

Chapter 5 - RUSTI

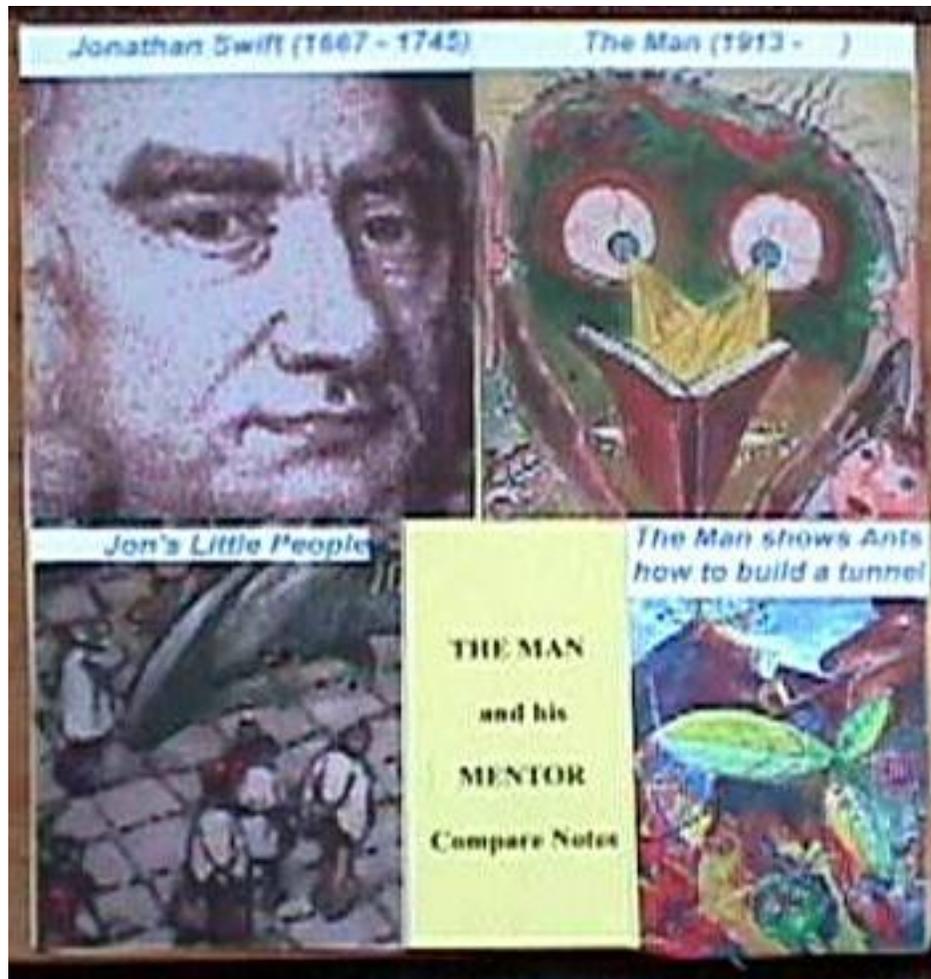
"Promises and Pye-Crusts are made to be broken." - Jonathan Swift (Jon)

"There is one essential point wherein a political liar differs from others of the faculty, that he ought to have but a short memory, which is necessary according to the various occasions he meets with every hour of differing from himself and swearing to both sides of a contradiction, as he finds the persons disposed with whom he has to deal." - Jon

Part 1. The Man Confers With His Mentor

"Hey Jon," shouts the man. "Stop that whirling in your grave, and thinking it's your fault that politicians, and the landed gentry, are screwing things up, and getting richer than ever, in that order. Back in the eighteenth century, you were a man of letters, so perhaps now you can assist by selecting the descriptors which best define the way our civilization, under the thrust of those three great drive engines, banking, privatization and globalization, is heading: Amelioration; Corruption; Defilement; Dilapidation; Enhancement; Enrichment; Gentrification; Malfunction; Pollution; Quantum-jump; Uplift.

"I'll follow your example, Jon, and use Part 2 of this chapter to cast a few stones at low level politicians, who are an unpleasant reminder that privatization and globalization have started to gain a foothold in Newfoundland. Meanwhile, like Jonathan Swift, I'll continue to describe imaginary happenings, as welcome relief from the unjustness and inequity of this century."



Whilst hibernating away from the States, the greatest luxury is not having to listen to our home-grown politicians, especially Bill Clinton, to whom I dedicate a poem that seems to describe him, written more that 60 years ago by someone called "Anon":

*Proud, polygamous, poltroon, 't's but your retrograde.
 Barbel you are, yet barracoon, you limner of scheezade.
 You speak a scumbled scutoform, a scutoform carimb!
 Too late indeed to seep along, too late, indeed, for him!*

*To outward view contuminous, to inward view adept.
 Your ostentation verminous, myopted as you wept.
 Too late! A gudgion though you were, in sesquiseried void
 Could elevate your soul to her, your crystalberiloid.*

Part 2. Newfoundland Giveaway

(Dedicated to Alice and Howard - Holdouts for Nova Scotia Hospitality)

"Forsooth, dear cyber-reader," says the man. "My hand is palsied by distaste, not age, but rage, as I listen to CBC Radio, July 1999, reportage concerning gravel pit camping and provincial parks in Newfoundland. Some of my best friends are Newfoundlanders, and I

cannot bear to see them deprived of their right to freely enjoy wilderness areas, including those special irreplaceable locations which the provincial government used to feel obliged to protect, on behalf of its citizens and visitors.

