

Take vacation "Down North"

Two-fifths of Canada in silent exciting northland

MIKE HEWITT

"Down North", life is very different; just how different is something few Canadians appreciate.

Two-fifths of Canada lies North of the sixtieth parallel. Yet, in this enormous area of some million or so square miles lives a mere one-fifth of one percent of Canada's population.

In the Northwest Territories this gives a population density of roughly 0.02 persons per square mile, while in the Yukon they are rubbing shoulders at 0.08 persons per square mile. The overall figure for Canada is 8.3 persons per square mile.

Most people imagine the North as a permanently frozen, colourless place and find it hardly believable that people can live here in comfort. It is true that the climate tends to be rather extreme, but it is predictable, which is more than one can say for the Maritime climate.

In the winter, temperatures may go as low as 50, 60, or even 70 degrees below zero - not to mention the "lazy winds" that go through you rather than round you. In the summer however, it is not too unusual to have the temperature go as high as the upper 80's - and of course we do have 24 hours of daylight per day for a couple of months in the summer, and we can swim in the shallower lakes which warm up very quickly. One lake at Yellowknife does service as a swimming area in the summer, and is used for stock-car racing on 5 feet of ice in the winter.

Some sights are unique to the North. Have you ever seen the Aurora Borealis stretching clear across the sky, rustling and moving like gigantic coloured curtains, illuminating the countryside? In the right place at the right time one may watch upwards of 10,000 caribou amble past with the easygoing gait of Irishmen going to a funeral wake.

When travelling in the North one often has difficulty in grasping its immensity. One may fly all day, seeing nothing but the sheer silent, empty land stretching away to the distant horizon.

A line drawn from a point just North-West of Great Bear Lake, South-East to Churchill on Hudsons Bay approximates the Northern limit of the trees. North of the tree-line lies the Barren Grounds: a vast area of countless lakes and rivers, low rolling hills, grey lichen-covered rocks, and long eskers twisting across the landscape like huge veins.



Exkimo Exhibits

Dalhousie graduate student Michael Hewitt has vacationed in the Canadian northland, and reports that life is "very different" there, though just how different, "is something few Canadians appreciate". He describes his companionship with the Canadian Eskimo and captures the feverish activity of geologists, sportsmen, bootleggers and the law at Great Slave Lake. The glow of chivalry and howling dogs have caught Mr. Hewitt's imagination in the North West Territories where he has a Yellowknife address. He plans to head "Down North" once more, this spring.

Summertime in the Great Slave Lake area is a period of feverish activity, with tourists (a strange race) fishing for 50 lb. trout, geologists searching for precious minerals, and the R. C. M. P. looking for bootleggers. The R. C. M. P. usually have the most successful season.

Visitors to the North always vow to return, for this is pioneering country in many ways, and one may still see unshaven and highly aromatic characters returning from the bush with a hopeful gleam in their eye. One such prospector once told me of a hard winter he had spent under canvas, and swore that he once had his coffee freeze so fast - the ice was still warm.

When weighing up the pros and cons of living in the North, two big advantages emerge. First, there is no television, and second, it is too far for my mother-in-law to visit.

Other things we go without in the North are traffic congestion, air pollution, Cassius Clay, and A GO-GO-GO.

You may think that I am mad, (a view firmly held by my mother-in-law) but next May I am going to hurry back "down North", and this time next year will be basking in the gentle glow of my chilblains, listening to the dogs howling outside.

In the event that this article has aroused your curiosity and you wish to know more, I suggest you purchase a book called, "The Unbelievable Land", edited by I. Smith and published by The Queens Printer at \$2.50. The book is beautifully illustrated, and deals with every aspect of the North, from Eskimo's to permafrost. I would suggest however that a visit "in the flesh" has no substitute. If American students can work there in summer, I see no reason why we shouldn't.

