

The Townships Sun



Townships Life & Culture: Past, Present, and Future



The Lost Dog Tag An historical investigation by Allan Rowell p.17

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Townshippers' Pilgrimage to the Pyrenees p.8

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The Townships Sun

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A few words from the editor

In August the Sun sent out a reader survey and I want to take a moment, before looking at the theme of this issue, to thank you all for the response that survey has received so far. The feedback, positive and negative, general and specific, in person and on paper, has played and continues to play a powerful role in shaping the future of this magazine.

Autumn brings an end to the traditional travel season, with people near and far preparing to return to their places of work for the long, dark winter. For some this is more of a return than others. For those who are still in one school system or another, the transition is often tough, whereas others might feel like summer breezed by without a second glance. Whether the "summer vacation" was long or short, though, it is likely that it involved some kind of travel.

Travel is one of a surprising number of words in the English language which is kissing cousins to French

words. Like mansion is to maison, the French word for house, the word travel is closely linked to the French word travail: to work.


It's a connection that makes a lot of sense to anyone who has done any travelling; going on a trip is a lot of work, but it is work that changes the traveller, sometimes in powerful and unexpected ways.

This month in the Townships Sun, the article and stories all bear some link to the idea of travelling. Sometimes that link is overt, in a story about the specific travels of one townshipper or another, and sometimes it is more metaphorical, instead looking at life-journeys, they all present the ins and outs of travelling and the significance journeys can have for those who decide to take them.

Gordon Lambie

The Townships Sun Editor

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Our Contributors

Mead Baldwin was born in Baldwin's Mills, went to Alexander Galt, Champlain, Bishop's and McGill, and lives and works in Waterville. When he is not working for the United Church, he loves to write, and create Murder Mystery dinner theatre.

After a career in public relations in Washington, D.C., promoting the interests of good (mining law reform, women's health, historic preservation) and not so good organizations, *Beverly Dame* is spending most of her time in North Hatley with her husband, Page; an aging dog; and a cranky Persian cat. She's a native of Kansas City, Missouri where they definitely do not curl.

Eleanor Gang is a singer, singing teacher, knitter, sculptor and writes poetry and prose. She has made her home in the Eastern Townships since 1987, and can be heard regularly on the Bishop's University Chez Nous concert series singing classical music and blues.

Steve Luxton was born in Coventry, England in 1946. He is the author of five books of poetry, including *In the Vision of Birds: New and Selected Poems* (DC Books, 2012). He recently retired from teaching English Literature at John Abbott College and Creative Writing at Concordia University and now lives in a 200-year-old farmhouse in Hatley.

Susan Macaulay is a writer, editor, blogger, public speaking coach and occasional model. After living and working in Dubai for 18 years, she returned to the Eastern Townships in 2011 to care for her mother Patti who has Alzheimers. She is writing a book about her caregiving experience. Susan loves travel, scrabble, and triathlon, among many, many other things ranging from soup to nuts. She lives in North Hatley with her mother's cat Pia Roma, and may be reached through her website AmazingSusan.com

Longtime Sun contributor and retired Pratt & Whitney aerospace engineer, *Tom Moore* lives in Bolton Ouest, QC with wife Mary (also retired PWC). He has been photographing birds as a serious pursuit since retirement, finding it a great way to spend money on small electronic equipment. He also has a strong interest in restoring '50s-'60s sports cars.

Allan Rowell is a cartographer and geographer for Statistics Canada. He grew up in East Clifton and in Bury, lives in Lennoxville, works in Ottawa and calls Baldwin's Mills his favourite hangout. He is an avid curler who also has a strong interest in the history of the Eastern Townships.

Carolyn Rowell is a writer and editor who has led creative writing workshops in the Townships for many years.

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A look into the life of Mead Baldwin

By Beverly Dame

Journey has, in some ways, always been a theme in Sun contributor Mead Baldwin's world; from his current life as a minister and a writer right back to early days on the family farm in Baldwin's Mills.

The most recent of these journeys came in the form of a trip to the Greenbelt Faith Festival in England this year; his first trip to the Mother Country. He explained that the trip recharged his batteries and opened up new opportunities for what he describes as his "great passion for congregational ministry, youth work, Bible study and engaging people in educational experiences."

"Last January I had never heard of the Greenbelt Faith Festival, though it had been held every summer for 40 years," he said. "For the past month it seems to be all I think or talk about. For four days I was one of more than 20,000 people who gathered at a racetrack in Cheltenham to sing and dance, listen to passionate speakers, sing protests, share our faith and have a great time."

Backing up a bit; it was on another journey, a summer trip to British Columbia, that Baldwin came to terms with his decision to become a minister in the United Church of Canada, the country's largest protestant religious denomination, which formed out of a mix of Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Union churches in 1925.

He hitchhiked from St. Anne de Bellevue, (as detailed in Baldwin's *Acquainted with the Night* on page ?) and on the third day, a United Church student minister gave him a place to sleep and took him to the edge of town.

That encounter, plus staying at the house of his uncle in Cranbrook convinced Baldwin that he was on the right path in his choice of the ministry as his vocation.

Today Baldwin serves as the minister for the United Church congregations in Hatley and Waterville-North Hatley. He is one of what some might call "those Baldwins"; a direct descendant of Levi Baldwin, who is considered the founder of Baldwin's Mills.

He said he sensed he had a call to the ministry when he was 18. "We always went to church," he said. "And when the snow was too deep to get to church in Coaticook, my father led a service at home."

Baldwin's father was a farmer until age 39 when he went to Bishops and trained to be a teacher. He was also a lay minister in the United Church serving in parishes around the Eastern Townships. His mother, Jane Ross, was a Townships girl and came from a long line of Anglican clergy. Three of Mead's cousins are Anglican ministers.

Through his experiences of Sunday school, youth groups and summer camp, Baldwin said that, "Christianity was all around me."

So, too, was writing and storytelling. "My aunt Eunice Baldwin was my English teacher for grades 8 and 9 at the Ayer's Cliff High School. She made every student believe that they had the ability to write." Baldwin edited the high school newspaper and notes with pride that his first work was published in the Sherbrooke Record when he was 14, a letter to the editor.

Two years after graduating from Bishops in 1976 Baldwin received a Master's of Sacred Theology from McGill University. His first assignment was in northern New Brunswick. Based in Charlo he served four churches. "That's where I started really writing," he said.

"I was looking for a way to worship that was more than just preaching," he explained. "So, I wrote plays and

had kids and young people and adults perform them. It was a new way of doing church.”

From New Brunswick, he went to parishes, small and large, around Ontario for more than 20 years. During that time a group of friends started a drama club, doing community theater.

In 2009, after the breakup of his marriage, Baldwin made the journey back home.

In the Townships, as well as around Canada, the United Church confronts a secular world in which the old ways of doing church, of being Christian, seem to be failing. United Church membership dropped nearly eight percent between 1991 and 2001. Baldwin is not concerned so much with why it has happened or is happening as to how to get the basic message to people of all ages and of all approaches to what it means to be Christian or even religious.

The recent trip to the Greenbelt Festival was part of an effort by the national body of the church to help young leaders find ways of getting the message across to a new generation. Organized by the national office of the United Church under “Destination Greenbelt” it was intended, in the words of the program proposal, “to support a cohort of younger new leaders with a passionate vision of what the church could be which has nothing to do with the narrative of inevitable decline and irrelevance.”

The 100 participants were organized in teams of eight to ten people that met over Skype in the months leading up to the festival. They also stayed in a college near the site so they could share their experiences.

