ELENA and Mohammed go to school with children from 25 countries learning a new language in Maine.
We thought we’d heard all there was to hear about the word Salt. Like it being an acronym for Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty or Save All Lives Today. Then the variations on a theme. Like salt lick and saltine. And those other terms that are closer to home. Like saltwater, salt of the earth, salty people. Terms that were the reasons we chose the name, salt, for our organization almost 25 years ago. And just when we thought we’d heard all the variations, a new twist has come along. Saltweb. What’s most galling about this new word is that we came up with it ourselves. It means that Salt’s now on the web. Go figure.

http://www.salt.edu
CONTENTS

2 Nineteen Pine Street
Around the corner from Salt waited a compelling story about a school. We tell it in this issue, challenging negative press about Reiche.

4 Myrtle
Myrtle Lowell left home at age 13 to go to work. That was more than 70 years ago. She's never had time for needlework. "Course not! God almighty! Only the Southern ladies could do that. Not us old crows."

18 Multilingual School Children
Portland's Reiche School has 120 students in five multilingual classes who speak 22 languages. Some are just learning to say ice cream in English, others are ready for mainstream groups.

33 Working on the Scotia Prince
It takes 200 people to keep the Scotia Prince cruising with its 1,300 passengers from Portland to Nova Scotia. Photo essay.

40 Comeback of the Boxers
Amateur boxing gains a foothold in Portland as young contenders sweep the Northeast Regional championship tournament.

50 A Home for Wandering Volvos
Volvos, babies, dogs. All much at home at Alan Auto in Portland, where wounded cars revive in a spotless environment. Photo essay.

58 One Island, Two Worlds
At one end, Great Diamond Island has a growing upscale resort community moving into revamped Fort McKinley. At the other end, but a world apart, are the year round cottagers.

THE BIGGEST STORY about Reiche Elementary School in Portland was yet untold. That's what we thought as lurid press reports about the school hit the streets during the summer. Charges of “inappropriate” behavior in the classroom (a child allowed to stroke a kindergarten teacher’s ankle), of disciplinary action, of a principal’s involuntary resignation, of parental support and teacher distrust, a leaked letter, police investigation. One Portland tabloid even called Reiche the “School for Scandal,” poaching from the title of a baudy Restoration play.

We knew another story. One we publish in this issue. One that Salt students had been documenting for months.

Around the corner from Salt, we saw an extraordinary thing happening over the years. Children from two dozen countries were going to school in classrooms where none of them spoke the same language. Mind boggling. A veritable Tower of Babel in the making, but that’s not what was happening.

Instead, these children of many countries were laughing and learning and playing together. In a new school in a strange land, before a week was over, they could say in perfect English “ice cream.” In two weeks they could count, ask to go to the bathroom, listen to stories, lead the lines to the playground, and play learning games like Binglish.

Two Salt students took this story on, Jennifer Fayocavitz and Amy Conn. In the winter and spring of this year they spent months at Reiche documenting what they saw and heard and observed. They were given the full run of the school, the cooperation of the teachers, the support of the principal, Marguerite MacDonald, and access to the children and their parents both at school and at home.

Read our story about Reiche and see what you think. Stack beside the negative press the clear message of sensitive teaching in a respectful environment that is coming from that school. This is not the School for Scandal. This is a school that is earnestly seeking its way in uncharted waters. This is the School for Hope.

CONTRIBUTORS

ETHAN ANDERSON graduates with a degree in English from the University of New Hampshire in December. He and his Salt photography partner, Chris Ruder, migrate to San Francisco soon after.

JUDITH BENNETT grew up in Scarborough, Maine, but had taken her camera to the streets of Brazil, India, South Africa and Cuba before coming to Salt in 1994. Her photography is part of a two-woman exhibit at the Salt Gallery until December.

AMY CONN’s Texas accent and friendly manner won her ready friends for her project at Reiche School. She graduates with a photography degree in December from the University of Texas, Arlington.

JENNIFER FAYOCAVITZ was the first undergraduate from Wells College to take part in the Salt program. She will graduate in May with a psychology degree and minors in Spanish and women’s studies.

ALYSSA GROSSMAN was a graduate of Brown University when she came to Salt in 1996. Recently she has worked in the Seattle area on an oral history project, Densho—The Japanese American Legacy.

HEATHER KADAR is now a staff photographer for the Ahwatukee Foothills News in Arizona. She graduated from Edinboro University after Salt.

CHRISTOPHER RUDER gained a love for wooden boats while in Maine for the Salt program in the fall of 1996. So did he photograph boats? Check it out. Boxers. He graduated with a degree in journalism from Marquette University in May.

BOGART SALZBERG is a reporter for the Lincoln County Weekly. He has the Damariscotta beat, with a weekly column called Bogielog. An almost native of Maine, he came to Salt from College of the Atlantic.

KATHRYN WEIGEL began her documentary photography at Moorhead State University before continuing as a graduate student at Salt. A South Dakaton, she was drawn to Maine because of similarities she saw between the two states.

ERIC WHITE is associate editor of the Times Chronicle in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. His Salt semester in the spring of 1995 came after graduating from Temple University.
SALT MAGAZINE

Salt Magazine is produced in cooperation with the University of Maine at Farmington, Wells College, Wheaton College and Southern Oregon University. It is a product of educational programs conducted at the Salt Center for Documentary Field Studies. Address: Salt Magazine, P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Maine 04101. Telephone: (207) 761-0660 Email: salt@ime.net Website: http://www.salt.edu

STAFF:
Pamela Holley Wood, director
Hugh T. French, assistant director
Sue Robinson, director of enrollment
Kristin McK.inlay, R. Todd Hoffman, photographic director

CONTRIBUTORS:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
Severin Beliveau
Alan Brewer
Diane Casey
Tom Donaldson
William Dunnett
Hugh T. French
Tim Hughes
James Hunt
Stephen Kennedy
Lynn Kippax, Jr.
Edie Krol
Hilda Lewis
Bonnie Porta
Neil Rolde
Peter I. Rose
Susannah Ross
Polly Saltonstall
Eleanor Smith
Gerald Talbot
Pamela H. Wood
R. John Wuesthoff

ACADEMIC BOARD:
Terry Eiler, Chair
Ohio University
Joyce Antler
Brandeis University
Alex Harris
Duke University
Nancy MacKnight
University of Maine System
Victoria McGill
Wheaton College
Victoria Sturtivant
Southern Oregon University
Peter I. Rose, Smith College

A NOTE ON PRODUCTION
Salt is typed in 10 point ITC Galliard from the Adobe Type Library with 2 point leading. Type output is on an Apple Personal Laserwriter 4/600. Text paper stock is Northwest, 70 pound text, (dull). Printed and stitched by Penmor Lithographers, Lewiston, Maine.

State of Ownership, Management, and Circulation.

1. Publication Title: Salt
2. Publication No.: 0002-654
3. Filing Date 10/1/1997
4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly
5. No. of Issues Published Annually: Four
6. Annual Subscription Price: $16.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Publisher: P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Cumberland County, ME 04101-0277
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Cumberland County, ME 04101-0277
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Hugh French, Salt, Inc., P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Cumberland County, ME 04101-0277; Editor: Pamela H. Wood, Salt, Inc., P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Cumberland County, ME 04101-0277; Managing Editor: (Have None).
10. Owner: Salt, Inc., P.O. Box 4077, 19 Pine Street, Portland, Cumberland County, ME 04101-0277
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None.
12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months.
13. Publication Name: Salt
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avg. No. Copies</th>
<th>Actual No.</th>
<th>Each Issue</th>
<th>Copies of</th>
<th>Single Issue</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Nearest to</th>
<th>Filing Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Months</td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Total No. Copies: 4,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.1. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 597</td>
<td>597</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.2 Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions: 532</td>
<td>532</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 1,129</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Free Distribution by Mail: 350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail: 75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Total Free Distribution: 425</td>
<td>425</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Total Distribution: 1,554</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Copies Not Distributed:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Total: 4,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 72.65%</td>
<td>72.65%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. This Statement of Ownership will be printed in #50 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Faye Eaton A/., Business Manager Date: 10/1/1997.

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties).
Myrtle

Written by Alyssa Grossman
Photographs by Kathryn Weigel
I T'S ALWAYS that awkward minute in front of her door, Myrtle hesitating before she asks me to come in. Standing there just long enough for me to start wondering if she might not ask this time. Her blue eyes squint through her glasses but I can feel them looking right at me. Her stooped shoulders only slightly diminish her tall frame. She is wearing a sky-blue turtleneck today, instead of her usual plain white shirt. With those same sensible polyester pants, black ones, that hike up a few inches above her ankles when she's sitting down.

And so we go into her living room. Myrtle Lowell sits easily, without the weariness that I'd expect from an 84-year-old woman. She's quite spry, and might leap up from her chair at any moment to look out the window at a passing car, or to get a little treat for her kitties, or to point out something tucked away in another corner of the house.

She's been living in Thomaston for over 60 years. Her husband's family owned this house, and when Myrtle married Richard in 1935, she moved in with him and his father. She didn't have to move too far, since she grew up around here. Rackliff's Island, Spruce Head, Tenants Harbor, Rockland. Myrtle has spent her entire life in this part of Maine. Except for a few years in the '50s when she followed Dick to Virginia, South Carolina, wherever he was stationed in the service. So when she first came to Thomaston and became Mrs. Lowell they made this place their home and she took care of him up until his death 16 years ago. Now she just lives here alone.

Daylight filters in the white cotton curtains, translucent through the rows of green and blue and orange glass bottles lining the window sills. The room feels spacious even though every corner holds its own collection of objects. Ticking clocks, porcelain figurines, glass vases, lace doilies. Mobiles with flying sailboats and sea gulls. Paintings of giant battleships. Colorful braided rugs under each piece of furniture, and bright crochet covers over all the chairs. The wallpaper is silver, shiny with blue flowers and leaves. A delicateness about the room that I can't quite find in Myrtle's staunch face.

I am perched on the edge of my armchair. "Why don't you set in that chair straight, dear, you're hurtin' your back." She talks with a loud voice, rusty like a man's. I wriggle back into the cushion. "Yeah, set back on it and enjoy it." In the round fisheye mirror across the room, I can see Myrtle's square, angular posture reflected next to my tentative one.

I ask Myrtle if she crocheted the chair covers. No, her sister Ella, the one that passed away, she made those. Do I like them, she wonders. Would I like to have one to take back with me? That's okay, I tell her, but the colors are pretty. I ask if she learned how to do things like that when she was growing up, crocheting and needlework.

Myrtle leans forward out of her chair with a hoot. "Course not! We couldn't do needlework. God almighty!" Because they had chores to do, all the time. Pee-pots to dump. And beds to make. Washing to do. Ironing to do. Floors to scrub. Am I kidding?

I laugh a little, too. "Bless your heart," Myrtle is forgiving. After all, I didn't grow up in Maine, and that was a long time ago. "Only the Southern ladies could set in their beautiful gowns, you know, with their hoop skirts, and embroider. We weren't that wealthy. Not us old crows." She's still chuckling. "You forget what end of town you're in!"

Myrtle just barely lives on the "right side" of the tracks. The railroad tracks pass through her front yard, though the passenger trains stopped running almost 40 years ago. Her house isn't as fancy as some of the Federal and Greek Revival mansions that still stand in certain parts of Thomaston; it's a modest white Cape Cod style home. But to me the neighborhood seems nice, with tall stately trees all around. And Myrtle's house sits on a hill. Where the branches don't block the view, I can see way down to the Saint George River.

Myrtle and her sisters didn't embroider samplers, but they did have to make the things they really needed, like quilts and braided rugs and clothes. "You know, little jumper dresses, we had. And then you wear a blouse under it. Like a sailor blouse."

Her mother never had the money to buy a real middy blouse. But they used to get them second-hand from a girl named Etta Mitchell, who was tall, like Myrtle, and got new clothes every year for school.
“And everybody was wearing ’em. So, it made me feel a little better. When you’re a kid, when you had somethin’ new goin’ to school, you felt pretty good.” She laughs.

I can remember that feeling, I tell her. “Sure you do. You prob’ly even think of it now, don’t you, when you’re goin’ to college.” We both laugh a little. It’s true, I still feel like a kid.

“Well, that’s good,” she says, “don’t ever lose that feelin’. ‘Cause that’s a good feelin’ to have.”

She looks over at me, her left eye narrower than the right. “I never had no time to be a kid. ’Cause I was either workin’ or takin’ care of children, or somethin’. But. It didn’t hurt me. You know, like I told you, we’d get up in the mornin’ and work.” They’d make their beds, haul in wood, lug water from the well. “And when we were old enough to go to school and come home and work, my God!”

Because she and her older sister and brother had to row to school in White Head every morning from Rackliff’s Island where they lived. I ask her if that was a long trip.

“Well I don’t know, honey,” Myrtle says, a bit impatiently. “We used to leave the house at seven thirty. And we had to be to school at eight o’clock.” They’d take turns rowing. “And mind you, the tide would come sometimes, and the tide would go. And you’d have to moor your boat so that when you got out of school, that your boat wouldn’t be flat on the ground.”

When they rowed back home, they’d have to help out with more chores. Do their dishes, lug more wood and water. “Work in the garden, gather seaweed from the shore. You know, the rockweed made elegant, elegant fertilizer. ‘Specially for potatoes.” They had a root cellar, to store vegetables, and they raised all sorts of animals, like cows and ducks and pigs. “You was dead when the time’s you got to go to bed. Get up in the mornin’ six o’clock again, and go through the same thing. That was the way we lived.”

I ask Myrtle if with all the hard work, they ever had any fun. Myrtle leans back again. “Oh, course we did. Course we did. Tell me some kids that didn’t get into mischief.” Her brother would climb up on the henhouse roof, and try to get Myrtle and her sisters up there. Then somebody would fall, and their mother would hear, and come out and spank their tail. Or else they’d fight over who got to collect the eggs, and in the fighting, someone would break an egg. “We used to get a bottom spankin’, but we didn’t care. Momma never hurt us. She threatened us, but she never hurt us.”

That was all on Rackliff’s Island, after Myrtle’s father died and her mother got remarried to Mr. Wall. Myrtle’s stepfather was a lobsterman, and Myrtle’s mother Annie would row the boat for him, to help him out. Every day they’d go. “Never had money for a power boat.” And even after her stepfather went blind, her mother would go out lobstering by herself. Myrtle’s older brother always got upset about that.

“He said, ‘Oh, no, Mummy, you’re not goin’ out in that boat alone.’

“She says, ‘Oh, I am!’ He says, ‘Oh no you’re not.’

“But she wanted to go alone.” I wonder if other people’s mothers lobstered, too.

“Other men lobstered, but the women didn’t, dear. They didn’t have to, see. But my mother had to. Help my stepfather.”

Myrtle’s mother made a little extra money by knitting bait bags and selling them to the other fishermen. And then after her children got older and left home, she moved with Mr. Wall to nearby Tenants Harbor, and started making her own lobster traps. Myrtle shows me a photo of an older woman, her hands busy with some sort of string.

“This was my mother. She’s makin’ things that go in the lobster traps. Knitting pot heads.”

A big woman, filling her chair, with hair—as white as Myrtle’s, only it’s pulled back in a bun and covered with a net.

People used to say that her mother was tougher than a boiled owl. She called a spade a spade, and that was it. She lived to be 88 years old. “She stayed with us all the time. And when she died, she died down at my sister’s in Tenants Harbor, in her home.”

Myrtle looks at me. “You wouldn’t be here if you hadn’t had a mother. No. You have a father too, but I feel your mother’s closer, she beared you. All those nine months, and loved you, and took care of you, eyeh. Your mother is it.”

Myrtle’s voice doesn’t waver. “She was a nice lady, bless her heart.

“She was good to us children, she never gave us away. She kept us all.”
They all had to leave home pretty young to earn a living. Myrtle went to school up through the eighth grade, but after that they'd have to pay tuition, and they couldn't afford that. So she and her siblings all went away to work. Myrtle's older brother Stephen went lobstering and then got into the Coast Guard. Her older sister Ella went to a sardine factory in Stonington. And when Myrtle turned 13, she went to Rockland, to board with a family and do their cooking and housework.

She had to get up early in the mornings to work. Make a coal fire, bake muffins, do the washing, scrub the floor on her hands and knees. "And I'm thirteen years old. And I got ten dollars a month. And my Mrs. So-and-so, and she wished to look at dresses."

Myrtle worked there for the next six years. It's a good thing she had all that practice rowing; she must have needed strong arms. Myrtle laughs. "Well, you have to have, sec. But I never thought of it as bein' hard."

"And then what I was goin' to tell you, when I was twenty years old, and they had that NRA. That was the National Recovery Act, President Roosevelt had."

Myrtle was the youngest girl working in the store, so they chose her to be Miss NRA for the big Rockland parade.

"I wore a tiara. And I wore an evenin' gown with silver beads. And I had a white ermine coat on. And the red ribbon that said 'Miss NRA'. And I got in the car, and I rode up and down Main Street, and I had to get up and curtsey to the Governor of Maine."

"Just think, white ermine. Why, it'd probably be twenty or fifty thousand dollars for an ermine coat now, if you could find one. Well, course the movie stars have 'em. But we had all that in the fur department on the second floor."

Myrtle lives barely on the "right side" of the tracks. They pass through her front yard, though the passenger trains stopped running 40 years ago.

Right: Myrtle.

Myrtle wear one that day.

"When I used to go to work in the mornin', I dressed up." She had good shoes and real silk stockings. Kid gloves that snapped on. And she never went without a purse. "It had just a little handle, on the back, where you slid your hand in it, and held it that way."

And then she had special evening clothes for the dances. They were held mostly up in Watt's Hall, on Main Street in Thomaston. It cost fifty cents to get in. "It was lovely. We'd have Waltz, and Fox Trot, and sometimes they'd do the Lady of the Lake, and the Boston Fancy. And then they'd do the Quadrille." That was kind of like square dancing, with a man who did the calling-off. "Always had a band. We had a piano, and a violin, and a trumpet, and bass viol."

I try to picture Myrtle on the dance floor. "The clothes came from the store where I worked. I had one blue satin gown, and I had blue satin slippers. And then I had a black taffeta gown that had gold leaves in it. And I had black and gold sandals for that outfit. And then I had a real pretty lavender satin dress that had silver sequin straps."

Nobody ever wore the kind of clothes that they're wearing now. "Any pants was out, back there then."
Suddenly I feel a bit shabby-looking. I never dress up, I tell Myrtle.

“No, but I bet you’d be some handsome if you did dress up. Don’t you like dresses, dear?” People used to be so lovely when they dressed up. “Handsome man, there’s nothin’ like it. And a beautiful girl. That’s what makes the wheels go round, yeah.” She looks at me. “I bet you think I’m funny.”

But her face sobers. “Pretty girls, and nice lookin’ boys. If they’d only just take care of themselves. Be careful what they do. The first thing they have now is babies, and they got to get married, as you know. And that’s sad.”

One of Myrtle’s cats wanders into the room. That’s Blackie, the bolder one. He’ll venture out from his little nook in the barn. And then Bootie will get jealous and peek in, too. “He can’t stand to have somebody make all the attention of his brother,” Myrtle tells me. “Blackie, can’t you stand up?” She motions for him to jump up. “C’mon, pooshiecat. Pooshiecat, ‘tand up like a good boy.” Blackie rears up on his hind legs and rubs his ears against Myrtle’s extended hand.

I’ve never seen a trained cat before. But Myrtle tells me you can train them to do all sorts of things. She’s had them since they were kittens, when their mother went off and left them, and nobody claimed them. So Myrtle took them. Because her husband has gone, and she had just lost her dog. And she had to have somebody. So she has them.

Myrtle was engaged to her husband Dick for two years before they got married. But she’d seen him around ever since she was 13 years old and boarded at the house on Broad Street, when he’d drive the man she worked for home in a Model T. When Myrtle started working at the store, Dick would come in to see her, and sometimes he’d ask her out to the dances. “We loved to dance. He was the most beautiful dancer.

He would always dress up, too; the men wore dark suits and white shirts and bow ties. “See, but if it was a real fancy occasion, then somebody would dress in a tuxedo.” The dances at the Samoset Hotel in Rockland were more formal. “But I never was able to attend anything like that. ‘Cause it was too high class. And we didn’t have the money, you know.”

Myrtle only made $6 a week at the store. And even after the National Recovery Act got her weekly wages to $13, she still couldn’t afford the $10 a week rent. So she always helped her landlady to make up for the money she didn’t have. But Myrtle didn’t mind; her landlady, Ethel Philbrook, was just like family.

