiny nucleus in the center of the near deserted market. A convolution of empty tables branch out around them—tentacles reaching to the edge of the field in all directions.

The gaping eye of Norma’s shack is closed tight. Don’s blue vinyl tent flaps slightly with a breath of wind. The stillness on the field is broken only by the droning traffic on the road above it.

“Going home we talk about the sales, people we’ve met, and all that.” Ken Hallowell’s words are slow and measured now. “And Sandy starts to cuddle up next to me. About fifteen minutes into the ride usually Sandy is pretty well gonzo. And we, you know, we kind of relax.

“Once in a while we see a deer or a coyote. Saw a coyote cross the other day. And it’s kind of like,” Ken’s speech slows down even more as he searches for the right words. “Actually,” he pauses, “actually, it’s kind of sad.” He drags on his Marlboro.

“It’s your family. And basically, you know, it’s like a family outing. And they swap stories and all that.

“On a Friday night it’s not so bad [leaving]. On a Saturday night it’s not so bad. You have one more day. But Sunday night it’s kind of sad.

“Oh a Sunday night it’s all over.”

salt
"TRACTAHHH!" I hear one of the thirteen Jamaicans yell from the top of the orchard. It must be Logan or Long Mon; they’re picking at the crest ofDouglas Hill today. The sound resonates down the rows and rows of apple trees and into the yellowing leaves of Sebago’s valley. The rolling land of Fifield Farms and the snow covered White Mountains stand still between calls.
After twelve years picking apples, he knows the work. “I don’t believe the American people want to work that hard. They cannot cut the sugarcane in Florida and do this.”

“TRACTAH, TRACTAH!” rises again and again from the valley. Dark hands jumble perfected fruit. Hushed rhythmic sounds run through the trees. Rasta George is in sight. His flat face, high cheekbones, and pointy beard seem ageless, an ancient Egyptian face hardened in stone. In knee high rubber boots with a tin picking bag strapped to his chest, he balances on his thin split rail ladder. He bends into the branches, rails connecting. The ladder spikes into the sky.

“COME HERE TRACTAH, COME HERE TRACTAH!” The call comes from deep in the orchard. Scorpion picks steadily from the middle of a tree. A black leather jacket, black bandanna, and black knit hat shield him from the day’s harsh cleansing air. Turning to the valley he says, “Everytime I look ovah der it den remin’ me a place in Jamaica. The only difference is dat ovah der is mountin on in Jamaica you hoff da sea ovah der.” They live the cycle, the natural rhythms of the harvest. Apples in Maine, tobacco in Massachusetts and Connecticut, sugarcane in Florida, three months back home in Jamaica. American dollars; dollars for the humbled families, dollars for the rural villages, and dollars for the dwindling economy of Jamaica.

“TRACTAHH!” There’s no roar, there’s no tractor. Tom Gyger, the owner of the orchards, strides up the path, head down, eyebrows stern. Frustrated he searches for the two tractor drivers. The Jamaicans need their large wooden bins moved down to other trees so they can keep picking.

“GEORGE, GEORGEY! GEORGE!” Wiley hammers out loudly from the middle of the path. He’s tall and timeless. A bright orange hunting cap with earflaps tops his full hair, broad face, and full beard. “WILEYYY!” George returns. “EH COME OVAH!” Ladders extending from their shoulders, they move into the road. Wiley calls out as they ease down to the farmhouse. “LONG MON!” “LOGI, LOGI, LOGI!” Ahead Dennis sings, “Many a tear hoff to cry.”

LOGANSIZZLES an egg in deep oil. He’s new, this is his first year picking. He’s smaller than most of the others. His boyish face agrees with his soft, high voice. He chooses to be in the kitchen more than most. He cooks and he
cleans. A knit hat and a sweater from a day's work cover him still. The steaming woodstove in the basement foggs the windows, but hasn't gotten to him yet. Already I feel feverish.

Dennis points to the tin pot. Brian's cooking "Johnny cakes." Dennis scoops up one to show me. He says there's potatoes, onions, "Johnny cakes," and instant chicken soup. Brian listen and stirs.

Dennis says, "No problem, we live like broddas. Treat one another good, do everyting as a team. Work togedda and pull'a togedda as a team. Cause y'know we're far away from ome. You hoff to do tings togedda so everybody get togedda, know what to do, make it light. That's why I say I love team work, one string." He's the coach.

Long Mon's slouched in a chair, his new Levis bent at the knees, and his knit cap still on. He's new this year. Exhausted, his eyes look dazed on 'I feel' a home, on 'I know that my heart and strength.' I work very hard, with the Jamaicans.

"Johnny cakes," and instant chicken soup. Brian listen and stirs. According to Dennis, "It's a little hard for you to understand some of the Jamaicans because they talk fast. So for you now we hoff to go h'easy, pronounce our words properly, the letters. You say now, where you going? In Jamaica you say, where ya gon mon? Just short. You say, I'm comin', say I'mma soon com. From it's English because what we speak in Jamaica is English. What we have patois. So if I'm talkin' to a Jamaican I can use short-cut English, talking to someone not Jamaican I hoff to speak good English." Brian and Long Mon listen, but don't add any words.

Dennis is a forty-three year old grandfather. He says, "When you make dat age you con teach, because you con teach, you know what is yout [youth], you know what is young age." He wants to teach. He says my age, "th'call the foolish age. You do a lot of stupid things."

Pots clang. Wiley's at the sink. Long Mon and Brian cook together every week. Long Mon tells me he's a bad cook. The others agree. He says he watches and learns, but right now he's letting Brian do all the work.

The TV's loud. Nine crowd on worn and stained couches in the stark square room. Eddy sits sideways in the old cloth chair. His picking pants unzipped, he smokes, legs dangling. George leans foward on the couch, and Earl leans back. They fit.

A powerful smell of years of Jamaican cooking has seeped into every wall. The familiar odor is the stale moistness of hot grease and spices. The most potent is the completely forign element. Tom Gyger's short dog, Champ, is scared of that smell. It's exotic, musty and earthy. A smell of a hot place. The Jamaicans have absorbed it into their skin. My wool sweater steeps in it.

Logan closes in on the other edge of the couch. He nudes one his own size, Trevor with the Walkman fixed to his head. They struggle, squeeze, and laugh into one space. Logan rebounds off Errol. Errol's bigger and forces him back. Together the two faces are youthful. Errol's looks weathered, a sign of hard work and a family.

Errol has picked the longest, the fastest, and the most. He'll top twelve binfuls some days. Other pickers fill eight four feet by four bins. Locals get five. He'll pick in drizzle and in fog. The less ambitious wonder if he's mad.

Erroll says, "I can work with Tom if he needs me until I'm seventy years old. God has helped me with might and strenth. I work very hard, on'I feel'a home, on'I know that my family is okay.'"

After twelve years he knows the work, he knows the program, he knows the language, and he knows the Americans. He says, "I don believe the American people want to work that hard. They cannot cut the sugarcane in Florida and do they y'know. I believe it will gon on. I love to be here."

He's religious and work's going to save him. He lives by scripture. He's taken Logan, a young Christian, under his wing. Today in the orchard he said, "We play some Christian records, kya-settes [cassettes] from Jamaica, we mostly play Christian records."

I don't hear any hymns in the farmhouse. I hear the slow beat pounding of loud distorted reggae in the room behind. Two cans of Budweiser sit on the floor. Kenny and Dennis are settled into large chairs. Kenny is a local who lives and works at the orchard year round. For six weeks he shares the house with the Jamaicans.

Soon he'll be left to bear the weight with Fred, his black dog. Then Fred will come in. He doesn't now. He makes the Jamaicans uneasy. They don't want him slurping food off of Kenny's dinner plate, a plate they may use. Tom Gyger heard they were planning to buy a new set of plates. The dog went out instead.

Eddy's mammoth black tape recorder takes up space on the long table. Behind is a second large refrigerator. This one for beer. Over the music Dennis tells me about himself. He says with his kind eyes looking down, "I got dis fellowship. I go to Teocratic Ministry school. I study for five years," he pauses, the others can hear.

He talks about his education. It sets him apart from the others. He's the oldest and there's respect, but there's no superiority. "But I um married and I get myself wit a girl, a girl. Fifteen years ago. She's a big woman now," he laughs. With a helpless smile he continues, "I was a h'ardained minister. I got myself messed up. I gonna change, I gonna change."

He calls over the couch, "Papa." George turns, "Eh Papa." Dennis rolls his black t-shirt above his firm belly, rubs it and says, "I goin home wit someting I never take home to Jamaica: a hell of a ponch!"
heads towards the refrigerator, amused. Dennis laughs and says, “My wife gonna be crazy, oh my gosh, I never weigh so much in my life.”

Dennis presses the stop button. Eddy’s reggae is cut short. A female country voice cries out and takes over. No one opposes. Against the wall George smiles at Dennis in recognition.

Brian delivers a large bowl of soup packed with potatoes and “johnny cakes” to me. The others will have to “share” it, dish it out, for themselves. George reaches for his flimsy blue plastic bowl every time. Errol tells me that only some people call them “johnny cakes,” he calls them dumplings.

The “johnny cakes” surface and sink like the potatoes. I can’t tell them apart in my green swirling liquid. They’re hard in the middle, but penetrable. Under pressure the edges crumble like leather hard clay. There’s no talking, only eating. I look up from my bowl and eyes turn to me from the couches across the room. I bear the edge of my spoon down on one of the “johnny cakes” at the bottom. Arm trembling from force I break off a piece, splattering some soup. I look back up. George takes a bite from his “johnny cake” jabbed onto the end of his spoon.

George is proud, his head always high. He’s intuitive, determining the truth with only a few glances, a few words. His thoughts are clear and rooted. My brain feels clouded by too much education around him.

In the field he wears a dark knit cap with specks of color. It hangs off the back of his head. His face is straight serious, but his eyes fill up when he laughs, a hoarse laugh. He tells me he has a motorbike. “A motorcycle?” I ask. “Nohh, A motahbike,” he says. “Oh, a motobike, smaller than a motorcycle.” I say. He says sternly, “Nohh!” then laughs, “A motah,” he laughs again, “yuh a motocyle fen. That’s what you call it.” “Are you a biker,” I ask. “Yuh,” George says.

George has been called Rasta for six seasons. Dennis is Scorpion. He had a disco called Scorpian. George says they give each other nicknames, “I will give him, on he will give me one.” Brian is Big Neck. Errol had a nickname years ago, but now he’s just Errol. Cova is Red Mon because of his light face. But Cova’s brother, Hugh, changed his own nickname. For years he was Persia, now it’s Wiley. He’s proudly stubborn about it. Tom Gyger can’t shake Persia, but the men call him Wiley. It means good with the woman.

