

Ans'd
May 21/47

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
May 14/47

Dear Mr. Raddall,

When I saw you briefly at Mr. Deacon's lecture I told you that I might be out this summer collecting folklore again. Since then I have been taken on the staff of the National Museum (Ottawa), to do field work in the Maritimes. Recording equipment is being supplied by the Library of Congress in Washington as it was four years ago.

Except for recording a few tunes from a singer at North River, I feel that I have pretty well covered Lunenburg County, and it would seem to me a good idea to go on now through Queens and Shelburne Counties, and then to the Pubnicos. I haven't received my instructions yet from Dr. Barbeau, but I think he will leave it to me to go where I think best, and though I expect he will want me to do much more with the French than I did on my last expedition.

The Library of Congress will want records of folk songs, old time instrumental music and dance tunes, folk tales and samples of dialect. In addition to these I will pick up as much as I can about witchcraft, superstitions, weather and animal lore, and all the other aspects of folklore that are necessary for the complete study of a district, but these latter of course will not be put on records.

Now I don't in any way want to trespass upon your preserves, but since I don't possess

your wonderful skill in presenting my findings to the public, it is not likely that we would conflict. On the other hand you may know just the people I will be looking for, and you may be very glad to have records made of their material. The Library of Congress sends the best equipment available, so it is a rare opportunity for the province.

I am buying a car (says she hopefully) and have been promised delivery about the first of June. That is the date when I should start out, which would be the beginning of a four month trip. If the car is late in coming I could do some preliminary work in this or one of the other counties with the school inspector. In fact Mr. Crowell told me when I met him in Lunenburg that he would be glad to do anything for me he could do down there; that is, in Queens and Shelburne. But since you have been good enough to express interest in what I am trying to do, I thought I would write you first and ask what you advise. I managed to get a few Indian records at Shubenacadie and Nyanza, but I would like much more if I can get it. I have practically nothing in lumberman's shanties, and negro folklore has been practically untouched except for some that I got at Preston. English folk songs, of course, are always treasured.

Is there any part of the summer that would be better for my work there than June, because it really doesn't matter to me when I come. I want to spend one month in P.E.I. as they were making efforts to finance a whole summer's collecting there and I know they are interested.

My reading club read the Odor of Sanctity last week. I wish you could have heard our shrieks of laughter. Some of us had read it before, but that made no difference.

Sincerely yours,

Pelen Brighten



DEPARTMENT
OF
MINES AND RESOURCES
MINES AND GEOLOGY BRANCH

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Jan. 13/48

*Amad
Jan. 13/48*

Dear Mr. Raddall,

Here is a story of frenzied finance which I thought might interest you. The other day, having for the first time in memory received no stationery for Christmas, I went to the Book Room to replenish my stock. The Wedding Gift was sitting there, so I picked it up absent-mindedly, wishing I could buy a copy. Just then Mr. Bendeler came along and, still clutching your book but forgetting it for the moment, I said,

"Mr. Bendeler, I think you owe me some money." This was for my Twelve Folk Songs which I had taken in there months ago. He said,

"Didn't I pay you?" So I said, "No, I'm sure you didn't." So he said he'd look it up in the books.

"When was it?" he said. "This year? Last year?" So we agreed it was one or the other, but there was no record of anything

"Well," he said, "there were twelve of them weren't there?" But I said, "No, I think there were four." It might just as well have been six and probably was.

"All right," he said, "how much were they?" So I said, "A dollar ten apiece," and then realized I should have said a dollar twenty, but it was too late then.

"I owe you four-forty then," said Mr. Bendeler, and started for the cash box. But I stopped him.

"A year or two ago I got a copy of Robie Tufts bird book, and then your fire came and I never got a bill."

"Was it paper covered or hard covered?" he asked.

"I haven't the slightest idea," I said, "because it was a gift and went out from the store."

"A dollar and a half," said Mr. Bendeler. "We'll make it a dollar," and again started off for the cash.

"Wait a minute," I said, "how much is this book of Mr. Raddall's?"

"Three dollars," he said.

"All right, give me forty cents," So he ~~went~~ wrapped up the book and gave me my forty cents.