When Dick used to stop by in the evenings to see Myrtle or take her out to a dance, Ethel would always invite him for supper. There was a piano in the living room, and sometimes Ethel would play for them. “That was really, really the only place that I had that was like a real home,” Myrtle tells me. “Until I got married, and had a home of my own. Course my mother’s home, I’m not talkin’ about.”

Myrtle lived there the entire time she was working at the department store. “And I met the most wonderful people.” Only the very wealthy traded at Fuller Cobb Davis’s. That’s what they called shopping then, trading. “All of the rich, rich people... I had met them, takin’ them in the elevator.” Anne Morrow, before she got married to Colonel Lindbergh. And the Kellogg cereal people. And the Dodges, that make the automobiles.

At the store there was a very rich lady, Mrs. Aspinwall, who used to come for the summers. She would get Myrtle to model some of the clothes when she went shopping for her two granddaughters. And every year she would buy Myrtle a few things too, like underclothes or a fall sweater. “She wanted to take me to New York with her, and put me in college. But I never pursued it.”

I asked her why not. Well, because she just felt independent, was going to be engaged, and have her own life.

“I just kept on seein’ my Dicky, and goin’ to dances, and doing my own thing. You know, working every day, and I never gave it another thought.”

I think for a minute. Her life would have been completely different if—but Myrtle is resolute. “Yeah, but I don’t know what kind of a life I’d had.”

“Cause I had a happy life the way I am, right like this.”
M}

YRTLE IS WEARING a white apron tied somewhat crookedly about her waist, and her hair looks slightly disheveled today. I ask if I’m interrupting anything. Not really, she tells me. “I had to get the washin’ out, and then I had to get my lunch. And, let’s see, what else did I do? Oh, I was goin’ upstairs to change some clothes around, on different hangers and things, but I was too tired to do that.” She takes off her apron and we go into the living room.

She had some trouble with her washing machine this morning. A sweatshirt got stuck in the wringer. “You know, it rolled right up quick. And rolled right up and up and up and up. So that made the day kind of hard,
Myrtle leads me into her kitchen, and almost trips over Blackie's paws. "Beat it!" she says to him. In the kitchen she takes a cover off the left part of her sink to reveal a deep basin. That's the set tub.

She's had that washer for 25 years. It looks simple enough, a plain white enamel machine, with one red knob attached to the top. But I realize I have no idea how the thing works.

Myrtle points out where the shirt got caught. "And I had to take and cut the sweatshirt to pieces." She laughs; she didn't care about the shirt, although it was a new one. "But I worked one solid hour. First I had the big scissors. Then I had a knife. Then I had a screwdriver. Then I got the razor blade. So I got it off there, a little bit at a time. Thank God, for that. So it'll be good for another wash."

We go back into the living room and sit down again. When Myrtle got married in 1935, they had to use those old scrubboards. During the Depression, only the rich people had real washing machines. "I don't think we had any lame arms. I never did. Rowin' and scrubbin' clothes and scrubbin' floors, all the hard work we had. I guess we was tough. You had to be. Rugged. You didn't get aches and pains, like they do now, 'cause people don't have exercise like that now."

And then in order to make the clothes white, they would boil them on the stove, and stir them around with clothes sticks. Did I see those great big clothes sticks in the pantry? She gets up again. "Come and I'll show you." The cat follows us back into the kitchen, and Myrtle shoos him into the barn and closes the door. "Blackie, I'm tired of you chasin' me."

She shows me the long wooden tongs hanging from the wall in her pantry. All those old things on the shelves used to belong to her mother, the cooking utensils, chopping trays, stone crocks. Myrtle still has a big brass scrubboard somewhere upstairs. "But then I got two little-bitty ones under the cupboard." They used those for cleaning socks and handkerchiefs.

"Do people ever use handkerchiefs anymore?" she asks me. I don't think so, mostly they just use Kleenex. Myrtle goes to a little table in the living room and brings over a whole stack of folded cloths. "Pick out what you want and I'll give you some. Go ahead. Look 'em over." Her mother used to make them, for when they went to school, hankies in their pocket.

I look them over, and pick out a white one, with orange crocheted edges. Myrtle wants me to take more, so I choose another one with a pretty yellow lace border, and I thank her. "Well, I don't know if a little old handkerchief means much to you." I hold the cloth in my lap, looking at the tiny stitches. No, it means a lot to me. Myrtle seems pleased. "Well. Some girls it wouldn't. You know."
Myrtle knew she was going to get married; she just didn’t know exactly when. After the Depression hit, she lost her job at the department store, along with everybody else who worked there. Customers had run up bills, and they’d lost their money, and Fuller Cobb Davis got behind in rent. “And Mr. Berry that owned the buildin’, he foreclosed on the store.”

Dick was away in the National Guard, and his mother had just died, so Myrtle moved to Thomaston to take care of his father and the house. Number 13 Elliot Street. Her first telephone number was 13, too. And the first place she ever worked in Rockland was Number 13, when she was 13 years old. She ended up getting married on Friday the 13th of July. Myrtle tells me that her sister used to play the lottery. “And I said, ‘I’m not gonna buy any lottery card.’ But you know, I waited one time, until it was gonna come Friday the Thirteenth. And I went uptown to the store, and I bought thirteen tickets. And every one of the numbers that I put out, I put out thirteen, in ‘em.”

She pauses, and I ask if she won anything. “I never won a cent,” she tells me, and we both laugh. “Since then, I don’t have no use for thirteen. But you know, when I got married, I never even give it a thought that it was Friday the Thirteenth that I was gettin’ married on.”

One day Dick just showed up and they went to Portland and found a minister and a church. That was it. “I don’t think anybody oughta have a big weddin’ anyway. I think it’s kind of private, between two people, don’t you? When you get married, are you gonna do that?” I don’t know, it seems like an awfully big commitment. Myrtle laughs. “I loved him enough to know that I was gonna be faithful. And I was gonna be a wife, and I was gonna take care of his father, and I was gonna take care of him.”

After the wedding they drove out to Old Orchard Beach, tin cans on the back of the car and a Just Married sign on the spare tire. “The cans stayed on till we got clear over to the dance hall.” There was a big mirrored ball in the middle of the room, and they danced all the evening and then rented a cabin for the night. “Oh, it was fun, that was real fun.” And that was all the honey-moon she ever had.

Myrtle came right back home to this house in Thomaston to stay with her father-in-law. And a few weeks later Dick was out of the National Guard, and found work in a canning factory to support them. He made 25¢ an hour. “An hour! And he’d dump clams on the table. He’d go to work seven o’clock in the morning and get through at five o’clock. And he brought home, at the end of the week, thirteen dollars and ninety-five cents.

“That was the way we lived. And ’course we never had no expenses, ’cause he had an automobile we paid thirty-five dollars for.” And Dick knew how to fix it. He knew all about Model T cars because he used to work in the Thomaston garage after school. “And they used to let him work because, good God, he used to do a lot of work for ’em for nothin’.”

He did all the electrical work and plumbing in the house himself. And he built his own thirty foot lobster boat. Learning from practical experience, that’s the way people got their education back then. They had to be self-sufficient.

“You oughta lived in those times,” Myrtle tells me, laughing. “Oh, lotta people can learn good, out of a book. And real quick. But the fundamentals aren’t the same as it is standin’ you up and showin’ you.”

Myrtle points to a photograph on a table across the room. “There’s a picture of him, right there.” It’s a snapshot of the two of them in an old-fashioned car. Myrtle’s in the passenger seat, and there’s Dick doing the driving.

They used to take those old cars and ride around in the parades. Andy Wyeth’s son Jamie took that photo of them, at the Rockland Lobster Festival parade. That was just 16 years ago, right before Dick passed away. And many years ago they’d take the neighborhood children for picnics or trips up to the lake. “Well, you oughta see us when we went out on a Sunday. Never had a kid of our own, but that car was full . . . .”

Dick made that little speedster in the picture, she tells me. I take a second look. He picked up all of the parts from the automobile dumps. The chair seat, the motor, the wheels. That was after he retired, and bought a little shop on some shore property down the hill. “He had ten years, that he lived, after they found out he had lung
He used to smoke, but he never drank. “And we never played cards, or gambled. We always used to dance. I just love him to this day.” They were married for 45 years. “He’s been gone sixteen years, and you know, when he was away in the Navy . . . I knew that he was comin’ back. It almost feels sometime now he’s been gone a long time, and I think, ‘Well, he’ll be back sometime.’ I will see him someday, I know. So that will be fine.”

Myrtle clears her throat and turns on a lamp in the settling dusk. Would I like a cup of tea and a cookie? We move into the kitchen and Myrtle fills a kettle and puts it on her big oil-burning stove. That stove and the one upstairs now, that I kept.” He landed on Okinawa the day they invaded, and his ship was hit by a Japanese kamikaze diver, and he was blown overboard. There were only a few survivors. And Dick was one of them.

When he came back home in 1945, he went into the Naval Reserve, and five years later got called back into the Korean War. But this time he didn’t have to go overseas; he was sent south again, Virginia to New Orleans to Florida to South Carolina. And Myrtle went along with him, for two whole years.

“I never knew where I was going to have a bed,” she laughs. “Suitcase and trunk packed all the time, I don’t like that. But I done anything to be with him, I didn’t mind.” She knew she’d eventually come back to Thomaston. “We kept our house here. If you own a house, never sell it. ‘Cause you’ll never get another one. And this was left to us by my husband’s father. ‘Cause we took care of him, you know.”

When the war was over, they drove home from South Carolina in a little Jeep and $45 to live on. That’s when Myrtle found work outside of the house to help out. She spent one summer raking blueberries, long days, at sixty-five cents an hour. “I don’t know what they pay now. But I know they don’t pay sixty-five cents an hour.”

After the blueberry season ended, Myrtle worked in the Port Clyde sardine factory. They had to line up at tables and somebody would come by and dump sardines in front of them. “And then you’d all start in. Grabbin’ up these fish and cuttin’ their heads off. And stickin’ ’em in the can. Just as fast as you can go.”

They had to pack 24 cans every hour, and got paid a dollar a case. Sometimes people would reach over to grab the sardines from someone else’s part of the table, and they’d get their fingers cut for their trouble. Myrtle shakes her head. “Sometimes it was almost like your life was at stake. Money back there then, dear.”

Every little bit of money you made was something then. She straightens herself in her chair. “Because people never got the money they do now, good Lord. Eyeah, times are different. Altogether different. See, as you grow older, you’ll see plenty of changes, too.” I nod, I feel like I already have. “The things that they’re doin’. And the jobs. And the machines that they’re usin’ now. There’ll be no knowledge up here,” Myrtle taps

---

Every corner holds its own collection. Ticking clocks, porcelain figurines, glass vases, lace doilies. Mobiles with flying sailboats and seagulls. Paintings of giant battleships.

Left: Inside Myrtle’s living room.

---

She straightens herself in her chair. “Because people never got the money they do now, good Lord. Eyeah, times are different. Altogether different. See, as you grow older, you’ll see plenty of changes, too.” I nod, I feel like I already have. “The things that they’re doin’. And the jobs. And the machines that they’re usin’ now. There’ll be no knowledge up here,” Myrtle taps
her forehead, "for anybody anymore. It's gonna be in a machine. That's not gonna be right, though."

She seems to look past me. "Because you see... it's advancement. But my Lord. We can't advance too fast. See, 'cause the Lord will slow everything down. He did one other time, in the Bible days. And he will again."

Now everybody has things like credit cards, but Myrtle wouldn't ever own one. They're just trouble, making people buy things they can't afford. I started to laugh but realize she is serious. "Even go eat on credit cards. My God, if I had to eat on a credit card, I think I'd starve." We both laugh. "It just don't sound right. Course I know everybody uses 'em. I guess I'm old fashioned."

Things are going, Myrtle tells me. "Now you see, there's lots of things that I don't know, right now. And I think to myself, 'Oh, I'm goin' to ask Momma.' Then I think, 'Oh no, I can't ask Momma, she's not here.' And then I think, 'Oh, Ella will know, I'll ask her.' Then I think, 'No, Ella's gone, I can't ask her.' And then my two younger sisters depend on me. When they want to know something they'll ask me. And my nieces and nephews will say, 'Well, Aunt Myrtle will know.' 'Cause I tell 'em what I know. Otherwise, they wouldn't have known."

We both sit for a moment, and I can hear the clock ticking from the other room. I tell Myrtle it would be fun to take a drive with her someday, to the different places she's told me about. Before it gets too cold out. Myrtle ducks into the front hallway by the stairs to look at her wall calendar. "Let's see, what is today, anyway? Sunday I'm goin' with my friend. And I don't have my hair done Saturday, 'cause I've already had it done this week."

What about lunch time, I ask, so we could go out to eat. "Well, then you can come along," she says. I tell her I hope it will be a nice day out. "Well, if it isn't, we don't care. We'll just go out anyway."

SO I GET dressed up a little, because Myrtle is taking me out to lunch. She looks spruced up, too, wearing little gold clip-on earrings, and a pretty pendant hanging from a gold chain. Her green suede loafers match the green of her sweater.

It's a sunny day after all. And as Myrtle locks up her house she asks if I still want to take a drive after lunch. I tell her yes, and I go around to help her shut the car door, but she's already got it. Well do I think she can't shut the car door herself? I mumble that I was just trying to be a good host and I get in the driver's seat and start the car. And she looks at me and puts her hand up to my cheek and says she knows, she knows I was just trying to be nice and I'm a nice girl.

At Dave's Restaurant I order the same thing as Myrtle, the Friday Special. Boiled haddock with egg sauce. Potato and cole slaw. Hot cup of tea.

It's been two years since Myrtle has gone back to visit Rackliff's Island, where she was born. But not much has changed since then, she tells me, just more millionaires' houses built. After lunch she shows me where to turn off Route One to the back roads through Spruce Head.

We cross the unpaved causeway to Rackliff's Island. "Now this wasn't connected. This was all water through here. And my sister and I, we'd wait till the tide got low, and then we'd jump over the rocks." I look out the window at the water, about a half-mile trek across. They'd have to get back before the tide came up, Myrtle tells me, so they wouldn't get stranded.

A big sign marks the entrance to Rackliff's Island. The road forks and circles around the island. There was no road when Myrtle lived here; when they wanted to come to the mainland, they had to cut their own path through the woods.

I try to see the coastline with her eyes. The water stretches out on either side of us, a ragged shore with trees and rocks and scattered islands. But to Myrtle every contour is recognizable. It must have been a beautiful place to grow up. "Yes, it is beautiful, dear. But when we was kids, and younger, we always wanted to get off the island. We just didn't like livin' on the island all alone."

They were the only ones who stayed year-round. And there was only one summer house. I drive slowly, and take the fork to the right down the dirt road, woods on either side. "I'm gonna keep watch and see where... we used to live." We pass vacation homes, half-built. We round a bend and the water appears again.

As we drive on, the water stretches out into...
Wheeler’s Bay. This is it, Myrtle taps her window. This is where she was born. They all were, except for her older brother, who was born across the bay on White Head, when their father was working as a lighthouse keeper there. We both get out of the car to look.

Myrtle doesn’t remember what her father’s face looked like; she was only six years old when he died. But she does remember when he was sick, going up to his bed with her sister to show him their dolls. “And he put his hand out, and he patted us, and he said, ‘Yes, dear.’ He said, ‘I don’t feel like looking at your dolls now.’ So my mother came and took us out.”

It was January when he died, and Myrtle’s mother held the feed bottle while the undertaker did the embalming. They carried the body across the frozen bay in a horse and wagon. And they put him in a dory so he wouldn’t be lost if they went through the ice.

After a year they moved to Spruce Head, where her mother met Charles Wall and married him. Then they went back to Rackliff’s Island. The house they lived in is right nearby, Myrtle tells me, and we get back into the car to find it. She stops me at the edge of a long driveway. “See, this is private property.” But I can leave the car right there, we can just go take a peek. “If I get in jail, you can come see me.”

We sneak down the driveway, far enough to get a back view of a house looking out over the bay. “That’s not our old house, though, that’s a new fancy house.” Because back in the ’30s, after she and her siblings moved away, a big fire burned nearly everything on the island. Soon after that, her mother inherited some money from a rich aunt and bought a house in Tenants Harbor. Myrtle points to the little shed; their root cellar used to be right there.

Myrtle hurries me back to the car. So nobody will know we’ve been tramping around private property. It’s a terrible thing that everything’s private now, Myrtle tells me. Because you used to be able to walk around everywhere.

All across the island Myrtle spies things that my eyes miss. She shows me the loons and ducks and mussel beds and rockweed.

Back on Spruce Head, Myrtle wants to know if I’d like to see where her father is buried. It takes only a few minutes to get to the Forest Hill cemetery. We walk over to the far corner of the small square of land. A pot of pink cloth tulips sits next to her father’s plaque. Stephen Flood. Spanish War Veteran. Light House Service. October 1854 to January 1918.

Myrtle’s father was over thirty years older than her mother. That seems like a big age difference to me. “Well, didn’t you ever read your General Henry Knox stories, dear? And all the other books on the state of Maine?” The men were old enough to be grandfathers, she tells me, when they married young women. And some of them were married two and three times. Even Myrtle’s stepfather had two grown daughters by his first wife before he married her mother.

We walk around the graveyard. That tree, Myrtle shows me, is where her mother’s mother is buried. There’s no headstone because they couldn’t ever afford one. She died when Myrtle was only a few years old, but Myrtle remembers that her grandmother babysat for them, and pinned them to her apron strings. After she died, Myrtle and her mother used to come to the cemetery and put flowers under the tree for her.

On our way back to the car, Myrtle bends to pick up an American flag that has fallen over. “I’m sorry,” she tells me, “but I just don’t like to see the American flag on the ground.”

When we get to Main Street in Rockland, we pass the building that used to be the Fuller Cobb Davis department store. “Yeah, park right here, and I’ll tell you all about it.” The four-story building takes up the whole black, and a hardware store and a bookstore are there now.

But when Myrtle worked there, the store was beautiful. It had two big granite columns out front, with brass plates that said “Fuller”, “Cobb”, and “Davis”. It had four floors, with a linen department, a dress department, a beauty parlor. And the antique annex was around back. The entrance was marble, and a handsome antique lamp hung from the ceiling. Mr. Fuller was always out front, opening the door for everyone.

Sometimes if they weren’t busy, they’d send Myrtle across the street to Moore’s drugstore to get a malted milk or soda. I tell Myrtle I’ve never tried a malted milk, and she looks at me with disbelief. Well maybe we should stop and get one before we go back home.
There’s an ice cream place around the corner, Myrtle tells me. We might as well make a day of it.

Myrtle ends up ordering a butterscotch sundae with whipped cream. We sit on the bench outside and she can hardly get to her ice cream under all the toppings.

“See that hotel over there?” she asks me between spoonfuls, pointing to the building across the street. “The Wayfarer East Hotel. My mother used to come here when my father got out of the Spanish American War, and he was in the Veteran’s Hospital. And she’d go visit him, and bring him tobacco for his pipe.” Myrtle doesn’t know what year that was; she just remembers that her mother told her about it once. It must have been a long journey back then, for her mother to have to stay in a hotel, before people could get around so quickly by car.

Going back to Thomaston on Route One only takes about ten minutes. But by the time we get to Myrtle’s house the sun is already going down, making little rectangles of light on her floors.

“I really had a nice visit with you. And you do come back now.” Myrtle stands at her door.

/~MYRTLE TELLS ME to stay put; she’s just going to find something in her room upstairs. A minute later she’s back with a little metal tin shaped like a treasure chest. “Did you ever see anything like that?” It’s an antique matchbox, the kind that everyone used to have on the mantel. I kneel beside her as she opens the lid. Wrapped up in tissue paper are three tiny white dolls.

“There they are in here.” They’re called Frozen Charlotte dolls, she tells me. “This little girl was goin’ to her grandmother’s in the winter. And on the way, it came a blizzard, and she didn’t get there. And she lay down in the snow, and she froze to death: And her name was Charlotte somethin’, and then they made these little dolls.

“And they called ’em Frozen Charlottes.”

That’s a true story from many years ago. She takes them out one at a time to show me up close. They’re only a few centimeters long, and they look like they’re made out of clay. No, they’re bisque, she tells me, and she found them in the dumps when she used to go out digging for old bottles. Their arms and legs are stiff and they’re not wearing any clothes. Myrtle laughs, “All she’s showing is a little belly button.”

She looks out into the darkening sky. “Well I thought they said we was goin’ to have rain all day. Now you’ve got to go back all alone. Do you mind ridin’ alone?”

No, I don’t mind. But Myrtle is concerned. “Just keep your doors locked, and keep on going.” I have to be careful that nobody tries to bump me off the road.