The nicknames of the seven new men this year evolve slowly. Eddy with the broad face and extended chin is Biggah three weeks into the season. He says, “I’m Biggah.” At 6’7” Derrick is Long Mon. He became Long Mon in the beginning. Earl’s got a gold diamond shape on each of his two front teeth. He’s Diamond Teeth sometimes.

“You hoff one?” George asks me. “No.” “You bettah get one,” he says, “we’ll get ya one.”

Trevor shows me a photo of himself cutting sugarcane in Florida. His hair tumbled down his back almost to his knees in lightened clumps and knots, “dread locks.” He had to cut it to come here.

Shoulders back he strides out in balanced steps. His Walkman on and eyes blank he climbs upstairs where the new men sleep. He returns to the woody room, to his space, a raised floor and short sloping ceiling over his cot. It’s separated by walls and a door from the other two cots, now empty. He sits, stares, and listens. He worries about his family, his ailing father who drank bad water and has a stomach sickness.

Downstairs a thin yellowed paper was tacked to the kitchen wall in September of 1988. Archaic black type lists the victims of Hurricane Gilbert. It is now worn and wrinkled from hands that held and then passed it. Errol, Dennis, and George walk by it now without a glance. The names are unfamiliar to all.

They saw the devastation on television. They heard the numbers and percentages: thirty-five dead, eighty percent of the homes ruined. Communication was cut. They picked in a daze, not sleeping at night. They usually sang in the orchard, but they can’t this year.

The American Red Cross made phone calls. No phone call to the men here became a relief; it took on the meaning that things were all right. Eddy heard nothing and began to think that maybe his wife, chil-

"Some of who are black colored in Florida are very prejudice. But I nevah see it it Maine, nevah been shown to me. There's a bettah relationship 'ere than in Florida."
dren and home were unharmed.

Weeks later he got a call. With a
wildness in his voice he says, “My
house mosh up, yeah it MOSH,
mosh up. A part of it con live in, de
board part mosh up.”

Dennis got three phone calls and
he says, “Only a piece of my house
y’know, the top oh fit got dam-
aged.” He shrugs, smiling, “It’s in
the game. We can’t stop dat y’know,
it’s part of the game. Some of my
friends am aroun, try to help my wife
y’know on jus get things togedda.
So I feel so glad.

“I thought about it, but I hoff to
keep courage y’know. As a mon, as
the head of the home, you’s hoff to
stand firm. So she [his wife] hoff to
stand up and you hoff to stand up,
cause you’re the bread winna on you
can’t go down. If you go down they
suffer.

“It’s supposed to be a big blow,
everybody should realize that. It
hoff to rebuild, we all now hoff to
put our hands togedda as Jamaican,
on do the bes’ on work the hardest
you con for our country, see what
we con do to help oddas suffering.”

Errol says, “The island was
buildin’ up so good. That’s how it
goes, is the work of the Lord. I hear
nothing from my family since the
communication is not . . . . But I
know they are all right because we
hear the person who died, we got
the paper.”

EVERY YEAR about 600 Ja-
maicans come to Maine for
the harvests: 450 for apples,
and 150 for other crops. In Jamaica
they call them “ferm’rka.” The Brit-
ish West Indies government with
the guidance of the U.S. Depart-
ment of Labor places seasonal work-
ers on farms throughout the coun-
try. The program started with the
shortage of farm laborers.

First the Jamaicans have to get a
.card, because der is tousonds of
people out der who like to come.
You’off to ask somebody who you
know give ya one. In every district
maybe tree, four, five cards come.
Out of da tree cards maybe der are
800 people so you’off to give jus
tree card.

“But they don’t know what the
United States are like. Maybe they
believe that we come on grob tings,
but they don’t know the hardness
we’of to work.”

If they get a card then they have
to pass thorough physical tests in
Kingston before they’re accepted.
Tom says, “They’re screened for
health, that seems to be one of their
big worries each year is whether they
pass the physical.” Their family’s
welfare for the year relies first on the
man’s health.

Like most, George has a family to
support. “I’m born in Clarendon
right, I couldn’t get a job in Claren-
don. Some people leave, some don’t.
In Kingston you get work for all
over the country. If I wasn’t comin’
to America I would leave,” George
says.

Erroll says in Jamaica, “There is
more people than jobs because if I
had a good job down there I would
not leave to come up here to work so
hard. But I don hoff a job and your
foreign exchange is good over there.”

Most of them pick tobacco before
the apple harvest. After apples they
move on to cut sugarcane for five
months. Dennis says this year, “A
lot of dem not goin to sugarcane
because of the disastah [Hurricane
Gilbert].”

The sugarcane grows in areas of
Florida that are too wet for mecha-
nized labor. With machetes they
chop the ten foot stocks in the hot
sun. They work in large groups, live
in barrack type housing, and eat in
mess halls.

“The word these guys would say
is that chopping sugar will kill a
man. It’s awful work,” Tom says.*

Dennis says, “Very hard. When I
leave here I get skinny. I break it
don on I buil’ ya bock, some guys,
buil’ ya bock like me, give me a lot of
good muscles, but it’s very hard
work.”

Errol says, “If I cut sugarcane I
won’t be able to go home until
March or April and I’m not gonna

*Editor’s Note: For a recent look
at the sugarcane harvest in south
Florida by Jamaicans and other West
Indians, see a two part article by Alec
Wilkinson, “A Reporter at Large:
Big Sugar,” The New Yorker, July 17
and July 24, 1989.
leave my family so long. I know some guys who spend eleven months up here. I cut no more sugarcane, no more. If it's der for me to make a living, I won't I don't believe.

"My skin is allergic to't, strip off all the skin's off on my face because down der is a muck, dey call't a muck. Den I'off to walk wit two arms crutch on'I feel so many pains. I go to doctor take medicine. I could not eat'any food." If a worker becomes too sick and has to be sent home he may not be able to come back, especially if he is new to the program as Errol was at that time. "I get back healthy before I go home. I didn't go home sick."

Dennis says, "Some of who are black colored in Florida are very prejudice. But I nevah see it in Maine, nevah been shown to me, nevah. There's a bettah relationship 'ere than in Florida.

"Wit we you don find no prejudice. We deal with more deep love."

Tom Gygger stands in front of a full bin of apples in a canvas work suit. His eyes hide behind dark rectangular sunglasses. He's in need of a shave and some gas for his tractor.

Behind him the old white farmhouse confirms past years of prosperity. Once pristine, it stands solidly in front of the orchard, mountains in the distance. The house shows years of Maine winters and seasonal pickers: paint is chipping and glass is broken. A weather worn sign hangs above the porch, "Apple Picking Jobs."

Tom has one local picker. This year five applied, but none of them showed up. Tom says, "I can offer only six weeks of work, it's not easy work, and there are too many other jobs that are full time and easier." McDonald's pays a little more. His hands move across the expansive wooden bin. He moves apples, two here, four there, leveling the top.

Tom lost two young tractor drivers this year. "They literally got off the tractors and said, 'I can't do this, I'm too tired, I haven't seen my girlfriend in a week.' I told them up front, 'This is a seven day a week, eight to ten hour a day for you fellas in the field every single day.' They couldn't even conceive of it because I can't think of any other business other than agriculture that has the intensity of a harvest."

So Tom and his wife June drive the tractors some days. "The tractor drivers get to the point where they get yelled at so much that no matter how much you know you should be doing it, the next guy that yells I will NOT go to them. They're yelling because it's the only way they can be heard, but people resist being yelled at, they don't like it, and there's no other way. When I do the interview I say look do you mind being yelled at and they go nope."

Tom picks up an apple, inspects the bruise and tosses it. His grandfa-
ther planted the trees at the South Bridgton orchard in 1925 and passed the orchard on to his son in 1947. Tom’s father bought the Douglas Hill orchard in 1954. Tom managed for ten years and bought the orchard in 1987. He says, “I taught for ten years and then I was on a collision course with burnout and my father and I met up here on the hill. The seed was planted that I would return.”

It’s a middle sized operation, 110 acres yielding between 35,000 to 43,000 bushels of fruit. If it were any larger Tom says the pilot that does the aerial spraying would have to fly back to Turner for more gas—he can only cover 110 acres with one tank. “I had decided early on not to enlarge. If I could do anything, it would be to survive through this period of agricultural stress.

“I think you’re going to see a down sizing with the smaller trees, more intensive plantings, closer together, more intensive management. We can get the yields from a smaller number of acres.” At Douglas Hill Tom says, “The real estate pressure is too great, the trees are the wrong kind. I’m actually keeping these in production longer than I should.

“I have more Red Delicious than I would like to grow. We’re going head to head with Washington state. There is a tremendous marketing campaign and it’s hard to penetrate. Maine is not significant, I mean we raise one percent of the national product of apples.

“We suffer from all the same pressures and problems that the grain farmers, the corn farmers, the dairy farmers are facing. General over production or under consumption is the way that most of us would like to look at it. And a tremendous rise in equipment costs.”

A tractor rumbles behind the house. “TRACTAH!” June drives up the trodden grass and onto the dirt driveway. “Where are the Cortlands?” she yells over the noise. “They’re up there. Scorpion knows. He’s been picking them for six years,” Tom yells pointing across the road.

Tom says he and his wife enjoy the business “except for fits and starts.” But Tom says, “With all the other ramifications of the real estate and what’s going on, it’s getting hard to justify.

“We used offshore labor, or you could call them guest workers, starting around 1960.” First they came from Nova Scotia. The Canadian fishing industry gradually improved and Canadian workers were harder to recruit. By 1971 the pickers started
coming from Jamaica.

The first year Tom's father employed fifteen Jamaicans. They were all named Brown, all unrelated. It went alphabetically.

Tom says, "When I first looked at the Jamaicans, the fact that they were black, and I had little or no exposure to blacks, that was what you noticed about them. You just don't look closely the first time, you look quickly and you see a major difference and you don't look any deeper.

"I knew these guys picked a ferocious number of apples per day. The chatter that you would hear from one field to another was really foreign. You could not recognize much English in it at all." He says the language has changed to include more English over the years.

He brought in seven new men because the harvest was going to be good this year. To employ Jamaicans, Tom must certify that he has advertised the picking jobs and has not found any workers. He then requests the number of Jamaicans he needs for the season, adding or subtracting from the core he has had over the past six to twelve years. He pays $550 per worker to fly them to Miami and bus them to Maine.

From the year preceding, the U.S Department of Labor figures out how much the Jamaicans had earned to determine what the wage should be for a local to make as much as a Jamaican. But the Jamaicans who have been picking for years know how to pick the trees more efficiently than the local who comes for one season.

Tom says, "For a long time everyone felt that we hired these workers because we wanted them more than local workers. That's not the case. Politically to have anybody in this country unemployed and to have guest labor it doesn't look good, especially in an election year." Tom pays pickers by the hour plus a piece rate when they exceed a certain number of apples. They all seem to exceed that amount, so they can make good money picking, about $300 a week. Who makes that much in Jamaica? "Probably a doctah," George says. But George only earns that wage for six weeks. The other seven months in tobacco and sugar-cane he is paid by the hour and earns less.