"Mr. Bendeler," I said, "who is out, you or me?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," he said, and

neither have I.

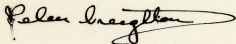
I am enjoying every word of it and recognize many of the places. I wish I had known of the settlement of Port Mouton before going there, as well as incidents about many of the other places. Miss Letty is a delightful character whom I hope I will meet again before the book is finished. In these busy days I don't get very much time for reading, but that spreads the stories out, and prolongs the enjoyment. Thank you for writing it. I had hoped to find Horace Johnston's story about the whale there, and will look forward to that in your next volume. Tommy says the idea is yours and you've copyrighted it. All power to you.

The Museum kept me on until the end of December, and will take me on again in June. I still have quite a lot of notes to finish typing, although I've been working steadily. When I get all the Jim Charles data together, I'll send copies on to you, and perhaps you will find something there of interest.

For various reasons I've decided to put my house up for sale. If it goes, I shall be very regretful and, if it doesn't, perhaps more so. I'll probably get a small house somewhere in the country, but where, I haven't decided yet. If any of you come up to Halifax while I'm still here, I wish you could find time to come over to Dartmouth. Our view is really lovely, and I'd like to show it to you.

Kindest regards to all the family, and congratulations upon the success of your new book,

Sincerely yours,





CANADA

DEPARTMENT

OF

MINES AND RESOURCES

MINES AND GEOLOGY BRANCH

NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF CANADA

Victoria Beach,
Annapolis Co.,
Aug. 30/48

Ans'd

Dear Mr. Raddall,

In Windsor on my way back from the Noel shore, everybody had a copy of the Chronicle to show me with an account of the speech you made at King's. It sounded most successful, but I've been wondering ever since what Canon Ambrose could have said that he "almost stole your orchids". One would never think of him as a wit, so he must have excelled himself. It was very good of you to give my small efforts a puff, especially at that university where I spent two years on the staff.

At Cheverie I found an excellent singer, but I've made him so conceited he wh't be fit to live with. He got the shock of his life when I played his voice back because he had no idea he was so good. "Now tell me, Miss Creighton," he said later, "what did you really think of those records? It won't hurt my conscience any." So I assured him they were wonderful and he said, "Yes, that's just what I thought," and he'll probably talk about it till the day he dies. However his voice is one of the best I've found, and if more blank discs arrive I must go back there and get everything he knows. They are the real thing. I've suggested to Ottawa that the National Film Board might supply the discs because they need this sort of things for background music. Washington has regretfully used up its quota for this project for this year. I should know the verdict this week.

I wrote Mr. Smith to-day and addressed the letter to Liverpool. I hope that is the proper address. It was interesting the way his songs, or rather his singing, improved as he got used the idea. His chanties should be valuable, and his voice was much better than I expected.

Kindest regards to all the family; it was so nice to see you all again. And many thanks for all you have done for me.

Sincerely yours,

Helena Creighton

(over)

P.S. Miss Thomas looks well, and has just finished a short story which she is mailing to-day. I am sure she would want to be remembered to you if she knew I was writing.

MISS THOMAS
OF
MINES AND GEOLOGY BRANCH
AND RESOURCES

P.S.

Victoria Beach
Annapolis Co.
Aug. 30, 48

Dear Mr. Suddall,

My Windsor on my way back from the hotel where everybody had a copy of the Chronicle to show me with an account of the speech you made at King's. It sounded most successful, but I've been wondering ever since what Canon Adams could have said that he "almost stole your orchids". One would never think of him as a wit, so he must have excelled himself. It was very good of you to give my small efforts a pull, especially at that university where I spent two years on the staff.

At Oberlin I found an excellent singer, but I've made him so conscious he won't be fit to live with. He got the shock of his life when I played his voice back because he had no idea he was so good. "How tall is Miss Christian," he said later, "what did you really think of those records? It won't hurt my conscience any." So I assured him they were wonderful and he said, "Yes, that's just what I thought," and he'll probably talk about it till the day he dies. However his voice is one of the best I've found, and it more than makes up for the fact that he and get everything he knows. They are the real thing. I've suggested to Ottawa that the National Film Board might enjoy the discs because they need this sort of things for background music. Washington has regretfully used up its quota for this project for this year. I should know the verdict this week.