Held at the racetrack in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, during the British bank holiday, August 23-26, Greenbelt is a festival of arts, faith and justice. The four days were packed with performances, workshops, speeches, for just about every form of creativity. Started in 1974, Greenbelt is all-age and multi-disciplinary in its programming. Its roots are in the Christian tradition, and its organizers describe its approach as “inclusive and wide-reaching.”

“The place had the feel of a folk festival,” Baldwin enthused. “Lots of kids. There was a children’s village with tents full of hands-on activities. There was one section just for people under 18; ‘Old People Stay Out!’”

There were all these eclectic forms of worship: nursery rhyme mass, the Les Miz Mass; jazz communion. And workshops. “Reading the Bible is bad for your health; how to write a protest song; can we really love our neighbor; everybody welcome: Asperger’s, autism and the church. And the Jesus Arms Pub where there was always terrific beer and great conversation.”

“I really liked the Christian comedians,” he said. “They used stand-up comedy to share their faith. Milton Jones delivered a series of 10-second sermons.... ‘Going to church should be like going up to the edge of the Grand Canyon and saying, Ahhhhh’ or ‘One of the mysteries of Christianity is why Christians rarely admit that so much of it is a mystery.’”

For Baldwin and the others involved, the journey to Greenbelt is not over. The cohorts (teams) that met online before the festival continue to meet discussing how what they experienced can inspire and energize their work. There is even talk about how a similar festival combining arts, social action and Christianity could find a place in Canada. There are already sister festivals in Scotland, the United States and Palestine.

“You can tell that this was a spiritually recharging experience,” he said. “The question is, ‘What’s next?’ Our teams will be meeting monthly trying to figure out the answer to that question.”

Meanwhile, Mead continues to be loaded with energy and enthusiasm for the world around him and his journey through it. In the past year, in addition to the world surrounding the trip to England, he spearheaded the program for a drama day camp at the Piggery Theater and taught there once it became a reality; produced, directed and wrote a murder mystery for a group of community players; organized an inter-church bonspiel (curling tournament) at the North Hatley Curling Club; was a member of ten-week writers’ workshop; curled and played bridge several times a week in the winter; golfed whenever he could in the summer; was elected as the president of the United Church conference that includes all the churches in an area covering Ottawa and almost all of Quebec; served as chaplain at a summer camp; baked cakes and pies for church suppers and the Ayer’s Cliff fair where he won four firsts in peach pie, cherry squares, bran muffins, and a diabetic dessert; and won three prizes at the 2012 Bulwer Purple Prose Contest including the first prize in the Romance category.

Acquainted with the Night

By Mead Baldwin

There is something romantic and alluring about the dark side of life, especially when you're twenty years old and tasting freedom for the first time. It was April 1975, and I was hitchhiking across Canada by myself to parts unknown. I had one more year of university to go before completing my B.A. in Religious Studies and another summer of the graveyard shift in a factory in Coaticook did not appeal to me. With the music of Gordon Lightfoot as a sound track, and the restlessness of Jack Kerouac in my soul, I set out on the road. My Dad's best friend drove me to St Anne de Bellevue, where I stuck out my thumb to begin a summer of adventure and discovery.

I spent the first night in the Pembroke jail. I had been told by other travellers that they would put you up for the night if you were stranded. Sure enough they locked me in a cell with my backpack and sleeping bag. I slept on a metal rack beside a urinal. I had a brief scare in the morning when I lost track of time and pounded on the bars asking to be released. No one came to release me for half an hour or so. I had a few brief moments of panic until 7 am, when the shift changed and I was on my way.

The next night it was pouring rain so I spent some of my precious money on a cheap motel in Sault Ste. Marie and watched the hockey playoffs. I then had a good day on the road. I only spent half an hour in Wawa, the hitchhiker's graveyard, and made it past Kenora, until at 9 pm my last ride let me off and drove off on a dirt road into the northern wilderness. This was a small community on a reservation and I walked for 20 minutes until I saw lights. It was a bar with lots of cars in the parking lot and a lively sound. I sat in the corner, ordered a beer and some food, and pondered the night ahead. The music was tolerable, and I was so hungry that the greasy fish and chips hit the spot.

I had craved freedom and adventure, but as the crowd got rowdy and a fight broke out, I began to rethink my

plans. Was this the place to spend the night? The scene in front of me made me quite uneasy. I finished my second beer, thought about ordering another, but my trepidation got the better of me. I left the bar, trudged back to the highway and stuck out my thumb with low expectations. While peering down the road hoping for headlights, I looked for a quiet spot to spread out my sleeping bag and bunk down for the night.

I was just about to give up when a van's headlights appeared in the distance and seemed to slow down. I had a ride!

This may sound like make believe but I swear it's true. It was a Charismatic Catholic folk singing group on their way to Winnipeg. They had just finished a coffeehouse gig and were still pumped up with adrenaline. We shared our stories and dreams. Then for two hours they played guitar and we sang familiar songs together. As we approached the outskirts of Winnipeg they offered me a place to sleep. One of their friends was a United Church student minister, who had offered his basement to the group before a gig in the city.

The next day this student offered to drive me to the outskirts of Winnipeg to make my next day's hitchhiking easier. Over the following week; I slept on a flatbed truck and woke up to see antelope jumping fences, bunked out in a farmer's fields surrounded by cow patties, slept under the trees in a park in Port Alberni, and finally on the shores of the Pacific Ocean in a tent with two new female acquaintances. Eventually I made my way to Cranbrook and spent two months with my uncle, working in a pulp mill.

I will always remember though, that dark night in the bar, and the mystical, musical ride to Winnipeg. I liked the thought of "being acquainted with the night", but realized that I preferred just a passing acquaintance, not full immersion.

Walking out our truth

A Tale of Two Townships Pilgrims

By Gordon Lambie

In the summer of 2013, Townshippers Lee Ann Hogle and Jenn Cianca undertook the Way of St. James pilgrimage in northern Spain, known more commonly by the Spanish name, El Camino de Santiago. The route is the only remaining medieval pilgrimage route still intact in the world and, according to tradition, leads to the burial site of Saint James the Apostle.



Walking up the Pyrenees

Photo by Lee Ann Hogle

Pilgrimage is a tradition that exists in all kind of traditions all across the world. In the simplest terms, one could call a pilgrimage a journey with a purpose. The definition is not perfect, since a walk to the store is not a pilgrimage per se, but in a modern era of shifting views on religion, ethics, spirituality and the meaning of life itself, it is arguably the closest one can get to a catch-all definition without being too specific. Perhaps the most famous pilgrimage in modern awareness today is the Haj, the journey to Mecca which is one of the central pillars of Islam, but society is filled with cultural

pilgrimages as well, such as the journey to Graceland, or the journeys thousands make every year to visit former German concentration camps.

“You can’t really just go on a pilgrimage anywhere,” Cianca said, “You have to go where there’s some importance attached to the place.”

A Historian and self-described “post-Christian,” Cianca is the chair of the Liberal Arts Department at Bishop’s University, and walked el camino alone to mark the end of the journey that saw her through her doctoral studies. She described her work as an academic study of human beings and the spaces they occupy

“The idea that we can study people only through texts is something I fight against, because I am more of a material historian,” Cianca said, explaining that she feels it is important for people to question texts, and not just try to learn history from the pages of books. “Pilgrimage is about bodies and the ways bodies experience things differently than minds do, even though you can never separate the two from each other.”