Beverly Smith started picking at the orchard 26 years ago and now manages the Jamaican crew. She says, "The new men start right in by saying, 'Yes ma'am whatever you want. Yes, yes, yes ma'am' to everything. When I start looking at their bins, 'You must come and tell me, you must come and tell me.' They'll watch me to see when I'm looking over the apples, 'Is it all right, is it all right? I want to do my best.'"

"That's all I hear. And I'd say, 'You're going to have to slow down, you're going too fast because you're bruising.' 'I want to do my best,' and they do, shoo, right down to a crawl.

"Somewhere down the line they're told not to cause any trouble." Beverly tells the liason officer, "Don't tell our people that, you know we want to know if things are bad." They fear that if Tom doesn't ask them back they may never come back to work, but that's not the case.

Tom needed an extra worker one year. The liason officer knew a man, Brian, who had worked in the Hudson Valley and was mistakenly placed in Maine. He wanted to be in New York. The liason officer sent him to Tom. Tom says, "I told him, 'You'll start with a clean slate here you just look unhappy to me.' And this guy turned out to be an excellent picker and fit in quite well. He was unhappy there. And he has come back. This is his third year. So he felt some sense of place."

"Brian was having some problems where he was and we took him in and he's part of the family," says Beverly. "I think our particular guys are happier than a lot of different growers because we've made them family whereas that's not always true of a lot of different areas. Some of the guys will talk to some of the other guys that work at the other places and they're not treated quite as well sometimes."

"TRACTAH, TRACTAHHHH!" a picker yells from behind the farmhouse. "IS THAT VINCENT, IS THAT THE BIRTHDAY BOY?!" Tom shouts back. Tom's wife, June, is going to bake a cake for Vincent this afternoon.

Tom says, "If I had 60 and I was trying to run an operation that had need of that many, I could not know my workers." Tom takes pride in the group that has stayed together for so long, some in their sixth season, Dennis, George, Cova, and Wiley, Errol in his twelfth, Walrick in his tenth.

"We get down to the facts that I know when their birthdays are, many of them. Walrick just happened to have a baby before the harvest started. We haven't seen pictures of the baby. We're all anxiously waiting."

TOM GYGER yells into the shadows through the screen door, "It's three-thirty gentlemen." "We comin', comin'." Two and threes, they emerge. Wiley still wears his bright orange hunting cap with earflaps, Logan strides out in aqua blue bell bottoms. He rolls his knit face mask up to cover only his hair. Dennis, an exhibitionist, stands out in his cowboy hat, black bandana, black leather jacket, and snake skin boots. He tells me they call him "coo-boy" at the tobacco farm.

They pile into the van with plates that say "GROWER" and rise and fall on the slopes leading to Bridgton. Checks in hand they fill up the small bank lobby mixing in lines with local laborers. They like hundred dollar bills.

Every week Dennis asks for two dollar bills. The bank never has them.

This summer he got fourteen in Massachusetts while he was picking continued on page 41
"JUST COMIN’ AND GOIN’"

“RED MON” COVA
tobacco. He sent them home. He'll never spend them.

Reny's, Bridgton, Maine. Long Mon found a coat, a bright green raincoat to keep him warm he says, through the last few chilly weeks of the season. He wears it hood up at the counter, waiting attentively to pay. At 6'7" he is a glowing obelisk.

Lighters, sneakers, and hanging listlessly, "Wanna wear it?"

Mon found a coat, a bright green raincoat to keep him warm he says, never spend them.

But the clerk, an old plump woman with a faint southern drawl continues to talk to the local at the side of the counter. Really she must know he's there, she can't help but see him towering over the counter. Finally, she turns and confronts him, listlessly, "Wanna wear it?"

"Yes," Long Mon says, quietly. "Let me cut the tag off," she says, shears in hand. He bends slowly to match the tag on his chest to the scissors in the short woman's hand.

"Do you off any barba sissas?" "Any what?" she says peering far up to the black face in the green hood, not expecting to understand. From the background Brian calls, "Dressing, hair dressing." "Oh no no, uh-uhhh," she says satisfied.

Downstairs the entire store moves. Dark hands jumble piles of socks, hats, folded pants, sheets, candles, lighters, sneakers, and hanging blouses in the packed aisles. One of the clerks, Jean says, "They'll usually pick out toothbrushes, lighters, before they go back they'll buy all kinds of sneakers, it must be expensive there." The old manager of Reny's used to hand them boxes of candy on their last evening of shopping to take home to their kids.

The younger more timid clerk by Jean's side crouches, ready to hide upstairs, "When they're around together and they're talkin', I can't understand a word they're saying." But not Jean as she says adamantly, "I do fine. If I have any problems I'll look for him."

She points to Errol, "He's been comin' here for a long time and his English is so good. And he's so much fun, every year he makes a point of comin' in to say goodbye to me before he goes."

Vincent and Cova handle plastic police cars, sirens screaming. Vincent considers one for his two year old son and Cova, chuckling, for his two little daughters.

Dennis gathers girl's blouses, jeans, high heels, and a skirt on his arm; a family man. Throughout the store they shop for wives and girlfriends. The sizes are baffling. They ask the clerks. They point to bodies in the store that resemble their wives. If the shapes in the store are too small they'll say, "Fattah! fattah than that."

Wiley's hands move through flowing nightgowns on a rack. George helps. Wiley finds a silky one, holds it forward and George hands back a packaged one, pink flannel. It's cheaper. Wiley unfolds it and looks confused. Laughing, he presses it against George's smaller back and shoulders. George is patient.

Cova sorts through the piles of long underwear. He'll bring it back for the brisk nights after Christmas, he says. At the counter Brian cradles a large Christmas ornament with tiny colored bulbs. Slowly they all crowd around the register.

Brain demands, "Where's my Christmas present?" Jean laughs. "I want it now!" he says. They all laugh. "Okay, I have some cookies." Under the register she searches in her bag for a roll of opened cookies. She promptly hands it to Brian. He takes one and passes it.

Jean waits behind the counter for Long Mon to make a decision. They all wait. Slowly he pulls a belt inch by inch through his hands. It's too long and he's in a different world. He returns to the belt rack testing the patience of the older men. George says, "He gives everybody a hard time all the time." They all eat a cookie and say goodbye.

It's Friday night and Friday night means shopping. It does not mean the end of work. They'll pick through the weekend and on through next week. But tonight they get off the orchard, they change out of their work clothes. They won't have time to cook. They'll go to Kentucky Fried Chicken in Windham.

This year they'll ship back pounds of flour and rice, and gallons of oil, because of the hurricane. Catalogs from Zayre's, Bradlee's, and Sears lie around the farmhouse. They know the bargains. The first years they came, they bought clothes and shoes. Tom Gyger says, "They didn't use to take back a television set, now that's routine." These men have the few houses in rural Jamaica with TVs, let alone electricity. They're busy copying movie tapes this year.

Errol bought a black and white TV. He had to replace it this year because his wife knocked it over. He found a $54 one. Others buy 19 inch color sets, stereos and VCRs.

Brian, Big Neck, bought a motorcycle last year for $250 and he's been offered the equivalent of $3,200 in Jamaican. Beverly says, "Every year they come here with something specific in mind and each year I say, 'O.K. Walrick what are you doing this year? What are you buying to take back?' They'll be working toward a refrigerator, or a stereo, or a TV."

Walrick beams under the fluorescent lights of Bradlee's center aisle. In his arms he balances a boxed sewing machine, a surprise for his wife. Long Mon wheels a shopping cart half full of shoes.

They used to take large boxes packed with stuff on the bus to Miami. They'd ship it home from down there. Tom says, "They became a freight company. One person actually took from here a toilet set, a complete porcelain, john stool and all that. It was so bizarre that it has become a benchmark." So this year they were told no more boxes, they can have two suitcases only, and the rest has to be shipped back to Jamaica in a few days.

Tom Gyger says it's been a tradition for years to drive them into Portland. But now they shop locally and spend more time at it. He says,
There have been Friday nights when we haven’t gotten home until midnight. They’ll be wandering around Shop-n-Save as the last gun is fired.”

The new group lives upstairs, the old group downstairs. The new group picks in one place, the old group picks in another. They don’t know names, they only know, “dot guy.”

Tom Gyger says he’d tell a picker to work next to Earl, “And the guy would be over picking next to Vincent.” Tom used an exercise from the classroom. He set them in pairs and had them learn enough about each other in three minutes to introduce each other. “One of them lapsed into almost sounding like a eulogy,” Tom says laughing.

Walrick introduced Tom to the group. He said Tom used to be “selfish” because when Tom used the phone in the farmhouse he walked around the room where they all sat in front of the TV rather than through it. Tom says he didn’t want to disturb them.

But near the end of the season it’s still, “dot guy.” The old guys don’t know the new guys. They haven’t accepted them yet. Tom says it takes about a year to become normalized into the group.

“We is all one Jamaican,” Errol says. They have to get along for six weeks. Dennis says it’s a “little tough” for the new guys to break in, “but we try as a whole to take our time, some of us con a’jus ourselves on rea’jus, some, not everybody. But dese are tings you hoff to prac-tice because you ain’t gonna live one place all the while, on you hoff to meet people.”

These are the rules of coexistence. Long Mon seems to have broken one of them. He took someone else’s ladder. Tom Gyger says, “You know ladders are particular items, it is your ladder, you know, they pick them out of a pile.” Long Mon was told to bring his ladder but he forgot. When he got to the field he grabbed someone else’s. “They had a little war over that. ‘I want my ladder back, MY ladder, you go get yours, that’s my ladder, it’s got my name on the side of it!’

“He tried to do that with a pail, one of those plastic pails. I saw the expression of the guy whose pail it was he took and this was, ‘Give me that pail back you son of a — ! I am not gonna put up with this anymore!’

“But they do get along, they will keep that under control, but it tends to break down towards the end of it,” Tom Gyger says. “As the work gets harder there’s less cushion against those feelings.”

Errol has a chocolate tree.” Beverly tells me. She knows because she went to Jamaica and spent a week with him. “He’s like my son,” she says, and she calls him just that, Son. He calls her Mom.

“Amazing what they go through to have hot chocolate!” Errol dries the beans in the sun, cracks them open, and churns the cocoa in a hollowed out log. He wraps the creamy mixture in banana leaves until it solidifies. In the morning Errol grates the cocoa into a strainer and pours hot water through for hot chocolate.

Errol Carter lives in a tiny village in the mountains, Wilmatown, where electricity made its way only a few years back. Errol says proudly, “Long time, isa long time Jamaica have electricity, maybe four or five years now.”

