

I Remember Canada

Tim Wees

I remember ..

St. Johns, Newfoundland, with the shoreline carpeted with fish flakes and cod drying in the sun. I was a boy then. We walked up Signal Hill and looked out over the Atlantic Ocean. It was a cold ocean, and I could easily imagine the raw courage it took for the fishermen to take their dories into those harsh waves and bring a day's catch home to the village;

Africville in Halifax, a shanty town where black people lived. They lived! They were alive. Their community was alive. Their hearts were friendly and showed on their faces in broad smiles and in their eyes with a twinkle;

The quietness of Prince Edward Island, and the red, red soil;

The soft greenness of St. John and the farm-lands around the city;

Being stranded with a flat tire on the north shore of New Brunswick with an old 52 Chev bakery truck for a tractor and a home-made trailer hooked on to a home-made fifth wheel and a truck load of donkeys .. really. I fixed the tire and drove all that night across the Gaspé to arrive in Rivière du Loup the following morning. I was bone tired. One of the hosts for the show had a corral and a barn ready for the donkeys, and we all of us collapsed and went to sleep;

Quebec City and traveling down the funicular, down the cliff to Lower Town. Old winding streets and churches laden with history;



The Eastern Townships, Scotstown and Milan, the apple orchards and their blossoms;

The 'farm' just north-east of Toronto. I walked into the meadow and a neighbour boy was fishing in the creek. I asked him if I could try his fishing rod. Sure. I put a worm on the hook and let it in several yards upstream from a big rock in the middle of the pool. There was a humungus fish sunning himself by the big rock. This was NOT the way to catch brook trout. You are supposed to let the worm drift under a bank into their quiet and dark places, but, by gum, this old geezer took the bait and I yarded him out onto the grass. Biggest fish ever taken from that brook;

An Indian village on an island deep in the bush north of Kenora. They didn't talk to me much. I needed some quiet healing time. They had meat drying and smoking on racks before a fire. It was a single engine Otter that took me in, laden to the roof with supplies for the bush people. It bounced in the air it was so light when it took me home;

My harshest winter ever, in Thompson Manitoba. The entire month of February never saw the thermometer rise above forty below. I traveled the Muskeg Express to a trapper's cabin. The train let me off in the late night and my trapper friend rode his snowmobile across the snowy lake to pick me up. I, then a newspaperman, had come, as requested, to set the record straight about trapping. He is a farmer who cares for his garden and the naturalness of the life around him. I am thankful that he is there. This corner of God's creation is being cared for;

Lying on my back in the snow near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and watching the northern lights. They cascade wave upon wave down through the night, a dance of angels filling the sky with life and wonderment. The prairies are more than flat. They are filled with life. The browns and yellows and reds of the rolling prairie offered me miles and hours on the back of my horse as we cantered across the land;

The sprawling beauty of Calgary and the winding rivers and the drive to Edmonton through the ranch-lands and wheat-lands;

The Peace Country. Oh, but she is beautiful, the rivers traveling their well worn trails, carving valleys, down, down and further down into the soil, and, as they work their way deep into the earth, the prairie life springs up in the nooks and hummocks to hide the deer and the other critters of the grasses and the tough scruffy woods;

The hot springs at Liard River where orchids grow, even in the middle of winter, where you can lie in the warmth at forty below as though you were at home in a hot bath, watching the steam rise through the chill and the frost in the forest;



The rough and rugged Rockies. They each have a name, and proud of it too. Scared with clear cuts, these mountains and their valleys, teeming with raw life, will yet survive man;

Sailing through the Gulf islands, harboured between Vancouver Island and the mainland;

Watching in the night as my boat washes through the water and brings to life a phosphorescent colony of tiny creatures. They are glowing with the disturbance and illuminating the waves as they ripple off to the side, and then they are relaxing into the eddies and swirls in my wake as I travel through the night, and then they are still, and silent, and, once again, dark.

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