

Working Lives

Volume 4 Chance and Luck Making a Job

**A Project of the
Writers' Alliance of
Newfoundland and Labrador**

In This Series:

Volume 1. A Hell of a Good Job! Finding Work that Matters

Volume 2. New Realities in Health Care and Job Safety

Volume 3. To Every Work a Season: Adapting to Change

Volume 4. Chance and Luck: Making a Job

Working Lives **Chance and Luck: Making a Job**

**Chance and Luck:
Making a Job**

**An Adult Basic Education Project of
The Writers' Alliance of
Newfoundland and Labrador
1998**

Book 4: Chance and Luck: Making a Job

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Foreword

Working Lives is the third in a series of literacy materials projects undertaken by the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador. The project was produced in conjunction with the Educational Resource Development Cooperative. As with our previous projects, *Newfoundland Books on Tape* and *The Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series* (both produced in conjunction with the College of the North Atlantic), the aim is to create relevant and engaging literacy materials that speak directly to the concerns and interests of adult learners.

Working Lives is geared towards students in the ABE Level I category. Due to subject matter, however, there is some slight variance in the degree of reading difficulty. All essays are accompanied by questions for discussion and, where deemed necessary, word lists and follow-up notes and activities.

The groupings of the essays into each of the four volumes of *Working Lives* were designed to reflect general themes such as health care, starting a small business and workers' injuries. It should be stressed, however, that these groupings are not meant to imply more than slight thematic connections. In all instances, the essays can stand on their own. Neither are the groupings meant to suggest incremental reading difficulty. Teachers should feel free to dip into all volumes of the series and mix and match essays to suit their particular needs.

As with the *Social History Series*, *Working Lives* will also appeal to high school and university students, as well as the general public.

The writers and editors of *Working Lives* found the creation of the essays to be politically, socially and spiritually stimulating. If we can inspire the same enthusiasm in adult learners, improvement to their overall literacy skills will be assured.

Acknowledgements

The essays and accompanying notes and questions in *Working Lives* were researched and written by Ed Kavanagh, Carmelita McGrath, Kathryn Welbourn, Marian Frances White, Kathleen Winter and Michael Winter. The series was edited by Janet McNaughton. Overall coordination was provided by Ed Kavanagh. Workshopping and professional consultation services were provided by Marion Cheeks and Deanne Hulett of the Educational Resource Development Cooperative. Funding for *Working Lives* was provided by the National Literacy Secretariat.

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Introduction

It may be argued that, as a title, *Working Lives*, is somewhat redundant. Is it possible to live a life without working? Most people would agree that it isn't. Work and our relationship with it—no matter how tenuous or ambivalent—helps to define who we are. It gives a face and texture to our communities. Like death and taxes, it is something from which there is no escape.

But what exactly is work? *Webster's* offers a full page of definitions dealing with the many permutations and nuances of the word. Clearly, work is a complicated matter. It is, of course, much more than this nutshell dictionary offering: "Action involving effort or exertion, especially as a means of gaining a livelihood." Work is certainly that. The people profiled in *Working Lives* know all about effort and exertion. For them, gaining a livelihood is always a struggle. But work and the pursuit of work casts a wide net. In the effort to improve our working lives, to make our work more meaningful, or in merely attempting to put bread on the table, there are stories to be found: stories of triumph and defeat, new beginnings, courage, adversity, confusion—the whole gamut of human emotion. It is this larger vision of work which *Working Lives* seeks to explore.

Work has never been a simple matter. Stories about the good old days when everyone had jobs—and presumably were happy with them—are fantasy. But in the late 1990s work has taken on a multitude of guises which our ancestors could never have envisioned. The traditional work scenario of a person toiling at one steady job for his or her entire working life is rapidly becoming out of date. The modern era is marked by job sharing, contracting out and increasingly stiff competition for the few available jobs. In addition, technology and the global economy are providing new challenges. Some traditional jobs are becoming extinct or highly mechanized. For many, the clunk of the axe is being replaced by the click of the keyboard.

While the pursuit of meaningful, financially rewarding work is a concern for everyone, it poses special challenges for people with low literacy skills. It is our hope that adult learners who, like all of us, are concerned about job prospects, out-migration and the myriad of factors that affect job markets, will be drawn in and, in some cases, inspired by the compelling stories collected in *Working Lives*.

There are many kinds of stories here. Kathleen Winter's "Creek Crossing Tragedy" details an injured worker's search for justice and spiritual healing. In "Chance and Luck: Two Stories of the Working Disabled" Ed Kavanagh profiles two people who overcame severe physical disabilities to build rich and rewarding lives. "Inside Health Care" by Carmelita McGrath explores the deteriorating working conditions and accompanying stresses of our health care professionals. In "Shoot" Michael Winter goes behind the scenes to explore, in a humorous way, some of the less glamorous jobs in the making of a feature film. Marian Frances White's "Cutting Trees on the Rock: Logging in the 1990s in Newfoundland" details the tensions that arise when money and job interests meet environmental concerns. "Quitting Time" by Kathryn Welbourn proves that even in an age when jobs can be as hard to find as a doctor in an emergency room, the time can come when enough is enough, and even the spectre of a long unemployment line can have its appeal.

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

Throughout *Working Lives* the reader will meet a gallery of unique and vibrant personalities. Gerard Hamilton turned from the uncertainty of the fishery to the uncertainty of the music business; Phonse Tucker considers the woods his warehouse; Karen Pottle is putting a new spin on the fashion business. There are all sorts of people here: boat tour operators, artists, IT workers, domestics, recyclers and fisheries observers. Their stories, slices of their working lives, will lead readers to examine their own attitudes about the activity that occupies so much of our precious time and, ultimately, tells us who we are.

Chance and Luck: Two Stories of the Working Disabled

Ed Kavanagh

Word List

Profile: A short look at the main events of a person's life.

Unique: Very unusual. Special.

Polio: A disease that can lead to physical disabilities.

Rehabilitation: The treatment program an injured person sets out upon to improve their health.

Rehab: Short for rehabilitation. Also the place where this work occurs.

Therapist: Someone who gives medical treatment.

Seminar: A meeting for discussion.

Frustrated: Unable to succeed.

Breach: The breaking of a law or obligation.

Introduction

If you ask a child what she wants to be when she grows up, you will probably get a quick answer. "I want to be a teacher," she may say. "Or a doctor." Many teenagers also have clear ideas about the kind of job they would like. Sometimes they know if they will get married. They may even know how many children they want. Dreams like these sometimes come true. But often, a very different story is waiting. For many reasons, some people's lives take unexpected turns. The future can be different from the plan.

The two people profiled in this essay have had unique lives. Both have physical disabilities. Charlie Boddie had a motorcycle accident when he was 32 and lost the use of his legs. He became a paraplegic. His whole world changed. Debbie Prim caught polio when she was nine months old. She became seriously disabled. This has affected every area of her life. But Charlie and Debbie have full-time jobs. They lead rich, interesting lives. Their stories show how a positive attitude and lots of willpower can make all the difference in overcoming problems.

Charlie and Debbie work hard. They have even created work for other people. Life has given them many challenges to overcome. But they have never run away from work or hardship. They have never let their lives be ruined by the negative attitudes of others. Their efforts are making society better for us all.

Charlie's Story: Pushing for the Limit

Charlie Boddie was born on September 8th, 1958. He grew up in St. John's. He has also lived in Nova Scotia and Northern Ireland. His father, a doctor, is from Northern Ireland.

Charlie went to school in St. John's. He was an average student. Charlie preferred to be outside. He was always active and he loved sports. He was known for always pushing himself to the limit.

Charlie has liked cars and motorcycles since childhood. "Anything with an engine fascinated me," he says. "I watched all the races on TV and bought all the magazines." Charlie loved speed—lots of it. "I was always interested in how fast I could do this, or how crazy I could do that." For Charlie, the more dangerous something was, the better. His favourite sport was downhill skiing. He raced like the Crazy Canucks. This is what Canada's national downhill ski team was called in the 1970s and early 1980s. They were known for their wild, fearless style. That's how Charlie raced. But Charlie loved motorcycles most of all. He was never happier than when he was racing. Motocross was his favourite. In motocross racing, the motorcycles are small. They are called dirtbikes. The course is made of dirt. There are many hills and jumps. Charlie spent a lot of time racing in motocross events.

Education

When Charlie finished school he decided to go to university. Like many young people, he wasn't sure what he wanted to study. He took a number of different courses. He found he liked the political science and business courses. In 1983, he graduated with a B.A. in political science and business.

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

Charlie was interested in working for the government in public administration. But he couldn't get his foot in the door. He took a number of different jobs. He worked as a bartender and a labourer. For a while, he even sold insurance. "It wasn't for me," says Charlie. "It was terrible! I left after five months." He especially liked jobs that were out-of-doors.

Finally, Charlie found a job he liked. It was with a company called Moore Business Forms. This company makes all kinds of paper forms such as invoices, payroll cheques and receipts. The company is the largest of its kind in the world. At first, Charlie found the job hard. "There was a lot of detailed work," he says. "I had to design the forms myself. Before I went there, I couldn't even draw a straight line. My handwriting is terrible. But it was something I took a shine to. After a while I really enjoyed it." Charlie also liked meeting people. He spent a lot of time on the go.



Charlie (in the background) taking part in a motocross event.

Moore Business Forms treated Charlie well. He was recognized for his work and made a good salary. During this time Charlie got married. "Life was a bowl of cherries," he says. "It was just perfect. I travelled, I had a great career and a happy marriage." He also kept up his downhill skiing and motocross racing.

But Charlie's perfect life was about to end.



Charlie checks his bike at the end of a race.

July 19th, 1992: The Accident

Charlie Boddie smiles. "I'm a lucky man," he says. Charlie has a quick and easy smile. He laughs a lot. If you talk to him for an hour he will probably say that he is lucky at least three or four times. But Charlie Boddie is in a wheelchair. An accident robbed him of his ability to walk. Even so, Charlie still thinks he's lucky.

Because Charlie loved motocross racing so much, and was so good, he usually took part in two races outside Newfoundland every year. On July 19th, 1992, Charlie was in PEI for a

motocross event. His younger brother John was with him. "I was having a good day," says Charlie. "I was doing well. But on one of the jumps I made a mistake. I flew over the handlebars and landed head first on the ground. One of my vertebrae was broken. My spinal cord was injured. In a second my whole life changed. I knew that from then on, things would be very different for me."

Charlie was brought to a small hospital in Summerside, PEI. But his injury was too serious for the hospital to handle. He was flown to a bigger hospital in Moncton. At first, Charlie went through a lot of uncertainty. "Right after the accident, I was an emotional mess," he says. "I was screaming and yelling that my life was ruined. But that didn't last long. Believe it or not, I was a mess for only seven hours--from 1:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. And then I snapped out of it. I knew I couldn't turn back the clock. I knew the doctors couldn't hook me up to a machine that would fix my spinal cord. So I tried to look at the positive side. I told my brother John that I always wanted to go back to school and do graduate work. Now I could do that. John said, 'Yes, you can do anything you want.' I knew that it was up to me to take control of my new life."

After four weeks in the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's, Charlie went to the Miller Centre to begin his rehabilitation. The rehab program at the Miller Centre was full. Charlie was forced to wait. He was bored. He had nothing to do. He hated just waiting around. He heard of a rehabilitation centre in London, Ontario called Parkwood Hospital. They had a space open. Charlie decided to go there.

During his rehabilitation Charlie's competitive spirit came through. It was almost like racing again. "I had heard that most people did their rehab in four months," he says. "So I decided to do mine in three." After a lot of hard work, Charlie met that goal. "My emotional state was good," he says. "I completed my rehab and went back to St. John's feeling positive about the future. I was eager to pick up my life again." But Charlie had been home only a few months when he was hit with another bombshell. Charlie found out that his wife was having an affair. She had decided to leave him.

Endings and Beginnings

Charlie Boddie had lost the use of his legs. Now he had lost his wife. "She told me she wasn't willing to carry on with the marriage anymore," he says. "She told me I was on my own." Charlie found his marriage break-up even more difficult to deal with than his accident. "I came to terms with my accident in about seven hours," he says. "It took me two months to get over my marriage break-up." Once again Charlie showed that he was strong.

In only eight months Charlie's life had turned completely upside-down. "After the two months I wasn't depressed anymore," he says. "But I had lost confidence in my ability to meet people. I didn't go out much. My brother would bring friends to the house to see me." One night Charlie's brother John decided that Charlie needed a change. He was spending too much time indoors. "John grabbed me by the scruff of the neck," says Charlie, "and we went out. We had a good time. It helped snap me out of the mood I was in."

Charlie was lucky that he started going out again. Soon he met a young woman named Tammy. They had a lot in common. Tammy also liked sports. She was both a downhill skier and a water skier. They fell in love. They both wanted security and stability. They thought

they could build a good life together. On August 20th, 1994, they were married.

New Directions: A Baby and a Daycare Centre

After Charlie's accident he wasn't sure what direction his work-life would take. He knew he couldn't go back to Moore Business Forms. That job required too much running around. He thought that he would like to study psychology and become a therapist. That way he could help people who had gone through the same thing he had. But he found out that it would take five years for him to become a psychologist. Five years without a salary. Charlie didn't know what to do.

Tammy had studied to be a primary school teacher. Her dream was to do one of two things: teach kindergarten or open a daycare centre. But Tammy could not find a job as a teacher. For two years she worked on the front desk at the Hotel Newfoundland. But she wanted to do more with her life. She and Charlie moved to a new subdivision. Many young families with small children lived there. Charlie and Tammy decided to see if they could make the dream of a daycare centre a reality. On October 3rd, 1994, they opened the Bloomsbury Childcare Centre. Only four children were enrolled. But that soon changed.



Charlie with his wife Tammy.



Emma

More and more parents sent their children to Bloomsbury. Three years later they expanded. Now the daycare centre has 50 spaces, the maximum number of spaces allowed in Newfoundland. There are six employees not including Charlie and Tammy.

Charlie finds this new business interesting and challenging. "I love it," he says. "I was always looking for a chance to become an independent business person." Charlie laughs. "It's funny, though. If someone had told me ten years ago that I'd end up running a daycare centre, I wouldn't have believed them. You never know what life has in store for you."

Charlie takes care of most of the business side of the daycare. This was something he had to learn. "I had no training," he says. "I fell into the work. It was a learning experience. I didn't have a clue about how to set up an office. But I became good at it. Now everything is done on time. I take care of the payroll, accounts payable, purchasing and general managing." Tammy works mainly with the children. "Everything worked out fine," says Charlie. "I'm a very lucky man."

Recently, things got even better. On October 23rd, 1996, Charlie and Tammy had a little girl. They named her Emma.

Charlie's life is now full and rewarding. He has a family, and a job he enjoys. He is still interested in cars and sports. He would like to get into wheelchair roadracing. But first he needs to raise \$3,000 to buy a racing chair. Down the road, he would also like to get into some other businesses. He may even try politics. He would also like to give talks and seminars to newly disabled people. "I don't know if I'll be any good at it," says Charlie, smiling. "Or if I can help anyone. But if the chance comes up, I'm willing to give it a try."

Charlie Boddie is a lucky man. But he has learned that luck is something you make.



Charlie, with friends and family, on vacation.

Debbie's Story

Polio

Debbie Prim was born in St. John's in 1958. When she was nine months old, she became ill with polio.

Polio is a serious, crippling disease. Debbie spent two years at the Fever Hospital in an iron lung. She needed this machine to help her breathe. Without it she would have died. From there, Debbie went to the Sunshine Camp where she stayed for two and a half years. In 1963, she went to the Children's Rehab Centre in St. John's. She stayed there until 1969.

Polio confines Debbie to a wheelchair. She cannot walk. She can move very little. She doesn't have any control over one hand and arm. Her other hand and arm can't move as well as most people's. Debbie needs an attendant care worker to help her. Despite these problems, she can do many things for herself. She is an active member of the community. She volunteers on many community boards. And except for one four-month period, Debbie has held a job ever since she graduated from high school.

