

**Wednesday, March 5, 2003**

Today is Ash Wednesday. For the ashes, we don't burn palms. We burn cedar leaves – without burning down the house. Attendance at Church last Sunday was low. The temperature had gone down into the minus thirties. It's warmer today – only 14 below. The sun is now warmer. You can actually feel it – even on days like today. It's hard to believe that in a month the ice road may be gone.

The ice road going north to Albany, Kashechewan, and Attawapiskat is still good. Theresa was here on Sunday, insisted that I do lunch with her and Monica and Derek, and then inveigled me into running her around Moosonee for errands. (Theresa gets things done.) The news from Attawapiskat now is that the DeBeers project is starting up again. Just enormous amounts of people and materials will be coming into Attawapiskat as soon as the weather breaks. Some of the freight may not pass through Moosonee, but may be sent by rail to Churchill and then barged down to Attawapiskat. One would think that all of this activity would produce a road. And it may do just that. But the road, as I have heard it described, will originate at Hearst, Ontario and pass to the west of Moosonee.

**Thursday, March 13, 2003**

The weather has gradually become warmer – at least during the day. Even when the air is cold, one can now feel the sun's warmth. Although it is now 16 below zero this morning (6 AM) rain is forecast for Sunday. That, if it happens, will be the first time temperatures have risen above freezing in a very long time. In fact, only rarely have we seen temperatures above zero since Christmas.

The roads are still good. Cliff Dee comes down from Kashechewan today – for dental work tomorrow. He'll go back north tomorrow evening or on Saturday. Sunday's rain won't help the ice road to 'Kash.' The ice road to Moosonee is still good, but we are pushing to get an oil delivery for the old rectory today – just so it doesn't run dry during breakup -- which could happen quickly and could happen soon, if the weather suddenly turns warm. The channel can stay clogged with (dangerous) ice until some time in May.

**Saturday, March 15, 2003**

Another funeral yesterday – in Moosonee. The family lives in Moose Factory and in Moosonee – as well to the south as well as to the north. It took a while to get everyone together. All have left by now. I didn't stay for the feast; I had to race back to catch a couple preparing for a wedding. Cliff Dee was here; Cliff helped out at the Family Service Thursday night, and he preached at the funeral – helping me out a lot, as well as enriching the ceremonies with his familiarity with the family as well as with his command of Cree.

Credit Card Report: MBNA/ca and SEARS/ca have both come in, finally. CITI/ca has yet to arrive, though it was promised first. MBNA/ca came through after they realized who I was. SEARS/ca summoned the courage to deal with me only after they realized MBNA/ca had taken the leap. The leaps, as such, were a start – if not very inspiring. Credit limit on each card is \$500 (Canadian.) I'm still using my American cards. Very few people or organizations will even take personal checks. Ninety percent of the business here is done with cash or cards only.

There are rumors and reports that Ontario Northland Railway will be bought out by Canadian National Railways. Ontario Northland also owns the local phone company (Ontario Northland Telephone.) In my case, at least, neither the railway nor the phone company has been familiar

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with any concept of customer service or satisfaction. My prediction last fall was that the minute either had competition neither would survive. Last April I placed an order with the Phone Company for dial-up Internet access. I checked on this project several times in August and September. To date I have not heard from the Phone Company about the status of my request. In September, when I returned from my trip south, the off-loading ramp for the truck had been relocated. The old location was a couple of miles from the train station. The new off-loading ramp was adjacent to the station. No one told the customers of the change. Those who hailed cabs found out from the cab drivers. Those of us who made the walk to and from the old off-loading site found out for ourselves. The guys at the station thought that was all pretty funny – even if it meant missing the last barge to Moose Factory. They just don't have a clue that – given options – I'd do business with anybody else.

One wedding that I'm working on is different. (They're ALL different....) But this one has issues that represent much of what I encounter elsewhere -- one way or another....

Both Bride and Groom live in a community distant from Moose Factory Island. But the Groom's family is centered here. Both Bride and Groom worship at a Pentecostal Church. But there is no Anglican Church in the community where they live. AND, the Groom was baptized and confirmed here at St. Thomas'. At considerable expense to themselves they came here to see me over March break. There has been a divorce, and so I need permission to go ahead with the wedding. If I were able to, I'd go ahead with the wedding. That would help nurture some of those Anglican roots. And it might help bring peace between the Anglican and Pentecostal communities.

### **Monday, March 24, 2003**

Since my last entry I've had another funeral. That's one a week, two weeks running. Funerals knock the stuffing out of me. I've come down with another cold. This is cold season, anyway, with the change in the weather. As I write (at ten in the morning), Moosonee Airport is holding at 39 degrees – the first time this year that I've seen it over 32 degrees. Everything is melting.