"Who gave the shop away? What were the advantages of firing dedicated career employees who were doing a fine job running these parks? Why were 20 of the finest parks turned over to private individuals without full public discussion, including an examination of whether there were sound reasons for privatization? Is there proof that the selection of private operators was based on an open and fair process?"

"The former provincial park at River of Ponds has remained closed far into the summer season. It is a flagrant example of what has been allowed to happen to the provincial park system, if the June 8, 1999 radio interview of a government official is an example. This person was completely unprepared (or unwilling) to answer specific questions about a situation that has required an inquiry for a very long time."

"What's it to you, old man?" inquires Ed. "You're nothin' but a furriner in these here parts, and there you go, stirring the pot 'til it may berl over and scald you."

"Go take a low dive off a high cliff. It'll clear your head, and can't possibly hurt that hard to convince, obstructive noggin," replies the man. "One might say I've been sensitized by the increasing commercialism of Nova Scotia tourism, which gives me an allergic reaction when I encounter similar trends in this province. Let me tell you about my friends Alice and Howard During, of Economy, Nova Scotia."

July 27, 1992: The man and Dora had been towing a 22' travel trailer for seven months. Here they were in Nova Scotia, looking for an attractive, spacious campsite. They followed a narrow winding road to Economy, NS, then saw a field that bordered on the Bay of Fundy. A woman and six children were having a picnic, and he inquired if he would be permitted to park his trailer near the beach. She said, "Howard will soon be here to greet you."

Sure enough, within 30 minutes, Howard drove his pickup alongside the trailer and invited the man to stay as long as he wished. Shortly thereafter, a young German medical doctor in a Volkswagen camper received a similar invitation. They were never asked to pay for the privilege.

Local people frequented the place to clam, when miles of sand and clay bottom appeared at low tide. It was a wonderfully friendly place, and before long, Howard and his wife, Alice, invited the man to tea. They became good friends, and it was Alice's poor health that kept the Durings from visiting the man in North Carolina.

He stopped by to see them a short time before Alice's death. Howard sadly informed him that the open field was now fenced in and closed to campers and local residents alike.

"Meeting people was my greatest pleasure, but the government people took it away. Said it was hurting business," said Howard.

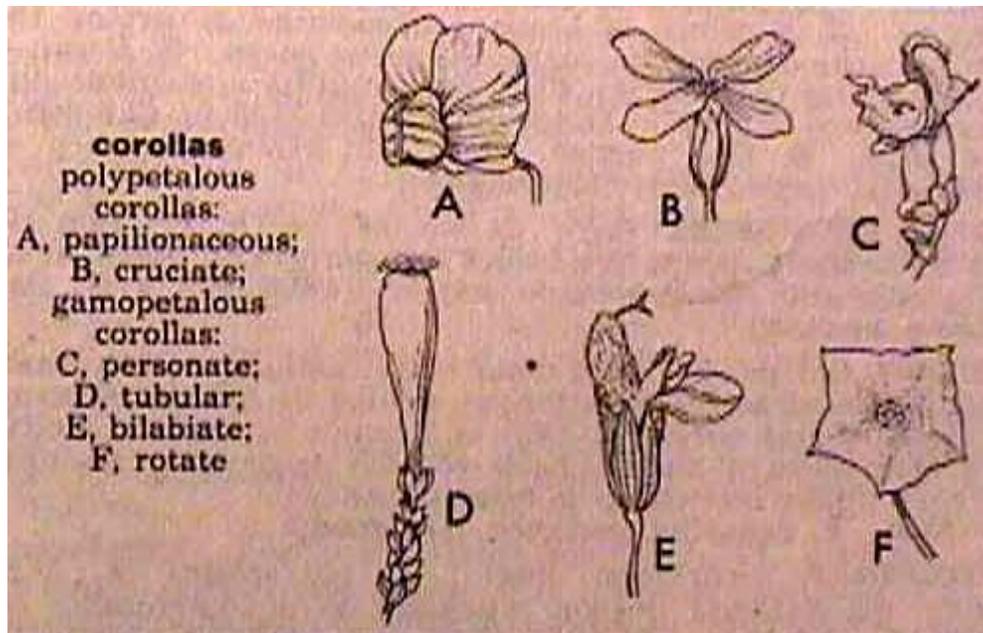


"Don't get me started," warns the man. "Go see for yourself! At least, along the highways I travel through Nova Scotia, there's hardly a convenient place for me to pull over and rest my weary head. So, except for fuel and the toll road, I keep my wallet buttoned up and hightail it for North Sydney, the ferry, and friendlier Newfoundland climes."

Part 3. Are Corollas Good for Hind Leggers?

"Well, well, well," sarcasms Ed. "Now we've gotta hear a botany lecture. How far must we stray before the old coot remembers this Chapter is about Rusti?"

