Chapter 1

Village Wooing

"The Festival experienced its first, faint twinges of life on a cold February evening" in 1962. So writes Brian Doherty, a former Toronto lawyer, then working in Niagara Falls and making his home in Niagara-on-the lake. "We were sitting around a fire at the home of Jean Marsh absorbed in our favorite topic: the beauty and charm of Niagara and the fact that its historic heritage was being threatened." The unanimous feeling was "to do something about the town we love, something we believe in." "How about theatre" suggested Peggy Meyer, a New York actress and friend of Jean Marsh. "Shaw", exploded Brian, with his characteristic exuberance. I am told by others in that small February circle that it was Brian who exclaimed "Theatre" - after all he had already founded two theatres - and it was Peggy Meyer who proposed "Shaw" .It didn't really matter; the story had begun.

Shortly after, I received a phone call from Brian Doherty, my new neighbor, who introduced himself and asked if I was interested in helping him found a theatre in Niagara-or-the-lake. I very definitely was interested. I had been an avid theatergoer for many years, and had seen a great deal on the stages of New York City where I and my family had been living for the past ten years. In 1962 I was teaching humanities at the University of Buffalo, living in Niagara as a Canadian landed immigrant, and commuting almost daily across the river to Buffalo. Here now was a chance not just to see theatre, but to help make it.

Indefatigable Brian quickly phoned an old friend, Maynard Burgess, an actor-director from Niagara Falls, NY, to help launch a first season, called "A Salute to Shaw" .And soon after, he recruited a tireless team of volunteers to handle business matters, pr, advertising, entertaining, tickets and printing. The team included Jean Marsh, Barbara Tranter, Dorothy Middleditch, Bas and Jean Mason and my wife, Pat. Brian and I did most of the fundraising from our friends in the

area; only a very few thousand dollars were needed to begin with. This was the way theatres are founded, certainly most little theatres.

For years it has been thought that the Shaw Festival founders were mainly interested in reviving and enhancing historic Niagara-on-the-lake. This account is true, but only partly so. In my opinion, the more direct reason for the Festival was the simple desire to start a theatre, especially for our "personal visionary", Brian Doherty. We all loved the theatre and it was a most exciting prospect to be involved in such an enterprise. And, as I shall mention more than once, we were intrigued by the success of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, only two hours away, which had been attracting world-wide acclaim for ten years. But Brian was here in Niagara. There was an available stage in the old Court House. So, why not? It was really that simple.

There is no question that our founding group was swept away by the energy and views of a classic founder, Brian Doherty. His was an irrepressible ego; he could not, indeed, would not understand those who disagreed with him - they must be somehow "flawed", he would say. How dare they say "no" to him. He was determined, demanding, but also persuasive and eloquent in his appeal. He turned off many, but he inspired just as many to follow his dream. And when he was opposed - as he often was - he did not generally sulk, rather, he charged ahead in the belief that the rest would follow. And most did.

Nevertheless, Brian did like to "stir things up"; most founders do. It's significant that Brian's memoir of the Festival's early days is titled Not Bloody Likely, Liza Doolittle's cry of defiance in Pygmalion. The Festival's Artistic Director of the time, Paxton Whitehead, give the memoir the title in 1972 when the book was being prepared for the opening of the new theatre. This "cry of defiance" could well have been Brian's in 1962, when he wanted so desperately to "do something about the lovely town" .This was his way of "doing something" about the torpor that had settled into old Niagara. Shaw, himself would have heartily approved.

The Town of Niagara had to be wooed. While many citizens felt the town should be livened up, others liked it just the way it was, and were especially suspicious of outsiders, to say nothing of actors, coming from afar to "do their thing" .Brian was, of course, suspect. He was a recent resident, coming from Toronto and now working in Niagara Falls. He was often flamboyant and at times arty; he was gay, but quite "proper" except for late night drinking bouts. These became more and more common.

As for myself, I was a third generation Niagara resident, but I was an American and lived in Niagara only as a summer resident until 1961. As I knew just about everyone in the town, I was only somewhat "suspect" .Still I was hardly considered a "local".

By the early 1960's, Niagara-on-the-lake had become quiet, laid-back, seedy in spots, and for newcomers like Brian Doherty just plain dull. Gone were the Canadian regiments which encamped each summer on the old 160 acre "commons" where the Shaw Festival was to build its new theatre 10 years later. The pipe and bugle bands, the weekend parades, the socializing between soldiers and townsfolk had all vanished. Gone were the lake steamers, the Cayuga and the Chipawa, which several times a day carried travelers, cars and produce to Toronto and back. Long gone were the daily trains which took passengers - including my grandfather - to Niagara Falls and Buffalo, and the spectacular Queen's Royal Hotel at the foot of King St. which at the turn of the century attracted the well-to-do from both countries. And not since 1939 had the King and Queen of England - George IV and Mary - driven down the main street of Niagara. Little did we know that their daughter, Elizabeth II, would be with us at the opening of the new Shaw Theatre in June 1973.

Parade and spectacle had always been commonplace in this small southern Ontario village that would eventually become Niagara-on-the-lake. John Graves Simcoe, the Governor General, declared the town - then called Newark - the first capital of Upper Canada in 1791, and officialdom, including royalty on occasion, passed through regularly. Generations of army officers watched the community grow and flourish and, as elsewhere in Canada, many families came to Niagara at the turn of the century. They were summer residents from Toronto, Buffalo, Cleveland and points east who restored and built large residences on Queen Street or further out in the country.