...Including the ice road. I am told that we will have a cold snap or two before the weather turns warm for good. This may not yet be the end of the ice road. But it's days are numbered. Deterioration becomes noticeable on days like this, as slush and water build up on the surface. People have described their spring adventures on the ice road – including water up to and over the floor of the car. Then, all of that changes. The water runs away; the ice rises and floats as it should. But that's when the road is dangerous, because it is then deteriorating from underneath. As for me, I go when the School Buses go; when they don't go, I don't go. Folks native to the region have a sixth sense about the ice. No matter how much I observe I'll never have that sense. As long as I acknowledge that, I'm safe.

Attawapiskat had two burials on Saturday. Attawapiskat is served by the Roman Catholic Church, and Bishop Cadieux was there to take the funerals. They were tough funerals (not that any funeral is easy....) They were so tough, in fact, that the local Band here was trying to get Raymond up there for some crisis intervention. But the overland ice road to Attawapiskat is no longer reliable. Raymond stayed here over the weekend.

One of the deceased was an Elder. The consensus on the street is that he was murdered. The OPP are investigating.

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The other was an eight-year-old boy – killed in an accident with a pick-up truck. He had been skidding along after it – holding on to the back end and the driver knowing nothing of it.

The child had been grandson to an Elder in the Community. The Elder's family had been adamantly opposed to Theresa's leadership – for reasons never really clear. And the Elder was always outspoken in her criticisms and challenges. At a public meeting some weeks ago Theresa was confronted by this Elder with a remark about death. The Elder had lost her husband some time ago. Theresa had lost her son about three years ago to cancer – leaving his family without father or husband. The challenge was that losing a son was nothing compared to losing a husband. Theresa wisely did not pursue the subject then and there, though it cost her great pain.

The child who died was grandson to this lady. And he died on the birth date of Theresa's son who died three years ago.

On Sunday, yesterday, we had special prayers and a litany for peace. I just sort of cooked up a stew of things to do, because I thought that would be a good thing to do. I really hadn't discerned a lot of energy on the subject. Well, the energy was/is there – always somewhere just under the surface. A group of folks are working together now to make at least the Thursday evening service into a peace vigil.

Last week the CITI/ca card came in the mail. This one has a decent enough line of credit I can now do up here when I need to do with a Canadian card. It has taken almost a year to pull this off. (Students and other paupers take note; millionaires, even, moving to certain Postal Code areas, also take note.)

An interesting series of articles, including one on Moose Factory and Moosonee in particular, can be found at The (Toronto) Globe & Mail's site:

<http://www.globeandmail.com/series/apartheid/>

The author is John Stackhouse.

### **Thursday, March 27, 2003**

Yesterday I received a frantic phone call from a family. They needed a Baptismal certificate immediately for their child whom they said was baptized some years back – in the 1990's. Regrettably there is no such entry. I searched the Book over several years, did a computer search for last name and first names. No such record. Unless the family can get a piece of paper from the previous Incumbent, they are out of luck.

When I preside at a Baptism I give lectures, sermons, and instructions about how important that little piece of paper (The Certificate) really is. I even print it out on cotton content paper. If that original certificate gets lost, it can be irreplaceable. All we can do, years later, is to certify/verify old records – depending on how those records have been entered.

These Certificates can have legal significance. In this case the certificate would be used for school enrollment. I have seen the Certificates used for identification purposes at Border Crossings (in lieu of Passport or Driver's License.) They also are used to prove Band Status.

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My own opinion is that the sooner the Anglican Church can get out from under this routine, the better (for The Anglican Church.) I can understand the routine for records out of the past – when, however imperfect The Church’s record-keeping, there were no other records anywhere for individuals. But now Band, Federal Government, and/or Province should be able to document a person’s legal status. Or, if they can’t, why does anyone think The Church can? And, there always is the question now: just exactly why does a family present their child for Baptism? The church of a generation or so down the road will need to be extremely clear with people about that. With this quasi-legal angle permeating any Baptism, as it does now, there’s always a question (in my mind, anyway) about just exactly why are we doing this anyway? In the minds of many, when they have been ‘done’, they are Anglicans. And that’s all it takes. This just doesn’t work, anymore.

**Monday, March 31, 2003**

The Hospital is under quarantine again. Many of us have colds. The Church Van has a flat tire. The weather has turned nasty again. We’re back into winter with wind and snow. I’ve settled in for a good long read. It’s my first opportunity since before Christmas. The book: Ways of Knowing; Experience, Knowledge, and Power Among The Dene Tha by Jean-Guy A. Goulet, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1998.

The quarantine at the Hospital is because of SARS (Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome.) There even is scuttlebutt that we may have a case in the Hospital. Be that as it may be, we have many people in the Hospital who come from Toronto (the Canadian center of the disease.) This is a ‘teaching hospital’, and staff and students come from several medical centers in southern Ontario. The Hospital is taking no chances: No visitors; all elective work is cancelled; the dental clinic is closed. If SARS got going in the North, its impact could be utterly devastating.