Of course, their lives have not been just fun and good times. Their suffering, deprivation, and degradation is only too clear, and when one considers the feeling with which they sing about their troubles, the good humour and optimistic outlook seem almost a facade. To hear Brownie live Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues", the desperate "Long Gone, Long Gone" or "Brownie's Blues" could leave one nothing short of deeply moved.

GAZETTE REVIEWS

Brownie and Sonny Swing at Gemini VI

By STEPHEN POTTIE Asst. Features Editor

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We welcome you to Gemini VI. This is our opening week as you know, and for it we have the best talent available. Gemini VI takes great pride in presenting Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry!"

The half-filled coffee house filled with applause. Brownie walks, limping, to the corner stage leading Sonny who is blind. They sit. The applause subsides. Sonny takes a mouth harp from one of the many pockets of his loose-fitting black blouse. He checks the key with Brownie. Brownie introduces the song, giving the background information on the visiting privileges in negro prisons. His guitar sounds the introduction, the harmonica wails behind, and both begin to pour out their lives, the Blues.

"Oh, baby, please don't go./Oh, baby please don't go./Oh, baby, please don't go back to New Orleans/cause I love you sooo."

Thus, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry began their second night at the newly opened Gemini VI, and if their performance has any bearing on the year to come, 1966 should be a satisfying one for the folkies in Halifax. The two filled the evening with good humour, wit, nostalgia, and most important excellent vocal and instrumental blues.

The first song was followed by a bit of humorous reminiscing about life in the South, "I Don't Want No Cornbread, Peas, and Molasses". As on most of the songs they do, humour is always present. Where the young folk singers of today attack blues with reverence and respect, transforming it into a sacred art, Brownie and Sonny display the fun-loving optimism and love for the past that makes the studious seem boring in comparison. As Pete Seeger said: "You can't learn to be a folk singer by being serious. You have to goof off." They do. Blues is not only the outpouring of sorrow and grief; it is a way of life. Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry live with a great joie de vivre and they transmit this zest to their audience. The rapport they create with the audience is so complete that one feels like running away to the South just to sample some of that corn bread, peas, and molasses.

Of course, their lives have not been just fun and good times. Their suffering, deprivation, and degradation is only too clear, and when one considers the feeling with which they sing about their troubles, the good humour and optimistic outlook seem almost a facade. To hear Brownie live Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues", the desperate "Long Gone, Long Gone" or "Brownie's Blues" could leave one nothing short of deeply moved.

Brownie, the guitarist, is the main singer. He is more sophisticated than most negro blues singers which is in some ways detrimental. Although polished

bluesmen such as Big Bill Broonzy have proved that sophistication doesn't necessarily imply a lessening of communicative ability, it often results in slick arrangements. Brownie, for the most part, remains very close to his traditions and respects them enough to avoid flash work; however, he fell from his position on one of his duets, pulling off some of the tricks that are associated with "commercial" folk singers. Otherwise, he was excellent, especially his guitar, which is some of the best I have heard.

Sonny Terry, besides being the undisputed expert on the mouth harp, is also a good blues singer, in fact, better than Brownie.

He has the raw, earthy intensity of a backwoods bluesman and his wit is just an edge sharper than Brownie's. He performed his famous "Hootin' Blues" a close interplay of whoops and harmonica wizardry. Sonny's whoops are derived from the field holler from which blues originates. In the same vein is "The Fox Hunt" in which Sonny simulates the sound of dogs chasing the fox along with his superb harmonica work. Those songs were the highlights of the evening, as they are wherever Sonny performs.

Aside from the engrossing performance, the new Gemini VI coffee house surpassed all my expectations. Apart from the high cost of drinks and the perfor-

mance restrictions which are bothersome but unavoidable, I have only praise for it. It has atmosphere without being self-conscious or distasteful. My only complaint is about the drinks, - not the prices, the drinks themselves.

When you pay 50¢ for a lemonade, I don't see why you can't get more than a small cup, three big ice cubes, and four drops of lemonade. It's a dirty trick, an old trick, and a bad trick.