Hogle, by comparison, is the newly ordained United Church minister serving in the area around Magog. She made the trek with her younger daughter Amélie over a period of five weeks. Like Cianca, though, she said she undertook the pilgrimage because she saw herself at a transitional point in life.

“A lot of people have asked me why I went,” Hogle said. “It just seemed like a good time. I was at a transition in my life and I wanted that space to realize and look back at where I had come from and where I am going. I wanted that pause, if you will.”

Asked what led her to taking this particular route to find pause, Hogle said that it was the only pilgrimage she had

ever heard of, and she traced that back to the writings of Anne Carson, as well as the 2010 film *The Way*, directed by Emilio Estevez and starring his father, Martin Sheen.

“It’s one of those things where, I feel like as soon as you hear about it, you keep hearing about it all the time,” Cianca reflected, saying that she first got the idea to make the journey when she found an article on the pilgrimage in doing research for a class she was teaching.

“I was still finishing my PhD at the time and I thought, you know, this would be a really amazing capstone of the last decade of my life.” The Bishop’s professor recalled a strong emotional pull at each reference to the trek over the three years she planned her trip.

“Every time I read something about it I would start tearing up,” Cianca recalled, adding that she was drawn to the pilgrimage because it was outside of the area that she researches directly, and that she felt it could be a break from the ordinary.

Though certainly different from the daily grind, the trip itself proved to be less of a break for the two pilgrims than those initial impressions suggest. Both expressed a feeling that they were still processing the experiences that the walk had brought into their lives, coupled with a feeling that there was no easy way to truly put the worth of the experience into words.

“You learn a lot,” Hogle said, calling the walk a metaphor for life, “things don’t go according to plan.”

The minister explained that she and her daughter walked the bookends of the trip, having to take the bus in the middle of the journey due to the physical challenges of the experience.

“I was hoping to have some kind of lovely spiritual revelation,” Hogle continued, “but the fact of the matter was you’re so very preoccupied by physical challenges that you end up really pretty exhausted.”

While Cianca admitted that there were many things she worked through while walking, she said that it was not a conscious goal of the journey. Rather than get up with a particular goal in mind, she said she just considered things as they came to mind and, lacking the distractions of the North American lifestyle, she had little else to do



Jenn Cianca at kilometer 20

Photo by Jenn Cianca

than to face them. She also stated that the traditional spiritual nature of pilgrimage was not a big part of her experience.

“I don’t like spiritual very much as a term,” Cianca explained, “I find it doesn’t describe me and my motivations very well. I know for probably the majority of the people that I encountered there was probably a spiritual aspect, but for me that doesn’t resonate.”

Hogle, again mixing the metaphorical with literal observations along the way, said that she was struck by seeing the things people carry with them, and how so many travellers tried to bear too much on their backs. She spoke of the anxiety associated with living a life where everything you own is on your body, and how that made her more conscious of where she was and what she was doing at any given time. Cianca addressed the same idea in her own way, referring to the fact that she gradually shed clothes over the course of the trip, to the point where, at the end of her 820 kilometer journey, she only had a tattered shirt and pair of shorts with a worn-out elastic.

Though the physical burdens weigh heavily on travellers, according to Cianca and Hogle, the people encountered along the way create a whole other, similarly intense experience.

“The people that I met were amazing,” the historian recalled, “I met some beautiful, wonderful souls, from all over the world, and that I got really close to, like a little family... it’s kinda like camp.” She reflected on the fact that although she, as a social person, put an effort into being alone on the journey in order to be able to move at her own pace, she had frequent repeat interactions with a similar group of people all along the way.

“People can only walk so fast,” Cianca said, “so you end up seeing the same faces over and over again.” She suggested that, depending on the people and the circumstances, that repetition could be a blessing or a curse.

One would imagine that Hogle, travelling with her daughter, would have had a more social experience, but she expressed quite the opposite, suggesting that the two of them often travelled together in silence, reflecting on their own inner thoughts.

“It shows that we weren’t just on vacation,” Hogle explained, “we respected each other’s need to be serious.”

While Cianca only spoke of one difficult day, Lee Ann and her daughter faced a distinct challenge in the

decision, part way through their trip, to stop walking and take the bus.

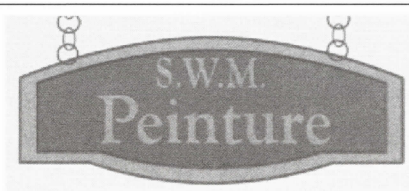
“You find yourself asking, did I cheat? Was that a real pilgrimage?” Hogle said, pointing out that even though they both got back on the trail and walked the remainder, the unplanned bus trip coloured the experience for her. She spoke of how being on a bus after moving only at “human speeds” for so long made her feel dizzy, and about how it affected her final perception of the journey.

“It was not some huge revelation to me when I arrived, it was almost a let-down,” Hogle said, “but then you realize that this is a life journey; this notion of putting one foot in front of the other is a spiritual practice, if you want to look at it like that.”

Whereas Hogle, as a minister, presents herself as an indisputably more spiritual person than Cianca, the latter’s story of arriving in Santiago de Compostela is considerably more profound.

“I don’t have an uncomplicated relationship with Christianity,” Cianca explained, “and that added an extra layer of complexity for me anyway because it’s a Christian pilgrimage. It was interesting to monitor my own responses. Sometimes I felt scornful, sometimes I felt contempt, but other times I felt completely moved and bowled over by the experience, despite the fact that it was housed in this tradition that I have ostensibly rejected.”

The Liberal Arts professor proceeded to tell the story of overcoming injury on the 31st day of her walk to make the final push into the city, later in the day than most pilgrims conventionally arrive.

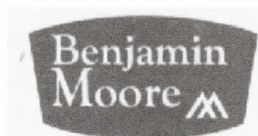


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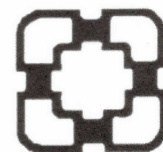
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"I just... I started crying. It was really hot, and really humid, and I was just completely soaking wet," she said, recalling her physical challenges as well as her complex relationship with the spiritual side of the journey; "I had this thing where I refused to kneel, so I was leaning, because I actually needed to, (I think I walked 42 km that day,) leaning on my trekking pole and just weeping.

Cianca described becoming aware of her personal burdens as a physical weight.

"I really felt like it was on my chest; all of the things that I had been thinking about, all of the things that I had been working through and piecing together, and reasoning through, and asking questions about, were weighted on my chest and I could feel them. I've never had that experience before. It really felt like there were bricks." She continued, "For some reason the thought popped into my head, 'are you strong enough to leave that here?' and I decided I was going to sit there until I was ready to leave it."

When that readiness came, according to Cianca, it felt like that weight was falling off her body.

"When I walked out of there I felt lighter than I've ever felt," she said.

Traditionally, pilgrimage is an experience that is meant to transform the traveller through a trial-by-fire experience of facing oneself in the wilderness. Almost every major religious or spiritual figure in history or popular mythology has a pilgrimage story that helps define his or her origins as a holy being.

"That's the thing that pilgrimage is supposed to do," Cianca said, drawing on her scholarly interest in the subject, "it puts you in this liminal state where all this transformative activity is going to happen and you come out the other side a different person... You walk through the fire and you come out fundamentally changed."

She followed that definition, however, with uncertainty.

"Maybe it's not the sort of thing you feel right away," she speculated, "I don't feel transformed, but I do feel more settled in who I am."

