

**Monday, May 5, 2003**

The ice is starting to break up just at the south end of The Island. Huge chunks have started piling up on top of each other in the middle of The River – where the current is strongest. The pressure of the current keeps pushing the ice down stream while the pack at the mouth of The River keeps the mess from going anywhere. As a channel forms in the middle of The River, the ice along shore just breaks loose and flows away. Along my side of The Island there are pockets of open water right up against the shore anyway. In other words, the ice where I am is just one big floating island that's too big to go anywhere. When the obstacles go, the ice island will go – and quickly. And no tears will be shed.

I went to the Metropolitan Opera's web page and discovered that on October 11 they will present *Tristan und Isolde* that (Saturday) afternoon. That's the performance that is broadcasted worldwide. Now there is no way I'll ever be able to get to that performance – or to any of the others. But I spent this weekend preparing.

I now can get streams from several broadcasters that carry the Opera. I also have laid in software that will record it all onto the hard disk. (And I have a hard disk that's big enough even for *Tristan*.) And, the software has a clock on it, so that I can set the timer in case I suddenly get hit with a Saturday afternoon distraction.

During my search I also looked for a LAME plugin for the SLIMp Ethernet audio interface server. Evidently there's one out there – somewhere. I don't know enough, yet, about this machine (and code) to be able to cobble together one on my own. (I did find the source code.) I now am faced with a summer project of either reading Schopenhauer or writing Perl. I don't know which will be tougher on my head. And I don't honestly know if I'll get to either.

For those in, near, or around New York, I envy you – for once. That production will have Ben Hepner and Janet Eaglen. In our lifetimes, they're as good as it will ever get. But, while I may miss the show, I'll be listening – possibly/hopefully several times over.

**Wednesday, May 7, 2003**

At noon today The River was clear of ice in the channel (on the East Side of The Island) down about to The Parish Hall. Tonight The River is clear in the channel past The Little Church where I live. The ice is moving out fast. This morning the first taxis made the run to Moosonee – from the landing near Raymond's house; the docks at The Hospital are not in and floating yet.

Sam Tomatuk came home from Kingston last week. He had been on dialysis for several years. The treatment then began to fail. Sam wanted to come home. He was with us about a week and left us late last night. We bury him on Friday.

Sam is like many who – for one reason or another – have had to leave The Island. When the time comes, however, they want to come home. Usually that happens after they have died – but as in this case, not always. There are some who have forgone better medical treatment and have chosen to stay here. The Island is still without dialysis machines at The Hospital. For that kind of treatment one must go south. Some have elected to stay in The Community.

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**Thursday, May 8, 2003**

Great new Word Processor for the MAC: MELLEL -- ([www.redlers.com](http://www.redlers.com)) . It's what WordPerfect (for the MAC) ought to be. Trouble with WordPerfect is that they got scared off years ago -- probably by Microsoft's new OFFICE FOR THE MAC. Anyway, Corel quit supporting WordPerfect on the MAC, so us poor beleaguered MAC-freaks were reduced to AppleWorks and WORD. Mellel does a straight text document -- and really nothing else. That makes Mellel lean (and cheap.) And what it does, it does very, very well. For those who type out their thoughts in Hebrew -- it does that, too.

Mellel does not do envelopes -- easily, anyway. But SNAILMAIL ([www.nixanz.com](http://www.nixanz.com)) does -- and very easily -- from your ADDRESS BOOK. Mellel is at its best for writing a good document -- with the kind of formatting you need for a good document. It would be perfect for this document -- if anyone else had the software to read it in Mellel. Of course, Mellel also saves in 'text'.

LetterWorks ([www.objectpark.net](http://www.objectpark.net)) does simple letters and envelopes easily, quickly, and well; it also uses the Address Book. Cost for all of that: Mellel - \$28; LetterWorks - \$46; SnailMail - \$20 -- I think, all in CAD.

Other survival strategies -- ie radio: Most of my (NPR) news now comes from another island -- Nantucket (WNAN, an affiliate of WGBH, Boston.) The station I listen to most for music/news mix is WPSU -- Pennsylvania State University, somewhere in Pennsylvania. WCPE is all classical music and comes from somewhere in North Carolina. (Both WPSU & WCPE carry the MET.) Also, there is a really good music stream that comes from (I think Geneva) called Mandjou. My choices reflect programming, of course, but also technical issues: choice of protocol, stability, and reliability. (Regarding programming: although the broadcasters carry national and international news, they also carry local news. I do not get terribly excited about mid-Pennsylvania news and politics. When, however, the barge got stuck in the Cape Cod Canal and leaked oil, I had the maps out.) The BBC is rebroadcast on WPSU and WNAN; or I can go directly to the BBC page and stream or download. For the CBC I stream directly from their page.