Like most people, Debbie dreams. "I always wanted to be a speech therapist," she says. "Or a primary school teacher for children with special needs." But these dreams did not come true. It was not because she wasn't smart. It was not because of her disability. Debbie was forced to choose a different direction in life because of the kind of education she received.

Education



The young Debbie flashes a smile.

All of Debbie's early schooling took place in institutions. From grade three to grade nine she went to school at the Children's Rehab Centre in St. John's. She went to Holy Heart of Mary High School in St. John's for grades ten and eleven. But Holy Heart was a real struggle. "Going to school in an institution is much different than going to a public school," says Debbie. "There were subjects in public school, like religion, that we didn't even have at the Rehab Centre. There is no comparison between the two. Going to public school after years in an institution was a real shock." Debbie feels now that when she entered grade ten she was probably only at a grade six level. "For one thing, I never studied at the Children's Rehab," she says. "The work wasn't taken seriously. We were all just pushed through. We spent whole afternoons doing arts and crafts. The same thing still happens today in rural areas. Disabled people are pushed through the system. When they graduate from high school, they are only at a grade seven or eight level. But they have a piece of paper that tells them they have a high school education. I know several disabled people who want to go to college or university. They think they've got high school training. But they have a real shock coming. They get so frustrated when they are not accepted."

Debbie also got frustrated. At Holy Heart about 50 percent of the work was totally new to her. But she did not give up. It took her two years to pass grade ten and another two years to pass grade eleven. In 1979, she finally graduated.



Debbie at age 5.

After graduation, Debbie took some journalism courses at Memorial University's Extension Department. Extension courses are not like regular university courses. You do not get credits for them that can count towards a degree. Debbie did journalism for a year and a half. She had very little confidence. She felt that she didn't have enough background to succeed. She knew that she could never do speech therapy or primary education. She would have too much catching up to do. "I knew that if I went to university," Debbie says, "I would have to spend a lot of money. It would probably take me two or three tries to get my degree. I felt it wasn't worth it. I decided to look elsewhere."

Debbie is not happy about the education she received in institutions. She believes that the government only went through the motions of giving the disabled an education. She thinks that many of her teachers were not well qualified. Some of her less disabled friends stayed at the Rehab Centre for three or four months while they were being treated. When they went back to their regular school, they were far behind the other students. "I think there was a feeling in the government that kids like me weren't going to accomplish anything anyway," says Debbie. "So why bother with us?" Debbie has had to fight the same attitudes

all her life. "Many people still think that if you have a physical disability you don't have any intelligence. They think you can't talk or do anything for yourself. If I want to buy a sweater in a department store, and I have my VISA card out ready to pay, the clerk still wants to deal with the person I'm with. It's like they don't see me. Or don't want to see me. I even run into it at work. There are people there whose jobs I could do in 70 percent less time. This is because of my experience. But I've heard some supervisors say things like, 'She's never going to get anywhere.' And do you know the sad part? They don't *want* me to get anywhere."

Work History

Debbie always wanted to work. It was important to her to keep busy. She wanted to pay her own way. When she was a child she was always the first to volunteer for the Easter Seal Campaign or the March of Dimes.

Debbie's first paying jobs were at the Children's Rehab Centre and the Hoyles Home. She worked on the switchboard and at the Front Desk. For nine months she also worked at the Hub, a service centre for the disabled. She worked in the library organizing material. After that, she coordinated a paper conservation project for Memorial University.



Debbie with Rick Hansen

Working at the Constabulary

In September, 1981, Debbie went to work at the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary as a switchboard operator. She did not even apply for the job. A man who knew her work at the Hoyles Home told the people at the Constabulary about her. Debbie has been working there ever since.

Debbie knew from her very first day on the job that some people did not think a disabled person should be working there. "I had only been working a couple of hours," she says, "when one of my co-workers said to me, 'They don't want you here, you know. You're not going to last.'" Debbie laughs. "I just took it as a challenge. And sixteen years later I *am* still there."

For her first ten years at the Constabulary, Debbie worked on the switchboard. But for the last six years, she has been the receptionist. "As receptionist, my job is more interesting and detailed," she says. "Anyone who comes into the building looking for police assistance usually speaks to me first. I decide who they should see. People come in for all kinds of reasons, from murder to shoplifting. I'm what's known as a frontline worker."

Never a Dull Moment

Debbie's job can be dangerous. Sometimes people call in and threaten her. She has even blocked the main door with her wheelchair to prevent people from escaping. Once when she was on her own she got a call from a policeman. He told her that he had reason to believe that a dangerous criminal was on his way to the station with a gun. The policeman told Debbie to lock the doors. But the doors were too heavy for Debbie to close by herself. She was lucky the man didn't turn up. Sometimes people come into the station and throw things around. Some people actually *want* to get arrested. Once a woman who wanted to go to a different institution threw an ashtray at Debbie. When she thinks about it, Debbie just shrugs. "I'm not bothered by things like that," she says. "God knows, those people have their own problems."



Debbie shows her fun side.

Dealing with the Public

Every day at work Debbie is reminded that she has a disability. Some people who come to the reception area don't want to talk to her. The scene is usually the same. It goes something like this:

"I want to see someone," the person says.

Debbie says, "Yes? How can I help you?"

There will be a pause while the person sizes Debbie up.

"No, I want to see someone," they say again.

"Yes?" Debbie repeats. "What can I do for you?"

"Sometimes that scene can go on for a long time," says Debbie. "What the person is really saying, is that *you* can't help me. I want to speak to a *person*."

Some people find it hard to believe that she even works at the Constabulary. Usually Debbie doesn't mind. She is used to it. But if it's a bad or busy day it can be frustrating. "There's nothing worse than having to spend three extra minutes trying to convince someone that I can help them," she says. "And the funny thing is that when they finally do see an officer, the officer often asks me where they should go or what form they should fill out."

People on Parole

Debbie also coordinates the parole section at the Constabulary. People on parole have been convicted of a crime but have been released before serving their full sentence. People who are out on parole must report to her monthly. She lets the Chief's office know whether or not they are turning up when they should. She also deals with people who have to report to

the Constabulary on a daily or weekly basis. "They report to me," says Debbie, "and I coordinate that as well. So if someone is on a court order and they fail to appear when they're supposed to, I'll notify an officer. If that happens, they are arrested and charged with a breach." Some of the people who report to Debbie have been charged with murder and are waiting to be tried in court. Others have been convicted and are out on parole. "In this job," says Debbie, "you never know who you will be talking to."

Opportunities for Improvement

For the most part, Debbie enjoys working at the Constabulary. She says that she has been well treated. But she has not always been treated fairly. In her sixteen years working there, she has had only one promotion. And that wasn't much. When she worked on the switchboard she was classified as a GS11. Now she is a GS15. "Not to be rude," she says, "but my new position is only one step higher than a janitor. And janitor is the lowest step in the job classifications at the provincial government." Her new job pays just \$20 a week more than her old one. But it's not the money that upsets Debbie. "I want to have a more interesting, challenging position," she says. "But I'm not given enough chances." Debbie believes that the people who make the decisions at the Constabulary think that her disability makes it impossible for her to do more demanding jobs. Debbie disagrees. "I believe 100 percent that if I physically can't do a job, then I shouldn't get it—and I don't even want it. Why should I? But I'd like a chance to prove that I can or can't do it. But at the Constabulary that seems to be impossible."

Once Debbie applied for a job as a dispatcher in the Constabulary's Telephone Recording Centre. The dispatchers take reports from people either on the phone or in person. When Debbie applied for the job, she had to do a test with five questions. One of the questions had to do with someone who was being battered. It asked how the dispatcher would handle the situation. Where should the battered person be sent? The person who corrected the tests told Debbie that her answers were by far the best. He was very impressed. He wanted to know how she knew so much. "I told him that it was because of my volunteer work in the community. But I didn't get selected in the top twelve," says Debbie. "They still felt I couldn't do the job." Debbie believes that her bosses assumed she couldn't physically handle the job. "But they didn't discuss that with me," she says. "If they were worried about the computer I had to use, I could have told them that I just needed a different type of terminal. Or we could put the three parts of the computer in a row instead of having them on top of each other. But it was no use. I was never given the chance."

Volunteering and the Future

Debbie Prim is never bored. Besides her work at the Constabulary she sits on two national and seven provincial boards. The Independent Living Resource Centre of Civic #4, the Wheelchair Sports Association, COD (the Consumer Organization for the Disabled) and the Spinal Cord Injury Association are just a few. She is also the president of the Hub.

Like most people, Debbie has an eye on the future. She is not hopeful that she will be promoted at the Constabulary. She is not even sure that her job will be there much longer. "What I would really like to do," she says, "is start my own public relations company. I'd like to organize exhibitions, concerts and promotions." Debbie is sure that she can do this kind of work. She has lots of experience. When the wheelchair athlete Rick Hansen came to

Newfoundland in 1986, Debbie organized his tour. She still does work for Rick Hansen in Newfoundland. "I'm good at organizing," she says. "Just recently, I organized a national conference in Ottawa. It was very successful and I did it all from here. I guess I picked up a lot of the skills from my volunteer work and sitting on so many boards. I can handle anything from a bake sale to a Celine Dion concert. I know what needs to be done. Or if I don't know, I know someone who does." She has also made a lot of contacts over the years. She has met the chief executives of Air Canada, Esso and McDonald's. She would like to move to Vancouver to start her business. "I have a lot of friends and family there," she says. "And if you're in a wheelchair it's much easier to get around. Even most of the buses are accessible."

Debbie Prim leads her life according to a simple idea. "If you have a goal you should go for it," she says. "No matter who you are, the sky is the limit. Never let anyone stop you from reaching for the stars."



The rights of the disabled were never far from Debbie's mind.

Conclusion

Charlie Boddie and Debbie Prim are special people. They are also rare. Many people with disabilities never get a full-time, paying job. Many are forced to live on social assistance. Like Debbie, those who do work often have to deal with negative attitudes. Luckily, these attitudes are changing. But there is always more that can be done. When more of the disabled move into the work place, all society will benefit.

Afterword

This essay begins with the idea that, for all of us, the future is filled with uncertainty. This was especially true for Debbie Prim. She would never get the chance to move to Vancouver and start her promotions company. On February 24th, 1998, not long after the interview on which this essay is based was held, Debbie died in St. John's of lung failure.

During her short life Debbie worked hard and long for the rights of the disabled. She touched a great many people. Her funeral—held at the Basilica, the largest church in St. John's—was packed. All her life she continued to reach for the stars. Debbie Prim was an inspiration to all and her legacy will live on.

Sources:

This article is based on interviews with Charlie Boddie and Debbie Prim.

Chance and Luck: Questions for Discussion

Charlie's Story: Pushing for the Limit

1. Why was Charlie an average student in school?
2. What was Charlie's favourite sport? Why?
3. Who were the Crazy Canucks?

Education

1. What were some of Charlie's jobs when he left university?
2. Why did Charlie like working for Moore Business Forms?
3. Describe Charlie's life when he was working for Moore Business Forms.

July 19th, 1992: The Accident

1. Why was Charlie motocross racing in PEI?
2. Describe Charlie's emotional state right after the accident.
3. How did Charlie face his rehabilitation?

Endings and Beginnings

1. Why do you think Charlie's first wife left him? How did he handle it?
2. How did Charlie's brother John help him?

New Directions: A Baby and a Daycare Centre

1. Why didn't Charlie go back to university to become a psychologist?
2. What is the name of Charlie and Tammy's daycare centre? When did it open?
3. Why is the daycare centre successful? How many spaces do they have?
4. What is Charlie's main job with the daycare? Was he good at this work right from the beginning?
5. Who is Emma?
6. Charlie always says that he's "a very lucky man." Why does he say this? How would you feel if you were in his position?

Debbie Prim

Debbie's Story: Polio

1. When did Debbie become ill with polio?
2. How did the polio affect Debbie physically?
3. What is an iron lung?
4. When did Debbie first go to work?
5. What were some of Debbie's early dreams?

Education

1. How did Debbie's education differ from most people's?
2. Why did Debbie find going to Holy Heart a "real struggle?"
3. What does Debbie mean when she says that disabled students are often just "pushed through?"
4. Why did Debbie quit her journalism course?
5. Why does Debbie feel that the government didn't care very much about educating the disabled?

Work History

1. Describe some of Debbie's first jobs.
2. Why was Debbie so eager to work?

Working at the Constabulary

1. Describe how Debbie was treated by some of her co-workers when she first started at the Constabulary.
2. Describe Debbie's job as receptionist.

Never a Dull Moment

1. How does Debbie handle the dangerous parts of her job?
2. Why do some people want to get arrested?

Dealing with the Public

1. Why do you think that some people find it hard to believe that Debbie works at the Constabulary?
2. How do you think you would treat Debbie if you needed information at the Constabulary?

People on Parole

1. What is "parole?"
2. What happens if someone on parole does not report to Debbie?
3. How does Debbie handle dealing with the people on parole? Does it bother her?

Opportunities for Improvement

1. How many promotions has Debbie had at the Constabulary? Is this fair?
2. Why does Debbie want to get promoted?
3. What stops Debbie from getting promoted?
4. Do you think she would have made a good telephone dispatcher?

Volunteering and the Future

1. Name some of the volunteer boards that Debbie sits on.
2. What are some of Debbie's dreams for the future?
3. Do you think she would be good at public relations? Why?

Conclusion

1. Many disabled people do not have good, full-time jobs. Why? What can be done to help them?
2. What is the most important thing that has led to the success of Charlie and Debbie?

Recycling Made Easy: Cash from Trash

Marian Frances White

Word List

Environment: Everything around us, both indoors and outdoors.

Non-Traditional Work: Work that is different from what most people do for a living. Usually refers to work that traditionally was not done by women.

Depot: A place for storing goods (pronounced depo).

Recycle: To reuse part of a product or thing.

Market Survey: Questions asked to see if a product will work or sell.

Competition: Two or more people working at the same thing.

Fleece: Fuzzy material made from wool or recycled plastic.

Complement: To work well together.

Ledger: A book to keep a financial record of your business.

Principles: Ideas that help people decide what they think is right.

One Person's Garbage Is Another Person's Treasure

Everyday we use paper, cans, plastic bottles, glass jars and many other household items. Most of us throw our empty containers into the garbage. At least once a week, garbage collectors pick up all our household garbage to take to a garbage dump. Over the years, garbage dumps have grown so big that they have become a major problem for cities and towns.

In this story, Jenine Piller tells us why she began a recycling business. The story also tells us how she makes her living from other people's garbage. Jenine is hoping you will not throw away your left over containers for two reasons. One, she knows that by recycling we can cut down on the amount of garbage in our environment. Two, she can make a living for her and her children from your garbage.

Jenine spends most of her day collecting other people's garbage. She gets lots of physical exercise and fresh air. Thanks to Jenine and others like her, our garbage dumps now have less cardboard, paper, cans, plastic and glass. Her work is important because it helps clean

up our environment. She also provides a helpful service to those who are too busy to go to a recycling depot, or do not have a way to get there.

Jenine is very devoted to her work. She believes recycling will make a difference. Her work keeps her very busy. We had to change the date two or three times, before we could do this interview. Finally, we sat down to talk about her non-traditional work as a woman who collects garbage.

Finding Her Way Home

Jenine Piller grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan and lived for ten years near the oil fields of Alberta. In the early nineties, Jenine and her family moved to Grand Falls, Newfoundland. In 1993, Jenine, her husband and her three children moved to St. John's.

This is how she felt when she first arrived on the island:

"It may sound strange, but when I landed here a voice inside me said, 'At last Jenine you have come home'. I was only in Grand Falls six months when I felt I had lived there all my life. Since then, I feel I am rooted here and belong on this island. Good things keep happening to me."