I wrote Mr. Smith to-day and addressed the letter to Liverpool. I hope that is the proper address. It was interesting the way his name, or rather his singing improved as he got used to the idea. His accents should be valuable and his voice was much better than I expected.

kindest regards to all the family; it was so nice to see you all again. And many thanks for all you have done for me.

Sincerely yours,

John D. Suddall

(over)

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Dec. 16/48

Dear Tom,

The new book on Halifax is fascinating I couldn't put it down. In many ways I think it is your best to date, but that is just my humble opinion. The war chapters actually kept me awake at night; I had always realized our danger, but had never let myself dwell upon it except in 1942 when I was returning from Indiana and wondered what the future might hold. The sinking of the ship off George's Island is a vivid memory. Having been here you will realize that we had a front seat, and how my dear father enjoyed the show! The whole book impressed me as such a well balanced summing up by one who has seen the picture clearly, and has distorted none of the facts. That holds for the early days as well as those we remember.

I wish I had thought of Margaret Ellis and John Martin when you were here. Next time I must ask them in to meet you here.

Greetings and best wishes to all the

family. I can see yours being a merry household on Christmas day.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Breighton

P.S. It must be true that women leave the most important things for the postscript. I forgot to tell you how proud I am to have a place in your bibliography, even if it is only for having collected a bawdy ballad! Thanks.

P.B.

NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF CANADA



CANADA

DEPARTMENT

OF

MINES AND RESOURCES

MINES, FORESTS AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

General Delivery,
Clark's Harbor,
July 18/49

Dear Tom,

Here is something for you and Edith to chuckle over.

Maida French paid me a surprise visit, and we decided to go to see Mrs. Richardson. We were sent to your friend Dewey Nickerson, and we asked him what he would charge. He opened with ten dollars. I looked a bit doubtful, so he came down to eight. Somehow he found we were writers, so he said, "Do you know Tom Raddall."

"Oh yes," we said with great enthusiasm.

"Well, Tom's a great personal friend of mine, and if you know ~~him~~^{Tom}, I'll make it all right about the price." So he made it all right by charging us the same eight dollars!

Such hero worship; all the way out on the boat, Tom this and Tom that. Did you know he had submitted Raddall as the name of his new grandson, to be known familiarly as Reddy? Then when he heard the Richardsons had the Seal Island story he had to see the article and explain the lobster net again. We were highly entertained, but our response didn't gain for us the expected price cut. Wherein would you say we erred?

We're deep in fog to-day, and rode the ocean yesterday in the same damp atmosphere. My chief informant is one of the most grotesque people I have ever seen, crèpped from childhood, and with a huge head and the most disconcerting blue eyes that point in opposite directions. To walk down a path in front of him gives the strangest sensation. He is supposed to have said that he has twenty-six girl friends; that I am one of them and that he could have me for the asking.

This place gives me the creeps, but how interesting the people are. I'll have lots to tell you no doubt if I go back through Liverpool. I did enjoy my brief visit at your house. Kindest

regards to all,



NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF CANADA

Sincerely yours,

Pelee C.

General Delivery,
Ottawa,
July 18, 1949

Dear Tom,

Here is something for you and Bill to chuckle over.

Mrs. French said she was surprised to see you and we decided to go to see Mrs. Richardson. We were sent to your friend Harry Richardson and we asked him what he would charge. He opened his eyes and I looked a bit doubtful, he came down to eight dollars. Sooner he found we were writers, he said, "Do you know Tom Bahall?"

"Oh yes," we said with great enthusiasm.

"Well, Tom's a great personal friend of mine, and I know you know Bahall. I'll make it all right about the price." So he made it all right by charging us the same eight dollars!

Such hero worship! All the way out on the boat, Tom and I and Tom that did you know he had admitted Bahall as the author of his new grandson, to be known familiarly as "Baby" then he had heard the Richardson had the Seal Island story he had to see the article and explain he was wrong, not again. We were right, but our response didn't gain for us the expected price out. Wherein would you say we erred?