“I hope you realize that. Some of these fresh guys, you know, these crazy birds. That’s why it’s not really safe to be out. I oughta go with you.” She looks up at the musket hanging above her stove and laughs. “I could set right down and take my gun with me. I couldn’t fire it, so it wouldn’t do no good. But I could point it at ’em. And scare ’em.”

I look at the lines on Myrtle’s face, her set jaw. I could picture that. “Yeah, you could, couldn’t you.” We both laugh. She keeps the curtains closed and the windows locked at night, because once she caught a man peeping in her window. “Back in the thirties we never had that. Why, we never locked the door. This is only happened in the fifties and the sixties, all these teenage kids doin’ all the damage and everything.”

I ask her where she got the musket. A lady friend gave it to her, because she was scared her three boys would get ahold of it and get hurt. Myrtle doesn’t like to use guns. But her husband had a few, for hunting ducks and things. She’s got those put away upstairs.

The door to the barn suddenly rattles. “Go to bed, Blackie. I know that’s you.” She can tell the difference because Blackie rattles the door, but Bootsie rolls the doorknob. Myrtle turns to me. “Can you imagine. Talkin’ to cats! But they know what I’m sayin’.

“Once upon a time, when I heard an old lady talkin’ with cats, God. I used to say to myself, ‘Is she crazy?’ My sister Ella told me, she said, ‘Shut up, Myrtle, she can hear you.’ Now I’m the old lady.” We both laugh.

She still has all of her husband’s old tools, too, boat caulking tools and plumbing tools. They’re in a great big sea chest in the room where the kittens are, by the barn. “That was what my husband was, a caulker. His
father was before, and his grandfather, and great-grandfather. That trunk of tools comes from four generations of Lowells. Hand tools.”

They really belong in a museum, she tells me. “Museums don’t have them, what I got. Horsin’ irons and makin’ irons and caulkin’ irons and needles.” They’re in the “L” part of the house, what used to be the kitchen. And the barn is way out, where they used to keep the coal and the wood and the sawhorse and the axes. She doesn’t use that section of the house; it’s just where she stores everything now.

Hanging next to the gun above the kitchen stove is a real powder horn. There were two or three of them when she moved into the house; they used to belong to her husband’s great grandfather. There was also a big horse pistol, but she sold that to a gun collector one time when her husband was sick and they were hard up for money.

I ask Myrtle how she knows all about antiques. “Cause when I worked in that Fuller Cobb Davis department store, they had an antique that was annexed.” And she used to go in there during her lunch hours, and Mr. Davis would show her around. “He used to tell me about a piece of furniture, how old it was, who made it, and how you could tell who made it.

“So when I got married, I was interested in antiques and the things that were here, I kept.” Sometimes people would give her things, like when she took care of elderly people around the neighborhood. “Their relatives didn’t tend to ‘em. So once in a while they’d give me a little piece of glass, or . . . a chopping tray, out there in the pantry or something that I could remember ‘em by.”

Myrtle pours us some ginger ale in the kitchen. “You’ll have another drink there, dear. If you have to pee, you’ll get off on the side of the road.” She chuckles. “Side of the road, that’s good. Well, you can do better than a man can, I know.” She lets the cats back in from the barn and returns to her place by the stove. “One time, we didn’t have bathrooms. We only had outhouses.”

They had an outhouse here, by the end of the barn, facing the railroad track. “Oh yes, when I first came here. Hardly anybody had bathrooms and things. Just think, I’ve been here sixty-one years, eyah. That’s a long time.” Blackie winds himself around Myrtle’s ankle. “Blackie don’t think so. Do you, Blackie.”

I finish my ginger ale and shiver. “Are you cold, dear?” Myrtle asks. No, it’s just the soda, bubbling in my throat. “Oh. I was gonna say, you can’t be cold. It’s eighty.” I knew it would be warm in the house, I tell her, that’s why I left my coat in the car.

Myrtle tells me I should watch out, because it’s getting closer to winter and I don’t want to catch a bad cold. Now when she goes on her walks in the mornings, she gets all bundled up. Sometimes she wears her husband’s old Navy pea coat that he had. She takes me to her dining room and opens a closet and brings out a dark blue jacket with big buttons. I admire it politely, but she holds out the sleeve and motions for me to slip it on. It’s a roomy fit, too broad in the shoulders but the material feels heavy and smooth.

I keep it on a minute, looking down at the anchors on the buttons. Myrtle stands next to the open closet, watching me. Her husband’s name is still on the lining. She shows me, right on the tab. Richard Lowell. That coat has been with him everywhere, when he went overseas for the war and all through his time in the service.

For a second there is silence. Then I lift the jacket off and hand it back to her. Those are all the fashion now, I say. She sometimes she wears that on her walks. That ought to keep you warm, I say. She disappears into the closet and comes out a moment later. Well, it does.

Myrtle walks me to her hallway and switches on the porch light so I can find my way through her dark yard to my car.

“I bet you think I’m a windy old girl. Well, you got me wound up, I guess.” She laughs, and I give her a little peck on the cheek goodbye. “Well that’s okay. You got my story. And anything I can think of. Come back, and if I’ve forgotten anything we’ll talk about it.”
Multilingual School Children

Written by Jennifer Fayocavitz
Photographs by Amy Conn
THE PLAYGROUND is drenched with sun today. The kids can play outside at Portland's Reiche School. They walk in line along the uneven blacktop toward the swing sets and slides, some swerving to miss the puddles, others jumping purposefully into one puddle and then the next. Out here, the air is fresh—like that of early spring—a relief from the dry, recirculated air in the school.

At an unmarked point, near the corner of the building, the orderly line breaks, and all the kids go running to claim their spot on the playground. This half-hour is theirs.

As long as there aren't any problems, the recess aides stay in the concrete courtyard, away from the kids. A huge, colored map of the United States is painted onto the concrete, where the aides stand, but I move to the mud and sand of the play area itself. I feel like an outsider, walking onto the kids' territory. I find a spot near a large tree and try to blend in.

"There he is, catch him, catch him!" Four Somali girls run by. They are playing IT, boys against girls.

Natalia Kasyanov breaks from the line and runs across the concrete. In her pink and blue flowered coat and swinging braid, she runs for one of the slides, quickly climbing the wooden steps.

Natalia and her sister Yelena started school less than a month ago. They came from Kazakhstan, in the former Soviet Union. They are two of 120 children at Reiche who are learning to speak English as a second language (ESL students). They are in multilingual classes with children from many countries who speak many native languages. Reiche has five of these classes. The rest of the 570 kids at the school are in mainstream classrooms, the "typical", non-ESL rooms.

Combined, the kids in the multilingual classes speak over 22 languages, making Reiche the most culturally diverse elementary school in the state of Maine. Somali, Khmer (the language of Cambodia), Russian, and Vietnamese are the languages spoken by more children than other languages. There's also French, Spanish, Estonian, Peshru (the language of Afghanistan), Chinese, Polish, Indian, and a variety of African languages—Lyco-Ugandone, Acholi, Amharic, Sudanese, and Tigrinya.

Most of the children at Reiche walk to school from the working-class homes of Portland's West End neighborhood that surround the school. More than 85 percent of the kids qualify for free or reduced lunch. This concrete and brick building, built in the '70s, sits between Brackett and Clark Streets, only a few blocks from the Western Promenade, one of the city's richest sections. Kids from these affluent homes make up about five percent of Reiche's student mix.

This blending of social classes makes Reiche unique, but the more striking mix at the school is the mix of cultures, of children from all parts of the world. More than a fifth of the students at Reiche were born outside the United States and speak a first language other than English. These are the kids I have been getting to know—on the playground, in their classrooms, and in their homes.

Natalia swings herself onto the slide, and to the left of her, a group of kids are running over the wobbly wooden bridge, another favorite. George Zivak is with this group, his black and purple coat only zipped halfway because of the warmth. George, like Natalia, is in Elinor Lopez's multilingual class. His family came to the United States from Bosnia in September of 1995. His older sister Jelena and younger brother Miladin also attend Reiche.

The constant clamor out here hangs close to the ground, with the kids, and doesn't get lost in the limitless sky. Kids are talking, sometimes yelling, running past me in a whirl. Skin color, native tongue, and grade don't seem to matter now. Everyone mixes together. It's a warm day and everyone wants to play.

The whistle blows—recess is over, but no one wants to leave. Natalia walks slowly from her slide. She gets closer to the concrete, then wheels around for one last ride. For his last moments, George runs to another slide, and flings himself down the silver chute. He then runs to line up behind Mrs. Kem.

Vaesna Kem is the Native Language Facilitator in Natalia's class. All of the multilingual rooms have a facilitator who helps the teachers. Mrs. Kem is Cambodian so she speaks Khmer and doesn't know any African languages or Spanish to help those kids in the class, but they still learn. Everything in the classes is taught in English.

Jura Burdinik is also a Native Language Facilitator at Reiche. He's been working in Carol Dayn's third and fourth grade multilingual room for the past seven years. His parents came to the United States when he was two. He speaks many European languages—Russian, German, Polish, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, French—all to varying degrees of fluency. One of his jobs at the school is contacting parents, so he knows many of the families at Reiche.

Through him, I singled out some students and families who are at different points in the program and in their immigration to the United States. The Kasyanov girls, Natalia and Yelena, are brand new, having started just a few weeks ago. The Zivak kids, George, Jelena, and Miladin, came from Bosnia about a year and a half ago. Lem Lem and Gebre Molla came in 1990 and have been at Reiche since kindergarten. They were first in the multilingual classes, but both are now in mainstream rooms.

They are from three different countries—Kazakhstan, Bosnia, and Ethiopia—they have different colored skin, they eat different foods, but they are all at Reiche, trying to fit in and just be kids.
"This is Natalia and she's going to be in your class." The small girl stands stiffly during her introduction to the class. She can't understand the words, her eyes are on the ground. Mrs. Lopez, in her friendly, welcoming manner, says hello to her new student. She tells Alex, the other student in the class who speaks Russian, to go up and welcome Natalia. Alex walks up to the girl, and whispers to her. Natalia looks frozen.

“She'll be in your class tomorrow, Mrs. Lopez.”

“Okay. Bye bye, Natalia!” Mrs. Lopez calls as Natalia is guided out of the room.

Mrs. Lopez's room of second and third graders has three long dividers which act as walls to separate the longest side of her room from the rest of the school's first floor.

Reiche School was built as an “open school” design, meaning it had no walls between the classrooms. I was shocked when I walked into the school for the first time. It was overwhelming to me, the rooms and kids so exposed to each other. Mrs. Lopez's room, like all the other multilingual classrooms, has had to adapt this original design because of the need for the students to talk—a lot—in order to practice English.

When Reiche opened in 1973, it didn't have the mix of students it has today and there were no multilingual classes. As the first children began arriving whose native languages were not English, they were simply put in a class with English speaking students. To give the ESL kids some extra help and a place to gather the skills they’d need in the mainstream classes, multilingual classrooms were created in 1978.

At that time, Reiche was the only multilingual site in the city of Portland. To assist multilingual teachers in the classroom, Native Language Facilitators were hired. The first facilitators were Southeast Asian—Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Laotian—since those were the first groups to come. Then in the mid '80s there was an increase in Afghan and Iranian populations. Now, it's African populations that are growing fastest, as well as Serbo-Croatians, because of the social and political unrest in both of those areas.

In Reiche's multilingual classes, the teachers use a process-oriented...
approach to teaching English. Speaking, reading, and writing are not separated. Like Montessori schools, lots of hands on learning is offered to the children.

Natalia sits in the back corner of Mrs. Lopez's room, at the group of desks with Alex, so he can help translate Russian. She has learned a lot in her first two weeks.

She stands up, trying to maneuver around the heads in front of the board so she can copy the spelling words. She looks different today than she did that first day. She is more comfortable here in the classroom. Her brown hair is always braided, as it is now. A pale purple jacket and red knit hat with a cardboard brim, which makes it stick out like the wings on shirt collars, hang on the back of her chair.

"Is everyone finished?" Mrs. Lopez asks with a warm smile.

Most have finished the spelling words. "Millions, hatch, claw"—it's the dinosaur unit and the words reflect it. The second Alex finishes copying the words and even a little before, he starts telling me stories
about his home and about himself. "I like insects. My sister caught one this big." And then, "We had a big garden in my land, 20x40 maybe. No one had one like it. We had it ourselves." Alex came in September and, like Natalia, is from Kazakhstan. He came with no English skills and now he can’t stop talking.

"I love to talk. I couldn’t live without talk," he tells me. Natalia sits quietly in her seat next to this chatterbox, waiting for the next thing to do. "I could take 50 of her," Mrs. Lopez says.

As the facilitator for Mrs. Lopez’s class, Mrs. Kem works closely with all the students. She helps Natalia with her alphabet book. Natalia carefully copies each letter onto a page and then draws pictures to go with them.

“She does so well,” Mrs. Kem says as Natalia colors a cat for the “c” page.

“Lots of people out today because of the snow. One third of my kids are out,” Mrs. Lopez explains as I walk into the sparsely populated room. She decides to play “Binglish” with the class. It’s an ESL version of Bingo, where the teacher holds up a picture of some action—sitting, standing, holding—and the students have to match the figure she holds up to the square on their card. The possible games are the same as Bingo—across, down, horizontal, four corners, various letter shapes, or full card. First they do the “T.” I am standing by Natalia’s desk and try to explain the “T” to her, tracing my finger in the shape on her card. She nods her head in understanding.

“Putting something down,” Mrs. Lopez calls as she holds the first card depicting this action. Natalia looks down and finds that picture within the “T” on her card and covers the space with a cardboard circle. "By this time of the year, they don’t even need the pictures, but Natalia’s new, so we’ll use them,” Mrs. Lopez explained to me before she started. One after the other, Natalia looks at the picture and matches it to her card.

She has only two spaces left to get a complete “T.” We smile at each other when she puts the circle over another. Next picture and she’s got it. In Binglish, like Bingo, you are supposed to stand and announce your win. But Natalia doesn’t say anything, either not knowing the rule or not wanting to stand.

“Mrs. Lopez, I think Natalia won,” I say. A wave of groans comes from the other discouraged players. Mrs. Lopez walks to her desk and brings a bag of goodies Natalia can pick from for being the winner. Pulling out only a handful of prizes from the paper bag, Mrs. Lopez muses that it’s time to restock her supply, but Natalia spots a transformer figure and happily takes it.

“That’s a good one,” Mrs. Lopez remarks about her choice. A smile cracks on Natalia’s face. She is a respectable winner, sure of herself, without being able, or maybe even needing, to say it.

Monday morning Mrs. Lopez’s class has computers at 9:40 a.m. The computer room on the second floor of the school is newly installed through volunteer hours and money raised by selling t-shirts. There are about 20 new Macintosh computers circling the room. Natalia sits at a computer by herself, as do most of the other kids, except for a few who have to pair up.

It’s not a structured computer lesson. It’s time for them to explore. Natalia’s feet are swinging back and forth from her blue plastic chair, not yet able to touch the tile floor. She’s small for a nine year old, but she looks comfortable at her computer. She draws a face with a hat at first, but doesn’t like it and erases the creation. Going into another folder, she calls up a black and white picture of a disco—bell bottom people dancing and a disco ball hanging in the middle of the dance floor—and then begins to color the scene. She chooses vibrant purples and blues.

After computers, it’s snack time back in the classroom. Natalia passes out bags of baby carrots to everyone and Alex is telling me more stories. Natalia comes back to sit down. As they munch the carrots, I ask Alex if they both lived in the same place in Kazakhstan. He says he’s from a smaller town, but she’s from the capital land, Alma-Ata. It’s in the southeastern corner of the country and it’s known for its lush orchards.

He tells me that in his country school was much different. Children
GEBRE MOLLA LOVES SWIMMING.
OTHER "SPECIALS" IN THE DAY
ARE ART, MUSIC AND GYM.

learned more in a shorter time and there were no groups, everyone learned the same. Also, kids weren't allowed to talk like they are here. I ask Alex to see if Natalia likes school better here or in Kazakhstan. He asks her, but she doesn't really answer. Still crunching her carrots, she shrugs her shoulders and looks away. Maybe it's too early to tell.

Another day, Mrs. Lopez calls to her full classroom, "Time for the dinosaur test, boys and girls. Sit down at your own desk, your own desk." With 23 kids in the room, there isn't much extra space. Holding her freshly xeroxed pages, Mrs. Lopez is excited about the test. While the kids whine, she cheerfully hands out the pages. She makes her way to Natalia and Alex's desks.

"And Alex, you're going to work with her. I owe you big time." To me, Mrs. Lopez adds, "He's my new Russian translator." After she leaves, Alex says softly, "I'm going crazy translating everything."

They finish the ten fill-in-the-blanks and then start cutting out dinosaurs from colored construction paper. The other day they painted volcano scenes and now they need to make the creatures to roam the paintings. Mrs. Lopez walks around, looking at everyone's work.

"Natalia," Mrs. Lopez says and the girl looks up. "Beautiful. How do you say beautiful, Alex?"

"Krasivo," he replies.

"Say it again."

"Krasivo."

Looking into Natalia's eyes, Mrs. Lopez says slowly, "Krasivo." Natalia smiles and looks down at her work quietly. "She's an excellent student," Mrs. Lopez smiles.

RULES IN CLASS: 1. Raise your hand. 2. No pushing or touching. 3. Say "please" and "thank you." 4. Write only on paper. 5. No name calling, in any language.

This poster hangs in the front of Carol Dayn's third and fourth grade classroom. I still chuckle at Rule #5. It's not an average rule, but this isn't an average class. The kids in Mrs. Dayn's room speak over half a dozen languages. In fights over broken pencils or missing papers, the kids slide into their comfortable, native tongue. Rule #5 keeps them in check.

Next to this "RULES" poster are the words "What will you Bee Doing?" over a bee hive that has all the class jobs listed. This week, Natalia's older sister, Yelena, is the class line leader, the clothespin with her name on it attached to this part of the hive. She leads the class to specials, lunch, and the bus this week. She can't talk with many people in the class, yet she is their leader.

Every morning after some work with sentence grammar, Mrs. Dayn or Mr. Jura, as the kids call him, work through an extended word problem on the front board. Today is no exception. The problem usually involves some unit the class is working on. They are learning about birds this week.

"What are the three things that all birds have!" Mrs. Dayn asks to start out, reviewing what the class learned yesterday.

"Wings," one person says.

"Feathers," says another. And then, "They all come from eggs."

"Right," Mrs. Dayn says. Today's problem is about penguins. To keep their eggs warm, penguins carry their eggs on their feet, Mrs. Dayn explains. If there are six penguins and 84 eggs, how many eggs does each penguin have to carry on its feet?

Before they even have time to think, the kids shout out directions for Mrs. Dayn to solve the problem on the board. Hearing the mass of voices, Mrs. Dayn stops, and is not happy.

"It's the end of March. You want to talk to me, you put your hand up. It's Rule #1," she says looking sternly at the kids, her hand on her hip, gripping a piece of white chalk between her fingers. She pauses a moment to let the words sink in and then calls on the patient student with her hand raised. Mrs. Dayn is tough on the kids, but she has to be, and
they do listen—eventually. At the start of the day, Mrs. Dayn looks at ease, in her clogs and denim jumpers, but throughout the day, her nerves are tested constantly. She seems under stress, a new problem every day.

As the facilitator in the classroom, Jura Burdinik is under similar pressures. He is tall, in his mid-40's, and outside of school, loves his five cats, and makes his own wine. But in school, Jura is anything but relaxed. He and Mrs. Dayn have 24 kids in the class now, and the prospect of even more by June. They are at capacity.

After math, the class breaks up into reading groups. Since she’s so new, Yelena leaves to go with the non-speakers group along with three Somali students, Amina and two other boys. Mrs. Wells, a reading specialist at the school, helps this group learn vocabulary and gives them a chance to practice speaking. She says of Mrs. Dayn’s class, “There are so many different levels in here. These kids are so needy—I’m a respite for Carol.”

That’s the challenge in multilingual rooms—the many levels of the kids. Multilingual classes are similar in some ways to mainstream rooms. The same material is covered, just slower and with more emphasis on vocabulary. But in Mrs. Dayn’s room, there are six different groups of workers. Even having that many groups doesn’t solve the problem entirely. Yelena and Amina are in the same group. Yelena had been very well educated in her country, while Amina had never been to school before she came in November.