Another picker, Earl, says in his village electricity is just now reaching everyone; “When I was leavin’ home the res’ of people they were stringing their house, the government string it. And aftah dem finish now and you get light, den you pay for it monthly or two months.”

Beverly says in Jamaica, “They live mostly on rice and yams and boiled bananas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.”

Errol farms. He says, “There’s no one to help me so I has to work. There’s no one, my mother and father don hoff it to help me so I has to work hard to help myself. I go from grade one to grade nine. But my parents never hoff the money to try with me. So aftah I leave school I has to be working.”

Erroll farms yams, yoms as they call them in Jamaica. He leases a small piece of land and they call it, “goin’ to the bush.” Beverly says, “At six o’clock in the morning there’s a whole line of people with their machetes and they head to the bush.

“I went with them. It’s out in the woods and he just takes the stick and digs up a little hole and puts a yam in it, a piece of yam, covers it over, goes and cuts poles out in the woods and carries them over and sticks one in each hole. And then you’ll have a hole here and a hole over there and a hole over there. That’s his farm.”

In a good harvest, if Errol sells his whole crop at the market he’ll make about $1000 Jamaican dollars, equivalent to about $200 U.S. dollars, $200 per year.

Errol lives with his wife, two daughters, and son in a four room home. Beverly says it’s an American type, because it’s made out of cement blocks.

Errol has, “A little lean-to out back of old rusty tin or whatever and they cook over a wood fire.” Beverly says Errol’s wife cooks and serves the food to her husband, children and guests. “And then in ten minutes in comes a family of six. The kids move away from the table and sit on the floor or whatever and those people sit down and their kids sit down all on the floor and you give up one of your utensils and one of your covers or whatever you have to these new people.”

Beverly says that up to 25 people in Errol’s village will wander in throughout the night because they know that Errol works in the United States and has food. Errol never refuses. “When they come in you say, ‘Sit right down and eat.’ And at
some point you’re sharing a fork with three or four people or a glass or whatever you’ve got you know,” says Beverly.

Errol’s whole family lives in Wilmatown, except for his brother who works for a law firm in Kingston. Beverly says, “Everybody’s in everybody’s house and everybody belongs to everybody.” Beverly asked him if he had heard from his wife and kids after the hurricane. He hadn’t, but she says, “He’ll be really concerned and he’ll say, ‘And my mom, and dad, and Noel,’ he has a brother that lives with him that he takes care of, and the nieces and nephews and everybody in the village.”

Errol has a store. He bought a small freezer in Maine last year and is one of the few in his village with refrigeration. He buys chicken and sells it to the villagers. He also buys pens, pencils, and crayons for the school children in the village. Beverly says, “You do a lot of that on credit. So that’s a problem. We kidded about that the other day when we went to Portland. I said, ‘Are you going to buy stuff for your store?’”

It’s mandatory for Errol to buy for his relatives. He says, “When I’m up here I work and send them [his mother and father] money on I bring home things. I make enough money, but you don’t save dat enough because y’know you has to buy things for your family, but you can eat’a bread, your family can be O.K.” Errol has a hope chest for his children. Beverly says, “When they get old or get married, they’ll all have dishes and silverware and glasses.”

Errol worries about having enough money in case someone gets sick. Doctor and hospital fees are very expensive and Beverly says, “They have to hire what they call a bus, a van, to take them for miles and miles. It costs them $100 just to get to the hospital.

“Errol has a washtub. He takes his two boys and a scrub brush, fills his tub with cold water and puts them into it and takes the scrub brush and scrubs their skin. I kept saying, ‘They won’t have any skin left!’ ‘Oh yes, must be clean, must be clean,’ he’d say.

“It’s amazing to see how clean their houses are and how clean their clothes are. You see these little kids, they look better than our kids when they go to school. They never wear shoes at home, they’re barefoot all the time. But they go to school,
Feasting on goat meat is a Jamaican ritual, even in Maine. It takes place in apple picking season every year. “Very spicy is good for you. Give da body warmth.”

they’ve got shoes, they have dresses that are pressed with lace, and the little boys are in kind of like uniforms, slacks that have creases and shirts that are pressed.”

Beverly may go back to Jamaica this winter. Errol says, “They’re anxious to see you back in Jamaica though Beverly, they are anxious!” Errol’s daughter asks, “The white lady not comin boc, Daddy?” and Errol says, “I tell her someday.”

Beverly remembers arriving at Errol’s house for the first time at night. “There were candles on the table, they didn’t have electricity, and there were all these black faces with white teeth all around the room. I mean just piles of people. Fifty people in his house waiting to see the white woman.”

When she got home, Beverly sent back presents to Errol, his family, and a few children in the village. “Errol wrote to me after that and said, ‘Please write to this one, this one, this one, and this one, and tell them that I did not steal their things. They all say that they know that you sent them all presents and that I gave them to my kids. Everybody’s mad at me.’” Beverly laughs and says, “They think I’m rich but I’m not. I have a family to support, too.”

“Everytime I got into the car everybody in the neighborhood, I mean you couldn’t shift, you had people hanging out the windows, everybody wanted to ride! I mean these people have never ever seen cars say nothing about riding in them. It was so exciting for them!”

She drove part way to Wiley and Cova Gregory’s house. “We walked all day straight up to their place. They all live right in the mountains, I can’t tell you, walk all day to get up there and you can’t possibly drive. I keep kidding them about if you take one more step you’ll be in heaven.”

“Manna used to fall,” says Errol knowing his scripture, “now you has to sweat, by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. You get the bread, get it here.”

“We get a lot of letters almost reading like a fundamentalist sermon, praising God, and thanking everybody, and praising us, and imploring us, IMPLORING us to ask them back,” Tom Gyger says. And it’s always, “well the good lord willing . . . .”

“By November the second,” Errol says, “if my life all speered I’ll be home, and sit and rest. Right here and home, home sweet home. Don’t hoff to work this hard again in the sun. You work hard up here on take it easy in Jamaica. I believe that’s a wise plan.”

“WHEN YA gonna come get some of dat goat?,” George says to me standing on his ladder leaning into the tree. I’d heard about the ninety pound bearded billy goat that Tom bought last year. He says it was the biggest goat he’d ever seen in his life. I’d seen the weathered lines of past goat hides that once stuck to the wall in the barn. One of last year’s hides slumps in the corner. Tom showed me the two picking bucket straps hanging in the barn where they slaughtered the last one. It took them thirty minutes to have the meat wrapped in plastic ready for Tom’s freezer.

Tom says, “It’s a delicacy in Jamaica, they get to eat more of it here than they get to at home. And boy the price of goat goes up, because they know ALL growers would like to buy one goat at least per year.”

“T’been heard for the last two or three days goat’s all gone, goat’s gone, goat’s gone. And that means hurry up Tom buy us another goat.”

“If there are no male goats handy by, they’ll take a female. I asked early on why are they so fascinated with the male? I have been told by the liaison officer that it is because there is beastification in Jamaica. And it has to do with all the verility that one might get consuming this male beast.”

I arrive too late. Kenny’s brother-in-law knew someone in a trailer up north who had two billy goats. So Dennis, Kenny’s brother-in-law, and
Kenny headed north in Kenny’s brother-in-law’s station wagon with a bottle of whiskey. They returned three hours later with half a bottle of whiskey and a good size goat for $40.

Dennis walks in. All eyes are on him. He says he made a deal and saved Tom money on the goat. He’s really cold from the trip. It’s cold and black outside of the farmhouse. The goat is in the back of the station wagon. It’s late and they’re tired, settled in warmth in front of the TV, but Dennis says they have to do it tonight. The new guys are ambitious, ready to do the work, ready to show their expertise, and ready for acceptance. Logan, the Christian, smiles slyly and says he likes to kill animals. Not man, but animals, he adds.

They need light outside in the open barn doorway. Kenny’s brother-in-law turns the station wagon and shines the headlights in. The goat is out already, trotting around frantically from hand to hand on a leather strap. Little Logan grasps the skin of the goat’s back raising it above his waist, weighing it. The goat baaaahhs with terror. Logan guesses forty pounds.

The blinding lights shine into the doorway. Distorted shadows bounce on the wall behind the dark faces circling around. Beyond the doorway it grows darker into the black depths. Logan, Earl, and Eddy, all new pickers, hold knives. They sharpen them. Hands folded behind their backs they stand, knives glistening in the headlights.

The goat lets out a scream, but no, it’s still trotting around. Dennis walks back and forth through the barn cringing. A curdling scream, short. Reggae penetrates the barn. Dennis says watching George, “on his is not mine, but I fine out his weakness on he fine out mine den we could pull along togedda. I tink that is right.” All others are silent except the few high-pitched hums they add to the music. Eyes go back and forth from their work to Dennis. They let him preach.

“You have to to treat yourself the best way you can treat anybody, you have to love yourself before you can love anybody, and I guess that is right. If you abuse yourself, you’re gonna abuse people. That’s not love because love is kind, love is mine, love is long sufferin’, love don’t give up, love don’t brag, it don’t have to, real genuine love.”

Dennis returns to his work. He shakes onion salt, garlic powder, meat tenderizer, and ginger. “Very spicy, is good for you. Give da body warmth.”

Earl and Logan cut the crushed meat and add it to the vegetables. “You see teamwork, teamwork. Everything you pull together, no tug-o-war. The moment you go dis way messed up.”

The other half of the pink slabs hang by leather straps on the white kitchen door. The meat and seasoning fill the pot. Dennis puts down his mug of whiskey and rolls up his sleeves.

He kneels on the floor, the pot in front of him. He rolls the meat in his hands and begins kneading and kneading. They stand around him waiting for the fresh smell of goat to rise up, musty and sour.

Logan’s shaving heads. He has the electric razor in the stark front hallway. It’s George’s turn. He sits under the glaring bare bulb, head held proudly.
The soft fuzz falls in a half circle around the back of his chair.
He patiently faces the dirty wall scribbled with numbers, telephone numbers. The black telephone that they each called home to Jamaica on to find out about the hurricane hangs on the wall. They don’t know how much their calls were, but they know where they called. Tom will collect tomorrow before they leave.

Eight of them are leaving tomorrow. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows. They will take the remaining seats on the bus full of apple pickers leaving from another orchard, Co-Hi Orchards in Standish. They’ll go all the way to Miami. Some will stop there to chop sugarcane, two new rows.

The music abruptly changes. George’s smile broadens when the reggae starts. Against the wall, head held high he moves gracefully, unconsciously up and down. He’s absorbed and distant, thinking of Jamaica as he watches Dennis show off some quick steps departing from the mood. Dennis looks tough with his black bandanna tied around his forehead, but he’s not. Dennis knows how to sway back and forth in place to the music of Jamaica, but he loves to dance other ways.

Kenny tries to join in. George says Kenny doesn’t understand reggae, although he tries to. George repeats the lyrics slowly, out loud. “No speech, no language, where the voice is not ’erd.” He wants me to understand.