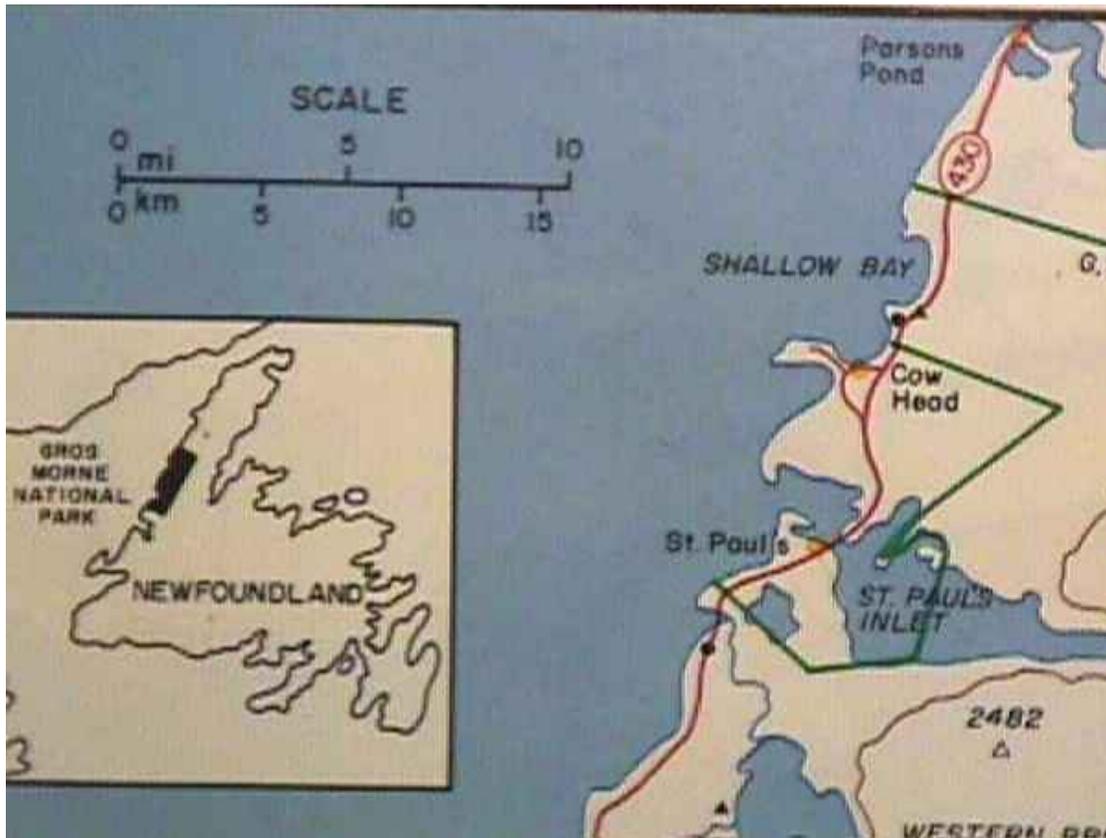
"Wrong again, Ed," replies the man. "There's a logical progression to things that must be followed, which in this instance starts with corollas:

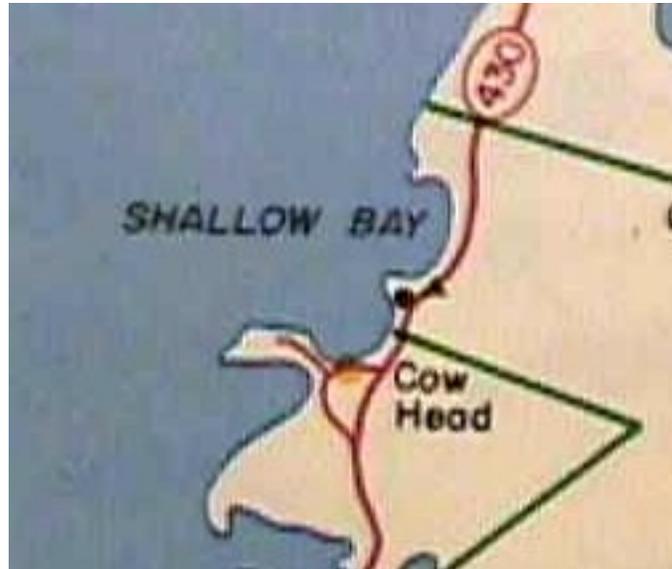


"Hand me that pointer, Ed, and I'll explain," professorlizes the man. "You will note from the chart that my investigation of the corollas is limited to the polypetalous ones, which, most important of all, includes B. cruciate; gamopetalous corolla. The Cruciferae family, so named because the flowers are made up of four petals in the shape of a Greek Cross, includes broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cress, mustard, turnip, wallflower, AND horseradish, the one with the most prestigious history. As you undoubtedly know, horseradish gets its kick from a glucoside called sinigrin that releases an acrid sulfur-bearing oil through enzymatic action."

"We are not impressed, old man," smirks Ed. "Just tell us what this has to do with you and your long-winded narrative."