"It helped me to notice my patterns more," Hogle said, repeating that she felt that the physical trip was just the first step in "a lifelong journey," and that the biggest challenge facing her on having returned is that modern life is full of responsibilities and, "ways to drug ourselves."

"On a pilgrimage our senses are wide awake to the details of life," Hogle explained, "in this day and age where a lot of people reject religion, this walk is an indication that there is still a spiritual thirst, we're still looking for meaning in life and this notion of somehow suffering in your body that you might become more enlightened in your spirit has some kind of grip on a lot of people... we want to walk out our truths."

ARLIE C. FEARON



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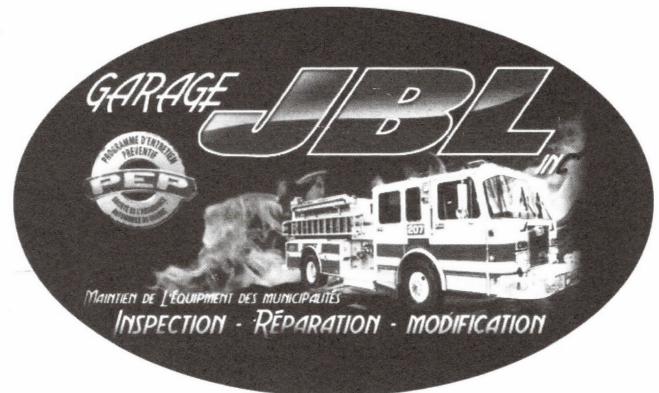
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The Diary of a 19th Century Townships' Adventurer

Uncle Levi Sails Around the World

By Steve Luxton

On the day before Christmas 1852, Levi Parker, a twenty-two year old from the village of Hatley, Quebec, set sail from Boston (which he had gone to from his Canadian home earlier in April), joining one of the mass of hopefuls participating in that extraordinary phenomenon, the nineteenth century gold rush. His voyage took him to far-off Australia from which he did not return home for over three years. Along with some gold—yes, he was one of the lucky few who returned from the diggings with bright metal—he brought back something equally valuable: a diary relating his adventures and ordeals. The document, *A Diary: Uncle Levi Sails Around The World, 1852–1856, to Australia and Home Again*, edited and published in 1989 by his descendant Geraldine L. Parker, makes for some fascinating reading.

Like any worthwhile journal that speaks to an audience other than the writer, Levi's diary offers a glimpse into a lost time by providing a wealth of concrete and evocative scenes and details. We learn that Levi with his neighbours H.S. and A.R. Boynton and nine other companions pay \$150.00 each for a cabin at mid-ships on the upper deck of the ship "Fanny", departing Boston for Australia. The first days out bring rough seas that leave the majority of the 110 mostly single male gold seekers on board acutely seasick. On the third day, when the sun shines and the sea flattens, they are a pathetic sight climbing up from their berths, feeble and disheveled into the open air. "Some poor unfortunates who have encumbered themselves with a wife are assisting them upon the deck where they try to assume a comfortable position by seating themselves upon... [its]... floor." Nevertheless, as the morning advances, the passengers revive a little and gather together in small groups or sit by themselves with a book or their own reflections. Seasickness is not that easily conquered, however, and there will be many more bouts before the journey is over.

And a long journey it proves. How do the travelers divert themselves during such an interminable passage? As the

"Fanny" heads south down almost the entire extent of the Atlantic, Levi and his companions spot spouting whales, schooling porpoises, flying fish and goose-sized birds called "boobies", (characteristic of the predatory nineteenth century European attitude towards nature, the voyagers' first impulse is to hurry for harpoons and guns!), and a few scattered boats. Otherwise what lies beyond the rail is the ocean stretching in shining peace, or, risen in fury, hurling vast, deck-sweeping waves. Since these, along with the strength and direction of the wind, are the helpers or hinderers of the vessel's progress, the diarist shows a great interest in them. "Strong wind continues from the same quarter (south-east) and "Fanny" is majestically reclining upon her side, advancing steadily along at the rate of ten knots an hour but several points west of the course that would be taken were the wind from a more favourable quarter." Much of the rest of the time, weather permitting, is spent on deck reading, writing, playing drafts, making or listening to home-made music, and, on Sundays, faithfully and enthusiastically attending church services.

They have been out of sight of land for over sixty days, when on February 26th, 1853, they spot "Table Mountain" and, given the OK by the port medical officer, pull into Capetown, South Africa. There, Levi encounters an Englishman returning from the Australian diggings who "gave us a detailed account of the country and mines. [He] advised us to go to the Ovens diggings... (Levi seems to have no noticeable second thoughts regarding the possibly portentous name!) He gave us new encouragement by his flattering accounts."

Reboarding the "Fanny", Levi sets out again. After observing the catching and butchering of a strange, huge, tropical fish, sailing through eerily glowing schools of phosphorescent jelly fish, and then enduring a ferocious gale that drives "Fanny" within half a ship's length of deadly reefs, he arrives in Hobson's Bay near Melbourne, Australia, on April 20th 1853—a total of 118 days out from Boston.



Levi Parker

Photo courtesy of Steve Luxton

Notwithstanding the trial by water, once on land, however, our hero does not let the grass grow under his feet. Despite his relatives' and Hatley village elders' misgivings regarding his far-fetched plans, now that he has set foot in Australia, we see how practical a young fellow he actually is. His primary goal remains to obtain a claim and dig for gold, but his first move in the face of mixed news from the "diggens" at Bandigo to the north is to find work in the nearest town. He commences chopping and selling wood. In the gold-rush region, the demand is enormous. Wood of course is required for warmth and shelter, but even more so to reinforce the walls of the treacherously deep "holes" (as much as 120 feet deep in one

digging named the Canadian Gully!) and construct sluices. Moreover, trees are few in the arid, sub-tropical landscape and any near the latest diggings have been quickly felled, and so wood must be freighted in by horse and cart at a high price.

As for his main object, seeking gold, while operating first one and then two freight carts, the young man, along with some companions, buys a partially worked claim and employs his spare time bending his back digging drains, pumping water and washing dirt. But, by late October, the writing is on the wall: "Finished, or rather gave up the claim Friday—about eleven ounces divided among nine makes it about \$23.00 each, hardly enough to pay our licenses and very near half pay our board and all for four weeks hard labour, Oh a digger's life for me!" And then when a second claim proves "one of the most perfect *Schoicers* (a German name for a hole without gold)" he casts aside his shovel for good.

Young Parker is no idle dreamer. He comes to hate Australia for its furnace-like heat, sopping sub-tropical wet, grasping drunken gold-seekers, and officious often corrupt colonial officialdom: "for my opinion of this colony (though I think it is a good place for making money) fully coincides with that of an American from New Hampshire that I saw in town and asked how he liked this country — He had a very strong loud voice and was a fluent speaker, and said he 'Well, I think it is the awfulest d---d place that ever a white man lived in... let me get a few shillings and I am for home again.'" Similarly, Parker desires only to make money quickly where money might be made. From chopping logs (often obtained in the local manner through bribing the police), he graduates to freighting them, along with food, other supplies, and even miners' wives to the diggings. Then, when these show signs of playing out and prices start to deflate as quickly as they once inflated, he astutely sells out before the big bust. He unburdens himself of an impressive collection of horses, freighters, and structures, and ships out with some five thousand dollars in gold in his pocket—a very considerable sum in the 1850's.