"I go back to Saskatchewan and Alberta to visit my family when I can, but I am always glad when I get on the air plane to come home. My three children, ages eleven, fourteen and sixteen, would get very upset if I talked of moving away. They have made Newfoundland their home and hopefully one day they will have careers that will keep them here."

I asked Jenine to tell me why she decided to make a career out of recycling. This is how it all began.

Trash Talk

First when we moved to St. John's we lived in the St. Philips area. Some mornings I would go down to Beechy Cove. This Saturday morning it was really sunny and I thought that it would be a beautiful time to go and sit by the ocean. I went down there and it was covered in beer bottles and cans. I was too upset to sit by the ocean, so I called out to my kids, "Hey, kids, do you want to make some money?"

We collected all the bottles and brought them to a recycling depot where they got their money. Whenever I go back to the beach I take a pail to pick up the broken glass. I want to enjoy the natural beauty around me without the garbage and glass. I have always gone back to that memory when I need to remind myself why this work is important. As soon as I knew I could recycle things, I did. Nobody had to tell me why, but I did have to learn how.

When I first moved to Newfoundland, I had several jobs co-ordinating various community projects. Part of my job was to apply for all types of funding for these projects. This meant I had to fill out lots of applications. It also meant I had the opportunity to discuss career development with my co-workers. I would often bring up the idea of starting your own

business. I soon discovered that starting your own business was more for me than for anybody else.

I began my recycling business as my marriage was breaking up. It taught me what we can do when we have to. In Newfoundland it is not easy to find steady work. I worked at Co-op Housing and that was one of the first areas cut when the federal government cut community programs in the mid nineties. We tried to work under the provincial government, but the funding ran out. I was without work.

We're Talking Garbage Here – The Business Plan

I decided to take a business course at Memorial University. As a part of that course I had to do a research paper on any topic I wanted. Part of that paper had to include a market survey to see if there was any interest in the business I wanted to set up. At that time I was thinking about composting. I liked the idea of reusing all your kitchen scraps to make soil. I had never done a market survey before, but that paper taught me a lot.

The more I talked with people, the more the need for recycling came up. Many people talked about the need to have their empty bottles and papers picked up. They did not have time to go to a recycling depot, or they did not have a car to take them there. The light went on in my head. BING! I can do that. So I changed my idea from composting to recycling.

In the business plan and market survey, I had to do several things. I had to describe my business idea, and I had to name my goal in setting up this business. I also had to figure out how much it would cost and how much I would make. In other words, could I make a go of it on my own? As a single mother, my work meant our survival.

Marketing was a big part of this business plan. I had to do research to see if there would be a lot of competition for my business. My biggest competitor for trash at that time was Robin Hood Bay where all the city garbage is dumped. I also had to find out if anyone else had started a recycling business. This would tell me if there was a need for a pick up recycling business. When I was mid way through my planning, I found out that a couple of students in Corner Brook had set up a recycling pick up program, but that was just for the summer. I felt there was room to grow. The business plan is a skeleton to let you know if you should go ahead with your plans or not. I decided to go ahead and see where all this garbage would take me.

At the same time, the business course gave me a lot of confidence in communicating with people. My professor told me I would do well in public speaking and he encouraged me in my work plan. I deal with the public every day, so that involves a lot of talk. You would be surprised at how much gets said while passing over a bag full of tin cans.

Cash from Trash

From the beginning of my work plan, I knew I wanted to start a business that would pick up all household goods that are recyclable. I looked at how I could build my customers. I learned pretty fast that it is almost impossible to know how anything will turn out. The most

you can do is be prepared. Because this is a service industry, funding from government or other sources is not available. I did get my unemployment extended for a full year through HRD (Human Resources Development). That was great because it gave me time to set up this business. While there is not a lot of funding in the service industry, there is a lot of room to develop new products made from recycled plastic and pop cans. There is a growing market for recycled products.

Making a Difference

From my research I could see that the business of recycling would grow, but not so big that I would not be able to handle it. I am not getting rich, but I work full-time and I now have two other employees. These workers sort all the paper, cans, containers, glass and plastic while I go around town collecting more.

If you stop to think about it, this work can only get better. This is not just for me, but for everyone. Besides, what are our options? I do not think we can keep throwing out everything we use and just go on as if the earth can recycle it without our help. So the more people realize this, the more work I will have. If you want to take home a \$60,000 a year salary, this work is not for you, but I pay the bills and feel good about what I do at the same time.

Hassle Free Recycling

The first thing I did when I set up my business was get hundreds of flyers printed. The name of my business, *Atlantic Blue Recycling*, was printed on the front. The flyers told how my business worked and how others could get involved. I offered customers a hassle free or simple way to get rid of anything they could recycle. I charged each customer \$6.00 to pick up their waste. I brought the flyers door to door.

To get the word out that there was money to be made in recycling, I also did interviews for the radio, TV and for newspapers. But I found that it was not enough to just put flyers in the door or mailbox. Many people forget about flyers in their mailbox. I had to make a lot of follow-up phone calls.

The Bottle Return Program

In 1996, when the government brought in a bottle return program, everything changed for me. Evergreen Recycling stopped taking many of the products I brought them. They were now mainly interested in bottles that could be returned for cash. The bottle return program charges six cents on every beverage container that you buy. Three cents is given back when the container is returned to a store or recycling depot.

Before the bottle return program, I would bring all my materials to Evergreen Recycling, a project of the Waterford Hospital. There people sorted it and passed it on to Nova Recycling. At Nova it was crushed and prepared for new products. Now this would no longer work. I had to think of another way to serve my customers who were paying me to pick up their recyclables. I knew there was still a market for paper and plastic. I had no choice but to expand.

A Growing Industry

I found a warehouse on O'Leary Avenue and hired two people to sort all the material that I collect. There was no way I could have done all the work myself. I not only survived the change in the recycling programs, but my business began to grow. It was difficult at first. I had to learn to sort and train others to sort too. You have to be quick at this or you lose a lot of time.

The bad thing about getting the warehouse and the sorters was that I had to raise my price \$10.00 a pick up, plus HST. Some customers didn't like the price hike. I didn't like it either, but I had no choice if I was going to expand and keep two sorters employed. I lost some customers, but some came back to me after they realized how much they could recycle with Atlantic Blue. Until towns and cities set up a good recycling program for all citizens, I am the only one offering this service.

MORE! MORE! MORE!

We pick-up and recycle more than any of the collection sites.

WE ARE THE ONLY SERVICE THAT RECYCLES TIN CANS!

- paper - colour
- glass - computer
- flex - roll and hand
- beer, liquor & wine bottles
- recyclables/tyres
- junk mail & envelopes
- extra pads (extra houses)
- glass & plastic beverage containers
- cardboard
- magnets, journals & books
- beer & pop cans
- shopping bags
- household plastics (1&2)

PICK-UP SERVICE

Reasons to start recycling with Atlantic Blue Recycling now:
You **get** free when you take out your garbage!
We accept more so you can do other than to generate Newfoundland's resources.
We pick-up every two weeks - no other city can offer us recycling in town!
We do the sorting for you and in the process, we're providing jobs.
We supply the recycling bags.
We save you time. Why waste your valuable time time parking, loading and unloading?
We're committed to solving the global problem of excess waste.
We are a locally owned and operated company.
LESS THAN \$30 A DAY!
Residential service - \$15.00 week + HST
ATLANTIC BLUE RECYCLING
CALL 726-BLUE (TIN) TODAY

Making T-Shirts out of Pop Bottles

Nova Recycling takes all the material we have sorted to their warehouse on Portugal Cove Rd. It is prepared there and packaged to be shipped to another manufacturer. I find it amazing that carpets and even some types of fleece for sweatshirts are made from plastic pop bottles. Our two businesses complement one another and that's good for both of us. But I take more trash than Nova recycles. For example, I also take tin cans. In 1997, I found a market for all soup cans, pet food cans and other canned products. That's great for people who want to recycle everything they can.

A Day in the Life of a Recycler

I get up early every morning and get ready for the day while my kids get ready for school. Before I go out on my daily rounds, I make some business calls, check messages from the day before and return calls. I do my pick ups everyday and the time this takes changes from day to day. I have a prepared sheet that tells me where I have to go to do my pick ups. I have to be well organized or I waste too much time and gas going all over the place.

I pick up recyclables in one area on Monday and another area on Tuesday. I have a calendar that I give to all my customers. On it I circle the days I will come by to do pick ups. I go to each household twice a month. I use clear blue plastic bags for my pick up around town, so I can see at a glance what is inside the bag. I can also make sure that what I am picking up is recyclable. The bags are usually all ready for me in front of their door. I try to keep track of how many bags I give customers and how many they fill in return. I keep my customers supplied with bags, though there are a few people who refuse to use plastic at all.

Billing day is the last pick up day in the month, so I have to have the invoices prepared for customers. I use a self-addressed envelope, and I put their name in the corner. In that way

they can reuse the envelope and save on trees. I don't know why all billing companies do not use this type of envelope. If they did there would be a lot less paper thrown away. I pick up the payment the next time I pick up the recyclables.

When my truck is full of recyclable material, I go back to the warehouse to drop it off. The biggest thing I recycle is cardboard, but I make the most money on the beverage containers.

It still surprises me how many pop cans and bottles are thrown away. In Prince Edward Island no beverage containers are brought into the island. They are recycled from those already used there. I think this is a good policy and would work really well on this island. It will take a lot of people asking the government to take more action before this happens.



Jenine Piller

Getting the Word Out — Marketing your Product

You can never market your product too much. I learned the hard way that what you do always has to be seen by the public. There was a time when I felt I had done enough marketing, so I cut down on that side of the business. Before I knew it, business was at a standstill. I quickly printed more flyers and started talking to the media about the fact that we needed more material to recycle. Advertising costs a lot of money, but without it your business will not grow. If we promoted the environment in ads as much as we do cars and fast foods, it would be a cleaner world. I really do believe that. People need to see garbage dumps and the tons of waste that gets thrown out and left for the seagulls to tear apart.

My biggest market is the home consumer. When I first started my work recycling, I only went to private homes for customers. Then some of these customers told me there was no recycling at their offices. I called their offices and my customer base grew from home to business. Some offices are really committed to recycling, but I have others that have started and cancelled because they see it as a hassle. They are not committed to improving their work environment or our world environment. Then there are schools that have excellent recycling programs. If more schools and offices did this, I would have a much larger business, and I would have to hire more people.

Growing Strong with the Business

I remember my very first pick up. My daughter came with me because she didn't have to go to school that day. I had packed a big lunch for us. I thought we would be out for hours and hours, but we were done in an hour. Just a little while ago my son came with me on a run and he turned to me and said: "This is really a good thing you are doing Mom." They see all the joys and sorrows of running your own business.

One thing that has really helped me run my business is all my bookkeeping experience from various jobs I had earlier in my life. I did accounting and bookkeeping. I don't use a computer for accounting. It doesn't work for me. Studies have shown that with computers, paper usage has increased by 100%, so I prefer to use the ledger for my business records.

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

Six years ago I could not do what I can do today. I have grown with the business and that also means I am physically stronger today because of all the bags I lift. When I started this work, I was diagnosed with MS or Multiple Sclerosis. I don't know why, but that seems to have disappeared. I made a lot of changes in my diet and took some natural remedies. I also believe that getting all this fresh air and exercise everyday is the best thing I could have done for my health.



Jenine with her truck.

Making a Difference

"We are not the masters of nature, or even its caretakers. We are a part of nature."
- Dr. Karl-Henrik Roberts from Sweden

I do not think we have any choice but to recycle. The volume of garbage is too large for nature to break down. Recycling offers us an alternative. Karl-Henrik Roberts is an inspiration to me. He sees recycling as a way to return to the earth some of the things we have taken from it, rather than just getting the garbage out of sight. We are given a lot of information about the problems in our environment, but most of us feel we cannot do anything about it. Recycling is one way to help out. We will all feel the results of environmental neglect, so I believe in acting now before it is too late.

I have often asked myself, what is the goal of my business? I am working in one small area of a large island. If I think beyond that to making a difference in Canada, or in the world, it makes me think we can all make a difference if we try.

The Four R's of Recycling

There are four R's to recycling. Reduce, reuse, recycle. But the fourth one is perhaps the most important — *refuse*. Since I began working in the recycling business, I have become more aware of the amount of waste there is when we buy new products. Imagine all the plastic bags a large store uses in one day. Then imagine how long one cotton bag would last if the store offered it for reuse. Take-out food is another good example. All of us buy take-out food every now and again. So much of it is served in styrofoam containers that are not recyclable at all. Today I recycle a lot more than I did six or seven years ago.

Until we push ourselves to become more aware of the need to recycle, things will not change very fast. We have to recycle for ourselves, our children and our planet. Once businesses start to reduce, reuse and recycle they quickly realize they are more efficient. Pollution is waste. Waste costs money, and businesses do not like to lose money. I think there are always options for us, and we are the ones who choose how we want to live on this planet.

What Makes me Feel Good

I remember one day I was going about my business and picking up these big bags of cans and throwing them into the van. This older man came up behind me and said,

"I didn't think women did that kind of work."

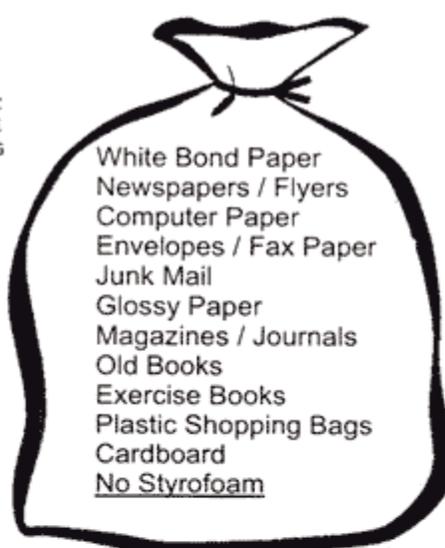
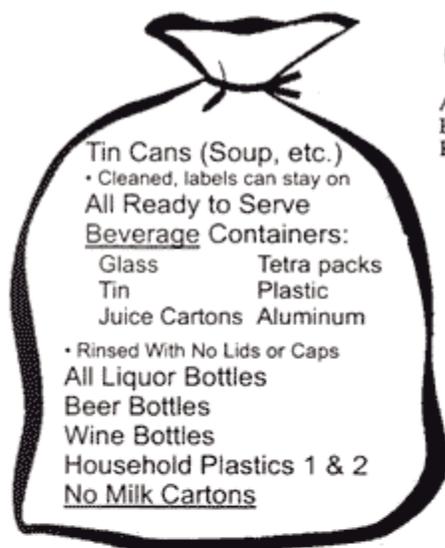
I slung the bag over my shoulders and said, "Well it's the nineties," and hopped up in my van and drove away. I looked back in the rear view mirror and could see him shake his head as if to say, "Now I've seen it all".

One of the things I like most about my work is all the different people I meet. I have had people share their personal stories with me on their doorstep. I never expected that. I remember this man had lost his job and he was really down. I told him to hang in there, we all have tough times some times. A month later he called to thank me and said:

"You don't know how much you made my day. I got a new job and I'm now back on my feet." That made me feel really good. Actually, a lot of things about this work makes me feel real good.

Sources:

1. Personal Interview with Jenine Piller by Marian Frances White, April, 1998.
2. Newspaper article: "Recycler provides home pickup service", *The Evening Telegram*, 18 January 1995, p. 22.
3. Magazine article: "Educating A Nation: The Natural Step" by Karl-Henrik Robert, *In Context*, No.28, 10 April, 1994, p.10-15.
4. *The Sacred Balance, Rediscovering Our Place In Nature* by David Suzuki.