George says, “He calls me his loss sheep.” I remember Tom saying it was the Prodigal Son story. “I didn’t get d’telegram. I was away for tree pickin season. He tried aftah he didn’t get me lock he first year right, den de second year I went to Canada.

“I didn’t like not even one person ovah der on de climate. De nex’sear I come to Florida for sugarcane. I phone and tell dat I om in Florida. Ond he said, ‘Oh good,’ ond I send him my contract numbah. If’er in Jamaica for tree season you can’t come back, hoff to start ovah again, ovah again.

“He calls his loss sheep . . . he said I was loss.”

LOS YEAR I CRY when I leave, Beverly, Tom, June.” The five that are staying don’t shave or cut their hair yet, except Errol. Logan cut his hair a few days ago.

Kenny’s friend, shows up with a bottle of whiskey. He says to Errol, “There’s my old buddy, you want a drink?”

“No sobba all day long! Sobba,” he announces sternly.

“Come on, one for road!”

“Me? No, no drinkin’.”

“Yeah who is I gonna aggrivate?”

“No more black guys . . . is a long time from home now, is time to go home. Kenny’s gonna miss us, see already MISS US. Tears, tears gonna come down his eyes.”

Altogether Errol’s lived about two long hard years in East Sebago, Maine. Twelve picking seasons. He has a dream of living here, but for now he just wants his wife to come and see the place where he’s been working so long. “On Beverly said anytime she con come. S’we gotta think about it.”

He pauses and says, “I get my bread here, I work my bread, so I’m very proud of dis place here. Wit da work, on’da place, on da ownah, on’evertthing. I love dem very much.”

After enough whiskey, Kenny’s coaxed into cleaning himself. He wants to join in. Pall Mall in hand, he looks scrawny with Wiley bending over him, black hands trimming an unhealthy blond beard, black eyes staring intensely at his chin.
Smiling, others stop packing to get a good glimpse. Underneath reveals a chin more receded than they thought and cheeks more sunken. His hair stays the same, needing a cut. His face changes too much, lacking the pride the others show in their new appearance.

They are different now, no longer rugged pickers in rubber boots, knit hats, and sweatshirts, carrying long ladders above them. No longer drumlike bags on their chests.

But Kenny's not leaving. This is home, and every year for six weeks Jamaicans are part of this home. He says someday he'll paint his face black and get right on that bus with them.

Dennis says, "I very easy to cry. I see someting funny my 'art easy to break, very easy. I'm a sympatetic person. I jus feel like when I leavin Jamaica e'know, I feel the same type of feelins. We slaughta a goat." He says to me, "I sittin' here goin' you are no more stranger to us, you like anybody here. Some of these guys I's the first time meetin' but we all from Jamaica ond we hall pull to-gedda as one—itta teamwork, ond you too jus join in jus like the same one of us y'know. I like the relationship, I appreciate it a lot."

Dennis says I remind him of his daughter Marlene. The difference in age, race, and culture, between Marlene and me become smaller. He says she always asks him why he has to leave for so long. He tells me he's very sorry. "Lost year I only spend three months at home. It 'urt."

"I been workin over here and my color has changed. When you go bock to Jamaica is coolah so they con pick you out different from people in dat is der. And the changes in your occent.

"But I love America. If I'ear't a mon talk anyting about America now I feel cut up about it. If I hear somebody should poss some dangerous remarks about this country I don like it. Jus like if I hear somebody poss some bod tings aboat Jamaica, because where you get your bread and butter you mus appreciate it.

"De only ting right now why I gotta stay in Jamaica right now I hoff to run set my farm cause my kids, but in my body, I con't fit bocck in Jamaica. I rather live here."

"I con't fit bocck in Jamaica for long. I cannot fit back der. It out of me now because I been hoppenin to me now. Ond more time in America, more dan Jamaica."

"Jus goin on comin."
What would you expect of an island ten minutes from Maine’s largest city? A pleasure park with resort hotels, ferris wheels and a carnival? Or maybe a dumping ground for undesirables? A military base? Or an escape hatch for nonconforming yuppies?

Wild guesses? No. What IS wild is that Peaks can lay claim to being ALL of the above, its closeness to Portland casting it into ever changing roles, from Coney Island, to welfare island to yuppie haven. AND YET—
PEAKS ALSO CLAIMS to be a community. To have a sense of place despite its chameleon reliance on Portland. Despite its nearness to the mainland, inevitably washed by waves of change from the urban center.

Peaks Island, the selective beachcomber, takes some of the city’s discharge and waits for the next tide to roll in and flush away the rest, selecting, always selecting.

On the surface, the island is a hodgepodge. Its mix of peoples have little in common—without even a common architecture to hide their differences. The nearly 1,500 year rounders (about 4,500 in the summer) are a collection of individuals, each making their mark within a chaotic collection of architecture.

Side by side can be found old style “ginger bread” homes contrasting with modern solar heated dwellings. Dilapidated summer cottages neighbor brand new custom homes. Some islanders have converted former stores into personal abodes. One person transformed a World War II bunker and another a former military watch tower into island residences. This and other dwellings fill the spaces along the shores and deep into the densely wooded interior.

The island is a mile and a half long by a mile and a quarter wide. It is 720 acres of topsoil over one large granite slab of rock. On the city side of the island, the community focuses where the ferry docks and the road leads up to a strip that offers a post office, grocery store, fire and police departments, two small restaurants and a laundromat.

Peaks Islanders, like their homes, are a wide range of types. There are no outwardly apparent social groupings and there is no norm. Inhabitants range from lobstermen to lawyers, artists to plumbers, and doctors to carpenters. As one long time resident put it, “Peaks is very diverse and heterogeneous, yet there is something that ties everyone together.”

That something is not too mysterious. It has to do with the three miles of water between Peaks islanders and the mainland. It has to do with the ferry ride to get on and off the island. It has to do with NOT living in Portland.

1. HERMAN LITTLEJOHN
Arrival: Native, 1914
When Peaks was Coney Island

HERMAN LITTLEJOHN is a 75 year old native islander who sees Peaks Island entirely as home, the seat of his family for generations, the place where he will be buried and where his sons will be buried. Nothing changes that, neither the hard times that drove him off the island for work, nor today’s siren good times, which might tempt him to sell the remnants of the large family holdings—but won’t.

Before the turn of the century, the very piece of land that his home sits on today was part of a large farm owned and tilled by his great great grandfather Joshua Trott. He claims that his forefathers arrived on Peaks in the late 1700s and took up an agrarian life that would last through most of the 1800s.

The name Littlejohn entered into the Trott lineage when a sea captain from England by the name of Joseph Henry Littlejohn came and married Herman’s grandmother. This was in the days when a few family names dominated the island: Skillings, Sterlings, Bracketts, Trots, Trefetheren. He began a trucking business, Littlejohn Transfer, to cater to the summer crowds that began arriving on the island in the late 1800’s.

Herman Littlejohn was born in 1914 and as a boy he grew up in the midst of its booming years as a summer resort. He was there to witness Peaks as it changed from a combination agricultural/summer resort to a suburban working class/summer resort.

He reflects back on the Twenties and remembers it was “sort of a suburb of the city, many people did as they do today, lived here and worked in Portland, transferred back on the boats. Then you had the influx in the latter part of June [when] summer people from Philadelphia, Boston and other places [were] coming here plus the people that came down daily for entertainment.”

Lean years followed and as Mr. Littlejohn remembers, “It stopped this as a Coney Island or Old Orchard Beach for daytrippers or your entertainment.” Although he quickly points out, “It did not lessen the number of people that came down for the summer, because my Dad was as busy as hell in the summers.”

Herman Jr. joined the Navy after high school. When he got out in 1937 there were no jobs to be had on Peaks or anywhere else in Maine. First he was an electrician for the Air Force, then an FBI agent, after completing a law degree in three years. In his retirement he lives on Peaks, which he and his non-native sons calls home.

The Peaks Island of his youth bore a look of gentility that he says is missing today. “Central Avenue was a line of beautiful homes. The whole street was that way and all of my friends lived on it, and now it’s a crumholme. I’ll bet half the people that live on it are on relief, still on relief.”

2. JOHN FLYNN
Arrival: 1941
“The New People Don’t Mingle”

INSIDE THE HOLLOW WOODEN building that the islanders call the Fifth Maine, the hall buzzes with activity. This day marks the hall’s hundredth anniver-
## ISLAND ATTITUDES

**PEOPLE: Their Age and Date of their arrival on Peaks Island**

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<th>CHANGE</th>
<th>PORTLAND</th>
<th>PEAKS</th>
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<td>Good for Peaks?</td>
<td>Good Neighbor?</td>
<td>Home Forever?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Herman Littlejohn</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Tolerated</td>
<td>Forever</td>
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<td>(Age: 75, Native)</td>
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<td>2. John Flynn</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>(Age: 63)</td>
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<td>3. Bud Perry</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Bad</td>
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<td>(Age: 70s)</td>
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<td>4. Richard Erico</td>
<td>1922</td>
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<td>(Age: 66, Native)</td>
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<td>5. Russ Edwards</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Bad</td>
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<td>(Age: 40s)</td>
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<td>6. Catherine Plante</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Forever</td>
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<td>(Age: 39)</td>
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<td>7. Bob Foley</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Time to Go</td>
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<td>(Age: 40s)</td>
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<td>8. Rick Boyd</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Inevitable</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Time Will Tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Age: 40s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Tom Morse</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Inevitable</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Time Will Tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Age: 30s)</td>
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sary as a Civil War Veteran’s Memorial. Tables display baked goods and crafts to benefit the organization. The island’s older generation mill about the tables, slowly measuring their steps on this hot July afternoon.

Out on the back porch by the railing, John Flynn settles himself comfortably on a weathered bench and directs his body toward the cool breeze blowing in off the water.

John reminisces about the old days when he first came to Peaks to settle and raise a family. “Oh, I like it. I’ve already said I’ve been here this long. I spent 27 years in the Fire Department and I went in as a private and ended up as chief and [now] I’m retarded,” he jokes. “I’m retired, but not really because I’m the deputy harbor master for the port of Portland, plus I lobster on the side, too.”

Crossing his arms he gazes out at the neighboring Cushing Island. He looks content. “The island’s been our life. I raised a family here, six children. Got two that live over town, and the other four live on the island.” He smiles, “The island’s been good to us.”

Of the changes over the years John comments, “The population fluctuates in cycles.” He gazes out across the narrow straight of water between Peaks and Cushing. “The big influx on the island was during the war when they built the port [and] you had a lot of people that were living on the island that worked over in the port.” John had arrived with that generation and notices the disappearance of his group.