Over the next eighty odd days he sails eastwards to London in the "Kent". Then, after a protracted stay in the British capital, unable at first to get a ship because many of the usual Trans-Atlantic vessels have been conscripted into the Crimean war effort, he sails from Liverpool to New York in approximately sixty days (a tempestuous winter crossing in the face of perilous unabating winds!). Finally arriving in New York harbor on February 15th, 1856, Levi Parker has, in slightly over three years, circumnavigated the world.

Earlier, I observed that to be gripping, a diary or journal worth its literary salt should grant the reader some felt glimpses of its period. These are best realized through the use of evocative, concrete and scenic details. Levi Parker's diary, I think I've shown, amply does this. What is a less common notion is that a journal or diary can not only be interesting on account of what it does include but what it doesn't. I don't just mean by this the unspoken midnight adventures—after strong drink, women, etc., but also other gaps. These omissions may occur for several reasons: One is that the writer doesn't mention something he thinks the reader is already thoroughly acquainted with and so will stretch a yawn at, i.e. who wants to read about the experience of riding in a stage coach (that springless, overcrowded, smelly box), or of uncomfortably voyaging in a common sailing ship? (though, it's true: Levi Parker does at times mention the name of sail or two, remark upon the violent snapping of a mizzen mast, and speak of the trade winds.) Well, the present day reader might! So, remember, when entering that Florida trip in your diary, to include something about steering and feeding that quaint vehicle you drive. As it is, this type of omission can help the perceptive future reader understand the behaviors that the inhabitant of an earlier age takes for granted—always a source of insight into the world view of the time.

A second reason for omissions, and one perhaps more illuminating sociologically, involves the mental and emotional blind spots of the writer. For instance, reading Levi, one is struck by how rarely, on a ship packed with young men like himself, he describes conversations with any of them. He neither seems to make much contact with nor show much interest in strangers. His view of them appears remarkably superficial. When the ship clears foul weather and the seasick passengers come topside for air, he remarks for the most part on their state of dress: "The decks are covered with passengers enjoying the morning air, many just recovering from their seasickness. Some dressed in their best which they have neither taken off nor changed since coming on board. Others in their sailing suit with shirt of blue or red flannel—but few today very tidy in their dress—some with their pants above the legs of their boots with no more than two buttons secured and but one side of their collar above their cravat. Others with neither collar nor cravat, coat nor hat." One gets the impression that Levi's world, even when inhabited by aspiring gold diggers who, after his Australian experience, he characterizes as "(with few exceptions)...some of the blackest, most desperate characters..." is a very arms length, socially stratified, formal

setting where one assiduously sticks to one's own clan, kind, sectarian persuasion, and precise social level. In Victorian England, even in the midst of a tempest, dress is a tell-tale uniform.

Or is such woodenness on a wooden ship just Levy? Are we simply seeing the effects of the young man's personality? Highly intelligent, sincerely religious, he is a youth with a talent for business. A genuine high-risk entrepreneur, he keeps his eye on the ball. Such personalities are rarely concerned with the subjective life, theirs or anyone else's. Levi, apart from the expression of a few conventional religious sentiments, has barely a philosophical bone in his body. He is, however, interested and fearsomely diligent in keeping track of material circumstances. His sea diaries note the direction and strength of the wind and waves and the speed of the ship in knots. His diary at the diggings usefully lists the wildly fluctuating prices. While he waits restlessly in London for an Atlantic passage, he meticulously records in the same small book the specifications of the Crystal Palace, the Bank of England, and other imperial monuments. Levi is one of the select few that returned from the Australian gold rush enriched, and this because he saw and grabbed the main chance—the one which lay above the ground, not under it.

By the time Levi returned to Hatley on February 26th, 1855, the region's first rail-line had been laid from Portland, Maine, through Compton Station nearby. His journey from New York, via Portland on "the cars" completed, and with his diary packed in his shoulder bag along with his Australian earnings, the seasoned twenty-five year old stepped off a private conveyance rented at Compton Station. He fell into the arms of his family, none of whom had, with the exception of his father Joel who earlier that day felt a premonition, any idea he was returning. Needless to say, he hardly dropped a stitch before going back into business. Other sources record him as once again prospering. His fascinating diary provides a vivid description of a trip around the world as yet unglobalized and unhomogenized, and does much to explain Levi's later worldly success.

Postscript: Geraldine Parker, the primary force behind transcribing and publishing Levi's diary, is presently living at Grace Christian Home in Lennoxville and has reached the ripe old age of 99. Uncle Levi Sails Around the World is currently out of print.

On Moving On

By Susan Macaulay

November 16, 2012: moving day.

My Mom, Pinkie Patti, leaves her home of 40 years to go into another kind of “home.” The kind you go to when you don’t know where you’re going or what you’re doing anymore. And she doesn’t.

She won’t know when she opens her eyes this morning that it will be the last time she’ll cast them on the sunlight streaming through her bedroom window.

(Dawn is just about to break, the sky is streaked with pink and blue, and a light frost coats the trees and fallen leaves all around the house.)

She didn’t know yesterday it would be the last time she would enjoy breakfast in her kitchen, clean her countertops, or stare into the crackling flames in her fireplace. Soon these small joys will belong to someone else, someone who may never know how much each of them once meant to Patti.

She doesn’t know she won’t dance in the goldenrod in her field again, or swim naked with me in the lake or walk in the winter wonderland behind her house at Christmas.

Somehow the fact that she doesn’t know seems to make her imminent (within hours now) departure more tragic. But none of us know when we’re going to leave the life we’re living. We may be snatched away at any moment, with no inkling the breath before was to be our last. It can happen at nine months, nine seasons or 99 years.

To coin and combine two old clichés: that ignorance is bliss may be a blessing in disguise. Unlike me, who has cried a million tears, Pinkie Patti hasn’t spent the last minutes, hours, days and weeks mourning the loss of her life as she knows it. She has lived it.

She hasn’t worried about saying goodbye about all that is familiar to her. I have worried for her.

I wonder how Pinkie Patti will be in her new home. Mercifully, and ironically, because of her Alzheimer’s she will likely forget this one before long. Or at least that’s my hope.

She will forget all the joys and sorrows with which she (and we) infused its three-bricks-thick walls. But life will still live here; it will be re-awakened by others at some future time. Pinkie Patti will create new joys, sorrows and life in her new place before one day saying goodbye to it too. When she leaves there, it will be for her final destination.



Macaulay and ‘Pinki Patti’

Photo courtesy of Susan Macaulay

As for moving on, there’s comfort in knowing that, in the end, no matter how far and wide we travel, and for how long, all roads eventually take us home. In that sense, every day is moving day, including today.

Birding on the Internet

By Tom Moore

The birds of summer have mostly headed south, perhaps a week or so earlier than usual, and there isn't much to see in my neighbourhood as I write this in late September. For the determined bird enthusiast, however, there are migrating shore birds, hawks, and a variety of warblers and songbirds still to be seen here and there. But where is that? I don't belong to a birding club and, living in a somewhat isolated area, I rely on several internet sites for information on timely birding locations. For your information, I've produced a tabulation of some of the sites I use. All are free to use, although some would like you to pay to join the organization.

eBird (www.ebird.org) is a free site with a staggering amount of information on birdwatching sites worldwide. After registering, go to "explore data" and a variety of choices become available:

By entering a location (eg Cowansville) a map will reveal "hotspots" indicated by teardrops. By clicking on a teardrop, all the bird species seen at that hotspot will be listed with info on what time of year is likely to produce an observation.