**Saturday, May 10, 2003**

Monica got in yesterday with Derek and her sister Mary. She was scheduled to be back on Monday or Sunday but was at the mercy of the chopper (from Akimiski Island -- her family's ancestral hunting ground -- to Attawapiskat.) And she had 33 geese. Derek got 30; she got 3. I fired up the freezer in the Rectory so that they wouldn't walk away; they had been thoroughly smoked up at the camp, however. Two went straightaway to Beulah (an Elder.) I am being extra special nice to anyone who has geese. Spring Geese, I am told, are the best.

And she had stories about Polar Bears wandering around The Island. Though she saw none personally, they were around. Derek, age 14, spent a lot of time hanging out with his uncle(s?) learning the craft.

I spent a few hours this morning in The Hospital -- with a patient & family. Although the antiseptic precautions are extensive, if requested by the family, we can get in there now. The Hospital certainly tries to accommodate; but they just can't let the SARS bug loose on The Island. Many patients and staff are still coming in from the south.

**Friday, May 16, 2003**

The Hospital Docks are in – as of a few days ago. The barge is not yet running. But traffic on and off The Island is getting more regularized. On tonight's train Marg Lewis and daughter, Jessica, will arrive. They come from Wabun on Garden Island, Lake Temagami. These are voices out of my past. Marg's husband, Dick, and I were 14-15 year olds back in the old days. Dick is now Managing Director of the Camp. One of our projects, when they get here, will be to entice Derek into a summer (and hopefully many more) of canoeing. In my exceptionally humble opinion, one does not know these woods, until one has mastered the canoe. With the canoe you can go anywhere. When the choppers are down, you're stuck. With a freighter, you can go only as far as you can carry the thing. With a tripping canoe the rivers become highways, not obstacles. And in following the old routes, if you're Derek, you walk in the footprints of your ancestors and paddle in their memories and legends.

So this will be a busy weekend. The Island, being in the mouth of a large river adjacent to The Bay, is not a good place for small canoes. The winds and tides make the water right around us treacherous. The art of canoeing is all but lost here. The only people who know the canoe that I have talked with are my age or quite a bit older.

**Friday, May 23, 2003**

To catch up.... Another funeral last week. Then, on Friday, Marg and (daughter) Jessica arrived on the train. Monica's sister, Theresa, was in town. And we ended up at Monica's for supper. There were several other guests there, and our conversation centered generally on the 'Ceremonies' conducted each year at The Old Reserve. It turned out that the main practitioner/teacher – Peter – was well known to Marg and Jess. He had been active around Bear Island (another Reserve) in Lake Temagami.

On Saturday we went to The Bay. Moose Factory Island is in the mouth of The Moose River. There are a few miles to go before one actually is out in The Bay. We went by freighter as far as we could go. There is still ice at the mouth of The River. You can see chunks of it hanging out of the mud banks. And there still is a layer stuck on the bottom. When the water got too shallow, because of the ice, we stopped at an island and walked about. The sky was cloudless. There was a light breeze and no bugs (yet). The temperature reached 77 (Fahrenheit) that day. It was absolutely gorgeous.

The Island is really a big sandbar. It's absolutely flat. When we were there it was but inches above the water. It obviously gets flooded often. Nothing was growing on it this last weekend. The birds, however, find sanctuary there. And, indeed, there's an area closed off as a sanctuary.

On our way back we hunted for fossils. They are everywhere. Even I found lots. Marg tells me they are of the same origin as the ones in Minnesota.

Sunday brought Church in the morning. In the afternoon my guests toured the elementary school. (They're teachers.) I took the time to hang out in The Hospital with some folks there.

On Monday we packed up and went to The Old Reserve for a picnic. Monica and Theresa and Joe Tip (owner of the canoe) were our guides.

The Old Reserve lies at the junction of The French River with The Moose River – about 10 miles upstream from Moose Factory Island. This was the ancestral camping ground for The Cree in

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the area. That is, when families came to The Bay for the summer, they would generally camp more or less in one large space. During the winter extended families made their own camps back in the bush and basically hunkered down for the winter while the men hunted (mostly caribou) and trapped. In the summer life was easier. Families would come to the shores of The Bay to fish, to get away from the bugs, and to enjoy the summer breezes. The Old Reserve is one of those summer campgrounds.

It was particularly during these summer encampments that families could mingle, trade, catch up on the gossip. And the younger folk could meet each other. The summer camps made it possible for the families to intermarry with each other.