**Please ensure your materials are clean and dry.
 Please have your materials out by 8:30 am on your scheduled day.**

May 1998	June 1998	July 1998	August 1998
S M T W T F S 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
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Atlantic Blue Recycling Pick Up Service

29 Cambridge Ave., St. John's, NF A1A 3N7

We appreciate your efforts in doing your part to protect and preserve our Newfoundland Environment.
 If you have any questions please call 726-BLUE (2583)

Recycling Made Easy: Questions for Discussion

One Person's Garbage is Another Person's Treasure

1. What is one of the biggest problems in our cities and towns today?
2. What can you recycle that you use everyday?
3. What is Jenine Piller's work?
4. Name two reasons why you should give Jenine your garbage.

Finding her Way Home

1. Where did Jenine Piller grow up?
2. When did she come to Newfoundland and where did she live?
3. Why did she feel at home in Newfoundland?

Trash Talk

1. Why did Jenine make a career out of recycling?
2. What kind of work did Jenine do before she began a recycling business?

We're Talking Garbage Here

1. What did Jenine Piller study at Memorial University?
2. What did she have to do in this business course?
3. Did she have any competitors for her recycling business?
4. What were her skills?

Cash For Trash

1. What service does Jenine's business offer to the public?
2. Name some of the things she picks up for recycling.
3. What did Jenine do to help her business grow?
4. What are some things that can be made from recycled plastic?

Making a Difference

1. Do you agree with Jenine when she says that we cannot keep throwing away all our garbage? If so, why?
2. Does she make a living by recycling garbage?
3. Is Jenine only doing this for herself?

Hassle Free Recycling

1. What is the name of Jenine's business?
2. Jenine did two things to promote her business. What were they?
3. In 1996, what program did the government bring in?
4. How did this program change Jenine's work?
5. What did she decide to do when Evergreen Recycling did not take her material?

A Growth Industry

1. Where did Jenine set up Atlantic Blue Recycling?
2. How many people help her and what do they do?
3. Why did she raise her prices and what did her customers think?

Making T-Shirts out of Pop Bottles

1. How do Nova Recycling and Atlantic Blue Recycling work together?
2. Does Jenine's business recycle other things that Nova Recycling does not?
3. Name some things that Atlantic Blue Recycling will take from your home or business?

A Day in the Life of a Recycler

1. What does she do during her work day?
2. Name two things that she does every month.
3. Do we bottle our own beverages in Newfoundland?
4. Name one Atlantic province that makes its own beverage containers.

Getting the Word Out

1. Who are Jenine's biggest customers?
2. What does she collect most in her pick ups?
3. What does she make the most money collecting and why?
4. How can businesses and schools add to her growing business?

Growing Strong with the Business

1. What is one thing that has helped Jenine in her recycling business?
2. Is Jenine's work good or bad for her health?
3. What does she like about her work?

Making a Difference

1. Is the growing amount of garbage a problem for our environment?
2. Can we make a difference? If so, what is one thing we can do for the environment when we go shopping?
3. What are the four R's of recycling? Explain.

This Work Makes me Feel Good

1. Why is Jenine's work called a non-traditional job?
2. Why did the man shake his head when he saw Jenine drive away in her van?
3. What does Jenine like most about her work?
4. Why does her work make her feel good?

All About Patrick

Kathryn Welbourn

Before you read

1. Did you quit school?
2. Why did you quit?
3. How did your family feel about your decision to quit?
4. How did quitting school affect your life.
5. If you had a child who wanted to quit school today, what would you tell them?

Introduction

Most people would rather work than be unemployed. Most people want high-paying jobs doing work they like, not the kind of jobs you get if you drop out of school. But if this is true, why have so many Newfoundlanders quit school in the past. Why are they still dropping out today?

The following statistics are from information gathered by the provincial education department. They show how many students quit school just before the cod moratorium in 1992 and how many students have dropped out since. They also show some reasons why students quit in the 1995-1996 school year.

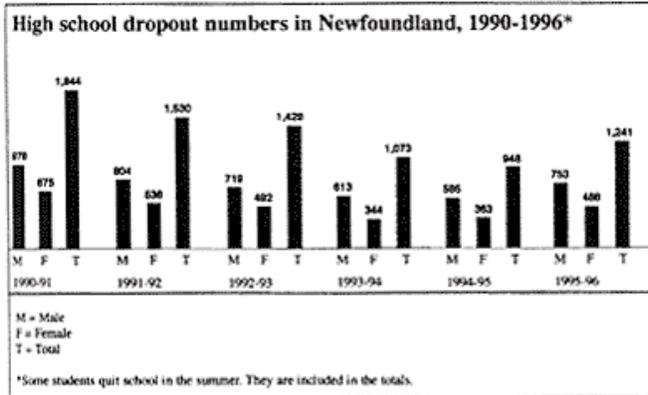
Statistics don't lie, but they don't tell the whole story. For example, it looks like less students have dropped out of school since the cod moratorium. But this graph doesn't show that there are also less students enrolling in school. So there may not be much of a change in quitting at all.

The reasons for quitting are interesting. But they only tell us a little about why students dropped out. They don't tell us how they tried to change their situation or how their families feel about their decision to quit. Statistics are just numbers. Behind those numbers are real people with problems and reasons for acting the way they do.

This is the story of one of those statistics. Patrick is a young man who quit school in grade 11. He was in special classes where you don't get credits and you can't go to college even if you graduate. The school sent him on a work program just before he quit. He was a janitor at a hotel. He didn't get paid for being a janitor. Schools send students on work programs to get experience not money.

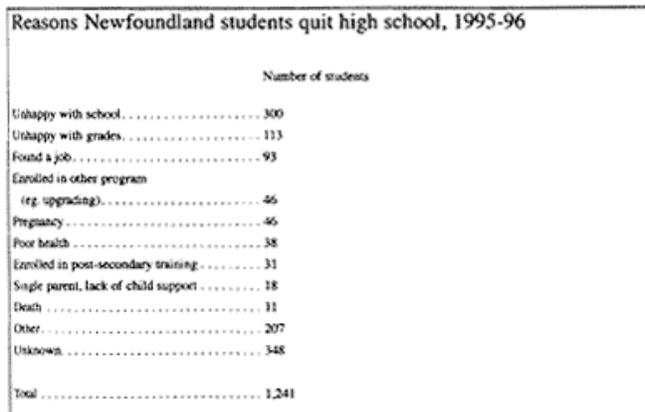
Patrick lives in a small rural town. He lives in his parents' home. Patrick delivers *The Evening Telegram*. He does odd jobs for the neighbours like shoveling snow, painting fences and chopping firewood. He works all the time. But he doesn't make much money.

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People who know Patrick like him very much. But Patrick knows they don't take him seriously. They just look at him and shake their heads. They don't know everything about Patrick, though. He has a secret talent. He writes country and western songs. It gives him something to dream about.

Patrick's decision to quit school and his problems finding a good job also affect his family and his community. This is what his father says about it.



Patrick? Jumping Jesus! He's my son all right. But I don't know what to make of him. Twenty years old and no job to speak of. I was out of the house and on my own before I was 16. And work. I worked at everything. I started off as a janitor down at the government offices. That was good pay. I went in at night. So there was no one watching me. No boss. I did my job and then I went home.

When I got married I took my turn at fishing. I went in my brother's boat, and buddy that was freedom. It was hard work and cold. My hands used to blister up and my legs would get stiff from hauling nets. But out there...no one to bother you. No one telling you what to do or when to do it.

I wanted to get my own boat but when we started having kids I gave it up. No money. Marg and I had five, one right after the other. That's when I started in at the ferry. I work two weeks on, two weeks off, directing cars and tying lines. I sleep on the boat when I'm working. Gets on my nerves, but it's part of the job.

I've been cold every day since I started in at that. It's all the waiting around for the boat to come back and the tying up and the cars. The cold gets right in you and it just stays there.

But Patrick, I don't know what to say about that. He tries. You've got to give him that. He doesn't bother his mother to take him out with those papers when there's weather either. Not like some of my other sons. They're always coming here and taking food, lying around watching television and fighting with their girlfriends. It's enough to boil you, the way they get on. The Jesus television. I'm going to haul it out into the yard and they can watch it out there...like a drive-in movie. And lazy. I don't know what they think they're doing. They all moved out. But they never went away.

I was telling about Patrick. All that book learning gone to waste. You've got to have a piece of paper to ride on the garbage truck these days. Not like when I started off. I don't know why he quit his schooling. I didn't ask him. Someone looked at him the wrong way I suppose. He's proud, that one.

Is he like me? We both like country music, Hank Williams and all the old ones, the real singers. We watch that together sometimes on the country channel. Do I love him? What the Jesus am I suppose to say to that? He's my son, isn't he? I put a word in for him down at the new fish plant. That's enough.

What His Mother Says

I always say my worst turned out to be my best. That's what I say about Patrick. When he was in school you couldn't do anything with him. Always fussing and fighting with his father. I had some time keeping the two of them apart. The way he was getting on I thought I was going to have to kick him out. He was driving his father crazy. Always on the phone, talking back, slamming doors. They're like one person the two of them—black and moody at times and right nice a minute later.

I told the school not to kick Patrick out. I told them, "You'll only be giving him what he wants." They had him in this special class. They said he couldn't do the regular work. I didn't know what to think about that. Patrick is as bright as they come, but you couldn't do anything with him. When Patrick told me he wanted to get into the regular classes I phoned the school. I talked to his teacher. But their attitude was — they know best.

The worst was the time he was sent home for interrupting classes. I got the call in the afternoon.

"What did he do this time?" I asked.

"Well, ma'am" they said to me. "He was walking down the halls barking like a dog and clucking like a chicken."

I had to laugh at that. I could just see him with his neck going in and out like an old chicken. I say the teachers didn't know how to take Patrick. He's quick with the wisecracks, like his mother. And then he's from the cove. Do they treat them different than the other kids, I wonder?

When they sent Patrick on that work experience to the hotel I had some hopes for him then. I thought at least he might get a regular job out of it, make some money for himself. But oh no, he was having no part of it. I just couldn't understand it. And then, after me trying so hard to keep the school from kicking him out, Patrick quit.

I didn't get much schooling myself. But I tried to help all my children with their homework. I had some time getting them all up in the morning for school. When they quit, I drove them to put in applications for jobs. I can't do any more than that. My other sons just keep coming home. They want everything from us. They don't even look for work.

I can't understand it. My husband is worn out from working. If he's not on the boats, he's working at the house. He built this house one room at a time. It's all done now. I told him, he's going to have to put on a third story, just to keep them from under my feet. But the boys, they can't get out of their own way. You can't blame them in a way. There's not much chance of them getting anything around here when there's grown men with nothing to do.

My youngest is still in school. He is going to graduate, that one. He sees how bad Patrick feels just delivering the papers and living home.

Since he quit school Patrick is like a different person. He settled right down. He helps me around the house. He doesn't get into it with his father. He doesn't ask us for anything. I see him sitting out back reading books by himself. He never goes out with any young people. Just stays in his room. Girls? Well, he's like his father that way. He's only ever loved one and she wants nothing to do with him.

I don't know what's going to become of him. It hurts me to see how bad he feels. I told you, he's my best. I hope he gets that job at the plant. He's a man now. He needs something for himself.

What His Neighbour Says

I love that boy. Well, I guess he's not really a boy any longer. I love his mother too. They've been really good to my family. I hire Patrick every chance I get. Last year I had a baby. If it wasn't for Patrick we would have been cold all winter. I had no time for splitting wood. I paid him to do it. He always does a good job.



When he was in school I used to help him with his homework. He always knew the answers. I never really understood why he wasn't in the regular classes. I had a feeling his teachers just wrote him off. I know he was a troublemaker. But I was a troublemaker when I was a teenager and I was still allowed to stay in the regular classes. My Dad was a teacher. The school wouldn't have dared put me down a level.

I wasn't surprised when Patrick quit. He was an angry young man, and no wonder. I think he felt ashamed of being in those classes. He told me when he did the work term the manager of the hotel gave him a free pen. I didn't say anything. But I can't believe the schools are sending children out to work for free. What does that tell them about themselves? What does that tell them about how much they're worth? They better not try it with my child.

Patrick has the fastest wit in the cove, except for his mother's and father's. Sometimes I'm down the road and back in the house before I get the joke — usually on me.

He showed me those songs he's always writing. I don't know much about country music, but they look good to me. Every one of them has something special in it. What would happen if I showed those songs to someone who knows about country music? Maybe I will.

I hope Patrick gets that job at the fish plant. He's hardworking and honest and you can see how depressed he's getting. He was in a lot of trouble for a while. Everyone was worried about him. It seemed like he was out of control. But he's turning into a wonderful young man. Very gentle. My little son kisses him on the cheek when it's time to go home.

Patrick's Story

If I had a real job I'd probably feel a lot better about myself. I don't call delivering the papers a real job. Walking around with the newspapers by my side, it's depressing. And embarrassing — a twenty-year-old doing the papers. When someone sees me I try to hide them. When I'm finished delivering them I put the newspaper bag under my coat, and pretend I'm coming home from a hard day at work.

It's my own fault. It's all on me. I knew I was in trouble the day I quit school. But I wasn't getting any credits so I couldn't see the point in staying.

In high school I was in what everyone called the dummy class. I tried to get into regular classes, but they wouldn't put me in. That started in grade two. I had trouble reading, so they put me in those special classes and they never let me out. It was only reading I had trouble with. I can't understand it. I was doing my brother's homework the other day, so I know I can do it. They just wouldn't let me try.

I wasn't getting any credits. The teachers told me I needed credits to do anything and still they wouldn't let me move. I went to a work experience at the hotel. I was a janitor. I did everything — mop the floors, clean the toilets. I don't know. Maybe I could have gotten a job at that. I thought they would have me doing something else, even making the beds. They didn't pay me. I wish. I just didn't feel right there, doing that job. Being a janitor just wasn't for me. I quit that and then I quit school.

I used to be in trouble all the time. I used to love trouble. I can't explain it. I just didn't want to be in school. I was mad at everything. Now I'm always thinking about going back. I know I can do it. But when the time comes I just don't put in the application.

I have friends that have their high school. They all moved away to Toronto and Calgary. They still don't have jobs. It seems like it doesn't matter. You can't get a job with an education, you can't get a job without one.

I never go out. I just deliver the papers, watch TV, or read out in back. There's no one here to go out with. They've all moved away to find work. I'd like to go too. But I don't have the money to move anywhere. I'd miss my family if I moved away, but there's nothing here.

I do like it here. But there's nothing for young people like me. I think all the older people have all the jobs. I guess they need them too. But there should be something for us.

I need money. I take everything I can get. I do odd jobs for the neighbours. The last job I had was tarring a roof. That was twenty-five dollars. But it's not enough to do anything.

What will I be doing five years from now? Oh, probably walking around the cove with the papers on my back. If I was to dream a little, I'd like to have a nice record deal in Nashville. I've been writing country songs for a nice while now — more than 300 of them. Yeah, they're all about the same girl, the one that doesn't like me. But that's something I'd love to do. It's something I know I'll never do. People just laugh at me when I tell them that.

I've applied for work all over. I'm hoping for a job down at the new fish plant. I'd love the money. I used to help the men in their boats. They'd let me go with them in the summer if I passed at school. I'd like to be a fisherman. So would my father. But with the moratorium it doesn't look like there's any chance of that. Those are old dreams.

Dad, he works hard. Mom works hard too. She's my hero. She looks after us and she loves us. Someone's got to love you when you're twenty.

I can't really imagine having a job. I'd love to have one. But somehow I don't think I ever will. I say a lot of people my age feel like that. We all want something for ourselves. We want to leave Newfoundland. But we're just stuck here still wishing. Oh yeah, it's really upsetting. I just wish I could have a better life, I suppose. But don't we all.