The teachers in Reiche’s multilingual classes teach more than academics and English. They have to teach manners and what is appropriate behavior in school. The issues that come up are often tied to cultural beliefs—the value of education, the roles of males and females. Jura recalls one time when some of the Somali boys in the class threw paper on the ground. When he told them to pick it up, they said, “Oh, Amina cleans up.” Needing to make them understand that, in school, cleaning is not solely a girl’s job, Jura explained, “No, no, wrong, you clean up.

“I don’t know what you do in your house . . . but in Reiche School, you make the mess, you clean it up. That’s it. Nobody else is your slave here.”

Woven throughout the day of all Reiche students are different “specials”—music, gym, computers, swimming, and art. Mrs. Dayn’s class has art on Friday mornings and it’s Yelena’s favorite class. She wants to be an artist. For the assignment to draw a portrait, an abstract, or a landscape, Yelena draws an ocean scene with fish and birds—real birds, not those “m’s” that most kids draw in the sky.

Yelena is lucky because her cousin Victoria is also in Mrs. Dayn’s class. She has both Victoria and Jura in the class to translate for her. When a student can’t understand Jura or Mrs. Dayn, another student in the class who speaks the language helps translate, or someone from another part of the school will be called in.

Yelena and Victoria sit at the same set of desks, and since Yelena came, she hasn’t left Victoria’s side. On the back of Yelena’s chair hangs a red knit hat identical to her sister’s. It’s hard to tell them apart when she and Natalia are wearing them. Yelena’s blonder braid is the only defining difference.

Having been here for one year, Victoria helps translate Yelena’s words for me. Yelena talks about coming to the United States, speaking for at least a minute, using her arms and body to tell the story. Victoria’s translations are much more timid than the sound and look of Yelena’s words in Russian. Yelena is very animated when she speaks. But Victoria herself is still in the process of learning English. “Yeah. She don’t want to be there [in Kazakhstan]. She said . . . if the girls is walking somewhere, the boys is running and knocking them down.” In Kazakhstan, Yelena says school was
Yelena is learning. She will feel very different. “You have to listen, that’s all. And sometimes you go to the board to write something.”

Both Yelena and Victoria like television—Darkwing Duck, Batman, Spiderman, Beetleborg, Power Rangers, the whole Fox Kids lineup.

“What’s your favorite food? Pizza, ice cream?” Hearing those last two words, Yelena’s eyes light up. “Ice cream,” she says in perfect English.

The girls then start to laugh about Joseph, a Somali boy in their class who says, in Russian, “I’m a pig” and “I’m a cow” to people. The girls can’t stop laughing about it. They taught him how to say it.

“What?” I ask, as I will many times, wishing I had taken Russian instead of Spanish in high school.

More laughing.

“Is it hard that people in your class speak different languages?”

“I don’t know,” Victoria says through a laugh. Their laughter answers my question perfectly. It doesn’t matter to them.

Yelena is learning some English words already. She can count from one to 20, pretty well, getting stuck around 12. She knows “please,” “dog,” “kitty,” and “Can I go to the bathroom?” Coming late in the school year is difficult, but still, Yelena is learning. She will feel more comfortable in school next year, she will be more ready. With kids like Yelena, you just have to get them prepared for next year, Mrs. Dayn says. “Yelena will be ahead next year. The acclimation takes time.”

At the end of the day Jura and Mrs. Dayn walk the class down the ramp to the buses. There are only two buses at Reiche. Most of the kids live close enough to walk. The buses are mainly ESL kids who are bused in from the surrounding areas to be in the multilingual classes. There are a few other elementary multilingual classes in the Portland School District, but Reiche has the largest program.

As the class nears the bottom of the ramp, like on the playground, the line breaks and everyone runs to the bus. I see Yelena’s little red hat dart out of the crowd, as she runs to get a good seat on Bus 11. Victoria rushes to keep up, but Yelena is small and squeezes in and out between the other kids easier. She makes it to the bus steps first and runs on to get her seat.

It’s almost four o’clock and Bus 34 has just dropped the Zivak kids at their home off Brighton Avenue. Their footprints in the fast falling snow are fresh, not yet filled in. I ring the doorbell and kick some snow from my shoes. Jelena opens the door, says hello and then looks down. A rush of warm, spicy air greets me.

Jelena is the filter for her family. At only ten, it’s a big job, but she is the oldest and knows more English than her parents. Her mother, Jadranka, is 33 and has been married to her husband, Andjelko, for 13 years. In Bosnia, Jadranka worked in a bank and Andjelko was a plumber, a trade that he continues here in the United States. Jadranka works the morning shift at Barber Foods now, and is home in time to be with her children after school. Neither have been able to take adult English classes, but hope to. “We didn’t have time,” Jelena explains. I ask Jelena if she can translate for her mom, if she needs it.

“George is better at that.” A year younger than Jelena, I wouldn’t have guessed that. George is shy, especially today. He has the chicken pox that Jelena passed on to him and he doesn’t want to look up. He and Miladin are sitting on the hardwood floor, watching “The Three Stooges,” their favorite show. Miladin turns away from the TV a few times to smile.

Jadranka is sitting close to her daughter on the couch. She smiles a lot and playfully takes Jelena’s hand into hers. Jelena’s grandmother comes in and sits down next to Jadranka. She says hello, but sits quietly with a yellow and blue babushka on her head. She is Andjelko’s mother. Both of his parents came with the family in September of 1995 to escape the war in their country.

Jelena talks passionately about the war in Bosnia and her fears. She knows so much. “They’re like stupid people. My brother was baby, a year. He was this big, they put him in jail. And plus they say, ‘We’re going to kill all the boys in the night when everybody’s sleeping.’”

It was very difficult for the family to leave their home, even with the war. Once Andjelko was released from jail, he made plans to come to the United States. Jelena remembers, “They release him from jail and then he sent us a letter and it said, ‘Come to Serbia. We’re going to America soon.’ And then mom and grandmother were crying.”

Before the war started five years ago, there was peace. Jadranka and Jelena recall all the animals and the large garden they had in Bosnia. “We grew potatoes, tomatoes, like pumpkin, corn . . . .” Jelena still likes gardening and flowers, even though there isn’t space for a garden here. Her favorite flowers are roses and tulips. The happiest time she can remember is in the garden at her home in Bosnia, “breaking flowers,” she says, as her hands gesture dividing a flower bulb in half.

Once the family went to Serbia, they flew to Greece, to New York, to Boston, and then to Maine. They were sponsored through the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) of Catholic Charities, the program which brings many families to Portland. The RRP uses numerous apartments in the West End for new immigrants, which explains the large population of immigrants at Reiche. It’s also in easy walking distance to the downtown area. For eight months after their arrival, the Zivaks’ sponsor at the RRP provided resettlement services—made medical appointments, registered the kids for school. “They help everything about finding apartment, and try to find a job, go shopping first time,” Jadranka says. The move was still very difficult.
REICHE HAS AN OPEN DESIGN.
ENLOSURES WERE CREATED FOR
KIDS TO TALK ENGLISH.

"Everything so different here. Different life." The weather is different. Too much snow here, she says. There is snow in Bosnia, but not in the area the Zivaks lived, in a town called Konjaic. It is one hour from the Adriatic coast in the Western part of the country.

One of the first things they noticed here were the houses. Jelena says, "The houses in my country were made out of bricks. Here when we saw houses, we were saying, "Huh? They said America is rich. It's not rich at all. What kind of houses are these?" The Zivaks brought only clothes with them from Bosnia. They lived in an apartment at first, but saved money. Three months ago, they bought this house.

George admires his father. I ask what he wants to be and he says, without hesitation, "I know, plumber." Miladin agrees with his brother. Later George tells me, "Sometime when I grow up a little bit more, I'm going to go to my father's job when he go. I'm going to go to help him." George talks quietly but with purpose when he wants you to listen. He's got a Maine Lobsters t-shirt on this evening, his brown hair almost touching the collar in the back.

Miladin is wild tonight. He likes to play Nintendo, for ten hours at a time, he says. He takes me into the room he and George share to check out the system. He is the youngest and has the most energy. Scooting across the kitchen floor in his socks, he slides into the room and starts playing.

"Ten hours you play this game?" I ask incredulously.

"Uh-huh," Miladin replies, not taking his eyes off the swinging Aladdin on the screen.

"Is that a lot?"

"No, not a lot, I think so," he says, still focused on the screen.

Miladin may have a tendency to exaggerate. "I like ten-thousand kinds," he says of the cakes that his mother makes, and of tangerines, "I eat what they buy—whole box!" His smile brightens his pale face, showing the empty spaces where his baby teeth used to be. Jadranka comes into the room, smiles at her son, and leans down to hug him.

Jelena sits on the boys' bed wearing the vibrantly colored slippers that her grandmother made. Her long, brown hair is pulled behind her ears. She is the tallest child in her fourth grade class and is still growing into her body. Jelena says she wants to be a teacher or a singer. As the boys play Nintendo, she puts in the tape of
TEACHER ELINOR LOPEZ TRIES TO EXPLAIN TO NATALIA KASYANOV THAT HER MATH IS CORRECT.

PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE: NATALIA WITH MRS. LOPEZ.

music from her country, the only kind she likes. It’s Dragana, her favorite singer. She sings along to all the words.

Even though the kids are learning English at Reiche, Jadranka would like them to keep up the Serbo-Croatian language. They speak Serbo-Croatian to their parents and grandparents, but usually English to each other.

Miladin has already forgotten five or six Serbo-Croatian words. Jelena doesn’t care about keeping up the language at all. “Why do I need it ‘cause I know I’m not going there?” She says that she likes the United States because “it’s not war—nothing else.” She doesn’t want to go back to Bosnia, except maybe to visit. Jadranka says that Jelena is scared. But Jadranka herself probably won’t go back either. The United States isn’t what she had expected. “Much better than I thought when I must come here... much better.”

Jelena brings out a baby doll that her mom bought her when she was one year old in Bosnia. It’s an old fashioned doll with eyes that roll to the top of its head. It’s very special to Jelena, and she is a protective mother. The doll doesn’t have a specific name. “I don’t know, baby. She was crying before so I call her crying baby.” The name isn’t important to Jelena, but it’s something that has been with her and that she can hold onto. When they were leaving Bosnia to come to the United States, Jelena remembers that her mother said, “Put her in a bag. I told her, ‘You crazy... I can’t put her in a bag. She has to sleep with me on the plane!’ ”

“HEY WENT bezerk,” Mrs. Dayn says, describing Jelena Zivak’s reaction to a routine fire drill that took place last year after she first started school. Mrs. Dayn was Jelena’s teacher at the time. Jelena and another new Bosnian girl “were really, really upset. Crying and holding hands. Definitely the most upset I’ve seen someone,” Mrs. Dayn told me. “Jelena wanted to find her brothers and make sure they were okay.” Jelena’s reaction was part of the reality she had lived with the bombing in her country.

She is far from those early days now. Rosa Barker, Jelena’s teacher this year, sees the change. She says that Jelena’s English has improved greatly in the past six months, and she has made friends. Jelena and her close friend Ngochieu, who is Vietnamese, sit in the back of the classroom and share occasional laughs and smiles during the day.

George also had a tough time at first. Mrs. Lopez remembers, “He was so traumatized. He didn’t talk, didn’t move. If you put your hand on his shoulder, he flinched. But for some reason from day one, everyone liked him and took care of him.” It wasn’t that George was reaching out, he was hurting, but he did come out of his shell because of everyone’s support. “He became less tense and got used to the schedule... Trust was big. He began to trust us. By Christmas, George would talk if he could and from then on, it’s been an upward progression. Now, he knows he’s good,” Mrs. Lopez beams. Laughing was also a big breakthrough for George.

When he did, “It was like, ‘Wow, there he is, there’s the boy.’ ”

Miladin was traumatized when he came to Reiche, too. Kathryn Blayne has been Miladin’s teacher for the past two years. She remembers him at first. “For three-quarters of the year, [he] could just barely make it to school every day. He wanted to come—he liked me, he liked the kids, but he couldn’t learn because he’d have nightmares about the bombing in his country. So you have to help mend that and make them stronger.

“Oh, and now, he’s a hot little ticket! He had to grow and... feel secure. He would ask me, ‘Where’s my mom? Is my mom coming now? Where is she? ’Cause he would think that if he’s at school, maybe he’s never going to see mom again. You know, so I let her come on in, check
in daily. Pop in, say hi. Let him know that, you know, mom's okay, dad's okay, and they're going to be there when you get home.

“And now he's wild this year!”

Even though their schooling was broken up by the war, school was much tougher in Bosnia. Jelena says, “In my country, it’s harder. Here when I come, it’s so easy. In my country, we do everything, divide, times, in first grade. Now fourth grade math book is like, in my country, first grade . . . . Why do I need to be first grader ‘cause I’m foreign?” The teachers at Reiche try their best to accommodate all the levels, but it’s impossible to make the learning pace right for everyone. Jelena says she finds school boring, but her English skills are still developing. She will probably move into the mainstream for some classes by next year.

That’s how the process works at Reiche, slowly putting the child into one mainstream class, usually math first, and then another, until they are fully mainstreamed. Once they are in mainstream classes, the students are expected to be independent workers, so the teachers don’t want to overwhelm them too quickly. Like the required entrance tests to be in multilingual classes, there are also rigid exit tests to pass before a student is fully mainstreamed.

When she came here, Jelena said, “It was funny ‘cause in my country, when you’re learning something, nobody could talk, but here, you learning, everybody could talk, you know. It was funny.”

In fact, at Reiche, talking is expected and encouraged. As Reiche’s principal for five years, Marguerite MacDonald, says about the school, “You’ll always hear a hum and a buzz of work . . . while the children are learning, they’re talking about what they’re learning.” Jura adds that this is especially true in the multilingual classrooms, where, unlike all of the mainstream “open” classrooms, there are walls.

“That’s why we’re in a closed room ‘cause you want kids to talk, and you want them to talk even if it sounds stupid to the rest of the class because kids go through silent periods, and then they talk, in fractures.”

Jelena, George, and Miladin are all beyond talking in fractures. They still have to learn more English, but they have come so far.

About all of her kids Mrs. Blayne says, “They’re not your average little kids. They have to overcome so much in order to become your average little kid . . . . They’re so resilient. It’s really amazing what they go through, and their little spirits are just so incredible. They really want to learn, they want to succeed, they want to do well. And they try hard.”

“LEM LEM MEANS ‘green’ in my language,” Molla Meresa Robso tells me as we sit on the soft couch-es in the family’s living room. This is what his daughter’s name means. His wife’s name, Abeba, means sunflower. The family just moved into this apartment near Park Avenue last weekend. They are still putting away some boxes. They’ve been in the United States for seven years, longer than the Kasyanovs and Zivaks combined.

It’s a Sunday afternoon and some family friends are also visiting. We are all in the living room. The kids are on the floor trying to fix the Nintendo. It won’t stop blinking.

Molla and Abeba are very involved parents, the principal and teachers at Reiche have told me. Molla often volunteers in Lem Lem and Gebre’s classrooms, and Abeba chaperones field trips with the kids. Neither can do as much as they would like. Molla works the morning shift at Barber Foods and Abeba, the afternoon. Time is precious.

Molla left his home in Eastern Ethiopia when he was 19 years old to escape the harsh Communist government that was in place at the time. He and some friends went by foot to Sudan, walking mostly at night to avoid capture. The trip took five months. That was August 1983. In Sudan, he met Abeba and they had
two children. The family then immigrated to Portland on September 12, 1990, through Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program. At the time, Lem Lem was three and a half and Gebre was just one.

Molla tells me about when they first moved to this country. “It was very hard,” he says. “Twelve days after we came here, my son, he gets very, very sick. But we have no phone, nothing, so he cries all night, and then at seven in the morning, I go down to the landlord and bang on his door.”

The landlord called an ambulance and the family went to Maine Medical, where they spent the entire day. Gebre was having an allergic reaction, which caused his rash and crying, but it was easily treatable. “My son, he got medicine, but we were there all day and had no food, water, nothing.” They couldn’t ask anyone for help. “It was so hard.” At last, Molla saw an information booth and went there to try to get a taxi to go home.

“Taxi is same in my language, so I ask him . . . .” The man finally understood Molla and got a taxi for the family. With their short time here, neither Molla nor his wife knew the street address of their apartment. “And the man in the taxi is calling his boss to say, ‘I have a refugee who doesn’t know where he lives.’ ” Molla laughs. He can see the humor in the story now. At the time, it was scary for them.

“My wife, she was crying. We didn’t know what to tell this man.” They had lived for a few days in a Refugee Resettlement Program temporary house, and remembered that it was on Green Street. “We were dropped off on Green and then we walk to our place—my son on my back and my wife with Lem Lem. It was very hard.”

Molla feels that there is hope in America for his children. Because of the political state of Ethiopia when he left, Molla wasn’t able to graduate from high school. He plans to go to school again, but he wants his children to succeed now. Both Lem Lem and Gebre stayed only short times in multilingual classes when they entered Reiche. Now, they are successfully enrolled in mainstream classrooms.

“I love Reiche School,” he says and he’s dedicated to helping his kids learn. Molla makes time with the kids after school when they do homework or learn about United States culture. He is studying for the citizenship test, so what he reads about United States history and culture he passes on to his children. He’s always pushing them, wanting them to know more.

“You did good job, Gebre. Plus and take away right? What do you want to do? How many planets are there?” Molla asks.

“Nine,” Gebre replies.

“Ten,” Lem Lem counters, “there’s a new one.”

Lem Lem and Gebre both have large eyes and chocolate brown skin. Lem Lem’s black hair is usually braided, tied back in colorful barrettes. She’s nine and looks about average height for her age. Gebre’s hair is kept short, like his father’s.

“Do you want to play?” Lem Lem asks me as she emerges from the kitchen, juggling an egg carton, two clay cups that she and Gebre made, and 48 dried red beans—four for each space in the carton—in her hands. She sets the supplies down on the table, and we play this game for hours it seems. It’s called “gebeta” in Ethiopia. Molla says he played it as a boy too, by digging holes in the ground and using small stones to move around. The object is to capture all of your opponent’s beans or stones. I keep missing the good moves.

“Jennifer! You should have moved here!” Lem Lem calls. Lem Lem is not shy here as she is in school. “My teacher says I have sharp eyes,” she tells me as she finds one of our beans that had rolled away.

Molla and Abeba speak Tigrinya to each other and to the kids. “They listen, you know. But when they answer, it’s English,” Molla says, laughing. He wants the kids to keep up the language because he’s planning when they get older to take them to visit his family, all of whom are still in Ethiopia.

Because of the sheer numbers at Reiche, it’s difficult to keep up with the cultures of all the students. Four New Years are celebrated along with
many other cultural events, but much of the responsibility lies with the parents to teach culture. Molla and Abeba relish this opportunity.

"We never forget our culture, no?" Molla says. For the friends that are over, Abeba prepares the traditional coffee or "buna". Green coffee beans are bought at the store, and the beans are roasted and ground at home. In Ethiopia, all the neighbors are invited for buna. It’s a time to sit and drink together.

Along with the coffee, Abeba burns some special herbs and spices on a hot charcoal for incense. The wave of smoke rises from the traditional stand and floats throughout the room. "It smells good," Molla laughs. "It goes with the coffee. If people are passing and they smell it, ‘Oh, this house. It must be coffee.’ It’s a good feeling, you know."

While the buna is prepared, Lem Lem and Gebre are sitting on the outskirts playing Nintendo. They don’t drink the coffee. "If [Lem Lem] get married, she can drink it." For now, the kids have milk or juice. It’s the tradition to have three cups.
of coffee. During the preparation, friends talk and laugh, as we do today. "When you call buna, you have fun, good time, with a neighbor, with a friend. Buna, we call it. Buna, very special. We don't want to miss our culture."

After almost seven years in this country, Molla and Abeba still keep up the traditions for themselves, for their children. Later, Abeba makes injera—a flour, flat, spongy bread—and chiro—a mix of beans and spices—for us to eat. Next to these traditional foods on their kitchen table are boxes of Rice Krispies and Raisin Bran. "They love cereal," Molla tells me, laughing.

Gebre definitely looks up to his big sister. He likes to tell the story of Lem Lem's first day of preschool and how she cried when her parents dropped her off. When he says this, Gebre turns and waves to me, his wet head is cocked to the side, eyes wide open and mouth shut tight to keep out the chlorinated water. He moves through the steaming water, his safety float and then lines up near his head, something he does often. He told me another time, "My sister's good at swimming ... and homework." This gets an eye roll as well. Hearing his children talk, Molla turns to me, her head, something she does often. Lem Lem rolls her eyes to the top of her head, something she does often.