We're deep in fog to-day and rode the ocean yesterday in the same damp atmosphere. My chief informant is one of the most grotesque people I have ever seen, crippled from childhood, and with a huge head and the most disconcerting blue eyes that point in opposite directions. To walk down a path in front of him gives the strongest sensation. He is supposed to have said that he could twenty-six girl friends; that I am one of them and that he could have me for the asking.

This place gives me the creeps, but how interesting the people are. I'll have lots to tell you no doubt if I go back through Liverpool. I did enjoy my brief visit at your house. Kindly

*Amal
June 11/52*



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
BRANCH

DEPARTMENT
OF
RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CANADA

Wolfville,
N.S.,
June 8/52

Dear Edith and Tom,

Twenty-five long years together. The last time I saw you I thought you seemed contented enough to start another twenty-five. May that be so, and may the second jump be even happier than the first.

My old man near Chester sang sixty-one songs in less than two weeks. Sixty-two really, but I thought it discreet to erase the last one from the tape! I've just been listening to the folk song program at six and heard three from my collections sung. Makes it feel worth while.

Jim Saunders



I'm supposed to be having an interview for MacLeans, but the correspondent had been imbibing for some days before I joined him at the Lord Nelson for lunch. He looked at me through a haze - it must have been a haze - paid me a compliment, and ordered champagne. My capacity is limited, so he did his best to finish the bottle. I'd call the whole thing off if it weren't that he might lose his job. Apparently it's a chronic ailment and I feel sorry for him, but Pierre Berton knew and was only anxious for his story. My fishermen treat me with more respect, but don't tell him I said so.

I'm waiting breathlessly for the new novel. Meanwhile how about that article for the Dalhousie Review? We have all July to do it in.

Please say hello to Tommy and Francie; and Edith, I hope your man thought you beautiful enough to be toasted in champagne.

With warmest congratulations,

Peter Breighton

Helen Graydon
L.A. Honolulu

November 1st, 1953

Dear Helen,

I wrote Miss Moore saying that I would come to the meeting in Halifax on the 24th if I possibly could, and I'm definitely planning to come. However it's impossible for me to make absolutely positive engagements of this kind, for something may come up requiring my presence elsewhere, or we might have a snowstorm making the hundred-mile drive impossible on that particular day. Bendall has asked me to come up and autograph some books for him, and I'm writing him to say that I hope to get up there on the 24th. So there are the two birds and the stone. If all goes well I shall be there, and I look forward with pleasure to seeing you after this long time. Mith probably will come with me to do a bit of Christmas shopping.

Frank Willis dropped in here a few days ago and got a further recording of old Will Smith. He then went on to Cape Sable in the hope of seeing Dewey, and thence to Falmouth. The recordings he got about the coast last year were a tremendous success on the CBC, he tells me, hence the decision to get more.

What a dreary week just past! I spent most of it cooped up in a hunting camp at Eagle Lake with three companions, playing bridge (I detest cards) and staring out at the continuous rain. At the end of the week I felt sure we could have paddled a canoe down the three miles of trail to the motor road at Big Falls. As it was I walked (or rather splashed) out to my car, burdened with rifle, knapsack, haversack and sleeping bag, and wondering how far Noah had to lug his baggage to the Ark.

Until the 24th, then,

Cheers,



CANADA
DEPARTMENT
OF

NATIONAL PARKS
BRANCH

RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CANADA

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Nov. 5/53

Dear Tom,

So pleased we are.

I meant to ask you and Edith if you could stay with me for the few days that you'll be up, and then remembered that you always like to stay with your mother. I see by your letter that she is now with your sister, and it maybe that they haven't as much room. Says she hopefully. The Alcocks from the National Museum were the last to occupy my spare room. It would adore to have you and Edith.

With or without staying here, are there any friends I could ask in for you? Authors in ones, twos, or just executive? Or friends who have nothing to do with the craft? If you've coming all this way we might as well make it as festive as we can. Tommy and Francis won't mind being parked for an extra night, or do they keep house by themselves?

You kept me up till 12.30 Sunday reading Tidefall, which says everything. I can't get it back to the Library because the whole house is reading it. I thought it was a most absorbing story. Proof, 12.30. More about that when you come.