Conclusion

Patrick's neighbour did take some of his songs to a country singer. The singer said Patrick shows some talent. He has good ideas. But he needs to improve his writing. Patrick met with the singer and they worked on one of the songs together. Then they recorded it to see what it would sound like. While Patrick and the singer were sitting together at the recording studio, the janitor came in to empty the garbage can. Patrick looked away. He says it was like seeing both sides of his future — the janitor the school wanted him to be, and the country singer he'd love to be.

Patrick has a copy of the song on tape. He's let a lot of people listen to it. He says they treat him differently now. They know there's "something to him." His mother was very excited for him. She teased him about remembering her when he's famous. Even his father was impressed.

No one has ever taken Patrick's writing seriously before. The singer showed Patrick what he needs to do to improve. He told him to read a lot and to keep writing songs. He may even use their song on his next CD. If that happens, Patrick might make some money and he'll get his name on the CD.

If this was a television movie Patrick would become a successful songwriter. But real life takes a long time to work itself out. Patrick knows this. He works hard on his songs. He hopes he'll have some good ones to show the singer again soon. He's still waiting to hear

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about the job at the fish plant and applying everywhere he can. He still thinks about going back to school. And he still delivers the newspapers every morning.

Patrick feels he has a little more control over what happens to him now. He feels he has some say about his life — it's not just what other people decide he is and can do. But he's still waiting for someone to hire him for his first real job and the chance to start his own life.

All About Patrick: Questions for Discussion

Introduction

1. What does the graph show about the number of students quitting school in Newfoundland?
2. The author says statistics don't tell the whole story. Why does she say that?
3. What reason would you have picked from the survey for quitting?
4. What would be missing from your story from these statistics?

What His Father Says

1. What kind of jobs has Patrick's father had?
2. How does Patrick's father feel about him?
3. How does he compare his work ethic to his children's?
4. What reasons does he give for the difference?
5. Do you sympathize with his feelings.

What His Mother Says

1. How did she try to keep Patrick in school?
2. How did the school respond to her efforts?
3. Patrick's mother wonders if the school treats children from the cove different than other children. Why?

What His Neighbour Says

1. Patrick's neighbour is angry at his school. Why?
2. Patrick's neighbour was angry about his work term. But his mother hoped he'd get a job out of it. Why do you think their views about this are so different?
3. What do you think about Patrick's work term?

Patrick's Story

1. What is Patrick's dream?
2. Patrick blames his situation on himself. What do you think?
3. Why do you think Patrick quit school?
4. Patrick didn't want to be a janitor. How do you think this made his father feel?
5. Patrick says he can't imagine having a job. Why does he feel this way?

Conclusion

1. Why do people treat Patrick differently now?
2. Patrick is still delivering the newspapers. He's still looking for a job. So why does he feel like he has more control over his life?

Sources:
Interviews

1. Patrick's father, informal interview with someone I've known for several years.
2. Patrick's mother, informal interview with someone I've known for several years.
3. Patrick, tape recorded interview in December 1997 and January 1998.

Statistical Information and Graphs

1. Provincial education department dropout statistics for 1990-1996.

Making Something New from Something Old

Marian Frances White

Word List:

Craftsperson: Someone who makes handmade crafts.

Crucial: Important for your work or life.

Routine: Something that happens every day in work or school.

Elements: Parts that make a weather condition.

Synthetic Material: Cloth made from fibres that are not from natural products.

Obstacle: Something that keeps you from getting ahead.

Trendy: Something that is popular for today.

Stylist: Someone who takes a designers idea and uses it for advertising.

Before You Read

This is the story of a woman who followed her childhood dream to be a clothes designer. This story tells us that we can hold on to our dreams and, with some help, make them come true. I met Karen Pottle at her studio on Water St. in St. John's. There we talked about her childhood and the years of study before she became a clothes designer.

While reading this story you might remember some of your childhood dreams.

Did you know long ago what you wanted to be when you grew up?
Did you have friends who always knew what they would do as adults?
How have your dreams changed?
What are your childhood friends doing today?

Introduction

People talk about the weather every day, but no one can do anything about it. That may be true, but one St. John's woman is doing something to help people enjoy our wild and windy weather more. Karen Pottle is the owner of a clothing design company called *Exploits Oilskin Originals*. She is counting on bad weather to keep her in business.

Many Newfoundlanders are known across Canada for their work in theatre, music, film, painting or writing. Now, clothing from here is being admired on the fashion runways of Canada. It has never been easy to make a living with your hands. You have to be very good

at what you do. You have to work hard to make a fine product. You also have to work hard to make your name and your work known. That means you have to have good business skills. Most importantly, you have to love what you do. This is the story of a woman who knew from childhood that she wanted to make clothes and have other people wear them.

The Exploits of Karen Pottle

Karen was born in Stephenville in 1955 and now lives in St. John's. Karen always wanted to make clothes. Most of us are asked at any early age what we want to be when we grow up. Even if we have an answer, few of us hold on to that childhood dream. Karen did.

"I have always said that my career came to me, I did not go to it. As a young child, I always wanted to make things, and I often watched my mother when she made clothes. By the time I was thirteen, Mom could not make things fast enough for the many ideas I came up with, so she put me in a sewing course. That sewing course gave me an early direction in my career. In high school, I was always more interested in the arts than I was in science or math. Back then, parents did not talk to their children about a career as much as they do today. But my mother often says she is not surprised to see the direction my career has taken."

Karen loved working with her hands. She also loved making something different than what she could buy at the local store. She had little boxes under her bed full of things she had found on the beach, like drift wood and sea shells and glass. She also had paint and ribbons and flowers that she used to decorate whatever she was making.

"I had a dress up box that I loved and I often tried on my sisters' clothes. When my older sisters were getting ready to go out to parties, I would lie on the bed and daydream of the clothes I would have them wear."

Dreams to Hold on to

By the time Karen finished high school, she knew she would find a career in sewing. She moved to St. John's and found work with a craftsperson who was making wallets and purses from leather. When she got the chance, she moved to Montreal. There Karen worked with a designer who wove fabric for coats. A designer plans and makes patterns for new clothes. In Montreal, Karen learned to weave. This was the mid seventies and Karen was nineteen. She saw this as her time to travel around Canada and see what was out there. In the Yukon, Karen stayed on an Indian reservation and learned how to tan hides and do leather bead work. She saw how this work could build a community and she liked what she saw. Karen says this of her time on the reserve:

"During those two years in the Yukon I began to think more about my life and what I wanted from it. I applied to the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design and was accepted in their program. I packed my bags and headed back east. But I didn't get to go to college at that time because my mother was ill. She was home alone with my twin brothers, so I went back to Stephenville to help take care of her. I stayed in Stephenville for almost two years. Lucky for me, a textile school had opened at the Bay St. George Community College. In

1977, I began a textile and sewing course. Here I was, back in Stephenville and back to sewing, just like when I was thirteen."

Education and Early Work Experience

Two years later, Karen came to St. John's and found work right away making clothes for rock and roll groups. More and more people asked her to make special clothes for special events. Karen had finally found work that she loved to do. There were lots of plays and groups of actors in St. John's then. They needed Karen's talent for making costumes. Before long, Karen got her first full-time job at the Arts and Culture Centre sewing in the costume department. She loved the challenge and remembers it well.

"I would spend hours looking at costume books, and then hours or days making designs from what I saw. That's when I knew I had to go further. I wanted to study pattern drafting and design."



Two theatre costumes designed by Karen.

Karen was accepted in a two year program in costume studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax. At the same time she took courses in painting and drawing the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design. A design group would get together with their instructor to do the extra classes. Karen studied at Dalhousie during the day and did the drawing courses at night when costume classes finished.

"It was a lot of work, but I was doing something that excited me and the long hours meant nothing." Two years later, Karen Pottle came away with a diploma in costume studies.

Cutback and Set Free

In 1982, Karen returned to St. John's and soon married. She found work at CBC TV. She worked in their costume department until 1989. Karen worked on the early CODCO shows. She also worked on the sets for *Skipper and Company*, *The Wonderful Grand Band*, *All Around The Circle* and *Up At Ours*. At that time, Karen worked with another costume designer, Peggy Hogan. When Peggy left CBC in 1984, Karen took over the costume department. But a few years later, CBC had a lot of cutbacks. The entire costume department was cut and Karen was out of job. After almost a decade working in a job that paid well and had a comfortable routine, she wasn't sure where to turn. Karen says this about that period in her life:

"I panicked at first because of the loss of pay, but I was also excited about going out in the real world. When you have a secure job, you work with the same people and crew year in and year out. It was really good while it lasted, but when you stay for a long time in the same job, you lose some of your creativity. If you are not struggling to get ahead or challenged by others who have the same or different ideas, you can get in a bit of a rut.

From that point of view, it was really exciting to go out on my own. It forced me to become more than what I was at CBC. I had to look closely at a second career and that was not easy."

Karen decided to go to Memorial University to continue her education. There she began to study Vocational Education. Karen was interested in teaching. She thought this would be a more secure career for the future. At the same time, more films were being made in Newfoundland and across Canada. Karen's costumes were in more and more demand on the sets of films being made at home and in Halifax.

By 1990, Karen moved to Vancouver, British Columbia and continued to take courses at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She also worked on films there. But Karen has always seen Newfoundland as her home. When the opportunity came up, she moved back to St. John's and began a business with Peggy Hogan. She had worked with Peggy in theatre and with CBC TV. She also continued to take courses toward her degree. So many people want her clothing that she still has not had time to take the last course she needs to finish her degree.

"I still want to finish my degree," Karen says, "but every time I sign up for the course, another job comes along." In 1996, she bought Hogan's half of the business and went out on her own once again. Between 1992 and 1997, Karen spent several months of each year working on film sets in Nova Scotia. She loved working in the film industry, but she also felt something was missing.

"Working with so many people in film taught me a great deal about my own talents. But in film, you give up a lot of your personal life to work in that industry. Finally I was ready to do what I wanted. I did not want to be fifty on the film set. I wanted to have my own business, and I was ready to make that happen."

Fixing Loose Ends

At the same time as Karen worked on making her own business a success, she had to face the end of her marriage.

"I fought to keep my marriage" she says, "but it just wasn't working. Finding security in my daily life is so important to my work. It makes all the difference when you have support in your relationship. I can now walk out the door to do a day's work without worrying about my home life. After a lot of personal work on my own, I am now free to be happy in another relationship. This allows me room to grow in my work. It also builds personal confidence. In a comfortable home life, the amount of work I can produce is wonderful. I think feeling good about yourself and feeling secure in your relationship are crucial to how you perform every day. Having someone who supports and respects you makes all the difference."

Sewing up a Business Career

In her forties, Karen is going through another important learning experience.

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"I feel I have a lot of life experience behind me to draw on. In my career, I have learned a great deal about the fashion business, and that makes me feel secure enough to work with many different people. It also makes me feel confident to create something of my own."

One of Karen's jobs with the Rising Tide Theatre Company took her in yet another direction. She made oilskin costumes for a live theatre show.



Karen Pottle. Credit: Curtis Rumbolt.

"I got so excited about these oilskins, I felt I was onto something. Over the years I think we have lost something in how we dress for the weather. This was very much a part of our grandparents' and even our parents' lives, but something got lost along the way."

The oilskin garments Karen made were from 100% cotton material. They were treated with oil and wax. This made them waterproof and warm. Most clothes for rainy weather on the market were made with rubber and synthetic materials. They were not warm and stylish. Karen got really excited about bringing the old design of rain clothes into a new fashion. She looked at what had already been done in modern day clothes with the Australian Outback and the British Barbour clothing designs. Karen wanted to create a Canadian oilcloth garment that would come from the east coast of Canada.

"I grew up and lived in this stormy, wild and windy weather. I wanted to use those elements to create something beautiful and lasting."

But before Karen could begin to make clothes, she had to find the right materials. There were a lot of errors along the way. Karen tried to make her own oilcloth with the help of a chemist. After months working on a formula for the cloth, she finally realized she was getting away from the work of making clothes.

"I had to remind myself that my dream was to make clothing. After nine months working with a chemist to come up with the oil cloth formula and getting nowhere, I finally decided to go with a cloth maker in England."

Karen used two main materials, canvas and oilcloth. She came up with ten different designs for coats, hats and the old style sou'wester used by fisher people. Her designs include a classic jacket and coat. She also makes a full-length Avalon greatcoat, a Cape Race peacoat, and a LaScie jacket. Her coats are available in colours of stove blue-black, spruce green, linseed yellow and port red.

In the Canadian world of design, this is good timing. Newfoundland is being looked at more and more as a place of creative talent. With financial help from ACOA (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Karen is able to set up her fashion business. She is kept busy planning for trade shows and putting together brochures to advertize her new products. Karen plans to continue to live and work in Newfoundland. She also wants this to be the beginning of a new industry for the province.

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"My main focus these days is to get across the idea that we can do it here. We have the talent and we can compete in fashion the same way that anyone in Montreal or Toronto can. Now that I feel secure with my designs, I want to get the word out by way of photographs and promotional material that this is where fashion is happening."

Karen involves many local people in her work. One of these is the photographer Ned Pratt. When he took photos for Karen's advertising brochure, it was the first time he had taken fashion photos. Ned's work turned out great. Now they are planning a new brochure for trade shows all across the country.

"Ned's work is outstanding," Karen says. "The feedback from Toronto and other places is giving me the push to move ahead. I know we have the talent here to do whatever we want. It's time we used that talent to see their work grow as well."

Dressed for Success

Karen has learned that it takes time to build a business. The textile program at Cabot College is the example she uses.

"People within government have to realize how long it takes to build a good school reputation. This doesn't happen in five years, it may take ten or even twenty years. You really have to look into the future when you are building a textile college that will make a name for itself. This is slowly happening here and this is how you build an industry. Other benefits like the response from markets across the country and the response from tourism will follow."



Credit: Ned Pratt: Promotion for Exploits Oilskin Originals, 1997

Karen is learning that nothing comes easy. There have been obstacles along the way. One obstacle for Karen is the way people in this province look at clothing design and fashion. Karen had to remind many people that her work is not a craft. Her work as a fashion designer is something that she takes seriously. There has never been a design house in this province, so Karen has to do a lot of work to be taken seriously by fashion agents. Government also has to believe that her work is worth supporting. To create a new industry she not only has to design and make the clothes, she also has to convince people that her product is worthwhile. Karen has to educate people about the fashion industry.

"Often when I go to government meetings to get support for my work, I bring along samples of how other people do their promotional work. If I lived in Montreal, my sponsors could run down the street and see what some big label is doing. To some people being a clothes designer might sound lofty or a pipe dream, but to me, this is all in a day's work."

And that work is paying off. In 1997 at the Atlantic Trade Show in Halifax, Karen was given the Award of Excellence for her clothing designs. Later in the year she was awarded second

prize for Best New Canadian Product for her coats. For the first time, some of Karen's coats are sold at RTW, a trendy clothing store in downtown St. John's. RTW also does promotional work for her products. She is also setting up a small retail store in her studio on Water St. where trendy fashion shops light up the downtown city. In Montreal and Toronto "my coats are selling like hot cakes," Karen says, "and I love the work of trying to keep up with the demand."

Hand Built and World Class

Today Karen's office, work studio and staff are financed from sales of her products. She and a stylist work every day until twelve o'clock. The stylist helps put the promotional material together for advertising. Karen's work for the day, however, is only half over. She then meets with two women who arrive to cut out and sew the coats. These women go to school in the morning to study English as their second language. Then they work from two until eight at night. If Karen is not working on weekends, it is because she is off to a trade show with her coats.

"Not only do I design my coats," she says, "but I also have to learn a great deal about the business and financial side of this work. I have to know how much to produce and be ahead of customer needs. All this takes time and energy."

Today more than five hundreds coats have been designed and produced in Karen's studio on Water St. Karen also has an agent in Montreal, who in turn has an agent in Vancouver. If her coats sell well, the work will spread from there.

"This year it's Canada, next year we will work on international shows. We are planning a promotion that will take us into the United States and other markets throughout the world. It's exciting to think Newfoundland coats will be worn by people in many places. I can't think of anything else I would rather be doing."