Lem Lem's first day of preschool and how she cried when her parents dropped her off. When he says this, Gebre turns and waves to me, his wet head is cocked to the side, eyes wide open and mouth shut tight to keep out the chlorinated water. He moves through the steaming water, his safety float and then lines up near his head, something he does often. He turns and waves to me, his wet feet smacking on the tile of the pool area as he rounds the corner.

When he gets out, his slick, wet skin support from their parents and they also started at Reiche in kindergarten, which made their move to mainstream classrooms much faster. "If I have a little child that comes in in kindergarten—your average, healthy, normal child, no learning problems—I'd say a year, year and a half maximum they could go into the mainstream. That's been about my average," says multilingual teacher Mrs. Blayne.

This year, Lem Lem and Gebre are both succeeding. Kristy Johnson, Gebre's first grade teacher, says that "he's been one I can really count on ... a leader in our room." And Gloria Dinsmore, Lem Lem's third grade teacher, comments that, "Everybody loves Lem Lem."

Lem Lem and her friend Janie, who is from China, were in the same preschool class, but they didn't know each other then. The girls have been in the same classes all along, and both have Mrs. Dinsmore this year as well. Janie is Lem Lem's close friend now, but in the classroom, both are very quiet. "Jennifer. That's what Janie's real name is. Janie's just a short name," Lem Lem tells me with the pride that kids have when talking about their friends.

Lem Lem is respected in her class. Ashley, the girl who sits next to her, told me that "Lem Lem was sick a few days ago or last week. I was surprised. She comes to school a lot." She strikes that balance, Mrs. Dinsmore says, between doing good work and having people like her.

Social Studies is on Monday and Wednesday afternoon in Mrs. Dinsmore's room. The teacher from the neighboring class comes over to teach this while Mrs. Dinsmore teaches science in the other room. Today, the kids are "tag" reading from their book Communities Near and Far.

The chapter is about reading maps and using compasses, as well as the seven continents. Everyone is in a circle around the teacher's feet. Lem Lem is called on to read, her voice is slightly more audible than the last reader, but still hard to hear. Attention is drifting. The teacher stops Lem Lem, trying to revive the interest, and asks if anyone has ever traveled around the world.

Everyone's eyes turn to Lem Lem, but she looks down. She meekly says "Ethiopia" after a moment. She doesn't like to stand out.

Then another more boisterous student starts to talk about his family's Irish history.

But Lem Lem is not ashamed of her heritage. She pulls out a drawing of an Ethiopian village from her tote to show me. It's a vibrantly colored picture, done with colored pencils, of a village scene—a woman walking with a baby, children running in the foreground, a house in the right corner. "It's going to the Principal's Corner," the boy down a few desks informs me.

"Why?" I ask.

"Because it's good," he says matter-of-factly.

Whenever students do any kind of superior work, their teacher can submit it to the Principal's Corner, a space near Mrs. MacDonald's office. There is prestige involved here—names are announced on the intercom and the kids go up to have their photograph taken. They are all sure Lem Lem's drawing will make it.

"How did you know what the village looked like?" I ask.

"My dad told me," she replies.

Ashley is still looking intently at the picture.

"I thought people didn't wear shoes there," she says.

"Some people don't," Lem Lem responds.
The 24-hour cruise from Portland, Maine to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia has a crew of 200 people working around the clock to keep 1,300 passengers happy from May to October. The crew speaks two dozen languages and represents 25 countries. Above, Chief Officer Hans Uli Teuber, Captain Hartmut Rathje and Second Officer Stjepo Milicic prepare to dock in Yarmouth.

WORKING on the Scotia Prince

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUDY BENNETT
"The first time I saw the ship I thought, 'Wow, it's big,'" says casino cashier Lester Daniels of Guyana, above with fellow casino worker Katia Dehaye of France. "I was lost at first. I didn't expect it to be so plush. It's a luxurious life, even though the work is stressful. What I make in one year here, I can't make in ten years at home."

Serving cocktails to the passengers on deck.
The roulette wheel in the casino aboard the M/S Scotia Prince.
Petra Linden, information receptionist, packing during the final cruise of the season.
Crew members Michael Hoje of St. Vincent and Tarrington Dallas of Jamaica between shifts in their living quarters. "You work six months on, six months off," says Captain Rathje. "It's a lifestyle, but it's not for everybody. You learn to adapt to it and you just plan your life around it."
Ivan Corak of Croatia, first engineer, working in the engine room.
Barbara Pierce of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, hooking up the gangway in Portland.
of the BOXERS

Written by Ethan Anderson
Photographs by Christofer Ruder
The Dirt Road drops off of a bingo hall's parking lot and easing its way through the shells of long-abandoned industrial buildings and garages. On a final bend in the road, the smokestack becomes visible, illuminated by a spotlight. In giant, white letters arranged from top to bottom, one word reigns over the clutter, the ruin, and the desolation: BOXING.

The club itself lies low in front of an expanse of railroad tracks. Here, the small lawn is neatly mowed, the building's white paint is new and clean, and the neon lights in the window burn red and blue and green patches onto the gravel walk. The building once housed a kiln used to dry lumber. Now it is a home for amateur fighters who are rekindling the sport in Portland.

The Portland Boxing Club stages about six nights of fights a year, all amateur. To call it a comeback for professional boxing in Portland would be an exaggeration, but it is a start, and to those who train here night after night and week after week, it's more. It's a refuge—it's their fix, their religion, their escape.

Tonight, cars lurch over the dips in the road, rounding that final bend and filling the small parking lot. Gradually, they line the road through the long grass and the abandoned buildings. People look into the dead buildings and the long grass, then at each other as if to say, "Are you sure this is the place?"

They enter, holding purses and videocameras, a mist of cigarette smoke from outside following them in. At the counter, they dig into their wallets and pay the ten dollar admission.

Two hundred folding chairs are assembled around the twenty foot square ring. Mothers, girlfriends, and old-timers arrive early, circle the ring, contemplating every vantage point, and finally settle. The videocameras hum as their autofocus and zoom are tested and discovered. Necks stretch. Eyes search out the boxers, who remain in unseen places, wrapping their hands, waiting.

Gradually, all the folding chairs fill. As fans pile in, their faces become obscured by shadow; they are swallowed by the crowd. The colored lights above the ring are turned on, and the halogens whistle softly as they burn to their full brightness. The crowd purrs and pulses. Judges and doctors filter through the crowd and take their places at ringside folding tables. The bouncers at the front door turn to face the ring. The policeman in the corner near the bar stops talking to a girl with pink barrettes and green chewing gum. The crowd quiets as the lights dim, until all that is audible is the whirr of the videocameras.

Bobby Russo stands in a corner of the club, taking it all in. This is his creation—the first annual Northeast Regional Championship Tournament. Fighters and clubs from all across New England have come to his club to assert their club's position atop the amateur boxing circuit. Bobby waits, watches, and when the mood is where he wants it, he signals to the concession stand and doctors filter through the crowd. The colored lights are turned on, followed by the crowd. The colored halogens whistle softly as they burn to their full brightness. The crowd quiets and the dance music fades.

Every eye focuses on the ring. The fighters tap gloves and circle, assessing and clashing violently into each other. The next, they are insects engaged in a mating ritual: they separate, gesturing, teasing, and luring each other forward. The spectators' eyes are about even with the ring's surface. They watch silently as the fighters' feet slide and shift, their shoes a cross between socks and ballerina slippers.

Melville moves awkwardly, but
with his long reach, he lands the first blow, a quick right jab. Chad's head snaps back slightly, and he steps away, adjusting his headgear. He rolls his neck, taps his glove to his chin, and bounces forward, eyes focused on Melville's gloves.

Chad ducks under Melville's arms and towards his chest, throwing a powerful right hook into his stomach. Melville doubles over, surprised. He steps back, eyes now watering, and tries to gather himself. Chad follows incessantly, landing a quick jab and following with a combination. With each punch, Chad exhales audibly through his nose and mouth, sending a spray of spittle through the air onto Melville and the mat.

Suddenly, Chad lands a blow to Melville's face with such force that it sends ripples through his cheek. Blood spatters from Melville's nose, and with each attempted punch and its corresponding exhale, it spatters his upper lip and chin a bit more. He tries a jab, bearing his lower teeth, which are blackened and ferocious with the blood.

As Melville retreats, Chad stiff-arms him, forcing him against the ropes. From behind the post, Bobby urges: "Lead with the jab, and follow!" Melville confused, lowers his arms. Chad opens up again; his opponent is weakened to the point that he can hardly cover his face. Melville's manager jumps to the corner and throws in the towel. The referee steps in, waving his arms horizontally by his waist, and separates the fighters. Bobby Russo runs the club from his cluttered office in the rear. He leans against his desk, his shirt unbuttoned halfway, a gold medallion resting in thick black hair on his chest. Fight posters and photos line the walls, and a one-way mirror looks out to the ring. Bobby's large, dark eyes grow excited as he talks about the sport that has shaped his life.

"Going through school, the only books I read was boxing. Like a freak, you know how it can be, baseball or whatever, mine was boxing. And I just got into it, my parents were against boxing, and I still went to the gyms anyway and boxed." Bobby can tell you who fought who, where, and in what year. He knows all the heavyweight champions, and their stories. Boxing to him is as much about the past as it is about the future: "Boxing's been around before Christ. It was an Olympic event, I think."

"He's very knowledgeable," nods Skip Neales, a trainer and coach, as he tries to fix one of the halogens, which melted during the last fight. "What we do is, on our road trips, we have games, like who fought Ali in 1957? In Madison Square Garden? Russo . . . he'll tell you right off the top of his head, too. Like who was Joe Louis's last fight? Russo knows, Russo's onto that. Drives you nuts all the way."

T WENTY YEARS AGO, professional boxing was a staple of life in Portland. Every week, world-ranked professionals fought at the Portland Exposition Center. These "Thursday Night Fights" attracted thousands of people and legitimate contenders.

In the early '80s, Joey Gamache emerged from Lewiston to win three world titles. Later, amateurs flocked to Gamache's gym in Lewiston, run by Joey's father. Interest was rising, and Maine had a hero.

Soon, smaller clubs sprouted in Portland, and four years ago, the Portland Boxing Club was established. Bobby Russo offered something other club managers lacked—a permanent ring at his fighters' disposal. As he attracted talent, he drew fans. Fighters saw the club as a chance to gain real experience and to fight before a crowd. To be cheered and appreciated.

Bobby Russo runs the club from his cluttered office in the rear. He leans against his desk, his shirt unbuttoned halfway, a gold medallion resting in thick black hair on his chest.
Although he has spent his life around a boxing ring, he has never been allowed to enter it for an official fight: his blind right eye makes him ineligible. He watches his fighters and fights through them. He has no children, and spends all his free time with his kids here.

Bobby looks through the one-way mirror out into the club, which is now nearly empty. Skip shuffles across the room, gathering water bottles left around the ring by the fighters.

"For some people, it's everything," admits Bobby. "And actually, look at me, too. 'Cause I really love the sport . . . once you get involved, you're in it for life. It's a really addicting thing . . . it's in my blood; it's in Skip's blood."

One of his goals is to de-stigmatize the sport and bring dignity to it and to his kids. Amid professional boxing's million dollar contracts and million dollar egos, the amateur circuit is often overlooked or ignored. Bobby created the Northeast Regional Championships as a way to glorify his fighters, giving them, and himself, a feeling that they are at a pinnacle.

"We wanted to bring it a little step beyond . . . because it's run like a world championship fight.

"The thing that we wanted to change was the general appearance of amateur boxing . . . they treat it like amateur boxing, you know? Everything's important, to make the right atmosphere."

Fights at Bobby's club use five judges, instead of the required three, to try to avoid unfair decisions. Between rounds, cardgirls—strippers from Mark's Showplace—wave the round number over their heads as they walk around the ring.

Watching from the red corner, Bobby assesses what he sees. He hears the crowd from the corner, and wins and loses from the corner. The fighters come and stay or come and go. Bobby stays, and watches.

He sees himself in the ring, in every street fighter and every prospect he trains. He raises them, shows them how to move.

"I have a kid that comes here that is in a street gang—that is, not anymore, because he comes here. You know, some people—kids that have been in jail, or whatever—and that's the purpose that boxing really serves. So it's kind of funny. You kind of learn about your inner self."
ONE WORD REIGNS OVER THE CLUTTER, AND RUIN. BOXING. PEOPLE LOOK AROUND AS IF TO SAY, "ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE PLACE?"

MARK CAMP is having trouble wrapping his hands; he has never done this before, although he has had his share of fights. He stands in the corner near the door, under a giant poster of Don Corleone from "The Godfather." Posters cover the entire wall opposite the ring. Fighters stare, timeless and angry, from yellowed cards advertising fights won and lost 20 years ago. Scattered among the images are slogans exhorting the twenty or so fighters that come here to train.

The more you SWEAT, the less you BLEED.

If you want to box, TRAIN... If you want to win, TRAIN HARDER.

Your next opponent is training HARDER than you!

Mark is a tall and lanky 15 year old. His unkempt brown hair falls over his large eyes as he swings his head to watch the fighters sparring in the ring. Today is his first day at the club. His eyes shift uneasily, and his voice is nervous as he struggles with the wrapping. He joined, he says, because he got expelled from high school.

"I needed something to do, so I decided to box. Plus, I was always interested in it. And I came, and it was pretty cheap. They said you can come here whenever you want, so I said I would." The sound of training and music reverberate off of the dull white walls, and sneakers squeak as they slide over the floor coated with industrial gray paint. The room smells like sweat and mildew-stained canvas. Mark unwraps his left hand, and starts again.

He smiles faintly and scans the fighters training at the various stations: they are like machines, rhythmically tapping the speedbags with alternating hands to develop speed, testing their reflexes by ducking and lunging into the sweat-stained heavy bag, or dodging and swinging at the double-ended bag, which is kept taut by elastic cords connected to the ceiling and the floor. Mark hopes that the training here will prevent a repeat of what happened to him at Cheverus High School. "People starting stuff with me... spitting in my face, and threatening to kill me."

Walking self-consciously to the exercise chart, Mark examines the daily workout schedule. He will stretch, and then start jumping rope, to improve his flexibility and endurance. On the chart, exercises are timed to the length of rounds. Every three minutes, as in an actual match, the bell rings and each boxer rests for a minute, leaving his bag swinging or dropping his jump rope to the floor. Most of the more experienced boxers are gathered around the ring to watch the sparring. In the ring are Chad Powell and a cocky brawler from Lewiston who trains in a club there. From the corner, Bobby urges: "Lead with the jab, and follow!"

Mark will not be sparring anytime soon. "They don't do that for, like, six weeks," he shrugs. He is having trouble with the jump rope; he returns it to its hook and chooses another. Above the door flanked by the jump rope hooks hangs a crucifix, draped over by a palm leaf.

SKIP NEALES is balding, with a raspy voice that wavers between high and low pitch. He has no bottom teeth, and he shuffles his feet in short steps when he walks. The middle finger of his left hand is missing above the knuckle, where it was severed with a tablesaw a couple years ago. His eyes are alert and dart around the room. Skip avoids eye contact, but he'll talk until he's out of breath.

He has been in boxing for "thirty, forty years, just fooling around, having some fun at it... it's a violent—it's a contact sport, one on one, individual. That's what makes it so much fun." In his career as a boxer, Skip fought three fights. He broke his nose in each one, and decided at that point to become a trainer. "I've had four gyms since 1960, I don't think I've had a major fatality in any of 'em. Maybe bloody noses. Nobody's got to the point where you know, catastrophe's set in."

He remembers people who have passed through any of the four clubs he's owned or the seven clubs he's worked at, although he seldom remembers names. Bobby refers to him, with affection, as the "Prime Minister of Misinformation." Above the mirror on the side of the club opposite the ring hang photographs of Skip with Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, and Danny Melendez. He hobbles towards the speedbags, where a newcomer is struggling, positions himself at the adjacent bag, and works it with expert precision and professional speed.

"Come right down to it, it's a labor of love, basically, is what it amounts to. It's something that you want to do with your life. My kids are all grown up now, so I got, you know, I have evenings. I have all free time, so..."
I come over here."

Skip works for a jewelry store three days a week. When the Portland Boxing Club opened, he was here building the ring with his own hands, painting the walls and breathing life into the dead building. The windows were broken out, with grass growing between the cracks. Where the ring now stands, a tree was growing through the floor.

Today he walks restlessly through the club, from training station to training station. For a while, he picks up a medicine ball and slams it into the stomach of Tom Thomas, one of the fighters, as he does sit ups, to simulate punches to the stomach. He demonstrates to Mark Camp, the newcomer, how to jump rope while crossing his arms in front of him. He yells into the ring where Chad is sparring, telling him to stay off the ropes. When the sparring is over, he refills water bottles. Finally, when most of the boxers are gone or leaving, he retreats to the office.

"What I like about it is the kids that I got involved with all ended up better for it. I got a kid from South Portland, he was about ready to drop out of college, I talked him into staying in, he went, finished his college, and now he's an engineer. God, that was, like, fifteen, twenty years ago. And he still remembers me, I don't know if I set him right, or whatever, 'cause he got involved in the boxing end of it . . . ."

"Now that's like Danny Melendez. After he left me he got into drugs. So I went over to his house, talked to him, you know, next thing I know, we straightened him out. Now he's living in Manchester, got a couple of kids. I don't know if it's me, I don't know if it's the boxing or whatever, but people in this sport kind of stick with each other, you kinda stay together. I don't know why, but they just do."

ARON SCALIA and Tom Thomas arrive at the club together, as always. They drive down nearly every day from Lewiston, where they used to train. Both are in their mid '20s and are novice amateurs, meaning that they've had fewer than ten official fights, and have won no tournaments. Both have come to the Portland Boxing Club from Joey Gamache's gym in Lewiston.

Aaron is compact and muscular. He has fought only one amateur bout, a win in the opening round of the Northeast Regional Championships. He heard of Bobby and the club through Tom, and they both decided to try it out. They soon found that the variety and the opportunity in Portland were better than at Gamache's.

"Bobby takes us down to Massachusetts, to spar in another gym down there, and he gives me a lot of attention on the pads, and the personal work—stuff I couldn't get other places. Bob lives, sleeps, everything boxing." Aaron talks casually as he changes his clothes in the middle of the club. "I can't even tell you how many tricks Skip has taught me, 'cause I mean, him and Bob go hand in hand. They're like salt and pepper. And Skip has been around the game for a long time. I think he's in his '60s, and he's probably seen more fights than I ever will in my lifetime."

"I can't even tell you how many tricks Skip has taught me, 'cause I mean, him and Bob go hand in hand. They're like salt and pepper. And Skip has been around the game for a long time. I think he's in his '60s, and he's probably seen more fights than I ever will in my lifetime."

Lately, Aaron's been working mostly on the colbra bag, which is like an upside-down speed bag. He stares at it with ferocity, circling as he punches it. Bobby watches him, offering occasional criticisms. Aaron looks frustrated, but takes a deep breath, and starts again. Aaron has been here for only about a month and a half, but he is already regarded as a promising prospect. He sees boxing as an evolving sport, citing that evolution as a reason that boxing may make a resurgence:

"It's a chess match. You get in there, it's not just bangin' heads and hittin'—see who can hit the hardest. I mean, granted, a lot of people do that, but the person with the smarts upstairs—nine times out of ten, if the skills are equal—will win, because he can see what the other person is doing. . . . Boxing's evolutionized into a more skillful game—there's more defense . . . it's gonna come back real big, and when it does, it's gonna be better than it used to be."

Tom Thomas is tall, with blue eyes and blondish hair. He had two amateur fights a couple of years ago, but hasn't fought officially since. In training, he moves with a little less force and ferocity than Aaron, but with more deliberation and intent.

"Only think about what you're gonna do, and not what the other guy's gonna do. Like some of the pros. You can tell guys that are fighting Mike Tyson, yeah, they're wor-
"IT'S A CHESS MATCH. YOU GET IN THERE, IT'S NOT JUST BANGIN' HEADS. BOXING HAS EVOLUTIONIZED.

LEFT: defeated boxer.

ried about more what he's doing. You gotta think about what you're gonna do."

Tom speaks firmly and with confidence. He was a "street fighter," even though he is a soft spoken and deliberate person; he thinks before he speaks.

"I guess I had my share of fights, I mean, I never went looking for them, but y'know, I wasn't the type of person to run away. I was always interested, not to go out and pick a fight, or anything like that, but just—it's just you in the ring...I don't know, it's a challenge. It gets you—it's addicting to some people."

TOM THOMAS ducks the rope and turns to face the post in his corner. He is nervous, with sweat drenching his face and his hair. He bounces on his toes, turns, and looks wildly through the crowd, his eyes widening and his chest heaving. From somewhere in the back of the building, a voice cries: "He's gonna collapse before the fight even starts."