“That group left and of course the new people that you have come down here now, the double income people, the so called professionals, the lawyers and stuff like that, they’ve been down here five years.” He observes that they “either get promoted or more affluent and they wanna be over town and so now they’re leaving. They’re starting to turn around and leave and we’re getting a lot more family people down here buying up cottages and stuff like that.”

Summing up why the newer group has been leaving, John explains, “They get that locked in feeling. They can’t get off the island when they want to. Some people just can’t live here, it drives them up a tree.”

Yet each generation wave leaves its mark. “They always leave one little segment that really like the island and they don’t go.”

Reflecting upon the new generation John feels, continued on page 54
History Through Island Eyes

In 1869 there were only fifty houses on the island which largely belonged to the descendants of the first settlers. They were a “hardy and industrious people, doing a little farming and a good deal of fishing,” according to Edward H. Elwell, a historian of the time.

This marked the beginning of an era when Peaks would flourish as one of the “best known summer resorts on the New England coast,” according to Katherine Wallace Stewart, a one time resident. It was a time she remembers when Peaks was widely referred to as the “Belle of the Bay.” As Edward Elwell once wrote of Peaks at this time, “The beauty of the island, and its facilities for sea bathing and fishing, yearly attract large numbers of summer boarders, as also excursion and picnic parties, and dwellers in tents by the seashore . . . no place on the coast offers greater or more varied attractions for summer residences.”

What followed was a developing bonanza. Attractions abounded on Peaks that included a merry-go-round, a five story observatory, hot air balloon rides, arcades, a skating rink, a bowling alley, a ferris wheel and one of the nation’s first summer theatres, the grand old Gem. It was the heyday of the steamboat that landed crowds of people on its shores who camped on the beaches, sailed its waters and vacationed in the huge multi-storied wooden hotels that used to adorn the landscape. “It was a real Old Orchard Beach in its day,” recounts one long time resident of Peaks.

Peaks flourished as a late 19th century summer playground until the late 1920s when the onslaught of the Great Depression quickly stripped the island of its status as a summer resort and brought it to near economic ruin.

Fires ravaged the island during the Thirties, claiming many of the old hotels as well as the famed Gem Theatre. John Feeny, an islander, reflects back on the disaster. “I was nine years old when that burnt, that was ’34, that made a tremendous fire for a few minutes, it was a concert hall with the tarpaper [siding] and it just went swish!”

The Forties arrived and with it the outbreak of World War II. The war brought renewed prosperity to the island when whole companies of enlisted men were stationed there in barracks. “There was 230 to 240 soldiers here,” remembers one islander, they even had “their own movie theatre.”

However the great influx did not insure wealth and good times for all. Herman Littlejohn remembers, “During the war the government came here and by eminent domain took the land that we had, took acres from my Dad, paid hardly anything for it.” There were numerous people that lost land, and “they didn’t offer it back to the people when the war ended.”

Another islander described it as when “they turned half of the island into one solid piece of military real estate and stayed here for the duration of the war. They fed the economy, they built the economy and when the war ended, they pulled the plug, they walked away, they didn’t re-subdivide [and] they left fifty percent of the island painted khaki.”

During the war time boom, hundreds of ship workers flocked to Peaks as an affordable place to live. “They’d come down and rent a cottage for a hundred dollars a month and live in it. They’d tack newspapers up on the windows, it was terrible,” says John Feeny.

With the end of the war, the island emptied and another depression followed. “People moved off in droves,” says Russ Edwards.

In the Sixties Peaks, became a so called “dumping ground for the welfare cases” of Portland. As Catherine Plante recalls, “Peaks reached what they call this really low point economically speaking where the city of Portland used to send low income or welfare [people] because the economy wasn’t that great here.”

However, she goes on to say, “That changed from about the mid Sixties on, that image changed, people were getting better jobs, better positions and of course had a lot of pride in their community. The old families always had pride in the community and they resented the city [for] using [the island] as that kind of a place, putting that kind of a stigma on the island.” She concludes, “So that corrected itself pretty fast because the islanders wouldn’t put up with it, and the people didn’t want to be labeled that way at all.”

At the same time the turbulent and revolutionary fervor of the later Sixties had its impact. Hippies migrated from as far away as Haight Ashbury to settle Peaks. “We didn’t have all that many here, and they didn’t stay long. There was nothing here for them,” says John Feeny.

The Seventies brought stagnation, but also the return of a certain composure as the former “community life” of earlier times took hold.

With the dawning of the high strung and affluent Eighties, a new generation evolved. A new breed of young urban professionals or yuppies appeared and transformed Peaks into a chic, trendy real estate target.

The end of the Eighties brings the slow fade of high times. For Peaks it’s the end of an era that has brought gentrification to its real estate and yuppies to its shores. Times are changing and Peaks Island, by no means a stagnant time capsule, changes with it.
continued from page 51

"People aren't as friendly as they used to be, they aren't as close. People are more like recluses now, they don't get out and do anything. They don't belong to organizations, they don't belong to churches."

"It really astounds me when you come down on the ferry boat, the amount of people that get off and they go up over the hill and they fade into the woods there and you never see 'em until the next morning when it's time to walk down again and [they] come back down again like hoards."

"I don't know where they go, I mean there's nothing here [now]. They just go in their houses and stay there or they have individual little groups I guess."

John reasons, "They're so diversified and they come from different places, different statuses, and they just don't mingle. They're not hometown so to speak."

John reflects back in time, "Years ago when you came down on the boat you knew everybody. If you've seen a stranger, everyone says, 'Who's that?' Now you get on the boat and you don't know anybody. In fact I let a boat go out the other day looking at it 'cause I didn't know a soul on the boat and I didn't know the boat was going to Peaks Island."

John adjusts his glasses on his creased face and gives a quick shrug. "Other than that the island stays the island...you can't change it." Looking out once again at the water around Peaks, he assures himself, "I'll never leave it."

3. BUD PERRY

"Nothing's Changed for the Better"

"AT ONE TIME I knew every man, woman, child, cat and dog on the island and not only by name but nickname and pedigree. Now I don't know [more than] ten to fifteen percent of the people," Bud Perry complains as he shifts his weight on his favorite sitting wall.

Island Avenue runs by only a few feet from where he sits and is unusually busy for a Saturday morning. Despite Bud's complaint, people still pass by on the sidewalk and greet him with a familiar and friendly "Hello, Bud." An occasional car slows down and a hand flashes a quick wave out an open window.

Yet Bud seems convinced of the loss as he watches a passing car with New Jersey plates and two anonymous figures staring coldly ahead.

"You know it's not like it used to be where everybody was somebody you knew from the year before, ten years before, fifteen years before... 'Oh you're so and so's son'," he says as if stepping back in time and talking to a passerby on the street. "It isn't like that anymore."

"Oh it's all changed, it's changed in the last two years."

"Well my decision is that there's nothing changed for the better." Reaching up past his protruding cigar he grabs onto the visor of his yellow, purple and white Lion's cap and shifts it back at an angle. He digs into yellowish white hair with two worn fingers and explains, "Well I don't know, it all depends whether you think it's for the good or the bad 'cause we've been invaded by yuppies. All the old families that worked in Portland are all gone."

Another car rolls by with no wave and Bud watches it drive off down the street.

"Older people are dying off and of course the kids are selling the houses. They think the kids up town [Portland] have so much more than they have down here that they can't wait to get off what they call 'the rock,' which is the island, and they leave. They don't want to hang around any longer and ten years later they try to get back, you know, they realize what they're missing, what a good place it is."

Bud's voice whines with disgust. "It was as I say about fifteen years ago, it was all families out here." Chewing on his cigar he looks up and then down the street at the general store and post office. "You had the small town atmosphere with all the city services. It was a beautiful place to live. But it's all changed now."

Though he first visited Peaks as a child in 1922, Bud has been a resident since 1957 when he was still "going to sea" in the Merchant Marine. "I had thirty years. That was enough. It got to be kinda hard." In 1968 Bud "retired," but kept himself busy on the island in various ways.

"I bought the taxi business down here and ran that for six or seven years and then I bought myself a lawn mower and cut grass. You know you can always find things to do. Then I ran into troubles health wise, I had to cut it out."

Since then Bud has moved into a large white apartment building overlooking Island Avenue where he lives alone. He comes out to sit on his wall almost daily. "I have my pattern of life, I go down to the restaurant and get my tea and muffin in the morning and go to the store, go to the post office, come back and hang around sitting here [and] wave to people as they go by and that's about it."

Farther up Island Avenue from Bud's wall, five or six "For Sale" signs stand on front lawns and hang on the sides of houses. Bud glances in that direction and speaks out around his cigar, "Some of these places, they've sold five or six times in ten years."

"Of course [when] we moved down here in '57 you coulda' bought the whole island for $100,000. Now ya can't even buy a house here."

"Now it's yuppies. I don't know where they get
"The old islanders separate themselves mentally from Portland. For our peace of mind, to exercise our rights."

Photograph above by Dave Read, below by Tonee Harbert
their money from. Jeez they were buying last year right and left and building. But property isn’t moving as fast as it was in the last couple of years because ‘Black October’ took care of a lot of people’s priorities.”

Bud stares off into the direction of Portland across the bay. “I just don’t put faith in the city anymore. They promise you everything, but they don’t do anything. Three years now they’re gonna be resurfacing this part of the road.

“I love it on a very cloudy, foggy day when I can’t see Portland, I think that’s the best thing in the world.”

4. RICHARD ERICO
Arrival: Native, 1922
“Everybody Wants to Get Rich Quick”

LIKE JOHN FLYNN, RICHARD ERICO has felt the changes on Peaks and is unsettled by what he sees happening.

“Everybody wants to get rich quick out here.” Richard sits on his front porch where he surveys the activity up and down Island Avenue. “These houses, they got prices on them that are way beyond what they’re worth in my opinion, ’course I’m not a real estate guy.”

Across the street, a middle aged couple wanders down the sidewalk and stops before a house with a “For Sale” sign on it. “Does it every summer,” Russ laughs at his neighbor’s annual summer tourist prank. “I asked him one day last fall, ‘How many do you have to come look at it?’ He says, ‘I had about 32. Twenty-six of them are just nosey; four of them might have been interested in it; two were really interested.’ Every year he ups and ups the price.” Richard’s blue eyes laugh above his long angular nose that points down to a thin crease of a smile.

“They have houses out here for over $300,000.” Ten years ago such prices would have produced laughter and mockery. In the past year they have produced big profits and a change of character on the island.

Richards is critical of a row of houses crammed onto land without front yards or back yards. They back into a steep hill that descends to the bay. “There’s been slides on the embankment out here.” He amuses himself with this thought.

Now he is pensive. “I liked it the other way. Lot of younger people here now, people who go to school, work around the Old Port area.” He adds that “there’s quite a few college degrees around here pounding nails, stuff like that.

“You don’t know how many are living here because you check mailboxes when you’re walking around and you see three or four names on a mailbox.”