Making Something New from Something Old: Questions for Discussion

Section 1: Introduction

1. What is one thing people talk about most every day?
2. Why is the weather important to Karen Pottle?
3. What was Karen's dream as a young girl?
4. For what kinds of work are Newfoundlanders known throughout Canada?
5. What do you need to make a business a success?

Section 2: The Exploits of Karen Pottle

1. Where was Karen Pottle born?
2. How did she pass her time as a young girl?
3. Who helped her sew her clothes when she was young?
4. What did she have in her box under her bed?

Section 3: Dreams to Hold on to

1. Did Karen leave Newfoundland? If yes, where did she go?
2. What is Karen's career as an adult?
3. Where did Karen go to school to train for her career?
4. When did she return to Newfoundland and why?

Section 4: Education and Early Work Experience

1. Where did Karen live when she left Stephenville?
2. What kind of work did Karen find when she came to St. John's?
3. What made her decide to go back to school?
4. Where did she go to study costume design?

Section 5: Cutback and Set Free

1. In what year did Karen return to St. John's.
2. What were some of her jobs?
3. What cutbacks changed Karen's life forever?

What did Karen decide to do?

Section 6: Fixing Loose Ends

1. What did Karen have to face in her personal life?
2. How did this affect her work?

Section 7: Sewing up a Business Career

1. In 1998 how is Karen's career different than five years ago?
2. Does she have financial help with her business? Who helps her?
3. Does Karen work alone or with others? Explain.
4. Who is Karen's fashion photographer?

Section 8: Dressed for Success

1. Have there been obstacles along the way? If yes, name some of them.
2. What awards has Karen won for her clothing designs?
3. What is a fashion stylist?
4. How many coats has Karen designed in her St. John's studio?
5. What are her plans for the future?

Quitting Time

Kathryn Welbourn

Before You Read

1. What do you think about people who quit their jobs?
2. Have you ever wanted to quit your job?
3. Why did you want to quit?
4. What happened?

Introduction

When you don't have a job it's hard to imagine why someone who does would want to quit. Being unemployed is depressing and dangerous. You worry about how you will be able to support yourself and your family. You can't plan anything in the future because you don't know where you will be getting money. You have lots of time to think about not having a job. You may start to feel useless or like you don't deserve to work.

In the 1990s jobs are not easy to find. Many people don't have them. Older people who have been laid off may never find work again. It's getting harder and harder to get EI. If you get it, it's not for very long. People who quit their jobs may not qualify at all. They have to go to an appeals board and prove they had to quit. Their reasons have to fit in with the board's reasons such as sexual harassment, too much unpaid overtime, or dangerous working conditions. The appeals board will ask their boss for their side of the story. The board will have to pick which story to believe.

Between March 1997 and March 1998, 954 people went to the EI appeals board in Newfoundland. Not all of them had quit. Some had been fired or had not been given EI for other reasons. Only 156 of those people won their appeals and got EI.

An official at the EI office told me that the number of people who quit their jobs has gone down dramatically in the 1990s because of the EI rules and because there are not many jobs.

But just because people have stopped quitting doesn't mean they don't want to. While I was researching this project on working lives I was amazed at how many people dreamed of quitting. They could tell you exactly what they would say to their boss. They could tell you exactly how they would feel the day they quit.

They had many reasons for wanting to quit. They didn't get along with their boss. They felt they were not treated well. Their boss yelled at them. They had to work too much. Their job was full of stress. Their working conditions were dangerous.

When I asked them why they didn't quit they told me they wouldn't be able to get EI. They were afraid they wouldn't be able to find another job. Their families would think they were

lazy. Quitting is something they just couldn't do, even though they thought about it all the time.

I think working is supposed to be a good part of life. It should make you feel useful and even happy. It should not make you nervous and sick. It should not make you feel trapped and helpless.

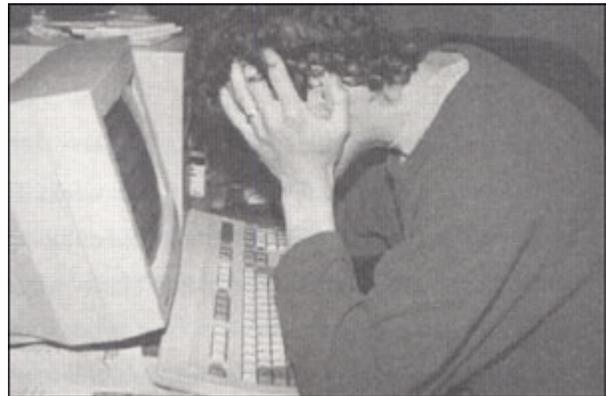
In the early 1980s you could still quit your job and get EI. You had to wait a few weeks before applying. But you could get it to help you while you looked for a better job. There were more jobs to look for back then too. I wonder if people were treated better at their jobs when they could easily get another one? I wonder if being able to quit made working feel more like it's supposed to?

These are two stories of people who were unhappy at their jobs. The first story is about a young father who wants to quit, but can't. The second is about a young couple who does quit and what happens to them after they do.

Can't Quit, Won't Quit

The First Day

Peter will never forget his first day on the job. It was the only job he could find. The job was teaching computers at a small community centre. The centre helped people with problems. Some had been in jail. Most had drinking or drug problems. The centre was a place where they could get counseling. Part of the centre's job was to hire and train some of those people. That's where Peter came in. He would teach the staff how to use computers.



Peter was twenty-six. He had a wife and two children. He had a university degree and some training experience. It was a nine-month contract. If they liked him he could stay longer. He needed the money. It sounded interesting. Peter felt lucky to find a job. He was ready to work. He was very excited.

On his first day Peter got to work early. He took off his coat and looked around for his boss. A staff person whispered in his ear. She said, "Stay away from the boss's girlfriend and you'll be fine." Then the boss came in with his girlfriend. He didn't speak to Peter. He went right into his office and shut the door.

The boss's girlfriend wandered around the office. She drank coffee. She looked out the window. She was wearing a very tight, blue satin top and matching shorts. She was blond and very sexy. The boss opened his door to see what she was doing. He did this about twice an hour.

Peter decided he'd better take the advice of the woman who had whispered in his ear — just in case. He spent the whole day trying to stay away from the boss's girlfriend. There were about sixteen other people there. Some of them were drunk. One was asleep on the staff room couch. Others drank coffee and whispered. Peter didn't know what he was supposed to be doing. He didn't even have a desk to sit at. The boss's girlfriend kept looking over at him. Every time she did this, Peter looked the other way. He tried to pretend he was very busy.

The Boss Quits

Peter had been working at the centre for six weeks. He still didn't know what he was supposed to be doing. He was getting tired of hiding from the boss's girlfriend. When his boss quit he was glad. Peter didn't know why his boss quit. He didn't care. He hoped things would get better.

For about one month there was no boss at the centre. Peter found things to do. He set up the office computer system. He talked to people who came to the centre. He started helping them with their problems. He helped them find places to sleep. He helped them fix problems with social services.

Peter did whatever came up each day. He started to enjoy working at the centre. It was a busy place. People were always dropping by. He'd never met people with so many problems. It was very interesting.

A Day Without Peter is like a Day Without Sunshine

The new boss was wonderful. She had worked at many centres in many places. She knew all about helping people. She praised Peter for all the work he had done. She asked him questions about the centre. She asked if staff drank at work. She asked if they came in on time. She asked if they did their work. She asked him to tell about each staff person.

Peter answered all her questions. Many of the staff had never had a job before. The centre was supposed to help them learn how to work in an office. So Peter knew the workers wouldn't get in trouble. It was part of the centre's job to help them.

His new boss wrote down everything he said. Then she came up with a plan. First, she fired everyone. Then she said they could all have their jobs back. They had to sign a paper promising not to drink at work. They had to promise to show up every day, on time. All the workers came back. Peter wondered about what his boss was doing. But she said she had done all of this before.

He started training the workers on computers. They opened the centre several nights a week. They had dinners for the workers and their families. Peter and the boss made up rules for work and everyone tried to follow them. They helped people who came into the centre.

Peter was very happy. He felt like the centre was going to turn into something wonderful. His boss asked his advice all the time. She seemed to trust and like him. She wrote in his work notebook: "A day without Peter is like a day without sunshine."

Peter's Shame

A few months later Peter hired a new receptionist. Joe was an unusual person to pick for this job. He was forty years old. He had never had a job before. When Joe came to the centre he was living in the bush. Joe had spent a lot of time in jail. He got into fights when he drank. And he drank all the time. Joe had a very bad temper. He had no education. But Peter could tell he was smart.

People were surprised by Joe. He greeted them at the door like this: "What the hell do you want man?" He answered the phone like this: "Help centre, go ahead." But that's what the centre was for — to give people like Joe a chance. He came to work on time. He came to work sober. Peter gave Joe his first pay cheque ever. Peter was very proud of this.

Soon after Joe started working at the centre Peter had a meeting with the boss. He couldn't wait to tell her how well Joe was doing. But the boss wanted to talk about something else. She wanted to fire Edna. Edna looked after the money. She did a good job. When the centre was having problems Edna did not come to work very often. She couldn't stand to be there. The boss read a list of things that Edna used to do wrong. She had gotten the list from Peter before things got better at the centre.

Peter couldn't believe it. He said, "Come on, she's not like that now." The boss looked mad. She told Peter to get back to work.

From then on the boss stopped talking to Edna. She sent her notes about what she was doing wrong. She sent her notes about what she should be doing. She put Edna down in front of the other staff. She said Edna was slow and couldn't do her work. She looked at Edna and said, "You might as well quit. I'm going to make your life hell here."

When Edna asked him why the boss was trying to get rid of her, Peter said he didn't know. He didn't tell her about the list. He didn't tell her about his meeting with the boss. Edna told Peter she couldn't quit. She had two children to support. Peter just walked away.

Peter had always thought of himself as a loyal friend and a brave person. But he didn't want to get involved. He wanted to keep his job and he kept hoping the boss would change her mind about Edna. His job was already full of pressure. Sometimes people came into the centre very angry and very drunk. Once he was threatened with a knife. The boss was already mad at Peter. His wife was pregnant again. Peter needed this job. If he quit or was fired, he'd have nothing. The kind of contract he had with the centre didn't include employment insurance benefits.

Finally the boss accused Edna of stealing \$120.00. No one believed it. The staff was very angry. They started talking about the boss in loud voices. The boss stayed in her office with the door locked. This went on for months. When Edna found another job Peter was relieved. He thought his job would go back to being good. But he was wrong.

Now that Edna had gone the boss said it was time to get rid of Mary. Mary was the secretary. The boss didn't like Mary. She said she got on her nerves. Peter didn't like her much either. Mary was rude and she laughed at the people who came to the centre. The more problems they had the more she laughed. She had a lot of problems herself. But Mary had stopped drinking and she did do her job. "You can't fire her," he said. The boss was silent. Peter left the office.

The next morning Peter found two piles of notes on his desk. One pile was a list of things he did wrong the day before. The other pile was a list of rules that had to be followed. If not, Peter would be fired. The list included rules for cleaning the bathroom, making coffee and using the photocopier. Mary also had a pile of notes on her desk. The notes told her not to talk to any other staff in the office. They told her she didn't know how to do her job. She should quit, the notes said.

Peter Keeps Working

Peter just kept working. He had a huge folder full of notes. One of those notes ordered staff to sit with their hands folded on their desks when their work was done.

Peter couldn't sleep at night. When he came to work in the morning he thought about getting away from the office at lunch. After lunch he just thought about getting off for the day. He was angry all the time. He yelled at his wife. He thought about quitting a lot. He'd practice telling his boss what he thought of her and walking out of the centre forever. Then he thought about his family. "I can't quit. I won't quit," he told himself over and over again.

One night Peter's wife woke up screaming. They were both covered in blood. She thought the baby had died. They went to the hospital. Everything would be okay. But she couldn't work at all until after the baby was born.

Peter called the office that morning to say why he was late. He went to work in the afternoon. There was a note on his desk. It told him his pay would be docked for being late. Peter was so angry he didn't know what to do. He sat at his desk grinding his teeth. He couldn't even look at the boss. When she asked him a question later in the day, he turned his head away.

At home, Peter did all the housework now. He walked his two children to school every morning. He felt fine until he dropped them off. Then he started feeling scared. By the time he got to work Peter felt like a small man looking down at the road.

The only time he felt okay was on Friday afternoons. Friday nights were golden. Two whole days off. He walked home on air. But by Sunday afternoon Peter started feeling depressed. By Monday morning he was so upset and worried about going back to work he would throw up his breakfast.

Peter's daughter was born at nine o'clock on a Monday morning. At 9:30 he went into the recovery room and held his wonderful new child. A nurse tapped him on the back. "Phone call," she told him. Peter picked up the phone. This is what he heard:

"The computer isn't working. What did you do to it? Get in here and fix it." Peter hung up. He kissed his new baby's lovely, little head. He wanted to quit. He was afraid he would be fired. What would happen to his family if he lost his job now? Peter was determined to try harder to ignore his boss, to keep out of her way.

One of the women Peter worked with had a terrible drug problem. Her daughter was in foster care. She hadn't seen her for six months. She wanted to see her daughter. The social worker said she could. But she had to find a safe place to meet. The woman asked Peter if she could use the staff room.

Peter asked the boss. But she wanted to see the woman in person. Peter said, "Just do it, you'll get to see your daughter." The woman went in and begged the boss. She said, "Please ma'am, may I use the staff room?" The boss said yes.

The day of the visit came. The little girl and the mother went into the staff room. The meeting was for one hour. When the girl left, her mother did not come out. She was crying hard. The boss told Peter to send the woman back to her desk. She said, "The meeting was supposed to be an hour. It was an hour and seven minutes. Take that time off her pay."

Something happened to Peter then. It felt like a knife cutting through his brain. He realized the boss didn't like people. She liked power. She liked feeling she was better than the people who worked at the centre. "I won't do it" he said. The boss went into the staff room. She told the woman she deserved to lose her child. She was a drug addict. She was stupid. She was lucky the boss let her have her job. The woman went back to work. The boss went back in her office.

That's when Peter stopped being afraid. He stopped feeling sick. He was very, very angry. He decided to do something.

What Peter Did

First Peter went to the people in charge of the centre. They didn't listen to him. It had been almost two years since they hired the boss. No one had complained about her before. They thought she was wonderful. Peter went to the government department that gave the centre money. They didn't listen to him. The boss always sent her reports in on time. They thought she was wonderful. They said the centre was doing fine. What was wrong with Peter?

The other staff told Peter they wanted to kill the boss. Peter said he had thought about shooting her himself. But, he told them, that would not solve their problems. They could find a way to get rid of her and keep their jobs. One of the staff said she was going to the media. Peter said, "Good."

When a reporter called, Peter told the whole story. He didn't tell his name. He didn't want the boss to sue him. He wanted to be able to find another job later.

The paper with the story in it arrived at 4:30. It sat on the front desk like cancer. The boss came out. She took the paper into her office. Everyone sat with their hands folded on their desks like they were supposed to. At five o'clock they left as fast as they could.

After the story came out the board sent an investigator to the centre to find out what was going on. The investigator talked to all the staff and sent a report to the board. The boss was fired. Peter saw her crying in the hallway. He didn't feel sorry for her at all.

The board and the government never apologized to the staff. Peter thinks they should have.

Peter wishes he had quit his job. He was wasting his life being afraid and feeling bitter and angry. It was like being trapped in an emotional circle. The more the boss pushed him the more he had tried to do. And the more he hated himself. It wasn't really a job. He had been more like a slave than an employee. He just couldn't quit. His boss knew that the whole time.

Peter works at a different community centre now. He loves his work. He hears stories about people's jobs all the time. It's part of his new job to help people who have trouble at work. Some of their stories are amazing. But Peter always believes them.