Bobby places his hand on Tom's shoulder and holds him still, while Skip yells something in his ear. Tom bites down hard on the plastic mouthpiece that Bobby holds up for him, and looks over his shoulder at Gregory Pendergast, the fighter in the opposite corner. He takes a few deep breaths, pounds his gloves against the post, and turns as the bell rings.

He lunges towards Pendergast and misses. Pendergast counters with a quick jab, which surprises Tom, who has a lot of friends in the crowd. They call his name, urging him on even as the tide shifts against him. He's trying to land the Big One, relying on power and luck instead of skill. He swings wildly, as his opponent waits, dodges, and counters.

"I was always interested, not to go out and pick a fight, or anything like that, but just—it's just you in the ring...I don't know, it's a challenge. It gets you—it's addicting to some people."

"I guess I had my share of fights, I mean, I never went looking for them, but y'know, I wasn't the type of person to run away. I was always interested, not to go out and pick a fight, or anything like that, but just—it's just you in the ring...I don't know, it's a challenge. It gets you—it's addicting to some people."

Tom rushes out again, but not without purpose. He leads with a jab, keeping his distance while applying pressure. Pendergast has become timid: he was reprimanded in his corner for his wildness, and can't focus on concentrating on defense, as he was told. Tom slams Pendergast's gloves as he struggles to protect his face, and Tom has now against the ropes.

He winds up and throws two crushing hooks, and Pendergast slams backwards into the ropes and slides downward, reaching back for the rope, as he falls to the floor. Tom jumps back, startled. Pendergast tries to get up, his eyes searching the halogens above for some direction. At the count of eight, he is on his feet, but leaning heavily against the ropes. The referee stops the fight.

Tom has won the Northeast Regional Middleweight Championship, and he runs and jumps into the arms of Bobby, who raises him up like a child.

OB RICHARD is short and balding, with a thin moustache. He has recently returned to boxing after a 15 year hiatus that followed his professional career.

"I just got ranked tenth in the world and sixth in the country. I was married. Had two children. At the time, my daughters were just little—four and six years old. And I come back from Maryland where I was training, and when I come back for a fight that I was gonna have at the Expo, she told me, my wife told me she didn't want to be married anymore, and she couldn't take it. Too much of the boxing, and this and that, and I was devastated. I was crushed. Y'know, I just had my two little baby girls, and I was just devastated. I went out, and I fought, and I got stopped in the ninth round, and that ended my whole career. And I was in limbo for, like, fifteen years. I didn't even look at boxing. I just got out of it completely."

Bob works as a bus driver in Portland. Every day now, he is at the club at 4:15, waiting for it to open. Fifteen years have balanced his life to some degree; he went from feeling like he'd lost his daughters to becoming a happy grandfather. He has returned to boxing to train to become a judge or a referee. He smiles: "I'm back in boxing, that I love."

A fighter, according to Bob Richard, has to choose one world or another. "Either you're gonna forget about what's outside until after your career, or you're just gonna get out of boxing. One or the other. You can't have two—there's no way—you just gotta have one or the other. Boxing world is a boxing world. Period."

CHAD POWELL is a quiet, shy high school student with average grades who changes oil after school at Prompto. He usually enters the club between six and seven o'clock, when many boxers are leav-
ing. He wears jeans and a t-shirt, and he doesn’t bother to change into athletic clothes. He walks through the front door, past the ring, and begins to stretch on a mat in front of Bobby’s office, near the back of the club.

Bobby watches a video of one of Chad’s fights as Chad stretches, visible through the mirrored window. “I’m very proud of him, because he’s just a good thing for the sport of boxing, because he’s never, ever got in trouble in his entire life, never will. Honest kid, works hard. His father supports him in the sport, because that was a man and Chad is basically a boy. Or was a boy.”

Chad’s father, Herman Powell, comes to the club to watch his son spar sometimes, and praises the club and especially Bobby, whom he chose to train his son. “Bobby’s almost like his second father, for God’s sake.”

Herman was a fighter himself, but by the time he had gotten involved, he was really too old to be competitive as a pro.

“I remember back when I was into it, I went from the street into the ring. I had really no decent gym to go to at all,” he laughs. “There weren’t really no gyms around. You either had to train at home or you didn’t train at all, really. Basically, that’s the way it was for me.”

Herman sees Bobby as the catalyst that allows his son the opportunities he didn’t have himself. “Chad is such a good kid that people who see him on the street, they’d never know he’s a boxer because he is that type of kid. I mean, he doesn’t boast about boxing. He likes it, I mean, he loves it, because again, I don’t push him. I used to push him, and I said, well, maybe he’s doing it for me. So I didn’t want him to do it for me. Y’know, I want him to do it for himself.”

Chad also dealt with pressure from his friends. He was pushed hard by his friends, who thought he was spending too much time at the club. Because of them, he left the sport for a full year before returning to it. He came back, realizing, his father says, that boxing meant more to him than his friends.

Lying on the mat, doing sit-ups, Chad offers: “My friends don’t really care, a lot of times they try to—they’re like, ‘Oh, just don’t go to the gym tonight, because we can go to the mall,’ or something. But my father and my stepmother, they love it.”

ARON CLIMBS into the ring as if he has too much energy to contain. There is sweat on his forehead, and on his back and the middle of his chest, his black shirt is shiny with perspiration. On the right thigh of his shorts is an Italian flag. His eyes are intense, and he shuffles his feet, waving an arm over his lowered head and staring at the mat under his feet.

Aaron turns to Bobby, who is holding his mouthpiece, leans and spits into the red bucket at Bobby’s feet, and looks up into the lights. His hands are on the ropes as he faces the corner, and he opens his mouth. Bobby slides the mouthpiece into place, yells something into his ear, and ducks out of the ring. Aaron is left alone, facing the fighter in the opposite corner.

In the blue corner, Brendan O’Donnell is shaking his head and trying to keep his arms loose by swinging them limply at his sides. He is from Portland, and trains at Choi’s martial arts studio on Congress Street. The crowd is loud and split in its support of the two fighters, and they face each other, winner and loser, with only a matter of minutes to determine which is which.

The bell rings, and Aaron all but runs into the middle of the ring,
meeting O'Donnell there. His eyes are rabid but focused, and he grimaces as he throws a jab and then a strong right hook at O'Donnell. Aaron is opening up early, and he looks wild. O'Donnell is unphased by the barrage.

Under the lights, they exchange damaging punches and missed jabs for three rounds. Sweat flies from their arms as they strike at each other, backs rubbing against the ropes or arms sliding over each other as they tangle in an embrace. The referee steps in and separates them.

They are tired and flailing at each other, hoping to get lucky and land a blow. Bobby urges from the corner, and Aaron musters a bit of energy and straightens out. They circle, hug, and separate. In intervals, they attack each other with abandon, and the momentum of the fight sways with the emotions of the crowd. Scorekeepers look up, searching for a landed blow. Bobby holds his chin in his hand, every now and then standing with his hands on the mat: “Combinations, Aaron! Lead with the jab!”

When the final bell rings, Aaron and Brendan rush each other and hug. They do not yet know who the victor is, but they know they have put on a good fight. They are proud of themselves, and of each other, as well. They are boxers; they are kin.

The crowd and the fighters wait for a decision. The two boxers parade for the judges, hands raised and smiles wide. They are both exhausted and beaten: O'Donnell's nose has some dry blood at the tip. After a minute, the announcer's voice blasts through the murmur of the crowd:

“Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of a four to one split decision, Aaron Scalia!”

Aaron raises his fist as he turns and hugs Bobby. Bobby is ecstatic: his fighters have swept the Northeast Regional Championships in their inaugural tournament.

Later, Bobby stands and talks in his office as the lights outside are switched off. Skip hobbles by, folding chairs. “It’s evolved into a—it’s like a dream, really,” says Bobby. “It’s great. Fantastic little program we have here. And, before it’s through, we’ll have a world champion out of here.

“Which is a one in a million shot, too. You can train a hundred years and not have anything even close to that.”
A Home for

Recyclemobiles, left for metal and plastic parts, right for cardboard.

Volvos. Babies. Pets. All much at home at Alan Auto in Portland, Maine, where wounded Volvos revive in a spotless environment.
Wandering Volvos

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC F. WHITE

Bethany Prosser brings son Sagel to work half a day. Pei, the dog, puts in a full day. Above, Barry Bishop holding Sagel in the waiting room at Alan Auto.
Jeff Demell in the paint booth.

Alan and Sagel Prosser, right, confer with Gerry Dube over a customer's car.
Alan Prosser practices Volvo repair in an environmentally conscious manner. The shop has its own waste water oil trap. All surfaces are smooth and easily cleanable. Concrete floors are sealed, walls covered with plastic sheets and mechanics wear latex gloves to keep oil out of the waste water. Two bays have a pit beneath them to provide uncramped work space.
LATEX GLOVED HANDS TEND TO WOUNDED CARS IN A SPOTLESS ENVIRONMENT.
“Usually people who work on Volvos are happier with their trade than other technicians. They tend to stay at one shop longer. There’s far less frustration.”

“The characteristic cursing grease-ball isn’t usually a working mechanic. Gerry has a lot of pride. He’s not a person who will throw things at the car to get it to succumb to his needs to repair it. With a little coaxing, they seem to repair themselves well.”
Bethany was working in the office with Sagel when he began to fuss in his crib. As soon as she brought him into the shop, he quieted down, soothed by the sounds of a mechanic’s work.
THE GATE separating the two halves of Great Diamond Island was new last year. Sharp iron bars between brick posts renew a border that was ill-defined by sagging chainlink and rusted hinges. To the north a new resort development called Diamond Cove revives the fortress of Fort McKinley. To the south a growing year-round population puts down roots within a scattering of old summer cottages. Two neighborhoods, each with its own ferry landing, share less than a square mile of land. Two histories intertwine at the border that runs east and west to opposite shores.

The border, a legacy of the fort, is marked by stone posts that rise wearily from the forest floor, guards turned to ghosts by a century of duty, tangled in wilted strands of barbed wire. They have long since failed to deter the passage of man, dog, or deer. Yet in their time they marked the outskirts of a federal city charged with the protection of Portland’s harbor.

The summer colony founded in 1882 by the bluebloods of Portland saw half of its land swallowed up when the border moved south in 1891, doubling by eminent domain the federal holdings at the island’s northern tip. Fort McKinley would never be engaged in battle, but its bustling preparation for war ruined the peace the bluebloods had come for. The fort thrived with a population of 1,500 through two World Wars while the original summer colony dwindled to nothing from a peak of 350.

Though the original blueblood families have all sold out, the Diamond Island Association that they formed to guide their settlement still exists. It survived a period in the 50s and 60s when “you couldn’t give away island real estate,” and has happily witnessed in the last 20 years the founding of a year-round community. These residents, that now number seven households, secured the 65 cottages in quiet winters when the abandoned fort across the fence was “controlled by thieves, vandals, arsonists, and trespassers.”

When developers announced plans in 1984 to renovate and subdivide Fort McKinley, the Diamond Island Association bristled into action, remembering the fort’s
domination of a hundred years before. Aided by envi­
ronmental groups, the Association mired the former
fort in the first war it has had to fight. Diamond Cove
survived, but only as the most highly regulated residen­
tial subdivision ever in the State of Maine. Now after
two years of year-rounders, developers are calling it
"Maine's premier island community." But it remains to
be seen in what way the “Diamond Cove side” and the
“Great Diamond side” of this island split in half will
consider themselves citizens of the same 400 acres with­
in a single, inalterable shore.

T
HE MAQUOIT II, workhorse of Casco Bay
Lines’ mailboat run, churns through cold
morning fog on an eastern course two miles
from downtown Portland. We swing north
around the bluffs of Little Diamond Island, to where
the sea floor rises to join its Great sister at low tide.
Beyond the skeletal timbers of the original Maquoit, not
wrecked but laid to rest in its shallow grave, the bar rises
to a grassy landscape. From this lip the land retreats,
from the Carrs’ landmark truck past the cottages that
ring the inward curve of shore, to the wharf, which sur­
rounds the cove as it extends to meet me.

A rumbling of the reverse gear and the slinging of
nylon lassoes nestles the ferry to the wooden frame.
Metal gangways ring with the exchange of passengers
and their possessions. I amble at the rear of a crowd of
arrivals that slowly disperses with handcarts and jeeps
along the gravel of Nancy Lane as the boat slips into
mist behind us on its way to islands beyond. Danny
Carr, clad in foul weather gear, waits in his electric golf
cart for longtime neighbor Peter Harris to climb in,
then rolls silently onward toward the reenactment of the
island’s ritual of Saturday: fried dough, molasses, and
gossip in his mother’s kitchen.

I walk around the cove, taking the first left after what
is known as the Farmhouse, and then another left to a
doUBLETRACK that eventually descends to the wet sand of
the bar. And there is the Carr’s house, beyond the

Two Worlds

On the north end of Great Diamond a new resort development called Diamond Cove revives the fortress of Fort McKinley.
Below, Jerry Ball standing in the former fort jailhouse he and his wife have remodeled.
orange truck. It is a two-story white clapboard cottage, the second floor tucked into the attic of the first.

I knock on the door, once then twice before Mrs. Carr answers. She stares at me blankly for a moment and then welcomes me in. Kay is 91-years-old, wrinkled, and not exactly limber. But her voice is full. "I thought you were Danny, forgot his keys." I am surprised to discover that, at 7:30, I am the first of the day's celebrants. Danny is "out hitting golf balls" and Peter Harris stopped off at his cottage.

She sits me down and begins to slice the dough. Her house is old. Its boards creak, as do the crickets that hide between them. Yellowed newspaper clippings that line the walls and snapshots of decades past, patched on the refrigerator, silently attest to Kay's 57 years on Great Diamond Island. As coffee percolates on the coalstove, she sums the years in a rifling staccato of names and dates that ricochet across decades, digressing in full circles but never losing momentum.

Peter Harris arrives, and slowly a handful of others, for the last such event of the season before Kay migrates uptown, to Portland, for the winter. It is the last batch of flour, yeast cake, and a little bit of sugar that fries into a warm, dense meal. "Summer's over," says Peter Harris, who is not related to Kay but "might as well be."

Peter is talking about the old days at the fort as he drenches the dough in molasses. "Have you been over to the fort?" he asks.

"Mhmm."

"They're a bunch of hobos over there, I don't like 'em," says Kay. "I don't like that Bateman. The guy that sold that place, he paid millions for it, sold it for a million and a half. But we're the ones who are paying the taxes."

"You're paying the taxes?"

"Us people here. I could fight with him all day. I could fight with the City of Portland, too. And they don't like me, because I'm a bad cat. They see me, they run."

The assembled laugh heartily. But I wonder, who is welcome in Kay's kitchen? I suspect that everyone is. "Do you know everyone on the island?" I ask.

"I don't know everybody but everybody knows us. Everybody down the bay knows us."

"Kay's an institution," explains Ted Weber. Though she has retired from her island taxi service, Kay Carr has continued to provide meals made from scratch, blunt courtesy, and her own brand of oral history meshed with off-the-cuff editorials.

Two neighborhoods, each with its own ferry landing, share less than a square mile of land.

Two histories intertwine at the border.

"I don't care for that David Bateman," says Kay. "He's been down here. I said 'all you need is a good kick in the ass.' That's when Tom Leddy died and they had that little affair over there. He did have that."

The "little affair" was a memorial service for Tom Leddy, Diamond Cove's first employee and a beloved islander. Kay admits that she has "never been over there." The nine batteries of the old fort's hillsides and the data booths concealed within, where soldiers calculated arcs of destruction, are worlds away from Kay.

This house, exposed at the tip of Sandbar Point, plainly visible from downtown Portland across miles of bay, from the rim of an island-fringed pool of ocean, is somehow always within sight. It casts a net over the bay, gathering to its sphere of comfort any and all within the volume of Kay's memory.

"You can see the fog has risen since you people have been here." Kay gazes with sharp blue eyes out the kitchen window, at the same scene of the cove that I had witnessed from the ferry. I now discover that her grandson pilots the Maquoit II. She gazes past the '59 Chevy Apache, past the sandbar that her retired son uses as a driving range, to the remains of the original Maquoit, and she misses its velvet seats.

Kay came to the island after the Depression, when "less affluent people" could afford cottages. They dined at the Hall as the bluebloods had, but only by setting the tables, baking three hams with pineapple, and washing the dishes themselves. Now the more affluent people are back, preferring to take their breakfast at the fort's four-star Diamond's Edge restaurant, which advertises from a booth at the ferry terminal and flies its chefs in from out of state.

"Oh, it was so different. A lot of changes. Yeah. Terrible."

T

HE QUICKWATER, the latest addition to the Casco Bay Lines' fleet, cruises at 15 knots between Cow Island and Great Diamond in the swells that roll in through Hussey's Sound. That patch of flat horizon between Peaks Island and Long Island watched so vigilantly for fifty years disappears easily from view as the ferry swings a starboard turn into Diamond Cove, a long narrow corridor of silent water. The boat glides into the branches of slips that collect arrivals from the walled anchorage.

I am met as I ascend to the pavement of Diamond Avenue by a young man in a monogrammed Diamond Cove sweatshirt. He offers me a ride in a golfcart. His
boss, the Head of Security and Guest Services, confirms after a couple of brief transmissions on the two-way radio that I am indeed expected, and offers the services of the young man as a tour guide.

His name is Jason Sylvester. “I’ll show you the cool stuff,” he says, depressing the lever of the canopied electric cart. And I believe him, since he has had the time and means lately to see much of Diamond Cove’s 200 acres. His second season here is winding down and he is required to do little more than taxi women and their poodles up the hill. Between ferries he smokes and cruises around, waiting for the burbling radio to call his name.

The cart hums on the smooth pavement, taking us up the wall of the valley which splits the north side. Where Diamond Avenue crests the valley and continues south, we take a hard right to McKinley Court on the plateau of the North Fork. The street winds around a manicured field, within a wall of Colonial Revival style buildings. Together the field and buildings form the Parade Ground, the focal point of the landscape, accepted as a unit in 1985 to the National Register of Historic Places.

But Jason passes it by without a glance and plunges into the woods beyond on a dirt road. The road turns to a path and then the path runs out. The cart becomes an all-terrain vehicle and bounces over logs and boulders before coming to rest at the ruins of Battery Ingalls.

The bunkers are dark and further obscured from the midday sun by tall oaks around them and sumacs on top. Heaps of rusted, twisted metal lie on the gun platforms next to two long puddles carved into the earth by large tires. Beneath the heaps are 6-foot diameter mortar carriages, cement pits emptied of their 12-inch breechloaders, which could pepper the flat horizon with destruction.

The batteries are remnants of a time when firepower meant gunpowder. Thick tunnels recede and descend into the earth, harboring the shell and powder rooms from the shells of the enemy. Their walls are so thick they deaden the burbling of Jason’s radio and he can explore no farther. We retrace our steps, driving from the woods on widening roads to the deeply carpeted, impeccably furnished administration building.

“It was like discovering Sleeping Beauty’s castle,” says developer David Bateman of his first sight of Fort McKinley. He is the managing partner of the project, an architect by trade, and the only constant through eleven years of dissolved partnerships and dispersed financiers. “It was this magnificent facility that was totally overgrown with trees, bushes, undergrowth. But underneath it were these marvelous buildings. All they need is a little maintenance, a little tender TLC.”

Fort McKinley bustled through two World Wars, peaking at 1,500 soldiers. The Portland blueblood summer colony gave up and left. McKinley. We ascend the servant’s stair to the third floor of the Surgeon General’s Quarters, where Bateman points to an interior brick wall within a wooden wall.

“This is brick firestopping, okay? These were built as small fortresses. They were built to withstand a 3,600-pound projectile coming in from seven miles out at sea. They literally spared no expense in constructing these. If you look at the roof sheathing, this material’s a hundred years old. It’s just as good as the day it came out of the mill.

“It’s one direction, it’s one vision,” he explains as we descend to the street, “and that is, basically, to bring it back to the way it was. In fact, we have done some embellishment. It looks more residential than it ever did. Excuse me one sec. Wayne?”

Bateman gets the scoop from an electrical contractor, who is prepared to “trench in” with a backhoe to bury power lines. I take a moment to look around me. The 30-yard dumpsters, the backhoes, the aluminum ladders. All are ages beyond the technology of the crew that laid these millions of bricks at the turn of the century—bricks moved by mules and narrow gauge railroads.