Lillian Clough, a neighbor and a resident since the early 40s, sees the newcomers as “modern strangers.” In turn she believes that islanders have begun to “feel like strangers in their own town, because everyone is so strange to us.”

As to the changing population, he says, “Different groups come to the island, different age groups, and change the way of living down here, stay four or five years, and all of a sudden they’re gone.”

A lifetime resident, Richards says a part of why they leave is poor city services. “When you live out here, you get what’s left over from the city. We are considered second class citizens. Quite a few years ago, we had a Portland city manager who made the statement, ‘What the hell do you live out here for?’ When people were trying to get something out of the city, some improvements or something, that was his attitude.” Richard shakes his head in disgust.

“The Portland Public Works Director made a remark at one of our neighborhood meetings. Somebody was harrassing him about the road.” The man complained that the island roads “most of them are full of holes.” And the director says, ‘Well, one thing about them it slows down the traffic.’ He said that! Picture him saying that about Congress Street.”

5. RUSS EDWARDS
Arrival: 1960
“Peaks Should Secede”

“THE SYSTEM IS working against us.” Russ Edwards speaks out against the Portland City Council. “It’s been a personal aggravation ever since I set foot out here.” An island resident since 1960, he feels it is time for Peaks to secede from the City of Portland.

Though islanders have complained about Peaks’ political predicament for years, Russ decided to take action and do something about it. This prompted the formation of the Alternative Government Committee five years ago in an attempt to have Peaks Island secede from the city of Portland.

His reasons were simple. “We’re an influence group, but we don’t carry enough votes to swing an election. We can give you a little nudge and help you if it’s a real close one, but other than that we’re not important. That’s the biggest reason why we really should be our own community.”

The way it stands now, “Peaks Island is considered part of Munjoy Hill for district voting.” Though Peaks has representatives, they are subject to “the way Munjoy Hill votes,” and according to Russ, “we have to accept.”

Russ Edwards is convinced of Peaks Island’s unique character. “There’s no question in my mind that we are a separate community. Our problems are so diverse
[and] so unconnected. We are a very small rural community not unlike many of your lakefront communities in upstate, Upper Cumberland and York County.

Russ chose Peaks because it’s different from other places. He prefers the tight knit community and the congenial atmosphere. “I find people friendly,” he proudly states about the island.

Furthermore, Peaks is unique because it operates under a completely different economy. “We have a tremendous number of summer people who come here and stay with us through the summer months and then go away and leave our economy on a real down side cycle when they go.

“This is the kind of economy we have. That’s a far cry from a city that is out cultivating industrial parks and high tech industries, huge office buildings and big retail centers.”

“It just ain’t us. No way at all. So our problems just from the nature of the communities are entirely different, they’re separated.”

The committee formed in 1984 and initiated a study of the feasibility of secession. “The committee discovered in its preliminary studies that if we are not part of the city of Portland, we could reduce our taxes by thirty percent [and] increase our services to the community by a like amount.” That is “a thirty percent increase in services.”

Looking back at their study Russ remembers, “We were surprised by our research result and frankly gratified.” Yet he admits, “There was a reaction. It all happened so quickly it made a lot of people on the island very nervous, and the worst thing that happened was the sensationalism by the press. That scared more people than anything factual that we had to say.” Such a reaction also labeled Russ and his group as the “lunatic fringe,” as he puts it.

Though the Alternative Government Committee has faded from the political picture for the time being, Russ and his associates are planning to return with revised proposals for a separate government. “Once we have something to tell,” the committee will be back. In the meantime Russ comments, “It’s moving very slowly, but it’s moving.”

The three miles of water between Peaks and Portland creates an ocean of difference and a severe contrast in perception of island needs and problems, he says. “That’s the other part of it, and probably the most important part. It’s easy to talk about dollars, but you know if you’re running a government in a community that you live in, and you make a mistake, like aren’t you gonna live with that mistake?” Russ questions.

“Those people in Portland don’t have to live with the mistakes they make out here. That’s really important.” He adds, “You can really see it. Come out here
and drive around the roads and it'll wreck your car. But they don't care, they come out on the fire boat once a summer for a clam bake.

"It's true that they don't understand our problems and why should they? I mean they don't live here. They live in a community that has a different set of problems, and those are the ones they have to deal with. It's much larger than we are, it's huge compared to us. Basically, we're insignificant. We're an aggravation. I don't blame the councilors. I don't know how they could act any differently."

6. CATHERINE PLANTE
Arrival: 1953
"Portland Is Our Lifeline"

WHILE RUSS AND MANY of the older islanders like Bud feel an aversion towards their relation with the city of Portland, there are others, like Catherine Plante, who see the relationship to the city as a "vital link" to island life.

Catherine Plante's living room spreads out wide in space and seems to hover over Casco Bay as it opens directly into Portland. The large picture windows create this effect and it seems as though the city lies at her doorstep.

Sitting in an easy chair, Catherine Plante, a ruggedly attractive woman, admires the view across the shining bay. "We're very much related to Portland, we depend on them." Turning her back to the bay, she says, "Peaks needs Portland, it's our lifeline."

Although the family business has depended on Portland for its water taxi service, fuel business and commercial barge, she also senses the "vital link" of the island to the city as a whole.

Tossing back her sun worked brown hair, she settles herself squarely back in her seat. "We can't work without the mechanics of the mainland," she asserts. "Without what the mainland can do for us" it wouldn't be able to work out here. "Because we're so integral, we're so cohesive, we really have to have it [Portland] in order to survive. When you start thinking of an island as isolation, it's the wrong attitude. You need the parent body even though we're pretty much self contained on this island.

"You'll see we have a post office, we have a day care, we have a Senior Citizen Center, we have a couple of churches, store, taxis, about anything you want, telephone services, lights—I mean we're pretty independent. We even have our substation for power, so when the mainland is cut off we have power."

Yet she still emphasizes the "lifeline." Peaks depends upon Portland for employment, its high school, and businesses. "If you look at the picture of the whole body, we have to depend upon Portland."

Catherine feels that many people who come to Peaks to live, especially the more recent newcomers, adopt the wrong attitude towards island life and arrive with a popular view of what island life should be like.

Some of the "back-to-landers" or "granolas," as she calls them, want to "stop it in time" and bring Peaks back to the way it was. No cars. No roads. She also feels, "Some islanders are worried or afraid of the island becoming over developed, too much like the Portland waterfront."

Such was the concern of the Solar Technology and Research Organization (STAR), an environmental organization, that cited the environmental impact of automobiles as a reason for a reduction in vehicles, but not necessarily their total removal.

She sees others like Russ Edwards as "too revolutionary." He creates problems for the island with his radical political views that weaken the already tenuous relationship between Peaks Island and the Portland City Council.

"You simply cannot go banging on City Hall's doors saying we need this, this and this, and we don't care how we get it." She implies that one cannot take the self righteous outlook that, "We pay taxes, therefore we're entitled to it." She shakes her head.

"The formula isn't that simple, and people that come here with that mental attitude or that premise, they're barking up the wrong tree and they [have] really wrecked the relations between the island people and the Portland people. It's a real negative thing when [a group] is working pretty hard to try to keep things going as well as possible.

"If you're not an island person or if you're not aware of island problems, you waste a lot of time barking up the wrong tree to no advantage."

Catherine feels the true islander inherits a certain "awareness." They are "aware of where the island has been, where it is, and where it's going."

She says that to be an islander is not an exclusive right granted only by birth. "Even if you're newly arrived, if you start feeling that philosophy" of understanding island needs "and develop into that, that becomes part of your background, it becomes part of you. And you want to keep that kind of atmosphere going."

It is also a matter of pace. "Not going too fast, not going too slow, but going at the correct pace. And you only know the correct pace as each year passes, but you have to feel that pace as it changes. And you have to feel that as circumstances change, environments change. You have to react."

As her daughter Amanda puts it, "If we go too fast, we'll spoil what's here. If we go too slow, we'll cut ourselves off." Though she is seventeen, Amanda speaks with the wisdom of an older islander. "You can be divided from them [Portland] but you can't cut
“YEARS AGO DOWN ON THE BOAT YOU KNEW EVERYBODY. NOW YOU GET ON THE BOAT AND YOU DON’T KNOW ANYBODY.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONEE HARBERT
THE YUPPIES ARE LEAVING. "THEY GET THAT LOCKED IN FEELING. SOME PEOPLE JUST CAN'T LIVE HERE. IT DRIVES THEM UP A TREE."

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE READ

yourself off totally, otherwise you'll be killing yourself, you'll be strangling yourself, just because you want to be independent."

Her mother Catherine continues, "The sooner a person adopts that attitude, the quicker we can get on with improving our community life and our quality." And she stresses, "It won't happen overnight. It improves very slowly."

Catherine recognizes the need for a certain separateness. "Almost all the old islanders and the people who lived here, verbally and mentally separate themselves from Portland. You can isolate yourself mentally, which is what we all do for our betterment, for our peace of mind and to exercise our rights."

However, she emphasizes, "You don't do it in a way that you negate the positive effect of what the larger area of our community does for us. Everybody knows that we're very much a part of Portland, but we just deal with things in a different way."

Her feelings are summed up in her belief of "installing the worth of the island in her kids. To know what they have on the island and appreciate it, but still be with the times and change with them." And not to be like a person, she describes "with their head stuck in the sand."

7. BOB FOLEY
Arrival: 1973
"It's a Zoo. Time to Go."

THE NEW GENERATION, those who have come to live on and know Peaks in the last ten to fifteen years, express their sense of island life from the perspective of a short term relationship. Unlike Catherine Plante, Russ Edwards and some of the older generation, they don't have a sense of the history and long term change on the island, but see Peaks as it stands in the light of the Eighties.

Bob Foley, a resident of fifteen years, shares many of the older generation's sentiments about change. Unlike them, he's ready to leave.

"It's a zoo, it's a zoo. Time to go." Bob Foley's voice resounds in the near empty kitchen of his Island Avenue home. Bob stands tall with square features, curly black hair and a full mustache. A resident of Peaks since he was sixteen, he is disillusioned with what has become of Peaks in the last few years.

Bob, who is in his thirties and owns an antique dealing business in Portland, feels that it is time to move off the island. "It's fifty percent for the business and fifty percent because I really," he ponders for a moment, "if I wasn't in the business, I'd still want to move. Let's put it that way."

"Boat tickets and ferry price keeps going up, [and I] can't park down there in the parking lot" on Peaks
island anymore. I used to be able to park my [other] car on Commercial Street and now it costs me $50 a month for parking which isn’t bad compared to other people [who are] paying $75 a month.”

Bob complains of the recent hike in taxes. “My tax is based on a Portland tax base. Like I say, I know the taxes and what they are on this house for the services you get. They’re the shits, really they are.