Nobody Likes a Quitter

Go West Young Couple

Being a reporter is a strange thing. If important people call and yell at you, you know you're doing a good job. Most of the reporters I know work very hard. They love their work. They feel like they are doing good in the world by finding out what's going on. Reporters on weekly papers work long hours. They go to meetings. They write stories. They take pictures—and sometimes they even design the paper. They have to learn about everything—politics, economics, the environment — fast.

My husband and I are both reporters. We often work at the same newspaper. This is not a problem for us. We just do our jobs and then drive home together and live our lives. But the year we moved to Alberta all that changed. All the joy we felt about working on newspapers was destroyed.

We wanted jobs and we wanted adventure. So we did what many Newfoundlanders do. We moved west. We got jobs on a weekly paper way out on the prairies. We moved into a trailer on a cattle ranch.

It was so beautiful. Alberta really is big sky country. Horses ran around our trailer. Hawks circled above. And in the evening, the coyotes came down from the hills. We listened to them howling all night. We watched their eyes moving around in the dark.

The newspaper was a new one. It was important to the people who lived in the area. They wrote letters about our stories. They called the paper to tell us about stories we should be looking in to. It mattered what we wrote. We reported on 14 little towns. We drove across the prairie for an hour just to go to one meeting. I loved it. The heat, the sun, the wind. It was all wonderful to me. My husband wasn't so sure.

The bosses were very demanding. They made everyone work for 50 or 60 hours a week. They didn't pay us for overtime. They didn't give us extra time off. They changed things in

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

our stories. They yelled at the two other staff almost every day. Ann and Lori were young women. This was their first job.

Ann did the comics and design. Lori was a reporter. She had big plans. She would go to Japan soon and try to work on a newspaper there. We liked them both. We showed them things we had learned at our other jobs. We tried to ignore our bosses.

One Monday morning, our bosses called everyone into their office. It was Lori's day off. She had gone on a driving trip with a friend. So we weren't surprised that she wasn't there. The bosses looked angry. One of them said: "Lori was killed in a car accident on the weekend." We all just stood there. The other boss said: "Get back to work."

We went to our computers. I cried. We all cried. My husband was shaking. We read in the big city paper that Lori's funeral was tomorrow. We all decided to go.

My husband asked the bosses if we should drive to the funeral together. We had been a big part of Lori's life. Her first job. Her family would be expecting us. The bosses told us not to be so foolish. They said we couldn't shut down the paper for even one hour. We couldn't shut it down for a whole morning. What if something happened in the news? Who would be there to report it? My husband was very angry. He sat down at his desk. He didn't say anything.

The next day, we met Ann at work. We got into my truck and we drove to the funeral. We had a card and we had some flowers. We added the bosses names to the card. We didn't want Lori's family to know what kind of a place she had worked in. Her mother was happy to see us. She took my hand. She said, "Thank you for coming. Lori talked about you all the time."

Just like in the Movies

When we got back from the funeral the bosses called my husband into their office. We could hear them yelling. They said, "How dare you leave the office. How dare you go to that funeral. This is our newspaper. We should fire the lot of you."

My husband said, "You can't fire me. I quit." Just like in the movies. Then he swore at the bosses and he slammed the door. The door was already half off its hinges. When my husband slammed it, it came right off in his hand. He looked so surprised. Ann and I laughed and laughed. Then we both said, "We quit." Just like that. We felt very proud of ourselves.

We all went next door and had lunch. We talked about Lori and about how we would all find better jobs. Then the cops showed up. They said we all had to come down to the station. The bosses said my husband had tried to assault them. They showed the broken door as proof. We all got in the police cars. We went down to the station and made our statements. The police told my husband to "watch it."

We were supposed to go down to the paper and pick up our last cheques. The bosses wouldn't open the door. They slid the cheques under the door and gave us the finger. All our cheques bounced.

We couldn't get Employment Insurance because we quit. We had no money in the bank. And now our cheques had bounced. We were still hopeful. We tried to find other jobs.

My husband found a very low-paying job in the big city. We had to move there. We found a little house right downtown. When the landlord saw the Newfoundland licence plates on our truck, he said, "I don't usually rent to Newfies or Indians."

Nobody Likes a Quitter

My husband went to work every morning. I looked for any kind of job. I applied and applied. There was no work. There was a recession. My husband didn't get enough money to pay our bills. We had to borrow from his parents. Almost every week we had to borrow money. My husband got very quiet. I got very angry. Why were we in this position? Quitting wasn't a crime. We had to do it.

Our families wondered about us. Why did we leave our jobs before we had other jobs? They started to feel sorry for us. I think they looked at us as the losers in the family. I tried to tell them it was quit or be fired. But they didn't seem to understand. I guess you had to be there.

Slowly my husband and I became very depressed. We used to be brave and happy. We used to argue and give our opinion to anyone. Now we started to doubt ourselves. Why had we left our beautiful little house in Newfoundland? Why had we come to the west? Who did we think we were, looking for adventure? We should have been happy with what we had.

Even our cat paid a price. The first time we let her out in the city she lost one of her legs. She ran out onto the railroad tracks. A train ran over her front paw. I still don't know how she lived. She dragged herself back to us somehow. She never went outside again.

We started fighting over little things. We stopped talking. How long could we go on borrowing money? The world looked very gray. This is how our day went.

My husband went to work. He worked at a computer all day and then came home and ate. I got up and looked for a job in the paper. I went to businesses and asked if they needed anyone. Then I sat by the window and waited for my husband to come home. After dinner, one of us would get into the bath. The other would wash their back. It was the only nice thing we did for each other anymore.

We made no friends. Who would want to know us? The only place we ever went was to the racetrack. We looked at the beautiful horses and made bets. Sometimes we won money. We felt like our old selves at the track. Happy and daring. But then we'd go home. We'd have nothing to say again.

One day we started blaming each other. "You wanted to come here," my husband said. "You quit your job first," I said. We argued right on the street. We yelled and then we both walked away in different directions. We were ashamed of ourselves. We were ashamed of our lives. We had lost our lives somehow.

We could have gone on like this forever I guess. It's nice to think something good will happen if you wait long enough. But that is not really true. Many people are unemployed for many years at a time. Sometimes people lose their jobs and that's it — they never get another one.

When I was a girl I used to quit my jobs all the time. I quit to get a better job, or because I didn't need the money, or because I wanted to go on a trip. If a boss treated me badly, I quit. I had rights. But the world is not like that now. Everyone is looking for work. Even low-paying jobs are a prize. Quitting is something you never do now. People think you're crazy to give up your job. And maybe they're right. We felt like we were doing the right thing at the time. But time was changing our minds.

What we did

This is what we did. I borrowed more money and moved back to Newfoundland. I slowly built up my freelance work. I worked day and night. My husband sent me as much money as he could. This was enough for me to eat one meal a day and drive to the different jobs I found. I couldn't afford electric heat. I chopped wood for hours every day. The wood was pretty wet. The house was very cold. I lost a lot of weight. I pretended I was doing very well. I had to. No one wants to hire you when you're down. My husband worked very, very hard and tried to stay calm.

We lived apart in this way for almost a year. We wrote letters and tried to find each other again. Finally I had enough work and I told him to come back. We fixed up our little house by the sea. We had a lovely baby. We built up our lives. We were lucky and we know it.

Quitting, well it's something we used to do. That's when we felt free. That's when we knew if we worked hard and loved what we did we would always have work. That's when we didn't give a damn about our bosses. Our work mattered most. It seemed to be more of a calling than a job. But nobody likes a quitter. Today it's almost illegal to quit your job. I think about Lori and feel sad. I wonder if we would quit that job now.

Sources:

1. Taped interview with Peter, November 1997.
2. Phone interview with an official at Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in St. John's.
3. HRDC statistics provided by Fiona Grant, Business Lines Consultant with HRDC.

Quitting Time: Questions for Discussion

Introduction

1. Why have people stopped quitting their jobs?
2. Why did the author of this essay decide to write about quitting?
3. The author asks if people were treated better and liked their work more when it was easier to quit. What do you think?

Can't Quit, Won't Quit

The First Day

1. Why did Peter stay away from his boss's girlfriend?
2. What do you think about his first day on the job?

The Boss Quits

1. Why was Peter glad when his boss quit?
2. What did Peter do at work while he waited for a new boss to be hired?

A Day Without Peter is like a Day Without Sunshine

1. What did Peter's boss do to change things at the centre?
2. What do you think about her methods?

Peter's Shame

1. Describe Joe.
2. Why did Peter hire him?
3. Why did the boss want to fire Edna?
4. Why is this chapter called "Peter's Shame"?
5. What happened to Peter when he stuck up for Mary?

Peter Keeps Working

1. Why does Peter think about quitting all the time?
2. Why doesn't he quit?
3. Why does Peter stop being afraid?

What Peter Did

1. Why didn't the board or the government do anything about Peter's complaints?
2. Describe what happened when the newspaper with the story about the centre was delivered to the office?
3. Why was the boss fired?
4. Why does Peter say he felt like a slave not an employee?
5. Do you think he should have quit before he started to feel this way?

Nobody Likes a Quitter

Go West Young Couple

1. Why is being a reporter a strange thing?
2. Why did the young couple move out west?
3. Describe the young woman's feelings about Alberta and her new job.
4. Why didn't the boss's want to go to Lori's funeral?
5. What do you think about what happened after the staff went to the funeral?
6. Would you have acted this way?

Nobody Likes a Quitter

1. Why did the young couple's family think they were losers?
2. What happened to their relationship after they quit? Why?
3. How have the young woman's feelings about work changed and why?

What We Did

1. How did the young couple save their lives?
2. Why does the young woman say nobody likes a quitter?
3. Is this true?

Cutting Trees on the Rock: Logging in the 1990's in Newfoundland

Marian Frances White

Word List:

Environmentalist: Someone who works to see that little or no harm is done to nature.

Mechanical Harvesters: One machine doing the work of many in the forest.

Reserve: An area of land set aside to protect a culture, nature or animal life.

Eco-tourism: Tourism that is based on enjoying nature.

Silt: Soil in the river that has been stirred up and made muddy.

Erosion: The loss of soil due to rain and industry.

Pesticides: Chemicals used to destroy insect pests.

Nutrients: Something that repairs and nourishes natural plant life.

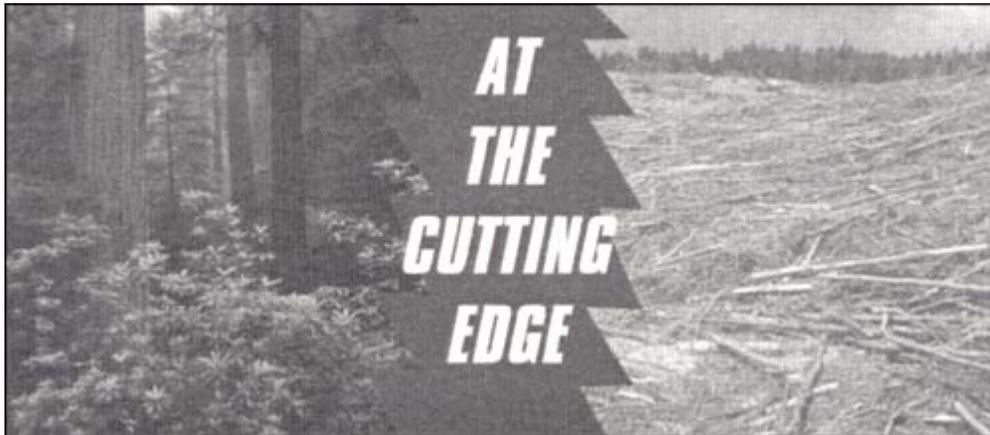
Watershed: An area of water draining to another set body of water.

Website: A page on the Internet (computer program) used by an individual or company to share information about their life or work.

Habitat: The natural home for animal or plant life.

Introduction

A hundred years ago the forests of Newfoundland looked very different from today. Ten per cent of the forest was made up of white pine. But, the pine clad hills praised in the *Ode To Newfoundland* are a thing of the past.



Newfoundland has always been blessed with plenty of trees. They include fir, spruce, birch, pine, poplar and mountain ash. Today the forests are mostly spruce and fir. In heavily logged areas, fir trees grow back much faster than spruce trees.

Logging began with the first settlers to Newfoundland. Ships needed repair after weeks at sea. Settlers built their homes from the trees they cut. The fishery has always been the main work in Newfoundland and Labrador. Forestry was also ruled by the sea. Until 1979, forests within five kilometres (or three miles) of the coast were put aside for the use of fishing communities. Spruce and fir trees were used to build wharves, docks, boats and homes. Bark peeled from trees was used to lay over the fish drying on long tables. These tables were called fish flakes.

The forests created many jobs for settlers, but as the population grew, the coastal forests became bare. After hundreds of years of cutting trees, the island of Newfoundland is now running out of wood. Since the forests in Labrador have never been cut, industry is now looking there to meet its needs.

This is the story of Greg Mitchell, a logger. He is taking on a bigger task than cutting tall trees. He is trying to protect the forests from too much cutting and too much big industry. Greg has written letters to government, to logging companies and to newspapers to ask them to look at the way the forest on the island of Newfoundland is logged. He warned them that the forest was in danger of being destroyed, just like the cod stocks in the fishing industry had been. Despite his efforts, not much has changed to improve the situation.

In 1997, Greg filed charges in the Provincial Court of Newfoundland, against the logging company Abitibi Consolidated. Greg is upset at the way big industries have used the forests of this province. It takes a lot of time and volunteer work to build a case against a large

company. Greg feels that even one person can make a difference. To understand why he is doing this, let's go back to when Greg Mitchell was a young boy.

As you read this story, ask yourself these questions:

What does the lack of wood mean for loggers today?

How might this affect your life?

What are some things we can do to help the forest last longer?

Early Memories of Logging

The forests on the island of Newfoundland are very different today than when Greg Mitchell was a young boy. Greg was born in Corner Brook in 1950. He grew up in Curling. Greg played on the log booms along the Humber River. The booms are large timbers that hold floating logs together. In spring, the logs are floated down the river in the boom. Later the logs are taken to the pulp and paper mill to be made into lumber or paper.



Greg's grandfather was a trapper and a logger. He worked much of his life in the forest scaling trees. A scaler counts all the logs before they are sent to the mill. Greg often got up early to see his grandfather get ready for his day in the woods. His grandfather would go in the woods on his horse. When Greg was a child, he could put four dots and six strokes on a line before he could write A B C. The dots were logging symbols he saw his grandfather use.

When Greg got older, he also went in the woods and watched the men work with their bucksaws. The bucksaws were used to cut down trees for the lumber or paper mill. Greg's grandfather taught him how to respect the forest. He taught Greg to leave young trees for another year, or maybe ten years. The way his grandfather logged, the soil was not torn up.

Greg camped on Serpentine Lake in the summer. He and his friends would fish and hunt. He loved the outdoors. When Greg grew up, he wanted to go to university. After that, he wanted to work outside. He might even be a logger like his grandfather.

Education and Training

In 1970, Greg went to Memorial University in St. John's. In 1974, he graduated with a degree in biology. Then Greg returned to the west coast of Newfoundland. For two years he worked in the Biology Department at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook. Greg also worked as a Biology Technician with the Wildlife Department. He was using the skills he had learned at university.

Greg wanted to make his dreams come true. He began to work outdoors. He became a logger, but he already had a lot of questions about the logging industry. In university, Greg had learned some of the problems with the forests. Now he wanted to use what he learned as a biologist in his daily life. But, as Greg's career took shape, he became more and more aware of his environment.

At Home and at Work, Logging with a Difference

Greg Mitchell wanted to live in a small town. He chose Gillams, a town on the North Shore of the Bay of Islands. It was not far from where he was born. In 1977, Greg and his wife, Lynn, built a small sawmill to cut wood for their home. This marked the beginning of his work as a logger. They have no electricity, but they use most of the modern day conveniences that other people have. They have a propane stove and a generator for the vacuum and other household appliances. They also have batteries for some of the work equipment. Greg, Lynn and their daughter, Emily, read a lot as their pastime.