A letter from Alice MacKay asks if the incomparable Raddais are going to Banff. They're planning for the convention early.

I really mean that I would love to have you and also to have anyone in for you. Don't say "now we mustn't put her to any trouble!" Just let me know what you would most like, but don't order angel cake because I can't make it.

Cheers to all the family,

Pelan

Arrived Nov 9th. Suggested tea at 5 pm. at her house Nov 24th or she could come to dinner with me at the Nova Section.

Anad
Nov 20/56



CANADA
DEPARTMENT
OF

NATIONAL PARKS
BRANCH

NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CANADA

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Nov. 14/56

Dear Tom,

Your new novel has been completely ruining my nights' sleep. I'd keep thinking, 'just one more chapter,' and so the hours would roll on to be paid for in heavy lids the next day. Which of course won't displease you at all, and to me was time well spent. You know your woods as well as your sea.

I think I told you some time ago that I was publishing a long playing record, put out by Folkways of New York, and that several of Mr. Smith's chanties would be on it. Well the record is out now and will soon be available in the stores. The Bligh Radio at 200 Quinpool Road will be carrying it. I would like to make a gift of one to Mr. Smith, but there are so many poor folk on the record to be remembered that I have to draw the line somewhere. But at least I can let him know through you that the record has been made, and that his father's voice is on it. I hope he will be pleased with it, and I thank you again for making that evening's recording possible.

My book of ghost stories is growing daily. I've been jotting them down since 1928, so there is a great variety of material. I have high hopes for it.

If you would send me Francey's address I would love to have her here some time. Love to Edith and congratulations on the fine new novel.

Sincerely yours,

Delia Brighton

Helen Coughton

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Dec. 12/61

Dear Tom,

I know you are a friend of Martha Thomas, and so am I, but I wonder if you realize her financial difficulties. I always knew she rode close to the wind, but to suggest her to the Canadian Writers' Foundation never entered my stupid head. I've just come back from Ottawa where I spent a couple of days with the Don Thomson. Terry, as you know, lives, breathes, and dreams of needy writers, and it was she who suggested that Martha would be eligible. As soon as I came back I got in touch with Mrs. Jordon who boards her, and then wrote Martha herself. Her case is pretty desperate. For one thing she has no immediate family. She has had flu and hasn't made a full recovery so she can't write. She pays \$100 a month for room and board and sometimes has drug bills of \$70 a month which she can't meet. She has kept up her board bills although how, I can't imagine, although her income from her writing has been steady. She has had no new clothes for years, her housekeeper tells me, and needs shoes which have to be specially made for her lame foot.

She must be very eligible, and I don't doubt this will go through, so I wrote and told her what was pending and asked a few questions. Her letter was pretty jumbled from the depth of her emotion and relief, and makes me feel pretty weepy. I now have to get a medical statement, and Terry thought it would

help a lot if you would write a letter of recommendation. I don't know what you know about her circumstances. Perhaps nothing, but if she has ever talked to you about her affairs that would help. Probably more important would be an estimate of her work, its quality and so forth. Did you know that she once published a book, *Storm along Gert*? It came out about the same time as *Tugboat Annie* which spoiled its sale, and is about Victoria Beach.

I feel sure this is something you will be pleased to do, for I know you have made special trips to visit Martha. If I am right will you address your letter to Mrs. D.W. Thomson, 90 Kenilworth Street, Ottawa, and it will be read by the Board. The idea having come from Terry in the first place, there is every possibility that the ball will roll swiftly. Anyhow Martha knows her friends are working for her, and that should make a very different Christmas for her.

I had never realized before quite what the Foundation could mean. Perhaps I should add that Martha gets the old age pension, and well-to-do friends have been kind.

Yours,

Pelen

P.S. Anything to do with the Foundation is, of course, strictly confidential.

14
December 18, 1961

Dear Helen,

I'm so glad that you wrote. For some time past I have suspected that Miss Thomas was in poor circumstances; but she always put on a confident air and dismissed her physical ills with such gaiety that I hesitated to enquire about her finances. She is a very brave soul, and with the brave there is always a sensitive personal pride which one must treat with care. I doubt very much that she would have confided in me as she has in you, in any case.