If you have a chance this weekend, don't miss Brownie and Sonny. For those with an eye to the future, next week Mike Seeger will be performing. Proposed talent also includes Jackie Washington, Carolyn Hester, Joel McCrae, and others. With this new influx of talent into this city, it appears that Halifax is coming of age, finally.

Garbage is Good

"YOUR TURN TO CURTSY MY TURN TO BOW"

A study in Bathos.

By Fraser Sutherland

One should frequently read a bad book. And incidentally "bad" is a critical, not a moral evaluation.

Fortunately there is no shortage of badly written books; yet there is of those qualifying as genuine suitably smelling garbage. Such a book is "Your Turn to Curtsy My Turn to Bow" by William Goldman, publisher Bantam Books. People used to speak of penny dreadfuls, this is a 50 cent dreadful.

Reading an impossibly bad book sharpens one's perception. Genuine garbage improves the reader's critical faculties. The paperback jacket for "Your Turn to Curtsy My Turn to Bow" has a girl clutching a pillow beneath her chin; she is staring wistfully into space. A boy lays beside her, one hand on her bare shoulder, the other fingering her beautiful hair. The bedspread is ruffled. A covering comment near their provocative postures says, "The frank and tender portrait of a seventeen year old boy and his initiation into physical love."

The publisher's blurbist at times is more impressive than the author. He calls the book a "remarkable achievement to slash through the veils of forgetfulness and hypocrisy which are drawn over the passionate years of youth, and to reveal the truth with precision, clarity and sensitivity." Note the masterful linear rhythm, the articulate emphasis, the expressive insinuation of cadence and nuances.

The last book this writer reviewed was "sexus"; a book which had elements both of sensationalism and of quality. One scene in "Your Turn" gives it the former but not the latter.

Peter Bell is big, seventeen, virginal, has a good build and is fond of baseball. His rich

father lands him a job at a spiffy boy's camp. At the camp he meets spindly spinster-type Gert, the camp secretary who has a delectable niece; and Granny Kemper, a muscle-bound camp counselor.

One thing to get straight:Granny is a man, a rich ex-football player who spends most of his time lifting weights. Pete also meets Chad Kimberly, a crack quarterback in college who inexplicably cracks up there. Chad has always been Peter's hero and at the camp they become inseparable.

Of dual importance to Peter is the sight of Tillie Creek, Gert's niece, down by the lake. Tillie is auburn-haired, has clear golden skin and looks like wow in a bathing suit. Peter engages her in conversation, tries to make a date and fails, takes her to lunch at the town drugstore. Coming outside they are met by an old man who lifts a hand and touches her bare arm. She runs away and bursts into tears. In Peter's arms she pours out the story of her unhappy childhood and he comforts her.

This is lovely-dovey until Granny comes along and whisks her away in his shimmering red convertible. The plot becomes muddy. To condense matters, Tillie breaks up with Granny and takes up with Peter. Chad tells Peter not to take her out. But he does take her out - in a canoe gliding over a gossamer lake. He is very nervous and after a time takes her home, kissing her goodnight, awkwardly, bashfully.

Back at the camp Granny informs Peter, with much amusement, that Tillie is in reality a prostitute. A little later the second shock comes. Chad reveals that he believes himself to be a son of God. Peter now is sure that Granny is right on both counts, and that Chad is stark raving mad.

Peter returns to Tillie's cabin, proffers a \$50 bill, which she refuses. They spend a night together. When the morning dawns Peter runs out into the woods and finds that Chad has nailed himself to a cross in a clearing.

That's about all. He is not dead and Peter takes him back by train to his parents. There is a flash-ahead to ten years. Peter, Granny and Tillie are all married but not to each other. I don't know what happened to good old Gert. Chad is institutionalized until he escapes; to where no one knows.