A graph of all the birds from a region by time of year

A world map shows real time entries being input to database

Oiseaux Rares du Quebec (www.quebecoiseaux.org/) gives daily listings of rare or unusual bird sightings across Quebec with an amateur photo each day and location notes on the sightings. In the "Resources" box on the home page just click on the "rare bird alert".

American Birding's Birding News site gives observations of birds on a daily basis across North America. Start with (www.birding.aba.org/maillist/ON) and a pull down menu will enable selection of most states and provinces. Observations are provided in a random fashion from Quebec, Ontario and bordering states by enthusiast birdwatchers.

The Bird Protection Quebec club has an extensive website (www.pqspb.org) relating to their club's activities. By clicking on "Sightings" on the top line of the site you can review bird sightings from the last 7 days within a 30 km radius of the Old Port of Montreal.

And on a slightly different slant, a site called Dendroica (www.natureinstruct.org/dendroica/) has a comprehensive database of bird calls and sounds with great photos for more than 400 species organized by regions of the world.

The days are growing shorter rapidly so perhaps these websites will provide some interesting internet browsing during the cold, dark evenings.



The Lost Dog Tag

By Allan Rowell



Herbert L. Rowell

All photos courtesy of Alan Rowell

Dad died last November and he was laid to rest alongside Mom on one of the warmest days of the month. It was as if he had ordered it special for his family and for his comrades.

Dad was a World War II veteran. As an ambulance driver in B Company of the No. 2 Motor Ambulance Convoy (RCASC), he transported the wounded, the sick, and the unfortunate ones—allied soldiers or civilians or even the enemy—from the battlefields of France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany to the various mobile field dressing stations and military hospitals. These trips took him through unfamiliar villages and cities, and on unfamiliar roads through the destruction of war.

According to Dad's comrade, Gordon D. Taylor, if there

was a difficult assignment to be done, Dad was given the job because he was the best at finding his way through the chaos; high praise for a farm boy from rural East Clifton in the Eastern Townships.

Dad was known for telling stories of his days in the war—of watching from a London roof top as incendiary bombs fell on the city, of dancing with Scottish misses, of harrowing night drives with his headlights blacked out while not knowing which side of the front lines he was on, of making hooch with his buddies. Some of his favourite stories were of “The Baron” and his wife, a young couple who befriended him when he was stationed in Belgium. He told of being invited to a fancy steak dinner at their house and of the vast and puzzling array of cutlery he had to navigate. He told of their little boy who his company seemed to have adopted as a mascot, letting him sit in the ambulance driver's seat. He also told of the Baroness' attempt at making them a lemon pie out of the rare lemons and sugar they had scrounged for her. She had wanted to give them a taste of home. Dad was proud of his wartime friendship with the Baron and his family and he fondly remembered their kindness. To a group of young men far from their own families, this friendship must have meant the world to them. To us, his children, the stories of the Baron were like fairy tales and we wondered what might have happened to the people in each one.

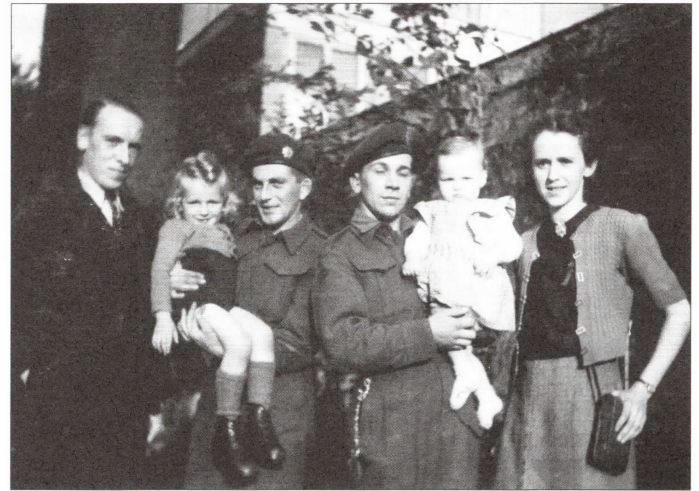
When we began the task of going through Dad's papers and drawers, we didn't know that we would, in fact, soon find out.

In a drawer in Dad's night stand we discovered an envelope, dated in 1997, addressed to him from his platoon buddy Walter (Wally) McGoldrick of New Brunswick. Along with an interesting letter, there were a dozen war photographs. They were copies of photos that we, as kids, had seen in Dad's collection. The difference between these photos and Dad's was that names, dates, and locations were written on the backs of Walter's collection.

Many of these war photos featured a child around 4 years old, with long blond hair who at first glance one would take

to be a girl. But it was noted on the back of one photo that it was “A Boy” by the name of Michel.

Michel was featured with Dad and his co-driver, “Connie” Gauthier in many of the photos. Also there were photos of Dad with a couple who appear to be Michel’s father and mother along with a baby sister.



Antoine, Michel, Herbert L. Rowell, “Connie” Gauthier, Algayette, Roselyne : November, 1944, Ghent, Belgium.

November 4, 1944. Company B of the No.2 Motor Ambulance Convoy at “Sint Martins” church, Ghent, Belgium.

Front: H.L. Rowell, Michel and right front “Connie” Gauthier. Gordon D. Taylor is in the far back.



Private Gauthier, Michel and Private H. Rowell

Not all the notation on the backs of these pictures was clear. On the back of one particular photo, featuring Michel’s stately family in a garden, was a note which appeared to be in German or Dutch or Walloon, the language of the Walloon region of Belgium – I just wasn’t sure, so that’s when I did an internet search on the phrase to see what would happen.

The phrase looked like: “bar... Ant. Kervyndevolkaersbeke”.

The search lead me to a Belgium genealogy site which listed a family by the name of Kervyn de Volkaersbeke (see figure 1) and the “Ant.” was actually short for Antoine. The “bar...” stood for Baron. I then understood that the note was a signature for the “Baron Antoine Kervyn de Volkaersbeke” and the little blond boy was Michel Kervyn de Volkaersbeke. The listing gave the name of Antoine as the father, Roselyne as the mother the names of two children; Michel and Algayette.

<p>▼ Antoine Kervyn de Volkaersbeke</p> <p>●●●●●</p> <p>* 11.04.1914</p> <p>Parents</p> <p>Father: François Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 12.12.1883 ◀</p> <p>Mother: Marie Kervyn d' Oud Mooreghem * 1886</p> <p>Marriages</p> <p>08.05.1939</p> <p>Roselyne Kervyn de Meerendré * 21.05.1920 ▶</p> <p>Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jean-Marie Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 23.08.1940 ● Michel Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 30.07.1941 ♂ Nicole de Rosen de Borgharen ● Algayette Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 11.09.1943 ♂ Henry Lallemant ● Réginald Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 22.04.1947 ♂ Laurette Stas de Richelle ● Xavier, baron Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 31.12.1951 ♂ Anne-Françoise, comtesse d' Oultremont ● Anne-Marie Kervyn de Volkaersbeke * 08.12.1956 ♂ Ghislain David de Lossy
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I wondered whether or not these people still existed and so I did a further internet search and came up with a business email address for a Charles-Antoine Kervyn de

Volkaersbeke of Brussels. I immediately sent an email asking for information on Antoine Kervyn de Volkaersbeke and a little boy named Michel, explaining that I had photographs featuring Dad and this family.