I remember something said to me by Joel Eastman, expert on Maine’s coastal defenses, in the concrete cubicle that is his office at the University of Southern Maine: “When they put the fort on the National Register, all they put on was the Parade Ground and the

Maine: “When they put the fort on the National Register, all they put on was the Parade Ground and the Parade Ground that glows green in the light of early afternoon. From all directions loom the slate-topped brick megaliths, set squarely on granite foundations. Some of them have become decorator-perfect rental units. Others remain yawning chasms of cobwebs. Bateman points to Building #17, one of the Double Officers’ Quarters, where some water-damaged brick is being replaced by the first of the contractors that will permeate the off-season at Diamond Cove.

“The local population almost killed it, because they were out here salvaging everything they could rip off the buildings. Namely, all the copper out of the valleys.”

What was almost killed by the locals, with time as their accomplice, was a gem of American architecture. The denticulated cornices, the panelled newel posts, the tinted mortar joints, the pressed tin ceilings, all were “visual cues” that indicated the strategic importance of Fort McKinley.
buildings. They didn’t put the batteries on. It’s obvious that the batteries should have been included, because they were the reason for the fort.”

As I gaze out across the quarter-mile of the long axis of Parade Ground, which is, according to Bateman, “indicative of an Olmsted design,” I see something else about the project that both is and isn’t “the way it was.”

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed this,” historian Joel Eastman had said, “but the Officer’s Quarters are on higher ground than the barracks. The Commanding Officer’s Quarters is the most elaborate house on the highest point of ground up at the end of the Parade Ground, and it overlooks the barracks, and the post headquarters down at the other end. Symbolically, that’s very significant because the military has this division in status between officers and enlisted men.” In the modern assignment of rank, it doesn’t matter whether you live in the Officer’s Quarters or in the barracks, now known as “townhomes.” Every homeowner is entitled to the same use of the outdoor heated pool and of the guest services crew.

We descend to the public domain of the valley in Bateman’s jeep, past the sign that says “Parade Ground area closed.” The marina and the commercial area at the cove, are replete with the corporate color of Diamond Cove, which varies between royal and navy blue. The color saturates canopies and signs that aid the legibility of leisure.

The division between uphill and downhill at the fort is now replaced by the division between home buyers and those who wear this corporate color.

Like Todd Supranard, who fills Tom Leddy’s shoes as the Head of Security, a 23-year-old graduate of the University of Southern Maine’s Criminology program. He will stay through the winter in the same building as the fire trucks, in an architecturally bland apartment with plastic trees and Norman Rockwell prints. He works from first ferry to last but is permanently on call, and is on no one’s list of the island’s year-rounders.

I tour the restaurant, art gallery, and general store of the commercial area, which welcomes 22,000 visitors during the summer. Bateman refers to it as “more like Cambridge or Newburyport. It’s very out of context, honestly, for an island.” Only ten minutes before, at one of Diamond Cove’s five private beaches, he had noted with pride that “68 percent of our land remains undeveloped forever.”

Across the ice pond, a walled reservoir at the head of the cove, a gigantic tent shelters wedding parties of 300 people and the one-act plays that make Diamond Cove an “arts-and-cultural community.” There is a show and a theatre somewhere at Diamond Cove for any kind of audience, turning what was once a single-minded fort into the ultimately adaptable island experience.

I look back to the cove itself, to which the Quickwater has returned. New this year, it is a fraction of the size of Casco Bay Lines’ other boats. A $300,000 subsidy from the developers is what makes it possible for it to shuttle to Portland and back and give its riders the best service of any stop. It’s part of what “takes the hassle out of island living.” It is part of sparing “no expense” that signifies “the way it was” at Fort McKinley and the way it is at Diamond Cove.

Or, as Daniel Carr IV sums it up as he stuffs a bagel in his mouth on the way to Mike Frager’s outboard and the golf course uptown: “They ended up being 30 in the hole. The new owners bought it for 1.5 million. And the bank went belly-up, so through the government, Resolution Trust Corporation, we’ll be paying 28.5 million.”

Top, Fort Mckinley’s former parade ground. Right, cottages on the south end of Great Diamond. Kay Carr’s house is to the right of the orange Chevy Apache truck.
KNOWN INFORMALLY on Great Diamond Island as the “big fight,” the formal challenge that faced the developers at every turn left its indelible mark on Diamond Cove. After drafting their original plan in 1984, the Dictar Associates hoped to begin construction the following spring. The plan involved the renovation of Fort McKinley’s existing buildings into 150 units and the construction of condominiums around the ice pond that, along with the subdivision of remaining land into house lots, would add another 200 units.

Dictar Associates, the original incarnation of the developers, admitted that they were “so anxious to see the dust fly.” Dictar paid $800,000 for the property and stood to make a fortune just by marking the corners of lots and selling the existing buildings “as is” for six figures. Renovation costs for rental units would be facilitated by a tax credit of 20% for historic preservation. They wooed Portland’s Planning Board with the promise of tax revenue and brushed off initial criticism by pointing out that current zoning allowed double the 350 proposed units. But non-profit organizations flocked to the distress call of the Diamond Island Association when one city planner stated that “the islands should be considered suburbs.

The intervenors—Island Institute, Maine Audubon Society, Casco Bay Island Development Association, and the Conservation Law Foundation—saw Phase II of the project (the new condos and the subdivision) as the “Hilton Head of the north,” a “foot in the door” for large scale development on Maine’s islands. They challenged it for six years with public testimony and legal action that sent Dictar continually back to the drawing board.

More restrictive zoning made the row of new condominiums the first casualty. A zero-coliform (drinking quality) wastewater filtration site replaced several of the house lots, as did the preservation of old-growth stands of pine and hemlock. Concern for the scenic impact of “strip development” on the shoreline reduced water-view lots by half. The gaps in the plan are now “open space recreation areas” which, conveniently, are part of the advertising package.

The batteries, which wore hypothetical houses in Dictar’s first plan,
were spared by being snugly wrapped in islands of the Fort McKinley Historic District. Though they gladly inherited the pomp and pageantry of the Parade Ground, the developers planned to turn these silent subterranean vaults into basements. Perhaps because of its isolated location, the “tactical structures” of the fort are rare examples of this kind of construction. Though now protected, the batteries are still mostly ignored. As in Battery Ingalls, a scrap heap by function, which is represented in the current full-color Master Plan only by a thin outline flattened into the textured green of the designer’s wooded landscape.

“The name of the game for Dictar is economy of scale” stated Phil Conkling of the Island Institute, “and if people like me begin tampering with the number of units, take a few units off here to meet this objection, take a few off there to fix that problem, this fully leveraged house of cards comes tumbling down.”

And tumble it did. By the time it was approved for completion, there were only 150 units left. The developers learned the hard way what the State of Maine and the City of Portland sensed when they refused it as a gift of the government in 1961: that it was a white elephant, an innocent mammoth that would cost a fortune to maintain. The statement applied only more so in the 25 years that followed. The site was overgrown with young forest, and its roads and dock decayed. The barge that brings custom windows and other strict requirements of historic preservation, or takes dumpsters filled with old plaster and lathe, costs $1,000 per crossing to the mainland. Environmental assessment requirements led to the mapping and measuring of every tree in every lot.

Costs like these have bankrupted developers that invested none of their own money, costs that brought their lender, Maine Savings Bank, down with them.

The pace of sales at Diamond Cove is increasing, and the developers, forgiven the obligation of matching these new earnings with old expenses, are freed to rescue history while secretly basking in the tainted reward of financial risk.

Across Diamond Avenue from the stone garden that is his father’s memorial, Tim Leddy and other contractors at the Pump House prepare to receive the inspection of their client. David Clemm, of Lyme Timber (the latest financiers of Diamond Cove), joins the crew this morning with his “two-million square feet of renovation experience” and his vision of what $400,000 can do to make a cozy timeshare residence for himself and his colleagues.

He comes from Vermont, and except for a felt hat and an oversized monogrammed Bean bag, looks like the average man. Slightly cleaner, maybe, than the crew, who wear collared shirts for the occasion yet conduct themselves no more formally than usual. Easing into the day, they roughly clutch their styrofoam coffee cups as they descend from the veneer-lined trailer to the churned earth.

Clemm surveys the 20-foot chlorinator tank that gave the place its name. “My father built tanks, that was his business. So I decided it’d be fitting for me to get the building that had the big old tank on it.”

“You know, I ran into an old friend on the island yesterday,” says Tim from beneath a thick moustache. “He was telling me this was a linseed oil tank. This was a paint-mixing pot.” Owner and operator of T. L. Construction, Tim Leddy lives mostly in Alfred, following the pattern of the other contractors, who hail from Acton, Parsonsfield, or other quiet towns of southern Maine. But Tim,
like his father before him, has spent summers on Great Diamond Island since his youth.

"I was looking at the roof system before it collapsed in. I came over and started to take it off once. I was 16. I said 'I want those rafters. I’m gonna redesign this as a fort, over on our side.' And the thing was rotten. It was already gone. I was like ‘aw shit.’ Because I really had dreams for that. It’s ironic that I end up over here building this for you. I was like ‘aw, my childhood dream’s coming true 40 years later."

It’s actually closer to 25 years, since Tim (who also says that he hasn’t missed a day of work in 40 years) is 41 years old. But the idea that he has made some progress is accurate. His skills have earned him fresh lumber, and though he still reveres the original builders, he is not surprised that the century-old masonry has warped his first series of rafters.

“I wanna make sure we have a grade shot around,” he explains to Clemm. “So we don’t depend on the Army Corps of Engineers or anybody at this point. We found them out about an inch square. Stuff like that, you know.”

At the end of the work day, when the others march down the hill to catch the Quickwater, Tim hikes up Diamond Avenue to the gate. The 20-foot ribbon of pavement that is flanked by recent renovations is transformed as it passes under. Tim and I walk around the iron bars and their brick posts capped with copper and lanterns to ten feet of dirt that is unaccompanied by construction for as far as the eye can see. We are on our way to the Leddy cottage, where once in a while Tim experiences the soul-searching repose of being single for a night.

After taking shortcuts through the woods and lawns of the village side, we come to the west shore of the island and a wooden building that seems to have undergone slow but steady construction for the span of its history. “This was my great aunt’s cottage,” says Tim, as we pass inside, “built by retired shipbuilders, because after the Civil War they started building ships with metal, so they had to turn to some new woodworking phase. There’s a lot of design that corresponds with shipbuilding.”

Low ceilings and porthole mirrors are some of the elements that make the Leddy cottage into a boat. Others make it a stable or a hospital. “These boards came off the horse barn at the fort. It was falling in, and as they dismantled it, my Dad took some over and did the kitchen part way.”

“I heard,” I respond, “that the first guy who bought that property spent $40,000 on it and salvaged $80,000 in copper.”

“Right, that’s what I was explaining to Rick the other day, how they’re talking about ‘the islanders ripped off.’ And I told him, ‘Yeah, like these windows.’ You know where these windows came out of? The old infirmary. You see what the condition of that is? I said ‘What were we hurting?’ You take the windows off before the roof falls in and crushes everything.”

Many islanders echo the sentiment that although they used the “derelict city” as a warehouse for furnishings, outsiders turned it into a copper mine and haven for recklessness. Says Ted Weber, resident since ‘78, about one of the early owners, Phoenix Resources:

“A simple phone call to the Phoenix manager, if you needed a door, a window, or a bureau, he’d say, ‘Go ahead and take it. I’d rather see it used than smashed.’ It used to amaze us, the number of families [from uptown] that would come ashore and just smash stuff, light fires on the porches. I’m talking about husband, wife, and children.”

Everything from slate and ivory to marble and mahogany was stolen from the fort in the era that it was “no-man’s land.” Stuart Laughlin, island historian, remembers it as a place for “drinking parties, hippies,” and a springboard for cottage burglaries. Rhea Ansorge, a cottager for 42 years, recalls being dissuaded from a leisurely walk at the fort by a pair of shotgun-wielding vandals. According to Betsy Weber, restaurant workers from uptown used it in the early ’80s as “Cocktail Cove.”

Tom Leddy and his faithful dog Baxter put an end to
the disrespect. He set up the security system and stopped the vandalism. It was the elder Leddy's dream—true to have a working retirement on the island that he loved. The building that is now the restaurant was renovated into an apartment where he lived year round until he died in 1992, shortly after Baxter.

We peer from the deck across the bay, at the sun setting orange behind a high-rise in downtown Portland. Glowing streetlights dot the waterfront. From this distance, it is a beautiful sight. Tim waves to the city.

“Hi. How ya doin’ over there? A little noisy for you?” He remembers the distaste he had as a kid for workers. “We pay about $4,000 a year for that little house. We peer from the deck across the bay, at the sun setting orange behind a high-rise in downtown Portland. Glowing streetlights dot the waterfront. From this distance, it is a beautiful sight. Tim waves to the city.

“We pay about $4,000 a year for that little house. That’s high. Probably double the tax base that there is in town. But they figure we’re all rich. ‘Everybody on the islands is rich.’ That’s why I bang my fingers a lot, right?”

Though he cites the difficulties, he acknowledges the luck that the renovation of the fort has brought to him and his father, that they are (and were) able to experience their childhood dreams. At night’s end he stretches himself before the potbelly stove that he hauled piece by piece from the fort at age 14. He basks in the warmth of that day’s lumber scraps, yawns, and admits: “It really is an era gone by. We’re just trying to relive it. The days of our youth.”

The wealthy Portlanders who bought half the island drew up a plan in 1886 as ambitious as Diamond Cove’s is today.

The Diamond Island Association, founded by the original subscribers, drafted a master plan that was, in 1886, as ambitious as Diamond Cove’s is today. The survey map shows 506 colorless squares inside of 30 roads that form an arcing grid wrapped around the island’s western slope. With Diamond Cove’s original plan, half of these lots would be zapped by the intervention of higher powers, whether by environmental advocates or the government. But the Association’s master plan has had time to become a thing of the past, a relic that after a century is only half-realized.

The 100 foot square house lots are outdated, half the minimum size of a house lot in today’s most liberal “island residential” zoning. Half of the roads wind from house to house through undeveloped lots, rolling with the landscape that in the plan had been a perfect dome. The other half exist only as dimples in the lawn, or the wooded space between stakes brightly ribboned with surveyor’s tape. These 40-foot rights of way have become woodlots or orchards, utilized freely by the year-rounders or absorbed slowly into seasonal estates that own the lots on either side.

A hundred years ago, the permission of the Association was required to fell a tree. Those were the days of strolling on the spacious lawns or the fairways of a nine-hole golf course. The “experimental” shingle-style cottages of the era were designed to stand alone in an expanse of grass. Posts in the earth supported broad mounds of sloping wood. Wraparound porches accepted breezes from any direction and shaded the parlors, which ascended to turrets and dormers standing on their tiptoes above the roofline for a view of Mount Washington, far beyond the city.

Within that sightline to the west was the Hall, and beyond the ill-fated private wharf, repository of most of the island’s wood. It ran 530 feet over the flats toward the city that all of the original subscribers called home. It was twice carried away by the ice sheets that swept through the expanse of Casco Bay in cold winters. The islanders that were left when the money fled in the ’30s took to using the sheltered southern landing, the one currently in use. It was the “low-class wharf,” the coal wharf by the Farmhouse, on the fringe of the former Deering estate, where the only resident family of the early days raised vegetables for the summer folk and received minimum wage for their vigilance in winter.

In the years that followed, class distinctions disappeared with the funds that allowed the Association to
manifest its landscape in isolation. Today’s version of the Association, though it now concerns itself with the entire south side, no longer reigns sovereign over its infrastructure. The city took over the wharf after it was condemned in 1961, making it a public landing, which is now dedicated to the memory of Tom Leddy.

Though more than half of the south side’s summer folk are from the Portland area, the common resolve that defined the bluebloods has been thinned by people from out of state. One man from Virginia, when introduced in passing at the wharf, descends without hesitation to his outboard, saying only, “Don’t blame me, I voted for Jefferson Davis.” Any vote of the Association in regard to its seaward doorstep is now only a non-binding suggestion to Portland’s Department of Public Works. By the time they gather to gauge the island’s general feeling, the city has its work mapped out.

Today’s meeting of the Diamond Island Association, the last of the season, is about a change in Nancy Lane. Seated at folding chairs at a folding table in the center of the cavernous Elwell Hall is the Board of the Association. Forty-three-year-old President John Condon presides, standing.

“Basically what the City wants to do within the right-of-way is to move the road,” says John Condon. “As you can see it will be shifted over, so that it’s eight feet from the pole. The road will be ten feet wide, and it will end up being eighteen feet from the house. The primary reason for the shifting of the road is that it’s pretty much a blind corner there, at the top of the hill.”

Stuart Laughlin is concerned that people will drive even faster after the corner is widened.

“They go to beat Hell now anyway, so—” says Reverend Hutchinson, retired, the Board’s only year­rounder.

Dick Ingraham suggests speed bumps.

“I was just gonna say, we could put a speed bump right there,” says Edith Yonan, Stuart’s cousin, who is from Texas.

Her brother, Bob Laughlin, counters: “That’s called a pothole, Edith, in Maine.”

“Nice little bumpy, yes,” says Stuart.

The discourse swerves to the matter of the relatively unused boardwalk that accompanies the road. Reverend Hutchinson recalls with guiltless glee the particular yearly visit of the city fathers when one put his foot through a rotten board. Stuart doesn’t dare walk on it when it’s wet.

“As long as you don’t end up with an asphalt walk like Little Diamond, which I personally don’t like at all,” says Bob.

“Yeah, asphalt,” says Stuart.

“Down with asphalt,” says Bob.

LOBSTERMAN Roger Robinson stacks wood against the foundation of his home on Crescent Avenue, tucked in between the bay and the fort border by the western shore. The noon wind blows cold off the water and I curse the sun that hides periodically behind fluffy clouds and leaves me shivering in my winter coat. Conversation adds nothing to my body heat. But Roger, facing his sixth winter on Great Diamond Island one log at a time, one mellow thunk after another, is pleasantly warm in his long sleeve shirt.

Tim Leddy stops by on his way to lunch at the cottage, offering to Roger a pumpkin grown on his farm in Alfred. He adds it to a pile of pumpkins that surround the wood and the basement door.

“What’s up with all the pumpkins?” I ask Roger.

“We had a housewarming. It was about this time of year, when we first moved in. We got to carving jack-o’lanterns and it kind of evolved, and now it’s an annual event, so we’re just trying to get things spruced up for that.”

“Every year you and Tim and a bunch of people get together?”

“Well, most of the folks from the island, this side of the island, anyway. We’re getting to know a few people on the other side of the fence.” Though he says of Diamond Cove that he expects “to see a little midget running around going ‘da plane, boss, da plane’,” his wife, Tammy, sends invitations across the fence.

Roger claims that most people coming to the party from the mainland take the six o’clock ferry. So when I show up at the ferry terminal at five of, huffing and puffing after a jog down Commercial Street with a casserole dish, I am baffled that Gate 3 is empty and the Maquoit II is nowhere in sight. I check the schedule. It turns out that the “six o’clock” left at 5:45, another example of the outdated but unquestioned island vocabulary, a vocabulary that still refers to the “Firth cottage” even though the Firths left 30 years ago.

So I take the Quickwater at 6:30, joining two of Diamond Cove’s year-round couples and a crowd of diners headed for the Diamond’s Edge on its closing night. Todd is waiting with the blue van when we arrive. The two couples pile into the van for rides to

Fiercely fought by environmentalists and cottagers, Diamond Cove survived as the most highly regulated island development in Maine.

TODAY'S MEETING of the Diamond Island Association, the last of the season, is about a change in Nancy Lane. Seated at folding chairs at a folding table in the center of the cavernous Elwell Hall is the Board of the Association. Forty-three-year-old President John Condon presides, standing.

“Basically what the City wants to do within the right-of-way is to move the road,” says John Condon. “As you can see it will be shifted over, so that it’s eight feet from the pole. The road will be ten feet wide, and it will end up being eighteen feet from the house. The primary reason for the shifting of the road is that it’s pretty much a blind corner there, at the top of the hill.”

Stuart Laughlin is concerned that people will drive even faster after the corner is widened.

“They go to beat Hell now anyway, so—” says Reverend Hutchinson, retired, the Board’s only year­rounder.

Dick Ingraham suggests speed bumps.

“I was just gonna say, we could put a speed bump right there,” says Edith Yonan, Stuart’s cousin, who is from Texas.

Her brother, Bob Laughlin, counters: “That’s called a pothole, Edith, in Maine.”

“Nice little bumpy, yes,” says Stuart.

The discourse swerves to the matter of the relatively unused boardwalk that accompanies the road. Reverend Hutchinson recalls with guiltless glee the particular yearly visit of the city fathers when one put his foot through a rotten board. Stuart doesn’t dare walk on it when it’s wet.