As is fairly obvious the worst thing about the book is its atrocious plot. The characters are wan, even unreal. It is very well to state that perhaps the characters are symbols pointing to a conclusive truth. But even symbols must have substance to give shape to a larger reality.

"Your Turn" is not frank and tender, neither is it subtle and raw. Its treatment of physical love is not in the least indicative of a greater love for all humanity.

The crucifixion scene does not do anything for anyone, although in Chad's case it must have been rather painful. If sensationalism was the author's object - it would have been simpler to give sex full rein in his narrative.

A few words on the title. It is the author's intent to show life like a dancing class. The ladies curtsy, the gentlemen bow. So we're all dancers; allemand left to your corner, allemand right to your partner, grand chain.

The book is not entirely material for lighting the fire in the morning. The author's clear and simple style is a redeeming feature, at times capable of converting bathos to pathos. But bathos implies a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. In "Your Turn's" case the sublimity is probably attained on the cover.

Had origins in jail

Freedom Singers in Halifax

Singing rarely eloquent, but treats civil rights bluntly

By STEPHEN POTTIE

Who are the Freedom Singers? That question was probably asked by the Dal students who heard them in the canteen on Thursday or by anyone who accidentally saw one of the skimpily posters advertising their two performances in Halifax. Four hundred and fifty people did discover who the Freedom Singers were on Friday night in the Queen Elizabeth High School Auditorium.

For the uninitiated, the Freedom Singers consist of five negro singers and one white guitarist, who speaks of himself as the "integrator" of the group. They are all field secretaries of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or as it is better known SNCC (snick). SNCC is dedicated to the achieving of full civil rights for the negro. The Freedom Singers, who had a romantic beginning in jail, are on a Canadian tour, raising money for the organization.

Sadly, I must report that the QEH show was technically (apart from the actual performance), subject to a serious blunder. The emcee, Mr. Joe King, is a very good interviewer and reporter but his qualities as a master of ceremonies are somewhat limited. He reviewed the concert before it started and was incapable of talking to the Freedom Singers without being jokingly insulting and patronizing.

However, the actual performance was anything but amateurish. The Freedom Singers wove a spell around the audience that was hard to shake. Their songs dealt frankly and bluntly with the civil rights movement; the beatings, the dogs, the hatred on both sides - the apathy, and the morale of the civil rights workers and negroes. The songs were rarely eloquent or polished. They reflected the hurried and impulsive desire for "Freedom Now". As with most freedom songs the lyrics rarely matched the thought. However, there were

several memorable songs. Besides the standards "Oh Freedom" and "We Shall Overcome", "Back Of The Bus" which was written by Chico Neblitt, one of the Freedom Singers, and the spiritual "Goin' to Freedom Land".

If the songs lacked something, the commentary certainly didn't. They have a natural theatrical talent for presenting their story unaffectedly but movingly and convincingly. And what a story! If

you missed it, I can only say you shouldn't have. Never has the civil rights movement been more real and vibrant.

The Freedom Singers are exciting singers. Although they have been together for only a few months they have worked out a tight harmony and counterpoint. They are all accomplished performers. In fact, one of them has been an opera singer. Their vocal power becomes even more evident when one hears them singing

without instrumental backing. Their stark, lean voices mesmerize on the very best songs and lift the mediocre to more than the song could normally hope for. Bill Purllman, provided competent and unobtrusive guitar accompaniment.

Although the evening wasn't a total success, I can't think of any other way I would like to have spent it, in the company of six dedicated and engaging men who spoke and sang of our times.



Freedom singers sing out for Dal canteeners



CUS STUDENT FLIGHT TO EUROPE

Cost \$228.00 (return)

Montreal - London May 29th, 1966.

London - Montreal Sept. 4th, 1966

For information & application form write to:

CANADIAN UNION OF STUDENTS

1117 St. Catherine Street West, Room 600, Montreal, P.Q.

(limited seats)

do you have the RIGHT date?

COMPATAMATCH