Within an incredible short 30 minutes Charles-Antoine replied saying that Antoine (the Baron) was his grandfather and Michel – the little boy in the pictures – was his father. His grandfather has died, but his grandmother is still living and his father Michel—still remembers The Canadians he played with during this period of the war. Over the next few days we exchanged photographs, with Charles-Antoine sending me some scanned from his grandmother's (Roselyne) photo album. Many were exactly the same as the ones we had.



**Michel
Kervyn de
Volkaersbeke,
c.2001**

Thank you for the pictures received. It is indeed my Dad! I recognize my grandparents and one of the sister of my Papa (Algayette). My aunt Algayette currently living in France. My parents will arrived at the end of this day with pictures and I will send you them.

You do not wake up bad memories but a testimony of true caring that took place during a difficult period.

I offer my condolences for the death of your father.

Charles-Antoine, November, 2012

Charles-Antoine asked if we would like the dog tag back. Naturally the answer was yes. In June 2013, a young man knocked on my door in Lennoxville and handed me an

envelope from Charles-Antoine and in that envelope was my father's dog tag, last seen by any member of our family in 1944.



The following is a poem sometimes read in ceremonies of Branch 48 in Bury which we feel epitomizes how Dad felt about his comrades.

A Soldier's Farewell

anonymous

As I roam here and there before my journey's end
May I always find friends just as true,
May dame fortune in kindness my daily path bend -
To a lot of good Fellows like you.

There's a glint in your eye, there's a clasp in your hand,
There's a tone in your voice always new,
I think paradise must be some sort of land -
With a lot of good Fellows like you.

Here's a pledge to your health, to your joy, your success,
For folks of your kind are too few,
There is something to hearten, to gladden and bless -
In a lot of good Fellows like you.

So I pledge you again, and can only say this -
And it springs from a sentiment true,
I shall always regret every hour I must miss -
From a lot of good Fellows like you.

The Things They Kept

By Carolyn Rowell

The Things They Kept is a nonfiction series, presented by Carolyn Rowell, of historical snapshots of days gone by in the Townships, drawn from items found in the house of her parents during preparations to sell said home. What follows is installment number two, the first having run in August of 2013.

Among my mother's papers I found this transcript of a letter written in 1853 by J.H. Clarke from Robinson (present day Bury) to his brother in England. Mr. Clarke is anxious for his brother and his brother's family to join him in the Eastern Townships and describes in glowing, yet realistic terms, the place his brother will be coming to. He outlines what his relatives should bring with them—including a hunting dog—and the route they should follow. I was struck by how much the new immigrants had to depend on their own courage and hard work and by how the journey would be the greatest and likely the last journey they would ever take. They would be leaving forever their childhood homes and families.

Sunday, November 30th, 1853, Robinson.

Dear Brother and Sister,

We received your letter and was glad to hear from you and we feel happy to know that you and your family was all well. . .

Dear brother, you ask if Harriet lost anything in the journey. Nothing only a hair brush. Nothing hurt but her bonnet bent a little, 4 plates broke, and my blue tea service, and I think that's nothing for the miles they came.

We are just got into our new house but I shall not be able to finish it till another summer and then it will be a very nice place. The land I have not done anything to yet neither shall I till the spring and then I shall get some ploughed and put in some crop. This country is different to England for here the people put nothing in

till the spring, no sort of crops. But I hope to be able at the spring to get crop enough in to keep you and yours through the winter and that will be good help to us. I shall this winter, if all be well, get out 4 or 5 hundred (cedar)rails to fence the land from the road. . a quarter of a mile long and that's how wide my land is, and about a mile long but to the back part I have not been yet as it is dense woods but it is good land when we get it cleared. There is plenty of work to clear it for you and I for 10 years to come. We shall not have to sit down and say we have nothing to do.

How people clear land I will just tell you. In the winter they cut down and burn the big timber and then in the spring they rake and gather all the little woods together and burn them and then harrow the land and sow the seed and the land will want nothing done for 2 or 3 years only harrowing. They cut big timber down about 3 feet from the ground and then let the stump stand till they rot.

Our house stands in a very nice space. We can see 3 houses and we live just by the roadside where trees are. A great many people say every day this is very healthy part of the country. We live in what is called the Eastern Townships and there is not another part of the world that can boast of its wholesome waters as we can. This part where we live, just 17 years back, was for many miles round nothing but one vast woods. But now there is a nice little village and plenty of people live around. We stand in need of good carpenters for here is not one for miles, and tailors and other trades I might name, but if a tradesman comes he can take land and be his own master. Here is them that left England 17 years back that have got cows, oxen, and land of their own and horse to ride on, and when in England had not enough to eat. A Man that will work can live here but a lazy man cannot as here is no parish to go to.

Dear Brother and Sister; I do not wish to deceive you in one thing and what I say you may depend on. There is good living for us here, if please God we have our health

and strength, and we shall have better chance than many have as I can work at my trade when the weather is so that we cannot work outdoors, but let me tell you we shall have to make some shifts and work hard for years. . till we can get things round us, but here will be a good house for you to come to. I have to work hard to get along but if all be well by the time you come I shall have it very comfortable. . . .We have got for the winter 30 pounds of butter, a barrel of flour, 12 bushels of buckwheat, 4 bushels of rye, 15 bushels of potatoes, a pig we shall kill at Christmas and some few pounds of sugar, and I think we shall take no hurt through this winter.

Dear brother and sister; I shall now name what you are to bring with you. Bring your steelyards and all your butchers things, carpenters things, you can bring plastering trowel, painting brushes, your fishing rod and a few jack hooks, iron candle sticks, plates, stallion iron and baker's copper, dust pan, tea trays, bread trays, all pictures, teapot, wine glasses and your beer glass, short brushes, hair broom. Do not buy any earthen ware to bring but if you have any you would like to keep as a keepsake. Bring your book shelves and my walking stick and all your books. Bring Harriet's () bottle and your decanter, white bed hangings as they will do for window curtains as we have 6 windows in our house. You will fill the mattress with straw to lay on when you come, bring looking glass, oilcloths for the tables, carpets, bring linen pegs.

Dear Brother; I sent word for you to bring a spaniel bitch to hunt partridges. We want a dog that will hunt them up and stand and bark at them when they light, as the partridges are in the woods and when they put up they light on the trees. Sell your bed hangings and bring the

remains of Harriet's as you will find them useful on board ship. You have no call to bring hatchet nor yet shovel.

Dear Brother; You must look out to come by Quebec as that will not cost half so much to get here as from New York. You come to Quebec and take the steamer to Montreal and then you must ask for the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad that goes to Sherbrooke. If you get in to Montreal before 2 o'clock you can get to Sherbrooke the same night, but I will send you word how you can come in the next letter which you may look for in about 2 months after you receive this.

Bring your dark lantern, candle molds, bring the patchwork as Harriet says she will have time to patch, and her work basket. Ask Mrs. Clarke to give you all the patterns she can of women's dresses and children's as you will have to make all your own things.

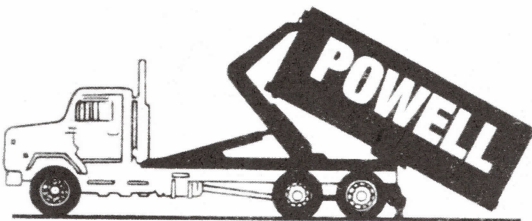
Dear Brother; if you can get all these things I have sent for, do, but be sure not to spend your money after them so as to be short. The dog you will have to pay 10 shillings for on board ship, that is what they had to pay on the ship I came with and what it will cost the other part of the way. I do not know. Now I would rather you shall not buy one thing than you should be short of money. I will send you as near as I can what it will cost from Montreal to here in the next letter. Give our kind love to Mother, brother Henry and his wife and to Mrs. Royal. Bring Looking Glass.