Fall, 1978.

Greg and Lynn began "mixed" farming. They raised sheep and chickens and grew vegetables. Greg began to work with Gem Wood Products, a small logging company that Lynn formed. He logged in much the same way as his grandfather logged. But over the years the logging industry had changed. Bigger machines and more and more chemicals were being used.

Making Choices about what you do in the Woods

In 1975 Greg joined EcoWatch. This was a small environmental group made up of people from the university who kept an eye on the forest industry. If Greg was going to work in the forest for a long time, he knew he would have to see that the forest was logged right.

Greg was also worried about the spraying of pesticides. These chemicals are used to kill insects. When he first worked with the Wildlife Department, the Spruce Bud Worm was killing off large areas of forest. Something had to be done, but Greg questioned the use of so many chemicals. If it was killing insects by the millions, what was it doing to our lungs?

"When I first began logging:" Greg admits, "there were plenty of trees in the forests, and I helped myself. I did not think I was doing any harm to my environment. Only when I began to make a mess of things, did I sit up and take notice."

A Fisheries Officer came to inspect Greg's saw mill. The officer pointed out problems he was causing to the river. Fish were dying from eating the silt from logging. Silt is the soil in the river that has become very muddy.

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job



Feller buncher machine at work
in the forest

By looking at ways to solve his own problems, he became an environmentalist. An environmentalist is someone who works to see that no harm is done to nature. Greg is looking closely at how his work as a logger affects the world around him. He is on a mission for the wise use of Newfoundland's forests. By 1991, Greg was giving talks on how to log without damaging the environment. He now feels the most important tool in the forest is good common sense.

More and more, Greg's work was changing from being a traditional logger to being a controlled logger.

A controlled logger uses small equipment. Greg is now working to change the way the forest is used. He still wants to work in the forest and make a good living there. He also wants the forest to last forever.

New Sounds in the Forest

The sound Greg hears in the woods today is not the sound of birds. It is not the sound of chainsaws. It is the sound of new logging machines and mechanical harvesters. These machines are owned and operated by big industry. They are noisy as they cut and limb trees and shape the trees into logs. The use of these machines makes streams muddy and causes soil erosion. Cutting out huge areas of forest changes the forest floor and leaves the forest open to insect problems. These methods also leave loggers with few jobs. Greg has this to say about mechanical harvesters:

"It's true that one machine can do the work of many loggers. But this new way of logging means fewer jobs, empty pockets for loggers, and environmental problems. Who gets the rest of the money that is made in the logging industry? It is definitely not Newfoundlanders, and there is something wrong with that."

As a logger, Greg has had to make some hard decisions. He has had to make a daily choice about how he will treat the environment. Today, Greg produces less and less pulp wood than he did in the 1980's. His main income comes from sawing logs. It is very demanding work physically. His big challenge right now is to continue to make a living in an industry that he has a lot of problems with.

Greg met with managers of the pulp and paper industry. He asked them questions about their use of big tractors and machines.



Overview of clear cutting for hydro project
at Star Lake

These machines damage forests by removing the nutrients from soil when they haul up trees. This prevents trees from growing back and causes soil erosion.

"Big equipment users are making fast money:" Greg told the managers. "But they also leave small contractors like me up against the wall. Sometimes loggers do not get enough work to keep us going from one season to the next. It is hard to compete with big industry. Worst of all, this type of logging leaves little tree growth for the next generation of trees. It also leaves little for the next generation of people."

Laws to Protect the Forest

As the population of Newfoundland grew, so did new plants and new diseases. The white pine blister, for example, came with settlers from England. As the years passed, new machinery opened up large roads. These roads were used by loggers, hunters, anglers and travellers.

To protect the forest, the Newfoundland government passed The Forestry Act. There were many problems in the forest: over-cutting, too many saw mills and cutting down trees in ways that keep new trees from growing back. With this in mind, the 1990 Forestry Act called for Sustainable Development. That means the development of resources without using all that resource. It also means meeting the needs of industry without destroying the forests for future generations. "This is very difficult," Greg says, "when industry demands more and more profit."

By 1992, the high demand for wood and the shortage of wood on the island was noticed by government. Demand for wood was 27 per cent above the supply. For the first time, the province set up a twenty year forestry planning program.

"Only through careful planning," Greg adds, "will there still be trees to cut in the next century."

"In 1966, there were 3,700 loggers in this province. They all made their living from the forest. In 1998, there are just over one thousand loggers left. With fewer people in the woods, and more machinery, we are losing a human touch. We are leaving big decisions up to a few people who use the machinery. This is why I have had to take a stand to protect the forests of Newfoundland. Let's hope it is not already too late."

A Day on the Job

Greg has always been an early bird. He gets up early and prepares to go in the woods. Five men work for Gem Wood Products. Greg still has horses, but most often they go in the woods on the skidder. A skidder is used to roll and carry the logs once they are cut. If Greg is cutting wood, he starts by 6:30 a.m. and finishes by 2:30 or 3 in the afternoon. There are two reasons for this. One is the flies and the other is the heat. In the summertime, the flies are pretty thick. You would think loggers get used to the flies, but it seems they never do.



Greg Mitchell at his office.

The forest is full of surprises. Loggers have to know the woods. They have to know where to cut the trees. They have to know how to cut the trees so they will fall in the right direction. The greatest danger in the woods for a logger is a falling tree. They also have to watch out for wild animals like moose and caribou. Once in a while they see a black bear that likes their bunk-house more than they do. The bunk-house was built in the 1950s. Some loggers stay for days in the bunk-house, but Greg lives close enough to go home almost every evening. He often stops at the bunk-house to eat and rest with the other workers.

Once the logs are cut and trimmed, they are put on the skidder to take out of the woods. Later they are shipped to the lumber yard and prepared for their float down the river to the saw mill.

A Lifetime of On-The-Job Training

After nearly twenty years working as a logger, Greg still feels he is training on the job. This is because he is learning how the forest industry affects our air, water and soil. His next question is, how does it affect the people who use the air, water and soil? As a logger, Greg cannot only think about making a profit.

"If I only think about profit," Greg adds, "Newfoundland's forest will be clear cut like some areas of British Columbia. Clear-cutting leaves nothing to grow back. It takes only five or ten minutes to cut a tree. It takes more than seventy years for a tree to grow tall."

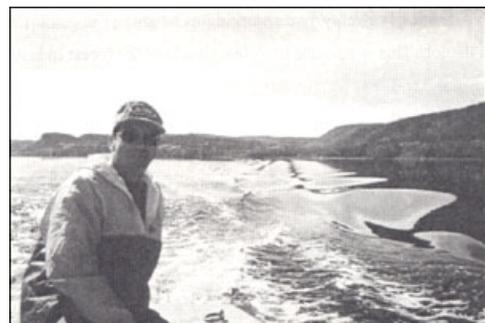
A Logger up Against a Corporation

A group called the Humber River Allies have a slogan: No Dam Way! That's how Greg feels about the destruction of our forest for the sake of big profit.

Together with another environmental group, Friends of Star Lake, Greg tried to save a beautiful lake that was going to be flooded for a hydro dam. The group wanted to see the area of Star Lake set aside as a wilderness reserve. That means that no logging or development would take place on or near the lake. Instead of damming the lake for more electricity, Greg wanted to plan for jobs in eco-tourism. This type of tourism takes people on walks through wilderness areas, fishing in rare ponds and enjoying the great outdoors.

Despite the concern of Greg and Friends of Star Lake, Abitibi went ahead and built the hydroelectric dam. In a rush to build the dam and flood the reservoir before too much public opposition could be mounted, Abitibi also pushed 6000 cubic meters of timber into piles and burned it at the lake site.

"This took place in a province that is overcutting its forests and bringing in wood from mainland Canada. Even if Newfoundlanders got a good percentage of the profit from these projects, and they do *not*," Greg says, "this would still be wrong."



Greg Mitchell boating on Star Lake.

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

In one letter to the logging industry Greg wrote:

"We do not have to destroy one thing to create something else. We want to work together instead of working against each other to make the forest a place of work and enjoyment."

In April 1998, the Newfoundland and Labrador Natural History Society awarded Greg the 1998 Tuck-Walters Award for environmental awareness and protection. In presenting the award, the Society noted: "We need more Greg Mitchells in Newfoundland and Labrador...he has [shown us] that poor forest management makes for poor job returns in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Today Greg is still a logger, but he also does a lot of volunteer work with the Newfoundland Environment Network. As he gets older, he finds logging physically very demanding. Greg is thinking of going back to university to do environmental studies. He wants to understand the role of science in making decisions about forest management. Greg plans to apply what he has learned as a logger to the other side of the industry.



Star Lake (overview)

"I want to make a difference in our forest as well as in others areas of the environment that are at risk. I can only do this if I stay a step ahead of big industry. I plan to better educate myself for the job ahead. If I have learned anything from my work as a logger, it is that it is never too late for a change."

Sources:

1. Personal interview with Greg Mitchell by Marian Frances White, February 1998.
2. *At the Cutting Edge* by the Sierra Club of Canada, 1998.
3. Historical references taken from *The Trees Behind the Shore: The forests and forest industries of Newfoundland and Labrador* by John Gray. You can find this book at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

For a good read on the history of logging in Newfoundland

Those Eight-Eight Unfortunates — Logging in Newfoundland in the 1930s by Ed Kavanagh. It is #8 of the Newfoundland and Labrador Adult Basic Education Social History Series, available through the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador.

For Discussion: Additional information on Greg Mitchell's case before the Provincial Court of Newfoundland.

Greg Mitchell had to make a big decision. Would he fight big industry to help save the forests of Newfoundland? When he decided to do so, he also let the public know about his

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

actions through letters to the editor in local newspapers. He hopes others will speak out about this environmental issue. Here is an example of one of his letters to the newspaper.

Friends Of Star Lake
P.O. Box 3924, R.R. #2
Corner Brook, Newfoundland
A2H 6B9
November 20, 1997

Letters to the Editor
The Evening Telegram
P. O. Box 5970
St. John's, NF
A1C5X7

Dear Editor:

As you and your readers know, on October 28, 1997 I filed a complaint with the Justice of the Peace of Newfoundland concerning activities at Star Lake.

On November 13, Abitibi presented a repayment plan for loss of fish and fish habitat at Star Lake. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) say that fish habitat must be replaced. Abitibi has proposed to build a hatchery at Star Lake, remove fish from the lake and release small fish back to the lake. Will this hatchery replace fish habitat? The answer is NO.

Despite our efforts, the hydro dam is now all but complete. The flooding will begin in December. Only now a plan has been put out for public view. The brook trout at Star Lake grow large because they feed on smaller arctic char. Many of the spawning fish have been destroyed through pollution. Evening Telegram readers will recall a front page story on November 10 showing this pollution. A hatchery will not bring back these spawning fish. It is the wrong tool for the job. This makes me ask, why build a hatchery in the first place?

Perhaps the answer to that question will be found in politics rather than science. Abitibi will look as though they are doing something about Star Lake. They will spend half a million dollars to build the hatchery and DFO will look like they are doing something as well. This gets everyone "off the hook" except the fish.

There is a solution to this problem. The government should order Abitibi to tear down the dam and clean up the area. Only our children or their children will know the loss of a fish species if they are allowed to flood Star Lake.

I would ask you to take up this issue as we have at the Humber River Allies. We are saying "NO DAM WAY" to Star Lake. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Greg Mitchell

Working Lives Chance and Luck: Making a Job

More and more people are interested in environmental issues. Here is an article about Greg Mitchell that was published on the Internet. It was found on the Environment Canada website page. You can view this website on the computer Internet program at www.ns.ec.gc.ca. By publishing news about Greg on the Internet, people throughout the world can follow what he is doing and give their support to this cause.

Greg Mitchell, a citizen of Gillams, Newfoundland, has laid charges against Abitibi-Price. Under Sections 29, 35 and 36 of the Fisheries Act, Mitchell claims logging has caused the destruction of fish and wildlife habitat. It has also caused large deposits of silt in the Star Lake River system. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) takes the lead role in enforcing the Act. Environment Canada will be inspecting the site [to follow up on Mitchell's claims.]

You can contact Friends of Star Lake at: hlen@web.net

Finally, when Greg decided to lay charges against the logging company, he had to file a complaint with the Supreme Court of Newfoundland. This is what the charges stated:

This is the information of Mr. Gregory Mitchell, from now on called the Informant. Address: Gillams, Newfoundland

The informant says he has reason to believe that: ABITIBI-PRICE of Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland and CHI HYDROELECTRIC COMPANY of Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland have committed the following offense:

Count #1: Did between February 26, 1997 and October 4, 1997, at or near Star Lake, in the Province of Newfoundland, erect a dam across a stream that prevents the passage of fish. This is contrary to the Fisheries Act.

Count #2: Did carry on construction that resulted in the destruction of fish habitat. Count #3 Did permit the deposit of a substance known as silt, in waters where fish live. This is also contrary to the Fisheries act, thereby committing an offence contrary to the Fisheries Act.

Signed before me this 28 day of October AD., 1997
at Corner Brook, Newfoundland

Signature of Informant:
Signature of Justice of the Peace for Newfoundland

Cutting Trees on the Rock: Questions for Discussion

Introduction

1. Name some of the trees that can be found on the island of Newfoundland.
2. What were some of the reasons that early settlers cut trees?
3. What is the situation today for logging in Newfoundland and Labrador?
4. Why did Greg Mitchell file charges against a logging company?

Early Memories of Logging

1. What are log booms and how are they used?
2. What work does a scaler do in the woods?
3. What did Greg want to be when he grew up?
4. Who inspired him to become a logger and why?

Education and Training

1. What university did Greg attend and what degree did he obtain there?
2. Did Greg leave Newfoundland after he graduated? If no, what did he do?
3. What type of work did he do in Corner Brook?

At Home and at Work, Logging with a Difference

1. Where did Greg Mitchell settle down?
2. Why did Greg and his wife, Lynn, build a sawmill?
3. What is different about their home in Gillams?
4. Would you be able to live without electricity? What changes would you make in your home?

Making Choices about what you do in the Woods

1. What is EcoWatch and why was this group important to Greg Mitchell?
2. What is pesticide spraying and why is it used in this province?
3. Why did Greg decide to change the way he was logging?
4. What is an environmentalists and why did Greg become one?

New Sounds in the Forest

1. What are the sounds Greg Mitchell hears in the woods today?
2. What are some sounds that you would like to hear in the woods?
3. What has changed in the forest?
4. What are mechanical harvesters and why are they a problem in the forest today?

Laws to Protect the Forest

5. What is the white pine blister and where did it come from?
6. What is the Forestry Act?
7. What are some of the problems in the forest today?
8. How many loggers were there in this province in 1996 and how many are there today?

A Day on the Job

1. Describe a day in the woods as a logger.
2. What is the most dangerous thing in the forest for a logger?
3. What are some surprises loggers face from time to time?
4. What is a skidder and how is it used?

A Lifetime of On-the-Job Training

1. Has Greg Mitchell learned anything new about the forest industry?
2. If yes, name some of the things that he has learned after twenty years logging.
3. What does it mean to clear cut an area of forest?
4. Name one other province in Canada that has clear cut a lot of its forests?
5. Why is this bad for the growth of other trees?

A Logger up Against a Corporation

1. Why do the Humber River Allies and Friends of Star Lake exist?
2. Who gets most of the profits of the logging industry? Explain why.
3. What award did Greg Mitchell receive in 1998 and why?
4. What do you think Greg will do in his future work?
5. Why is this work important to all of us?
6. Where can you find more information on Greg Mitchell's case?
7. Give examples of ways we can help protect our forest.