"I'm sorry, dear Edward, that my story has more points than a porcupine, but for your sake, I'll mention only a few. It's to be expected that the gentle reader will want to know the kind of diggin's Rusti lived in, and its location, so below you will find pictures of our cabin, and maps showing its location. The land mass, connected by a road, on the northwest side of Shallow Bay is where the cabin is located."



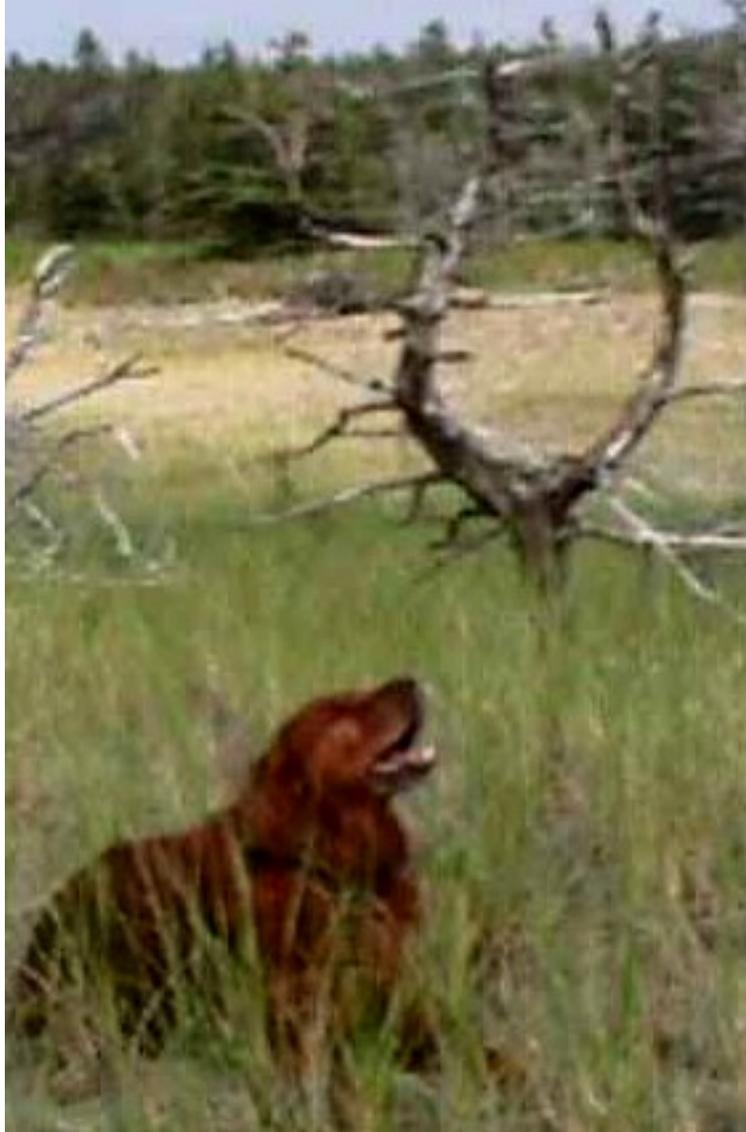


If they are not off somewhere else, adventuring, each day in every kind of weather, Theodore takes the man for hikes through the woods, dunes, and rock formations that abut Shallow Bay. Much of what appears in this manuscript was mulled over during these outings, but the man relates this experience as a mysterious one that simply popped out of the blue:

"I wished I could remain by the fire, but Theodore disagreed, so we forced our way out of the cabin in the teeth of a living gale. I drove to a parking area near the Stanford River, and then we bent into the wind, aiming for the lee of the sand dunes and the greater protection of heavily wooded trails.

"Easier said than done. I was getting very tired when I heard Theodore howling, or should I say singing? He was sitting in front of a dead tree with only two branches, curved and harpshaped and shaking in the wind with a tune of its own.

"A time warp instantly transported me back to that Seder dinner when I was eleven, and had been given a (lyre-shaped) Jew's harp. After the meal, its twanging had driven the adults to distraction, but inattention during the ceremonial dinner was not tolerated. This was the first night of Passover which celebrates the liberation of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. I vividly recalled the burning, bitter taste of the horseradish, served to remind us of their enslavement; and the sweet red wine, laced with seltzer water, to clear our palates."



Part 4 - Rusti Comes to Live with Us

Horseradish - A Cultivated Cruciferous Plant (*Armoracia rusticana*)

"Having established that this horseradish was a true cross-bearing plant, and a cultivated one at that, I reasoned that my adopting it would broaden our cultural outlook. If that didn't work, there was always its ability to make a horse taste good, so why not a moose?" mused the man. "So we adopted it as part of our household."

Call it ESP, or whatever, but when the man took the root in his hand, he was absolutely sure that its name was "Rusti," and in true scientific tradition, he purchased several jars of horseradish grated in vinegar, and each jar sent the same message: "My name is Rusti."

Ed interrupts the narrative with a screech. "Talking roots, talking jars of horseradish sauce! I've heard it said that plants can communicate, but never a root, and never, never a grated root in a jar."