I should say this is definitely a case for the Canadian Writers' Foundation. Miss Thomas deliberately risked an indigent old age by living in Canada and writing about Canadian scenes and people. You and I and a handful of others know very well the struggle involved in that, especially in the past thirty years; we have gone through it ourselves.

I shall write Mrs. Thomson at once, as you suggest.

With my regards,

Sincerely,

Miss Helen Creighton,
26 Newcastle Street,
Dartmouth, N.S.

Note:- As a result of all this, Miss Thomas got a grant of \$1,000 a year from the Canadian Writers' Foundation, which continued until her death in July 1968
— J.H.R.

The Canadian Authors Association

Patron His Excellency Major-General George P. Vanier, DSO., MC., CD.,
Governor-General of Canada

Affiliated with
La Société des Écrivains Canadiens

Direct reply to:

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Dec. 12/63

Dear Tom,

What a delicious surprise. Last week I couldn't hear The Serial, but to-night I planned everything so I could listen. At the first unexpected note of music I listened intently, and at the end when Karen James sang that lovely song, "He's Young But" I thought at first it was one of my versions, and then thought not, so I was quite unprepared for the welcome announcement at the end saying that the ballads were mine. Quite apart from my personal involvement, the music seemed to me most suitable, and I hope others will realize that our own folk music should accompany our stories. I liked the one episode I've seen. It looks like a more professional than in the Costain story. This must be a great satisfaction to you and I hope you are enjoying it.

You have probably seen by the papers that we are offering \$1000 for new lyrics for the Maple Leaf Forever, a gift from Gordon Thompson. I don't know whether you saw George Salverson on television the other night, but I felt he'd given it too negative an approach, and that is why Gordon and I concocted a statement for the papers which came out as a Canadian Press interview. This promises to be quite a lot of fun. One entry the other day ended by saying she hoped we all would live "like maple leaves together." This might be an idea for a new valentine; will you be my maple leaf?

Will Bird has no doubt written to ask you to take part in the convention in June; it wouldn't be right without you. Except for a few incidents I must say being president has been an experience I wouldn't have missed for anything. Much hard work, mostly in correspondence, but the Author and Bookman is improving all the time (that began before my term) and we now have an editor for the Poetry Magazine who promises to lift that to its proper heights. The executive has been loyal and faithful in attending meetings, and when I retire in June, I think Fred Swayze will be prepared to take over, and he should be good. Like Don Thomson and me, he really cares about the Association. I've made very good friends through it, and can point to many times when it has helped me. We all look forward to the time when you will be one of us again.

Good luck to the serial and whatever else you are working on now, and accept congratulations not from me only, but from all our members who will be watching from coast to coast.

Love to Edith, and all best wishes,



National President



CANADA

OUR FILE NO.
YOUR FILE NO.

DEPARTMENT OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CANADA

HUMAN HISTORY BRANCH

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Feb. 19/64

Dear Tom,

I have been typing out a story Jim Howe of Annapolis Royal gave me a few years ago. It deals with Indians tapping ash trees to select those without knots for making baskets. They were asleep on a hilltop when they were awakened by the noise of tapping coming from the trees in the middle of the night and for some reason this so terrified them that even the young boy with them screamed and the dog howled and they left the place in ^{panic} haste. It would seem to be a forerunner of death, and the oldest member of the little party did die a few months later.

Jim thought this had something to do with the creation myth that Glooscap shot arrows into the trees and young Indians stepped forth, but I can't see any connection. Kay Hill has never come across any such belief, and I wondered if you ~~xxxxxx~~ had. I'm working on a book of Popular Beliefs and Superstitions, and would like to include this story, so any light we can throw upon the reaction of these people to the sound of tapping from the trees would be a valuable addition. The tapping was the same sound the Indians themselves made when they tapped.

Would you believe that I've never had a word from the CBC about the music used for the Wings of Night? However I belong to Capac, and have asked them to look into it. There ought to be a nice fee awaiting me there. I enjoyed the series very much and saw nearly all of it. The James are here now, and we are wondering about the mistake in the courtroom scene that you mentioned and we couldn't spot. Did anyone, and will you enlighten us?