“For years and years, the taxes might have gone up a little bit, but nothing major. Only in the past three years [there have been] great increases, because all these people are moving up. All the yuppies there with their kids and all of a sudden they think that they need better schools, and yet have more houses, so you need better sewage systems and we do the water systems and this and that and [it] raises the taxes up and then the people that have lived [here] all of their lives can’t afford it. They change it right back to the reasons why they say they left.”

He creaks back into his antique chair and settles his forearm on its back rest. “What I can tell you [is that] it’s getting too crowded out here with all the construction going on and all the new houses. He refers to the recent influx of development on the once nearly barren back shore.

He softens. His eyes wander around the white plastered kitchen and out the window to the shade of the trees in the yard. His voice mellows. “It’s nice in the summer time, that I will miss.” His gaze becomes distant. “I think a lot of people are content with the island living.

“I don’t regret moving out here, that’s for sure. It was really nice, really nice. You know it’s been good to me.” Leaning back in his chair, he looks back out the window into the familiar yard and sighs, “I guess it’s just time to go.”

8. RICK BOYD
Arrival: 1976

9. TOM MORSE
Arrival: 1983
“Lucky to Live on Peaks”

RICK BOYD AND HIS FRIEND, Tom Morse represent the latest wave of people who have found a special quality in island living. They have adopted roles as “islanders” and are determined to preserve them. Sitting out on the deck of the Jones Landing Restaurant enjoying a few drinks after the work week, they explain their reasons.

“I wouldn’t trade this experience in for all the money in the world,” Rick leans forward to declare as he finishes off his Friday afternoon “three olive martini.” Rick, a balding but youthful man in his early forties with a wild red beard and glasses, likes his occasional martini, but he is referring to his life here on Peaks Island.

His friend Tom agrees and adds, “There’s an incredible sense of community out here that is really unique, and unique to island living.”

Easing back into his chair and looking out over Casco Bay, Rick recounts, “[One] day I decided I was gonna be on Peaks Island as long as I was gonna be in Maine. Just for the sheer community of it.” His eyes glow behind his glasses. “I’ve never seen anything like it in my life.”

Rick has lived on Peaks Island for the past twelve years and commutes to Portland daily, where he holds two jobs. “I work one week at the Medical Center giving anesthesia and then the other week I work in the boatyard over in South Portland, ’cause I get burned out at the Medical Center.”

He plucks a gin soaked olive from his martini glass and pops it into his mouth. He tells of the time when his house burned down and the people of Peaks were there to help. “I had a fire eight, nine years ago,” he begins, “and I think there was a little bit more of a community then, because it was smaller. But not to take away anything from what we have today.

“And my neighbors said, ‘What can we do to help? Can we help to gut out the house?’

“And I said, ‘Yeah.’” His voice becomes charged as he zealously continues with the story.

“Saturday morning fifty people arrived at my house. It took me three years to build the house, [and] by NOON,” he stresses noon, “everything was at the dump that we had stripped out and the second crew of another twenty people arrived to finish up.” He blurts out an amazed laugh and beams a smile. He relates another example. “You know if someone needs a hand hanging drywall, you gotta beat your friends back ’cause everyone wants to get in there and do it.”

“If you have a chore that needs to be done, a major chore, the victims are everywhere,” Tom adds sarcastically.

Tom, a free lance copywriter and advertising specialist in Portland says, “As a lifestyle it’s very endearing and it perhaps boils down to this. We [he and his girl friend] have been out here for six years [and] I couldn’t begin to count the people I know on a first name basis that live in my community. If I’d moved to some development or neighborhood in Portland, it would take me decades to know as many people in my neighborhood as I know on Peaks Island.”

He attributes this largely to his daily travel on the ferry back and forth to the mainland. “The ferry acts like the narrow part of a funnel or an hour glass, and you have the island and everybody goes through that channel to the mainland and you’re forced to meet people.”

“It’s just, it’s just idyllic, it’s really idyllic. To be able
to work in a city as nice as Portland with the opportunity that Portland has and then come home to this every night is very special,” he says taking a swig of beer and pointing out to the bay lying just beyond the deck of the restaurant.

“If you can deal with the ferry schedule [it can] lend a certain rhythm to your life. You have to be on the boat going in the morning, and so you HAVE to be on the boat, so wow you arrive to work on time. And the last boat tonight is midnight.” It’s Friday.

He says he does not feel cut off from Portland night life. “You reach an age in your life, I imagine the late twenties, when you don’t need to close down bars, and you don’t need to party until two o’clock in the morning anymore and it makes a wonderful excuse to leave a party at quarter of eleven.”

“What I think is important to discuss is the 6:15 boat.” Tom leans forward with mock seriousness.

Rick nods, “That is a character building boat.” He grins. “I take the 6:15 out of principle. Just because...it’s incredible, we get the most incredible cross section of people that you’d ever want to meet in your life.”

“There’s Rick, an anesthetist,” Tom explains. “Mike drives a Budweiser truck. Steve owns a construction company. Gary is a computer programmer, data processor for Union Mutual. Joan is a computer programmer. And Dean works in a freezer warehouse for Shaw’s. So you have this incredible range from good solid blue collar workers up to, I’d have to say Attorney Whitman.” He adds, “Who windsurfs twelve months out of the year.”

“And the 7:15 is the drone boat. The drone boat is the people that, they’re good solid Americans and all of that, but they don’t have to be as early as we do, whether it’s by choice or dictate, and that’s kinda the drone boat. They’re great people and we have friends on the 7:15, but the 7:15 boat is all kinda,” he mimicks a half asleep person, “and nobody’s really awake enough to talk.

“And the 8:15 is the sloth boat, because anybody that can afford to be in Portland at quarter of nine in the morning is either independently wealthy or has, you know, no self respect.”

Rick comments, “We’re hard cores. But it’s fun. The 6:15 boat is a lot of fun. People don’t believe it.”

Tom adds, “You know I hate it when I miss the 6:15.”

Rick eyes his watch and rises abruptly, announcing, “I have to beat feet gang, nice talking to ya.”

Tom remains and talks about his generation on Peaks. “I think for the most part the people in my generation that are out here are retired Hippies. We’re people that went through the Sixties and Vietnam. But there aren’t that many yuppies here, there aren’t that many true yuppies.” He calls them ‘Yuppie Slime.’

“My perception of the yuppies is ah, you know BMW’s, expensive suits, suspenders, jobs where pay is more important than the product and I don’t see that. I mean there are people out here that are attorneys, and there are people out here that are CPA’s, and they’re different, they really [are] all kinda aging hippies.

“That comes back to the fact that it’s a personal choice of lifestyle. It’s not that one is better than the other. But to live out here you have to be slightly eccentric. And to be a yuppie you have to be slightly mainstream, and there are not that many mainstreamers out here.”

As for the elderly of Peaks who sense a loss of community, Tom offers the explanation, “It may be relative to their age. We’re part of the Baby Boom, which has a tendency to distance older people from younger people. So our sense of community, again it’s not better or worse, it’s just different, and we tend to hang around with people our own age.

Tom stresses, “We don’t want to dominate the culture. We want to mix with the culture. Our presence on the island changes things,” he admits. “But we don’t wanna rob the older generation of their peace and tranquility.

“The people that stay out here are the people that feel that the inconveniences are outweighed by this lifestyle. If you can live out here and deal with the inconveniences, you should consider yourself very lucky. And I think ‘lucky’ is the key word. And it’s not so much a matter if you’re lucky to have found a place out here, because those places are available, or that you’re lucky to have been born here or you were lucky to move here, it’s just a matter if you can fit in the lifestyle.

“I consider myself very lucky, very fortunate.”

His hand motions in the direction of Portland across the bay. “There’s some people at the oyster bar at Market and Middle Street, they’re having cocktails and they’re very happy with their lifestyle.” He pauses for a moment as if to soak up the atmosphere and to bask in the orange red light of the sun setting over the bay. “I prefer this.”
Manor House Inn, Bar Harbor, 106 West Street, 207-288-3759. Innkeepers: Jan and Frank Matter. Twenty-two room Victorian mansion built by Colonel James Foster as a summer "cottage" in 1887. Listed in the National Register. All rooms have authentic period furnishings and private baths. Home-baked breakfast. Formal Victorian garden and beautifully landscaped grounds. $74 to $140 for two. Open May to mid-November.

Blue Hill Inn, Blue Hill, 207-374-2844. Innkeepers: Mary and Don Hartley. Constructed in 1830 as the home of Varnum Stevens. The Federal style inn has been serving guests as an inn since 1840. Ten guest rooms with private baths, all furnished with period antiques. Perennial gardens. Full breakfast and many course dinners served daily. $60 to $70 for two, lower off season. Open year round except March.

Ricker House, Cherryfield, P.O. Box 256, 207-546-2780. Innkeepers: Jean and Bill Conway. An 1803 colonial style home built by blacksmith Amaziah Ricker. One of the oldest homes in the area. Grounds border the Narraguagus River, famous for salmon. In the heart of Maine's blueberry country. A comfortable Downeast lodging with full country style breakfast served each morning. $35 single, $40 double. Open year round.


McGilvery House, Searsport, Route 1, 207-865-6566. Innkeeper: Sigurd Knudsen, a/jr. Built by Israel Bagley in 1772, it is the oldest house in the area and has served as an inn and a schoolhouse. The area's first worship services were held here and Mr. Bagley opened the area's first store next to the house. Set in the country on six acres of fields and woods, the Bagley House offers five antique-filled guest rooms with both private and shared baths. Full breakfast is served to all guests. A splendid country home. $60 to $80 double, lower off season. Open year round.

Bagley House, Freeport, R.R. 3, Box 269C, 207-865-6566. Innkeeper: Sigurd A. Knudsen, a/jr. Built in 1860, is one of the best examples of mansard architecture in central and north coastal Maine. McGilvery was a Searsport ship owner and builder. He and his four brothers were all ship captains. Spacious guest rooms, some with ornate marble fireplaces and views of Penobscot Bay. Shared or private bath available. Home baked continental breakfast. $45 double. Open May through October.


Pomegranate Inn, Portland, 49 Neal Street, 207-772-1006. Set in Portland's historic and architecturally rich Western Promenade, the home is registered by Greater Portland Landmarks as the Barbour/Milliken House, circa 1884. Stunning interior design retains the architectural integrity while lending a decidedly contemporary flavor. Truly unique accommodations. Six guest rooms, antiques, fine linens. Full continental breakfast. $95 double. $85 off season. Open year round.

Kennebunk Inn, Kennebunk, 45 Main Street, 207-985-3351. Innkeepers: Angela and Arthur LeBlanc. Located in the heart of Kennebunk, the Inn has been a landmark since 1799. Nationally renowned for its fine dining room and charming, historic accommodations, the Kennebunk Inn offers a variety of guest rooms with both private and shared baths. Full continental breakfast. $45 to $98 double, lower off season. Open year round.

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