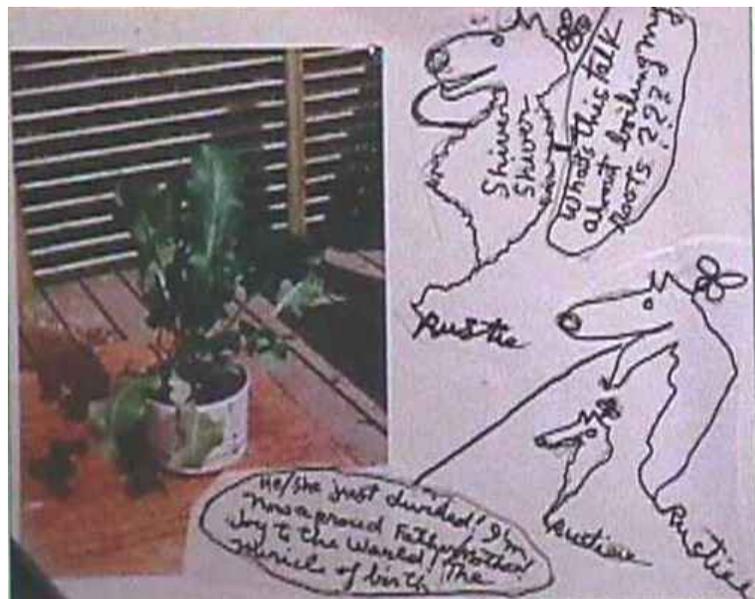
"Well now you've heard it from a highly reliable authority who happens to be the same one who imagined you, my dear fellow," replies the man, "and there's a perfectly logical explanation. All horseradishes, including the one I met when I was eleven, are closer to each other than identical twins since they multiply by dividing. With all due respect, Edward, you aren't the liveliest conversationalist, and I must have someone to talk to, so why not a horseradish?"

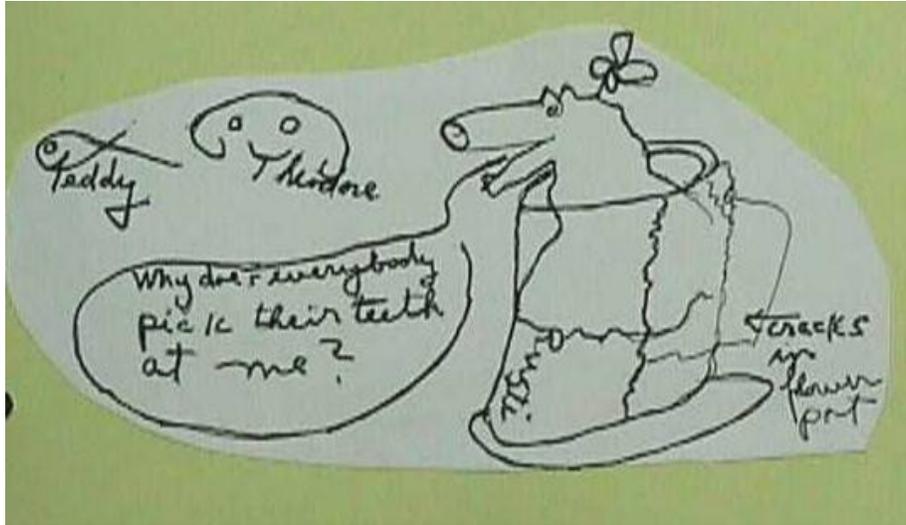
So Rusti was placed in a clay pot, surrounded by potting soil, watered whenever he/she requested, and the cruciferous leaves that finally emerged were soon busy watching the cooking, from the shelf over the stove. Rusti also insisted on being carried to the table to observe our eating habits, and then commented as follows: "My memory banks go back for centuries, and we've always ended up in the homes of the affluent to tickle the fancies of the overfed. What am I doing in this shack? And I can't say much for the food, either!"

"Lots of books have nice things to say about me. For example, I'm in Norman Taylor's *Encyclopedia of Gardening* (1961), and I must get catty and observe that no encyclopedia that I've seen has the man's name listed therein."

Thus began a long series of disclaimers as to who would want to be in "Who's Who," Britannica, all the way down to "Reader's Digest" and "Time," followed by a pause to allow the man to regroup and consider. "Once upon a time, getting your name in print was a way to impress your peers, but now, nobody bothers to read. And with the whole world at risk through globalization and worldwide increases in GNP, survivors will no longer worry about the peck system, only how to get a gasp of pure air."

"Well I must say," ESPs Rusti. "This party's gone to pot. All this doomsday talk! Pour some of that beer into my potty soil and I'll make better use of it than you seem to be doing. YUK! Don't you have dark beer or stout?"





Part 5. Rusti Meets Chatelaine (Mother of Vinegar)

"Rusti's getting to be a pain in the butt," opines the man. "Sits there above the stove and makes acerbic remarks about everything in this cabin, especially my cooking. I'm tempted to put that plaguey root into a poultice for some needy rheumatic, or maybe mix it with honey for a cold."

"Button up your lip, you nasty old man," shouts Ed. "Don't you know you're getting Rusti upset? What ever happened to your much touted respect for animal's and plant's rights? And look at poor Theodore, cringing as far back as he can go in that cubbyhole under your desk."