“As long as you don’t end up with an asphalt walk like Little Diamond, which I personally don’t like at all,” says Bob.

“Yeah, asphalt,” says Stuart.

“Down with asphalt,” says Bob.
their respective townhomes and I tag along for a ride to the gate. The Taylors ask Todd about their washer and dryer, whether they got a new set or the old ones repaired. "It'll all come out in the wash," says Mr. Levine, who turns to me, explaining "this is island talk."

As the van rolls south I can see a pair of headlights mirroring our approach to the gate. I pass the threshold and Roger greets me warmly, though he expected someone else on the 6:30. I hop into the back of his rusted jeep and choke on exhaust fumes as he follows dirt roads past glowing cottages. He yells "Coming over?" to a man on his porch, not slowing down for the answer but discerning the "I'll be right over" anyway above the roar of the engine.

The Robinson house is sturdy, its kitchen armored in linoleum and formica. Stuck to the almond fridge is a cartoon of a family dinner: "Eat your lobster, kids, we mix the concrete of this foundation, only the third foundation to be built on the south side of the island, was lugged for months from the mainland, one pail at a time. The same concept of accumulation was applied to the pumpkins, which arrived almost daily from Tim Leddy’s farm, and to the contents of the Robinson’s second refrigerator: a selection of beer groomed by months of purchase and consumption.

"Islanders are twice as smart as people from upcountry. And you can quote me on that," says Sam Tucker, year-rounder since '84 and builder of the fourth foundation on the south side of the island. He cracks a Busch and slides it into a foam cozy. It is unclear whether being "twice as smart" means anything more than having twice as many refrigerators, but it seems to be related to the ability, and choice, to survive within what Sam calls the “expensive moat.”

Tall, dark-haired, Sam sips his beer and rocks on his heels while chatting with Ted Rand, who knows, perhaps better than anyone here, the cost of island living. He is the only resident of Little Diamond Island, arriving before the founding of a year round community on Great Diamond. Gray-haired, his thick hands empty, he sits in the basement’s token barcalounger and gazes like a sage at those that came after him, patiently waiting for the tide to fall so he can walk home.

The last few jack-o-lanterns float out the basement door. And though it is left ajar, the space inside is kept somehow cozy by the aura of country music and islanders that fume warmth from their third beer. Gradually, their clusters of conversation digress to the issue of immediate importance in their community: the deer hunt in December.

Roger explains that the hunt is a depredation hunt. Each registered hunter is allowed to take three deer. In fact, each is expected to take three deer, preferably females. What Diamond Cove advertises as a “deer-inhabited forest” is more accurately deer-infested. The island is now stripped of foliage below chest level and holds a deer population three times the capacity of its ecosystem at full foliage.
What is known as the Glickman’s Hundred Acres, the former Deering estate, will be open for hunting this year, which stokes Roger’s optimism. But he’s afraid that off-island hunters won’t recognize their task. “You shouldn’t come to sit in the woods and drink coffee. It’s not that you can take three deer if you want to, you know, while you wait for the prize buck. If you come, you should stay until you have your limit. I don’t like counting their ribs.”

Mary Haynes, a year-rounder, carved the words “Deer Crossing” into her pumpkin. Her home is “headquarters, buffet style, for all animals walking or flying.” With her apple tree, her Crunch 14 deer food, and her paths shoveled through the snow to their forest dens, she is fighting a losing battle to maintain the crowded herd. Though she cannot stop the hunt, her affection for Broken Horn, the patriarch of the island deer, saved him for this season at least. He will be disqualified as a target by a fresh coat of blaze orange spray paint.

But “Sweet Pea’s gonna get it,” says Sam Tucker matter-of-factly. Sam, who is temporarily homeless and can appreciate being stuck inside the moat, organizes the depredation hunt. He carved a question mark into his runt of a pumpkin. When asked why, he responds “because it’s easy.”

“Not as easy as an exclamation point.”

Ted Weber, builder of the fifth foundation of the south side of the island, is familiar with politics. When a dog from the south side kills a deer at Diamond Cove while prospective buyers witness in horror, he is the one David Bateman calls to deal politely with the situation. He offers me and the other upcountry stragglers a ride to the 11 o’clock at the cove. I sit in the back of the truck as it rumbles down Diamond Avenue to the gate.

I don’t mind walking from the gate, but suspect that Ted might unlock it and drive through, since, as an Emergency Medical Technician, he has a key. Instead he squeezes the vehicle through the pedestrian berth and drops it gently off the curb on the other side. He leaves us at the marina and we board the Quickwater with the restaurant workers.

We’ve all owned businesses and run businesses and things like that. I don’t ever want to do that again,” says Jackie Bell. She and her husband Gerry retired to the Jail at Diamond Cove last November to become the resort’s first year-rounders. “So to come out here and have someone else take care of the physical facility, and hire people and so on. That’s just a great idea.”

She admits that it was “more of a function of escaping something than going to something. You make a lot of money in New Jersey and you get out.” She and Gerry were in their mid-forties by the time they had resolved to escape to somewhere that was “so far away from the George Washington Bridge and traffic jams,” and had made enough money to do it, she as a computer programmer and he as a management consultant who “perfected” the 401k retirement plan.

They were intrigued by one of the first advertisements of Diamond Cove in Yankee magazine, a small black-and-white aerial photo of the Parade Ground, and were its first visitors after it opened for business six years ago. They toured the commanding officer’s quarters. “Too big.”

Turning away from the Parade Ground, they found the jail nestled into the woods, overlooking the cove on the edge of the plateau. “It looked like a haunted house, a bottomless pit that you could throw dollars into.” Trees were growing out of the porch. Four foot piles of rubble obscured what is now the living room floor. Five years later, the “monster” front door is “bonded within an inch of its life.” The slate that was encrusted with lead paint is custom countertops, and the bridge trusses that suspended the second floor have been replaced by steel beams and demoted to “sobriety tests.”

Jackie doubts that her community is clothed in instant history by the buildings it moves into, a claim made in the advertising: “Wherever possible, original building fabric has been kept and reused, exemplifying the attention to detail that results in the lasting value of the buildings and is mirrored in the spirit of community created at Diamond Cove.”
“When you live here you find out that everybody is pretty much the same. You may spend a little more on housing, but your favorite clothes are still blue jeans, sneakers, and sweatshirts.”

The Parade Ground did not, at first sight, remind her of the pomp and pageantry of the armed forces, but of Bates College, which her niece attends. As for the dynamics of the neighborhood, “it’s like college. You don’t make the same mistakes in college as you did in high school. People get along better, because you already came from that, and you worked out all these little wars and social ills and so on.”

Until 75 percent of Diamond Cove properties are sold, the self-government of the Diamond Cove community is limited to the “Saturday night homeowners’ cocktail hour.” In fact, for all its “amenities,” Diamond Cove does not yet have what the south side has as its only public space: a Hall. I bring up the latest promotion of Diamond Cove as “Maine’s premier island community.”

“It’s wishful thinking,” says Jackie. “It’s hype. Is it better than Cape Elizabeth, or Falmouth Foreside, or whatever? Probably not. It’s real easy to be a cohesive community when you have three [year round] households, and one child.” The advertising claim recalls a time when Fort McKinley was the keystone of Casco Bay’s island defense network. Its community was a feat of coordination, military-style, back when the fort had a job to do. But this “spirit of community,” conjured from the numb stone, sometimes rides roughshod over the brief history Jackie has shared with her new home. She laughs, exasperated, recalling the summer, when a historian lead a tour of 175 people through her recent-ly seeded lawn to point out the restoration of the walk-way that she and Gerry built from stones they found in the woods.

“It’s wishful thinking,” says Jackie. “It’s hype. Is it better than Cape Elizabeth, or Falmouth Foreside, or whatever? Probably not. It’s real easy to be a cohesive community when you have three [year round] households, and one child.” The advertising claim recalls a time when Fort McKinley was the keystone of Casco Bay’s island defense network. Its community was a feat of coordination, military-style, back when the fort had a job to do. But this “spirit of community,” conjured from the numb stone, sometimes rides roughshod over the brief history Jackie has shared with her new home. She laughs, exasperated, recalling the summer, when a historian lead a tour of 175 people through her recently seeded lawn to point out the restoration of the walk-way that she and Gerry built from stones they found in the woods.

“This is a huge attraction. It’s like a magnet. People just walk up. They think this is a building that you can just walk through. I came out one morning, early spring, and there was a guy standing here with a videocamera photographing my house. And you go ‘excuse me! This is private property.’ And you get very sick of it. I mean, we’re one of the tourists that came and stayed, and it’s amazing how fast you become a Mainer, and you say ‘go home, time to go home. Nice to have you spend your money. Go home.’

“We were very, very fortunate that we came at an odd time of the year and we had the good fortune to meet Tom Leddy. And I think it was his love of the island. He loved island life, he liked the people, and he introduced us to the Webers and the Norings. And as soon as we met those people, some of the real hard questions got answered, some of the things that you couldn’t quite figure out for yourself, like ‘Can you really do this? Can you really get off the island every now and then? Can you really work from here?’ even though we didn’t do that.”

We sit on our respective couches, facing each other across a heavy glass table in the Bells’ living room. I ask them how the average island resident is different from the average uptown resident.

“A very strong personality,” says Jackie. “You would never, in a million years, call any of them shy and retiring.”

Gerry is reclining on the landing behind me. He stares at the smoke which spirals from his cigarette to the fourteen foot ceiling. “They’re madly independent.”

“You could pick out three words that would match that person exactly, says Jackie.

Could you give me three words for Sam Tucker? Hmm...

Intelligent. Humorous. Tough, or caring. Caring. Yeah, Sam’s everybody’s favorite person.

“IM THREE QUARTERS hermit,” says Sam Tucker. “I grew up in Falmouth, over across the way. And as a kid I used to row out here and boparound the fort. It was good fun. I didn’t break any windows but I bopped around the fort.”

As an archaeology student at the University of Southern Maine, Sam spent the summer of ’79 on Great Diamond Island sifting the ancient refuse of a vast shell mound. It was the best summer of his life. Five years later he bought the junkiest house on the island for $40,000. Then in ’87 Sam built the south side’s fourth foundation, on a shorefront property, but did not finish the house on top of it beyond the barest standards of habitation. The tax bill, $4,800 per year, was too much to swallow and he sold the property at the end of this summer.

Ted Rand, who had already passed to Sam his lobstering territory, came to the rescue with the offer of a plot of overgrown land in the middle of the island. On the basis of Sam’s casual acceptance, he refused the offers of a man from Portland who came with cash in hand. Although Sam has started work on the sixth foundation, he has had to do a lot of shuffling, and today is moving for the fourth time in two months, from tenant at the Morellis Meadowview to handyman at the Giggeys down the road.

The interior of Meadowview is dark with old,
unstained wood. The doorways are squished into subtle parallelograms and the fireplace is cracked. To the blaring notes of a Genesis record Sam washes a sinkful of dishes and packs a variety of beers from the fridge. He hauls these out to the truck while I gather boxes of clothing from beneath the gaze of the dozens of images of Jesus.

We repeat the procedure in reverse at the Giggeys, ascending to the primer-gray porch where a water heater (which is Sam’s chore to install) sits brand new in its packaging. The boxes pass inside to a bright, airy living room where they are set down gently. The plumb angles of the all-around white interior are accompanied by scenes of the Revolutionary War. Sam selects a Brahms compact disc and places the last of his belongings with a deep sigh.

He stands straight to survey the scene, his new home. I feel more comfortable in the Morelli cottage because it’s already a disaster. This is too clean. He cases the dilemma by planning to collect all of the furniture beneath a tarp, and then happily kicks off the dinner festivities by cracking a Busch beer and toasting to the Republican party. He drops into a pot four of the 44 lobsters that he had harvested that morning from a rowboat.

“What a hard life I lead.” He grins, hiding a secret. “I don’t believe in God, but bless him.”

After such a benediction, I wonder aloud how islanders came to discover that Sam Tucker was one of them.

“Islanders on this island are relative newcomers. They’re transplants, so it’s easy to become one of them. Far too easy to become one of them. . . . But we’re all here for a common purpose, you know that. It’s a love of the island. Actually, you come here, and at first nobody knows you, you don’t know anybody else. You’re all alone, you’re isolated, you go, ‘Wow, this is like a vacation,’ and then you start knowing people, and before too long, to be honest with you, you realize that we have a community out here.”

The sixth foundation is only a seminal cube of concrete blocks at a scar of earth in the middle of the woods. The property is twice the size of the old one, but the house that he envisions there is half the size.

“We don’t need castles,” he explains. “We just need little heated envelopes to keep us warm.”

The site is surrounded by materials in every imaginable condition of novelty and disrepair. Some were donated by other islanders. Some were scavenged from the woods at the fort. Some washed up on the shore. It is a goldmine. But Sam is quick to point out the refuse that surrounds his site with equal volume and variety, like the deer scat in piles “deep enough to shovel.”

“Nature is a pig,” says Sam. “She’ll eat anything. You see a deer feeding and it’s constantly intaking at one end and shitting out the other.” Sam’s dark eyes seem to look in two directions at once. From his “horribly late 30s,” he looks back at his student years, when he gazed through a microscope at the venison dinners of millenia past. He knows that before Great Diamond Island was a summer resort it was Great Hog Island, a 400-acre hog pen fenced in shore. His postcard collection offers scenic vistas of the treeless island, “back when the pagans ruled.” And nothing’s changed. The same old treasure and trash still circulate in close proximity.

“Humans are pigs, too.” He points out the piles of coal ash that litter the hillside, leftovers from the clubhouse of the Portland Club a hundred years ago. It reminds me of Kay Carr’s statement:

“Everybody’s gonna go to ashes when they get going, so nobody’s any better than the next one.”

Yet he looks ahead, through the falling leaves, to the gate that is barely visible a hundred yards away. He dismisses it, an act not far removed from the arrogance with which he claims isolation.

“See, eventually what’s gonna happen is that gate will be open permanently, once things get going and get adjusted. Things tend to tame. No, the fort’s us, we’re them, we’re all the same. We all live on Great Diamond Island. We’re not a big island. There’s a lot bigger islands out there, right in Casco Bay. They’re all one community, and that’s how it’ll happen here. Absolutely. The naysayers are all ancient, so there’ll only be so much naying they can say.”

Sam checks the time. 7:25. I am headed for the 7:40, so he suggests that I get going, then gives me a ride to be sure I’ve made it. “We’re gonna have to teach you how to be an islander.” I arrive at the landing in time to see the Maquoit II rounding the bluffs, a plodding amphibian of bubbling steel. It strikes the island slowly, in its familiar tangent, and I latch on to starboard. Making my way to the upper deck, I watch the island recede. The lights of the landing fade and then, as we round Little Diamond, the island itself becomes a black hole on a horizon lined with highways, lighthouses, cruise ships, and the bustling nightlife of Portland’s Commercial Street.

If you stood on at the center of the black hole, at Sam Tucker’s scar of earth, and walked in any direction,
you would as easily meet an electric fence around a garden as the old barbed wire that defines the line. Flanking these, and any of the townhomes or cottages, the blue golf carts or the dumptrucks with the city seal, piles of dead batteries or deershit, you would quickly find the substance of an even darker space lapping at your feet. This shore which makes Great Diamond Island, though it admits and disperses the materials of the world-at-large, steeply walls the stage of community. He that comes and stays, with his arrogance and frugality, lawlessness and charity, takes comfort in being surrounded by the echoes of himself.

ON A WARM June weekend I return to Great Diamond after many months to find Sam Tucker’s predictions coming true. The gate is open, the flanks of iron bars now fastened wide to open into the cove, what Sam calls “the glasnost.” There are other changes. David Bateman has been replaced by a new managing partner. Kay Carr has passed on. Sam has finished building his house.

I wake up in Sam’s guest room to a sunny Saturday morning that stirs the island slowly. Sam has risen to an earlier dawn to set lobster traps from the same old rowboat. From his porch hemmed by dense green foliage, I wade through tall orange asters to the gate to join a wider net of island traffic. Unfamiliar crowds of taggers jog unhindered down Diamond Avenue, tote fishing poles or return from either island landing with Bean bags full of crackers, beer and juice.

When the Board of the Diamond Island Association meets at 9 a.m., I am surprised to find that Sam is a member. He was elected against his will, he says, for the purpose of repairing Elwell Hall and the Association float.

At least this is his excuse for skipping the post meeting festival of yard work at the hall, where the Laughlins and a handful of others sweat between glasses of iced tea to prepare for a wedding reception. Relations with Diamond Cove are “more cordial,” they tell me as they haul out the folding tables and tend the flower beds.

Gerry Bell agrees. He advised Diamond Cove’s new management on the opening of the gate. “It’s a cosmetic gesture, but sometimes those are the most meaningful,” he says, receiving a gallon of gas for his mower from Ted Weber’s new hand pump.

Ted Weber also says good riddance to the “imaginary wall.” Now the new fire truck and ambulance at the fort can pass through unhindered, not to mention the aging fleet of his new fossil fuel supply company, Dinosaur Enterprises.

The road hums with exchanges as the feast of summer hurtles to a peak. A summer resident arrives on a golf cart to ask Ted’s daughter, Beth, if she can babysit tonight. Beth has a prior engagement, but recommends a teenaged year round occupant of a Diamond Cove town home who now regularly exports her services to summer cottages. She cites the number from an island telephone directory.

Jackie Bell and Betsy Weber collaborated on the directory. Though they researched names and addresses with the same standard of accuracy, formatted them in the same elegant style, and share the designation of “Y” in the residence duration column, the two women cannot be found in the same directory. The seven year round households of each side, now nearly equal in number, are compiled along with summer residents in separate documents. A single island yellow pages, however, seems likely.

It is a shared need and service, and the coming generation that is opening its eyes to a single island, that will finally establish as fact the “one-island view,” says Dan O’Connell, Diamond Cove’s new managing partner. A new playground at the fort’s old schoolhouse is open to the toddlers of Roger Robinson, who are now outnumbered by the tumbling offspring of Diamond Cove’s new year-rounders.

“It’s little increments. There is no master plan,” says O’Connell of the pending progress of openness. “On an island this size, everything rolls around quickly but moves slowly. There are people who are not comfortable with this detente. I think this is a generational process. It’s growing up together.”

It is also remembering together, by all accounts, that brought the island together. Even the pockets of resistance known for citing the distinctness of their halves of the island were among 100 attending a dedication of Leddy Park on Memorial Day weekend. Across Diamond Avenue from the plaque that remembers Tom Leddy as a “guardian, ambassador, neighbor, friend,” the completed Pump House, Tim Leddy’s childhood dream come true, was opened by the Clemms to the ceremony’s guests.

Still standing across from the new open gate is the only road sign on the south side of the island. It posts in bold numbers a 15 mile per hour speed limit. Above the numbers is a reminder that “all neighbors share the road.”

The sign provides a small welcome in the summer to the one percent of thousands of visitors to Diamond Cove that cross to the south side. It speaks mutely to a growing number of year rounders who cross the single island road under the weight of winter, scrutinizing every unfamiliar track that strays beyond its cover of snow.
YOU TAKE FOUR (4) WRITERS. THEN YOU ADD SIX (6) PHOTOGRAPHERS. YOU MIX SOME TOGETHER. SOME YOU ALLOW TO GO THEIR OWN WAY. DON'T loose ANY. DAMN YOU IF YOU DO. YOU’VE GOT TO GET THE RIGHT MIX. DIFFERENT PHOTOGRAPHERS WITH DIFFERENT WRITERS. ONE SEMESTER PROGRAM WITH ANOTHER SEMESTER PROGRAM. DON'T HURRY THINGS TOO MUCH. BUT DON'T GO TOO SLOW. YOU’VE GOT TO BUILD THINGS TO A CERTAIN LEVEL. A CERTAIN QUALITY. A CERTAIN CONSISTENCY. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN THINGS ARE RIGHT? THE PROOF IS IN THE TASTE.

Ingredients

SALT MAGAZINE, ISSUE #50.

All of the stories and photographs in this issue were produced by students taking part in the Salt semester program. With academic credit at the undergraduate and graduate level. If you'd like a taste, contact the Salt Center for Documentary Field Studies, 19 Pine Street, P.O. Box 4077, Portland, Maine 04101. Telephone: (207) 761-0660—ask to speak to Sue. Email: salt@ime.net. Or visit our website at: http://www.salt.edu.
There was this little magazine that was started in 1973 by a bunch of high school students and their teacher. Photocopied at first. Then printed by a real live printer. It had stories and photos and type and layout. This issue of Salt is number 50 of that same little magazine. Yippeeee!