Kiss all the children for us.

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An Alien's Journey

By Eleanor Gang

My memories begin when the Gravitors found me wandering in the woods like an animal, hungry and scared. It was as though I were an unwanted pet who had been thrown out of a fast-moving car into the wilderness to survive or perish. If the Gravitors had not found me, I surely would have succumbed to death.

I was told how I had been found in the woods, practically naked, scrabbling in the dirt for something to eat, wild-eyed and fearful of every movement. Kress, the hunter who spoke to me quietly as one would a spooked animal, wrapped me in his cloak and brought me back to the tribe, where I greedily ate and drank everything that was put in front of me. I have no idea how long I had been wandering among the trees, nor how I had arrived there. There was no clue to my identity on me, no jewellery, no identifying marks; yet, I must have come from somewhere, for the scant evidence pointed at my having lived a civilized life, and a song that I sang to myself indicated that I had been educated in some fashion. But my memory of before has never surfaced, and I have stopped poking at it.

Kress was very kind to me, as were the other members of the tribe. I was adopted into a family immediately. They were Closs and Djinna, who already had small ones, Frass, Vruss and Karta, and I helped out by looking after them while their parents went about their daily jobs. Closs was a tanner. He took the hides of the animals the hunters brought back to the settlement and turned them into leather to make clothes, footwear and other uses. Djinna farmed the communal garden. She could get anything to grow, I was told, and it's true that when she was working at planting and hoeing and cultivating, things thrived better than when others did the same work.

The community was run by a committee of members which changed periodically. There was no "boss" and everyone had a turn at being an administrator. This

involved making contact with the outer world and keeping open avenues for trade. But for the most part, the Gravitors did not mingle with the world of men, keeping to themselves, living a mostly agrarian lifestyle, supplemented by some hunting, and they were happy, as was I.

I had been with them for many years, learning their language and their customs, eating their food and dressing in their fashion, it never occurring to me that I was anything but a Gravitore, when I accompanied Kress on one of his hunting expeditions which took him farther from the compound than I had previously gone. Kress was older than my adoptive "parents" and was very experienced in the ways of the world outside the forest. He had taken a keen interest in me right from the beginning, possibly because he had first discovered me, and he was my main teacher and companion when I was not occupied otherwise in the village.

On this occasion we followed the spoor of a beast whose flesh and hide the Gravitors particularly prized. One spaktil would feed the tribe for a whole season, as its meat was preserved well by drying and curing, and the hide was thick enough to use as a building material, perfect for repairing dwellings against the harsh conditions of winter. Kress and I were tracking it to its lair, and would return later with a hunting party, as it was too large and fierce for one aging hunter and a human girl to take down themselves. We followed its trail for several days, and Kress became more anxious the farther we got from home. When I asked the reason for his disquiet, he merely shook his head.

Eventually we came to a part of the forest with which even Kress was unfamiliar. He cautioned me to stay hidden, since my pale skin didn't provide me with the same camouflage as his mottled olive complexion. Instead, I daubed dirt on my face and arms and tried to blend in with the trees.

The forest changed as we tracked our quarry. The underbrush thinned and paths appeared beneath our feet. The spaktil had followed such a one, and we found ourselves keeping to the trees alongside it, lest we be seen. In a clearing we spied a group of people and immediately shrank back to avoid detection; but I was curious and couldn't help but stare and edge closer, even as Kress motioned me urgently not to.

The strangers were tall and pale like me, dressed in the kind of fabric the Gravitons acquired in trade with the aliens. I edged closer so that I could hear their voices, and realized with a shock that I could understand some of their speech. I was about to walk out into the clearing when I felt Kress' six-fingered hand close on my wrist and pull me back silently into the deeper woods, signing that the spaktil was not in this direction.

As soon as we had located the lair of the beast and returned home, Kress went immediately to the council and told them of my near encounter with my own people. They called a general meeting to discuss the matter. Kress and several of the other elders spoke, as did my foster parents, and the same point kept coming up: I was at an age where I should be found a partner, and there was no one among the Gravitons with whom I could mate. It was simple biology. I had never considered it before. The Gravitons mature later than humans and I had been fertile for years, accepting my monthly bleeding as an aberration which must be endured. While they knew what transpired in my own body, I did not. I learned more about myself that night than I had in all my previous life.

Finally I was asked to stand and Djinna relayed what the council had decided. As much as they loved me and would miss me, I was not a Graviton; I could not stay with them for the rest of my life. There would be no mate, no young ones, no happiness for me were I to remain, and they all thought it best if I joined my own kind.

I couldn't believe what they were asking, no, telling me to do. The village was the only home I remembered, Closs and Djinna the only parents I loved. I tried to argue with them, but their minds were made up. As much as I had become a part of their community, I was still an alien. There was no lack of comfort offered, but

no other solution was put forward. I had to leave.

Closs helped me gather my few belongings, and I bid my family good bye, hugging my foster brothers and sister, and holding onto Djinna as though I would never let go. Kress was to accompany me back to the spot where we had seen the aliens and wait till I was found. When we came to the clearing, there was no one there. Kress and I followed the path until we emerged from the forest into a glade where many people were gathered: adults and children running about. For a moment I hesitated and looked back at Kress, but he was gone, vanished into the forest where his people felt most at home. I had no recourse but to walk boldly out into the open and declare my humanity.

That was a long time ago. It was not easy for me to become human. I never did find out who my real parents were or what my given name was. Other kind people took me in and made a home for me, and eventually I met a man with whom I mated and had two children, a boy and a girl, whom I insisted on naming Russ and Karla. It was as close as I could get to my foster brother and sister. I learned that humans were not native to Graviton, that I was an alien. For a long time I felt as though I did not belong anywhere, either to the society of men in which I now found myself, or to the planet which had nurtured me before I knew what I was. I never saw Kress or any other of my tribe of Gravitons again, although from time to time natives did come into the city to trade their local goods for our cloth and plastics. I have never forgotten Kress, Closs and Djinna, the people whom I consider my true family. I miss them still. I suppose I always will.



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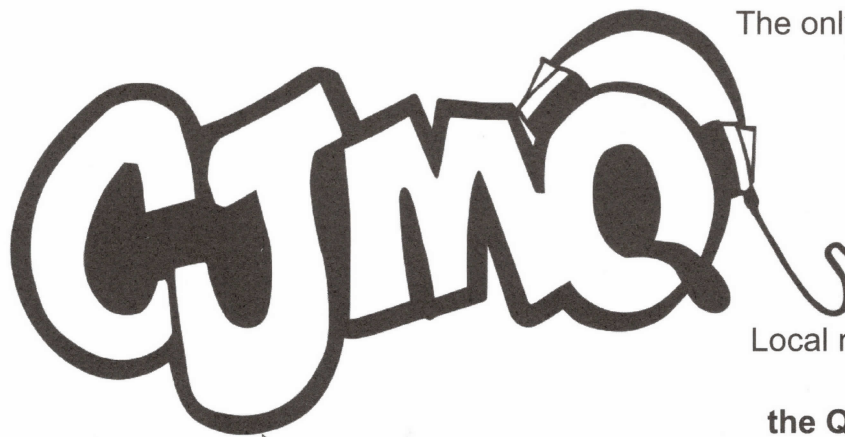


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