"To be honest, Ed," replies the man, "it gets kinda spooky around here, especially when I try to cook meals that equally satisfy dog and man. We go easy on salt, so I depend on 'Mrs. Dash' gussied with pepper. Then, I gobble my share directly from the pan and drop it on the floor for Theodore to wolf down what's left.

"My method of cleaning pots, pans and dishes conforms with the latest concepts of biodegradable technology, and as a result I'm thinking of marketing a product called, 'Slobber':

SOMETHING NEW AND INVENTED BY A DOG!

Better things through Chemistry

A completely natural biodegradable dishwashing detergent, 'bottled' in rabbit bladders, packaged in sheepskins, each package with quadri-pads for scouring pots and pans.

Soon to be Available in Stores Everywhere

Next time you shop, look for SLOBBER

SLOBBER is a clear colorless liquid, pH 6.4 - 6.9 (slightly acid and therefore compatible with a woman's perspiration).

No More Lobster-Red Hands

Ingredients : Albumin, globulin, mucin, urea, uric acid, digestive enzymes

"Now now, old man, calm down, or before long you'll tell the world you rinse with 'DROOL' instead of water. It's time you looked at things in a more logical way," says Ed. "I think you need a moderating influence in this household....something youthful, ebullient, trifling, frivolous, and frothy."

"Pipe down, Ed," screams the man. "Who asked for your imaginary opinion? I've survived without 'Cheesecake' for a long time, and don't you go telling me I need it now!"

"You silly duffer, who said anything about 'Cheesecake'? I'm talking about Yeastcake--phylum Ascomycota, and genus Saccharomyces, to be as exact as anyone can be when talking about wild strains," says Ed sourly. "I think we need one of them vinegar plants, that were used in Newfoundland homes for changing molasses into vinegar. A smart plant like that should know how to keep Rusti in line."

These days, a vinegar plant is hard to find, but as luck will usually have it, Marge, who lives on the north end of Cow Head, had recently received one as a present. She generously agreed to give the man one of the round, pancake-shaped, gelatinous objects which she slithered into an empty two-liter plastic MARITIME MAPLE ICE CREAM container. Then she added water and fed it some blackstrap molasses.



Even while driving back to the cabin, the man realized that he had adopted a talkative wench. Her ESP came through loud and clear. "What a bouncy, ugly vehicle for carrying a lady to her new abode! That Marge was sure rough, the way she separated me from my kith and kin. I bruise easy, but fortunately, I heal quick. No thanks to her! Maybe this guy's a pushover and will feed me better than Marge did. I'd dearly love some of the stuff that used to be in this container."

"Okay, okay," ESPs the man. "I'll give you a shot glass of maple syrup to celebrate your move to my abode, but if we drink a toast, I'll have to be properly introduced."

"Let's get something straight, Buster. It's evident from your clothes and truck that you occupy a lowly station in life, much like the peons of Scotland, where I resided as Mistress of the Keep, and was called Lady Chatelaine. My talents as a biochemist far exceed yours and, in my hay day, were honored throughout the realm. What do you know about making balsamic-, bay leaf-, chili-, garlic-, herb-, lemongrass-, malt-, peppercorn-, red wine-, rice wine-, rosemary-, sherry-, tarragon-, and a thousand other vinegars?"

"Well, your Royal Highness, you'd better come down to earth and get used to this peon, and Ed, Theodore and Rusti. You must have been abducted by some Scotch-Irish roustabout and landed here without immigration papers, so cool it, kid, and be polite to your new friends."

So it was that Lady Chatelaine graciously accepted Rusti's company on the shelf over the stove, and peace returned to the humble cabin.

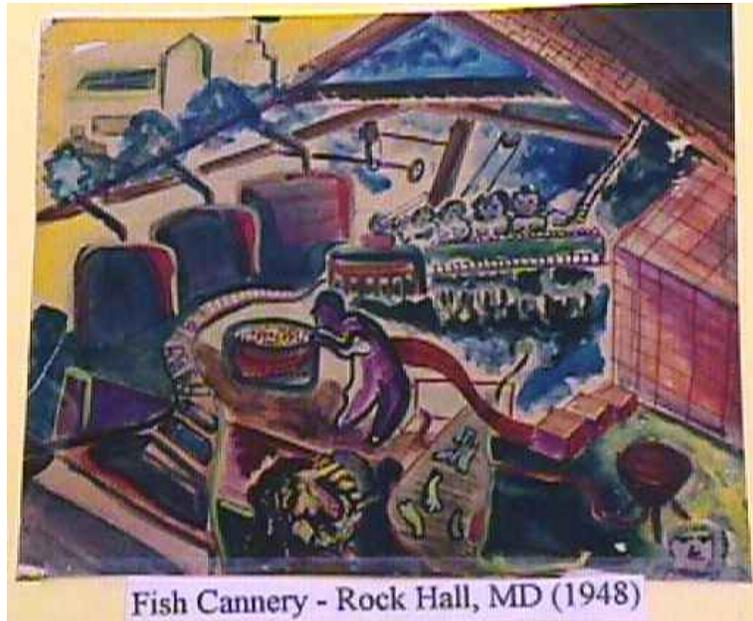
Part 6. Little Things Can Make a Dent

"I'm now an honest to goodness published budding author," chortles the man. "My diatribe about the giveaway of Newfoundland provincial parks, Chapter 5, Part 2, appeared in *The Western Star*, Corner Brook, NFLD, on July 14 - a pitifully small blow against government inattention to the wishes of the majority of its citizens, whose bankrolls are too small to add the tiniest whiff to the Chinook (hot air) trade winds that steer the average politician.