The village or community moved to Moose Factory Island because of the presence of the Hudson Bay Company. At first families camped in an area near The Hospital and Parish Hall (south or upriver end of The Island). Then the Community here on The Island took shape. The site at The Old Reserve is much better for smaller (non-motorized) canoes. There is a wide expanse of open water -- the mighty Moose. There are several streams -- including The French -- where fishing is good. If bad weather comes in from The Bay, there's always a place one can paddle to for safety. Moose Factory Island is more convenient to maritime shipping -- being only a few miles from The Bay itself. It is generally good about bugs -- because of the breeze. But the winds and tides around The Island can be utterly treacherous without warning.

The Old Reserve is a flat expanse on a bluff overlooking The Moose just after The French enters. The current from The French is strong and sweeps up close to the bluff. The campsite is on the east side of The Moose.

The campground presently is laid out in sections. At the extreme north end overlooking The River is where the ceremonies are held. None of us walked this day on that ground, and we didn't take pictures of it. The south end of the campground, overlooking The River, is where tents are pitched. That's where we had our picnic. Back in the bush -- to the east -- were clearings where people went to fast -- alone and for extended periods of time. Here and there throughout the tenting area were sapling frames to hold sweat lodges.

With a little luck I'll be back in a few weeks for at least a day when people are there.

We ended our day gathering more fossils.

### **Tuesday, 27 May 2003**

Gwendolyn and I took our last walk together today.

I had packed last night, so she knew something was up -- and registered her expectation that she be included, if you don't mind. At six this morning we left the Rectory for a walk. All in the routine -- except that I had an overnight bag with me, and we walked further than usual. On our walk there were the usual neighborhood dogs to encounter and dismiss. And another dog-person (with dog) was walking towards us. We stopped and talked (and growled.) The morning was warm, clear; and there was no wind. The morning sun had risen over The River and over the swale that separates the east side of The Island from the open water. As we neared the old HBC post a Great Blue Heron rose from the swale and headed east out over The River.

We walked slowly. Gwendolyn must investigate. And she walks slowly now. And we have to take many rests.

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We got to the docks by The Hospital (on the west side of The Island) in about 45 minutes. A lone taxi waited. There is no traffic at this time in the morning. That's the way I wanted it – cross ahead of the morning traffic. We were alone in the canoe: Gwendolyn, the driver, and me.

The water was glass. Whales had come up into The River to fish. There was a dog on the Moosonee dock. And we said hi (and growled.) And we walked from the Moosonee docks to the train station – slowly, with many rests. There was plenty of time.

We had time to stall around before boarding the train. Here Gwendolyn got her Dramamine with her favorite cheese – Velveeta – and a little bit of fresh baked bread. The first mosquitoes of the spring had just come out this morning, and we talked about THAT as we brushed them aside. And when it came time for her to lie down in the cage in the baggage car, she did not object. She knows the drill, was used to it; and she was tuckered out from the walk.

The train ran on time – for once. Just after we crossed The Abitibi, a cow moose charged from a nearby bog back off into the bush.

Andy's had the truck waiting at the station in Cochrane – five hours and 186 miles later. We took another short walk around the train station in Cochrane. Gwendolyn stumbled and fell, but she recovered her dignity and wanted to go on. We lingered a moment, visited; I rubbed her ears. Then into the car – I had to help her. Then: the seventy-mile drive to Timmins.

I had thought we might stop at one of the rest stops along the way. I had brought the bread and Velveeta – the all time best of the best of the treats. But I figured this would just make her more aware of my own anxiety – she was nervous already -- and that would only make it worse. We drove straight through to the Vet.

We were early. We did the paper work before and not after. There were a number of dogs – large and small coming in and going out. Gwendolyn was as good as gold and lay at my feet the whole time and licked my hand.

Our time came. I was asked if I wanted to leave now. No, I'd stay – right through to the end; we had come this far. The first shot was while Gwendolyn was standing on the floor. She never felt a thing. I sat down on the floor. She lay down beside me. In 20 minutes she couldn't get up. She was totally dazed.

The Vet's assistant then lifted her and laid her on the table. I was too weak to even try to help. Then came the hard stuff. A soft, deep whimper, and it was over. I tried to remove the collar and couldn't. The guys had to do it for me.

It was all over now. There was nothing more to be done. There was no place I could take her. Cremation was the last and only option. I left her lying there on the table.

Our journey together, for now, is over.

### **Wednesday, May 28, 2003**

It is Wednesday evening. I took the next train north this morning. Somehow the train made it (barely) over a broken rail. Cochrane was 75 degrees and climbing this morning. Moose Factory

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is 45 and cloudy. I am listening to Das Lied von der Erde (Fischer-Dieskau/Bernstein.) It fits. I keep expecting her to nudge me to tell me it's time for bed – or that we'll take one last walk, if you please. I know it's over, but the memory lingers.