All good wishes to you and Edith,

Peter Breighton

Miss Helen Creighton
26 Newcastle St.
Sarnborough, N. S.

December 15/63

Dear Helen:

The inspiration of Nova Scotia folk song music in "Wings of Night" really belongs to Ron Weyman, the director of the TV film, and his playwright. Actually I was not consulted on the TV script, except on one or two minor points. Indeed the standard contract one is required to sign, on selling the rights in a story, contains a clause to the effect that the author will have no say in the film or TV production.

This is, of course, the standard practice of the motion picture business, evolved from a long experience of book authors screaming murder whenever their story is twisted or mutilated to suit the film playwright. Actually, if the film people had consulted me more, I could have saved them several bad boners, including one that -- when detected -- makes a farce of the courtroom trial, which is the principle part of the story. It will be interesting to see how many people do detect the anachronism.

On the whole the play and the direction were very good, and the casting was excellent. I confess I was dubious when Weyman informed me that "a folk-singer named Karen James" would play the part of Tally in my story. However when I saw Miss James on location here for the outdoor shots I was quite happy about the choice. Quite apart from her singing talent (a talent I had not given Tally in my story) she had exactly the combination of healthy good looks and rather shy charm of the person I had in mind, and she played the part beautifully.

The film device of having Neil hear her singing a Nova Scotia folk ballad before actually seeing her, and the use of her song as motif music for the opening, fitted the story well indeed, and the acknowledgement to you was not only graceful but the proper thing to do.

I have not heard from Will Bird about the convention next June. As you know, I have never liked the notion of anyone (including me) pontificating about the literary art. Art comes by instinct, and no one can lay down rules for it without betraying himself as a stuffed shirt or a fool. I've seen and heard too much of that when authors and would-be authors meet.

Edith joins me in greetings.

*Miss Helen Creighton,
Dartmouth, N.S.*

Feb. 21, 1964

Dear Helen,

I never heard of tapping an ash (or any other tree) to find out if it had knots, because there would be a visible sign of such knots on the surface. I've watched an Indian selecting clear ash wood for baskets and for ax handles, and all he did was to walk around the tree looking at the trunk as far up as the branches.

However, quite apart from that, I think Jim Howe's story is a variant of an old and widely held superstition amongst the Micmacs. Encamped in the forest, they would hear loud cracking sounds, as if some ghostly ax-man was busy felling a tree. Then they would hear the crash of the tree falling. It was reckoned very bad luck to hear KEASKUNOOGWEJIT -- "THE INVISIBLE TREE FELLER" --- and I have heard one or two Micmacs declare that a death followed in their families after hearing these sounds. The sounds were always heard on a calm night.

I have heard these sounds myself, and so has every woodsman. An old dead tree that has been standing for generations, against all winds, sometimes reaches the end of its endurance in the middle of a calm night. In other words the rot at the base, or in some weak spot farther up the trunk, finally eats away the last fibres that keep the tree firmly erect. As the rot is usually deeper on one side, the tree begins to totter in that direction. As it goes farther and farther you hear the loud cracks of the remaining sound wood giving way, and then the crash. There were no fatalities in my family within years after hearing these sounds; but of course I'm not superstitious!

In "Legends of the Micmacs" by Silas Rand (who started his long missionary career among the Micmacs here in Queens County) you will find a footnote at the bottom of page 387 describing briefly the invisible tree-feller, and giving him an alternative name, WEGCOASKUNOOGWEJIT, which is merely a difference of dialect. In Rand's "Dictionary of The Language of the Micmac Indians", page 108, he gives the name as KEASKUNOOGWEJIT and adds still another variant, KOCASKUNOOGWEJIT. All mean the same thing.

With regard to the TV version of "Wings of Night", the error was not manifest to most viewers because apparently most of the courtroom scenes ended on the cutting-room floor; at any rate very little of the trial was shown. Anyone who had read the book, and knew something about rifles, would have spotted the error nevertheless.

As I've said, I wasn't consulted on the script nor on the production. Hence such matters as the background music were outside my ken, and I don't know where you stand in your claim for a fee. It will be interesting to see.