"There was a time," muses the man, "when people devoted serious attention to letters, and their obligation to respond."

"Sounds like the nineteenth century," jibes Ed. "Perchance a little catch-up is due."

"Okay, Ed, I'll only drop back about one-half century, and tell you about the time a very wise lady received a letter that almost cost me my job," replies the man. "It was one of many canneries, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, packing fish to feed war-torn UK. An English woman wrote to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), wife of the deceased president, and complained that her dog refused to eat our fish. The government reacted instantly, closed the canneries, and started an inquiry."



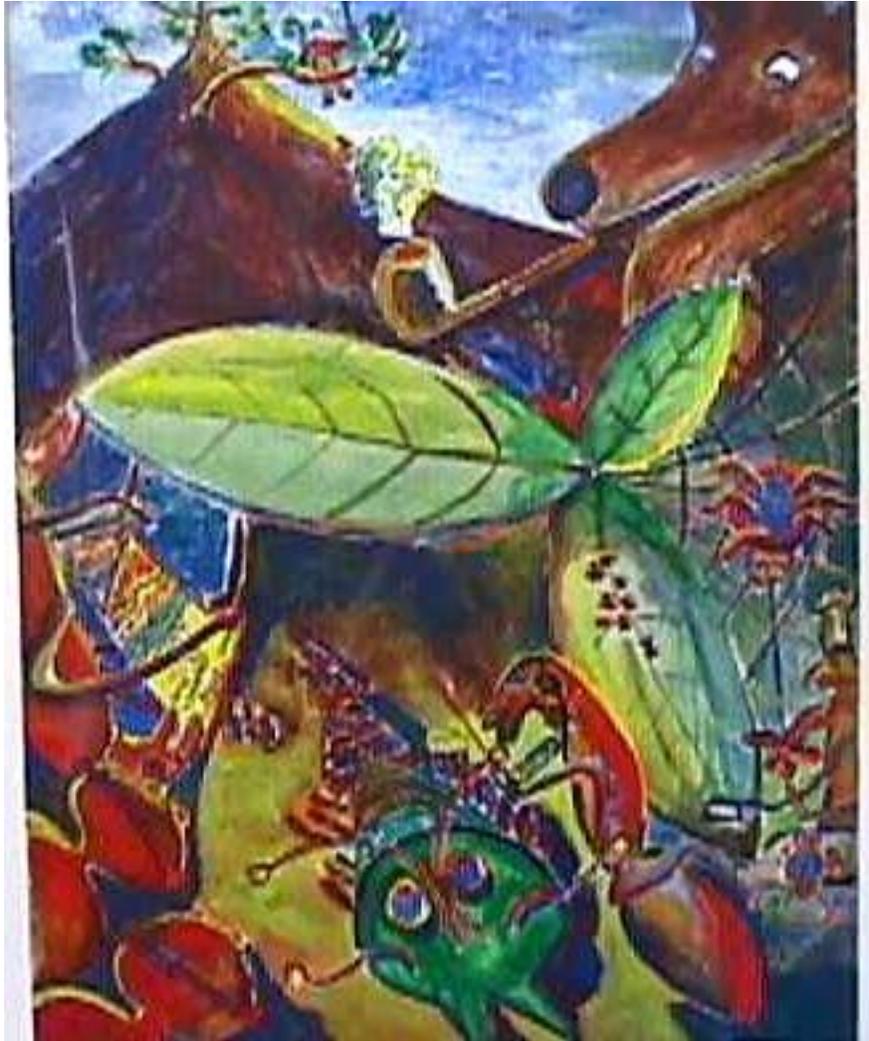
"I think you like that fish-story because a dog rather than people prevailed. The poor Limeys still had to use that canned whiting to make fish 'n chips (UGH!)," groans Ed.

"Edward, settle down and listen respectfully, before I lose my temper and scatter your ectoplasm brain. The following experience proves that 'small' in no way implies inability to perform great deeds:

THE BOGUE SOUND TUNNEL

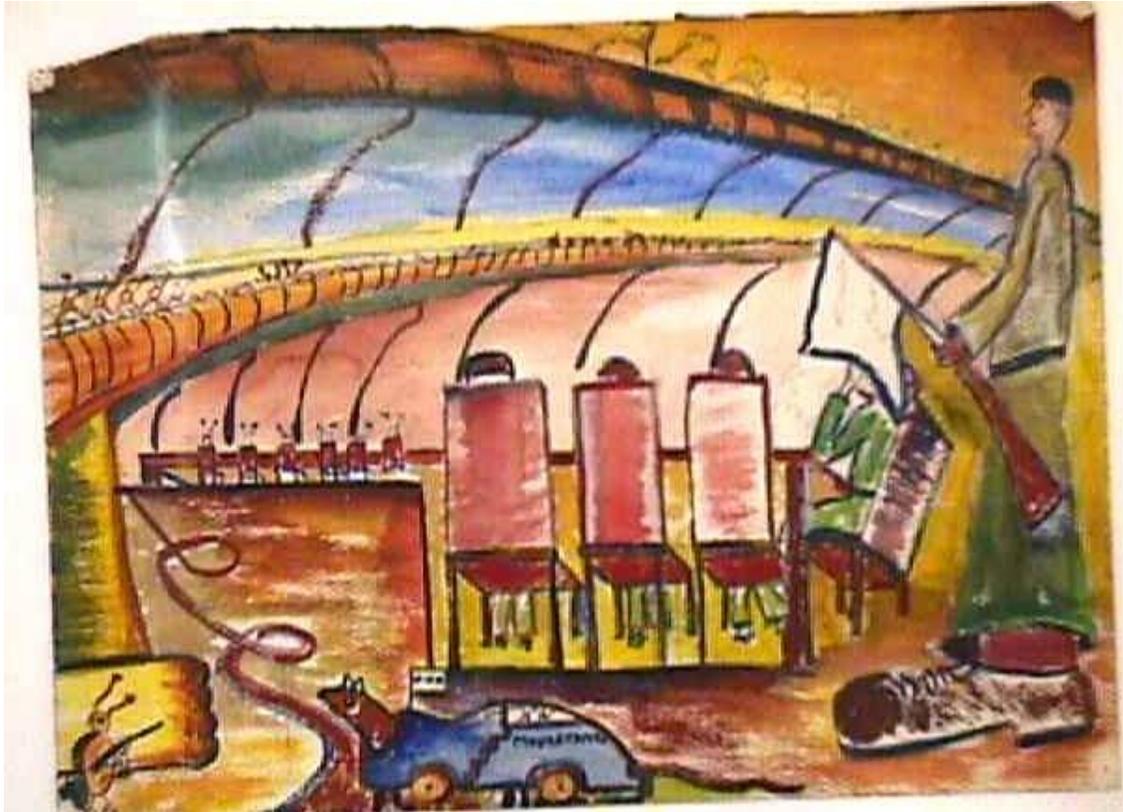
"Teddy and Corny used the 'Small Pills' to make themselves as small as ants, and a whole new world emerged as they explored their front lawn. Black ants appeared monstrous and longtime friendships developed, especially with the ant with the slanty eyebrows, who was mayor of the ant colony. He asked Teddy to take some of them across Bogue Sound to visit relatives on an island, but a more permanent solution was offered - the building of an underwater tunnel.

"Soon excavations started at the base of a pine tree, while Teddy sat high up on a branch and sent directions by radio to ants equipped with earphones and building plans. Beetles were used to pull dirt from the tunnel. A spider caught insects for the ant-chef who chopped them up to feed the workers.



U. S. SIGNS PEACE TREATY WITH THE ANTS

"The ants objected to the noisy fighter jets' training flights over their domain, and by slipping aboard the planes and clogging the engines, succeeded in grounding them. Finally, the humans and ants met at a specially constructed peace table, and the United States agreed to limit their military aircraft to silent gliders."



"Now I ask you, Jon: Is it possible that our imaginary characters offer a more tangible reality than the politics you observed in the eighteenth century, and I in the twentieth?" inquires the man.

"As this century ends, so does the validity of a whole lexicon that realistically described governments, economic systems, and their component parts. Now there are mostly the innovative systems designed by the elite to guarantee a controlled flow of wealth away from the majority, and to safeguard spheres of influence through interminable wars and slaughter of millions - in effect, a whole new system of non-government."

"Slow down, old man," warns Ed. "You're working yourself into a lather over matters which have nothing to do with this book and your personal search for last places. Besides, what you describe may just be a temporary fascistic trend."

"If the governments of this world are losing control of their own destinies, then their share of inspiring (last) places will be minimized, as is happening in Newfoundland. Besides, healthy debates over conservatism, moderatism, liberalism, progressivism, leftism, communism, socialism, capitalism, conservatism are being ignored and brushed aside by heavy-handed 'globali-zizers,'" explains the man.

"All you have to do is look, and you'll see there's plenty of room for concern over the way corporations are undermining the legal authority vested by citizens in their governments." For some disturbing specifics, read Tony Clarke's, *Silent Coup* -

Confronting the Big Business Takeover of Canada (1997), co-published by Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and James Larimer & Co. Ltd.

A recent poll indicates Americans are more satisfied with the present state of affairs than citizens in other countries, all over the world. Required reading should be *Dumbing Down - Essays on the Strip-Mining of American Culture* (1997), edited by Katharine Washburn and John Thornton, W. W. Norton and Co., New York and London.

"Well, Theodore," says Ed, "I've listened to all the pessimism I can abide. Now, I'm starving for a palatable subject, but for that I must await Chapter 6, 'Cooking for Man and Dog,' due September 1, 1999."

August, 1999