Saw you on Front Page Challenge the other night and enjoyed the show. Berton's ready parody of O Canada made me wonder (not for the first time) how much of FPC is really ad lib.

Cheers.

26 Newcastle St.,
Dartmouth, N.S.,
Feb. 27/77

Dear Tom,

I've just finished reading your Memoirs, and as I went along I jotted down memories of my own. I had never heard the place where the blind sister was left to drown called the Blind Sister Ledge. I think it was my "Lady of the Legends" CBC documentary that has a Sambro fisherman telling that story, and a singer named Betty Belmore made a very good song up about it.

Miss Hoyt. Dear Miss Hoyt. My brother Terry and I trudged all the way over there for years and took part in her recitals. I always felt sorry for her because she seemed to have so few of the pleasures of life. But we were fond of her.

The explosion. That was an excellent description. You were closer to it than I was and saw more of its horrors. Very hard on an impressionable youth, and the years that followed while you were at sea were grueling.

You mentioned your study. I remember on my first visit being shown it and being so interested in where you worked. Then I thought of our trip to Eagle Head and Mrs. Joudrey, Kartina? I think that is what you called her. How serious she was about her witching. And Moose Harbour. I have a nice picture of you and Edith there. It must have caused you great grief when the fire came.

The Merkels were good friends of mine too. I saw a lot of them at Granville Ferry when I was working the Victoria Beach shore. And I remember James Gillis in Halifax, but I remember him better when I recorded him in front of his property at Lake Ainslie. His entrance was barricaded probably because his house was too dirty to be shown to visitors. And to see him standing out on the road sawing away on his fiddle and then singing with his eyes tight shut, and reciting "Miss MacKay". It was one of the most comical things I've ever seen, he was so deadly earnest.

Evelyn Tufts. The last time I saw her was on the train at Digby. She was dressed to the nines, and looking most flamboyant in striking contrast to the well-tailored person I was meeting. I knew her in Wolfville too when she and Robie lived together.

Frank Willis, a good friend. We worked on a number of things together in the early days of the CBC. What a lot of changes we've seen in our time.

I hope you are well and that your eyesight has improved. I often think how kind you and Edith were to me on my visits to Liverpool. What will you do with yourself now if you are not writing?

Best wishes,

Pelan Braighton

March 2, 1977

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your interesting letter. We have indeed lived through much the same time and known many of the same people.

Regarding the Blind Sister rock off Sambro, I chuckle every time I hear or read about that silly legend of the blind woman fastened to the rock and left to drown. As the Blind Sister is permanently under water, even at low tide, it would be interesting to know how the fastening was done.

The nautical fact of the matter is that there are several rocks in a row, more or less, off Sambro, and seamen have long known them as The Sisters. All but one are close to the surface, and the sea breaks on them and makes their presence visible. The outermost rock is deeper and much more dangerous because the sea doesn't break on it, and many ships have been wrecked there.

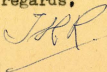
Seamen call it the Blind Sister in much the same sense as a modern motorist referring to a blind corner or a blind alley. Back in 1967 Bill Harper of the CBC got some wonderful film shots of a big ship hard aground on the Blind Sister in a heavy sea. Every wave that hit the ship sent spray as high as the masthead. I was working with Bill on a film about Halifax ("A City's Story") and we used some of the shots, and wished we had room for more.

You ask about my health. In general it's very good, but I'm having trouble with my eyesight. Had a cataract removed from my left eye last summer, and in April I must return to the hospital for a similar operation on the right.

The operation itself is nothing. I dread the long weeks of recovery in which I'm unable to read properly, and then the longer period of getting used to a new thick lens in my glasses. Since the operation last August I haven't been able to drive my car, or even to walk outdoors with ease and confidence. The new lens makes the ground look much nearer than it really is, and consequently I walk somewhat like a sailor with three sheets in the wind, not knowing exactly when my foot will fetch up. As the fellow said to the hangman, "It takes an awful lot of getting used to." I tried contact lenses but couldn't manage them.

When my eyesight has recovered sufficiently I shall resume research into Nova Scotian historical matters, adding the papers to the collection now in Dalhousie Library.

With my regards,



Miss Helen Creighton