In the opinion of many, decline set in following World War II, and the center could not hold. Niagara was becoming a backwater and its doom appeared to be sealed with the building of the new super highway - to be named in honor of Queen Elizabeth II - which sped past nearby St. Catherines and made it possible to bypass the old train and shipping routes entirely. In the summer of 1961 The Niagara Advance ran an article calling for a citizens committee to look into ways of promoting the town. The local newspaper even suggested that the tourist crowds of

Niagara Falls might be lured in. Little did the editors know that Brian Doherty and his crew were poised and ready to put Niagara solidly back on the map.

And still today - perhaps especially today - many would consider this group a "wrecking crew" .The changes in the Town of Niagara over the last 30 years have paroled the development of the Shaw Festival. These two trends have fed off each other; they have clashed, made up, clashed again. This continual dialectic has at times been healthy, at other times destructive.

I mentioned the suspicion of the local residents during the Festival's founding, but it was not until the late '60's, when the Festival was seeking a site for its new theatre, that enraged citizen reaction took place. And the people were right, since many of the proposed theatre sites threatened to impair the wonderful ambiance of the old town. When a satisfactory site was finally found, the tensions died down until the 1980's when both the Festival and tourism were booming. Now the argument was between the developers, on whose side the Festival was thrown, and the preservationists who wished to maintain what, in their opinion, remained of a quiet and gentle past.

In the early 1960's Niagara-on-the-lake may have been in decline, but it was a decline relative only to the high times of the past, primarily the turn of the century, perhaps even the 1920's and 30's .The post World War II period was very satisfactory for most Niagara residents. It was a quiet neighborhood town, adequately served by automobiles, stately homes, golf, tennis and sailing. In the main street one could get a haircut and buy the best meat, vegetables and cheese, either at McClellands famous store (founded 1840) or Marino's excellent vegetable deli. In contrast during the '90's on a summer day, the main street is clogged with cars, tour buses are lined up with their motors spewing fumes and as Barbara Tranter, a Shaw Festival founder, puts it, "You have to go to Virgil, five miles away, to buy a spool of thread."

To paraphrase Ogden Nash, "The trouble with progress is that it's gone on too long." And, of course, it all depends on who is doing the complaining; for there are many good things that have happened in Niagara over the last 30 years. Fine homes continue to be built and old ones are well preserved and some excellent restaurants and hotels have come on the scene. Despite the traffic the main street looks lovely, filled with flowers and the golf course is still crowded, (although it has been reduced from 9 to 7 holes to accommodate tourists in and around Fort Mississauga).

The Shaw Festival, of course, is both praised for the town's increasing prosperity, and damned for changing Niagara into a Mecca of tourism. Predictably, both sides are correct. To be sure, not only the Festival must share the praise and blame. Beginning in the 1970's overall population increase, government promotion of the area's historic sites, and greatly expanded travel routes - to say nothing of strong word-of-mouth - have all led to the "rediscovery" of Niagara. When travel posters in Toronto began to advertise a visit to "Historic Niagara-on-the-Lake" following the experience of world-renown Niagara Falls, many in Niagara knew that the "die was cast". Bus tours from around the world now merely point out the new Shaw Theatre, spend ½ an hour on Queen Street, just enough time for post cards, ice cream or a photo, and then on to the Buffalo or Toronto airport.

None of this tourism will find its way to Shaw Festival doors, nor will it have any real economic effect on the town and region. However, tour buses will continue to pollute the atmosphere. Often these same buses will circulate through the old town with passengers from the top level peering through the second stories of historic houses along the way. More than one local resident has hurled stones at these nasty, noisy vehicular intruders out of anger and frustration.

Yet, the Festival itself has had a huge impact on the economy of Niagara-on-the-Lake. From the early years we promoted the town as part of the Festival. The theatre experience began when Americans crossed the Niagara River to start the gorgeous drive along the Niagara River Parkway or, coming from Toronto, theatre-goers found their way down the old Stone road (now Route 55), through orchards and vineyards, ending at the golf course with Lake Ontario in the distance.

One of our major claims for government support was the familiar economic impact argument, showing how much Festival patrons spent in the area and how many local jobs the Festival supplied. We persuaded more than one Ontario government to sponsor an audience survey to back up our case. All of this was instrumental in gaining the two million dollar grants for our new Festival theatre in 1973. Such surveys are the classic way to gain official support.

Hard questions continue to be asked, however. Could the Festival have carried out its mission differently? Could the operation have been more limited? Could tourism have been

better contained? Is perimeter parking still possible? One of the citizens asking such questions is the town's former mayor and former Shaw Festival governor, Gerry Wooll.

Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake from 1961 to 1963, Gerry Wooll has found himself on both sides of the Shaw Festival question: does this town need a theatre festival? Originally Gerry thought, yes, that is how Niagara-on-the-Lake might prosper and could develop the kind of potential that the Niagara Foundation envisioned. This Foundation, newly formed, had the objective of "promoting public interest in the history, traditions, and culture of Niagara and the immediate area" .As mayor, Wooll initially refused to become involved with the Festival because he felt he was being used to secure grants from the town. Yet, "Brian Doherty was the kind of guy you couldn't say no to", asserts Wooll. He adds, "I had to walk a tightrope between Brian and all his idiosyncrasies and the town Council who couldn't have cared less, really." In the spring of 1963 it came down to the question: do we rent the old Court House, now the Town Hall, to the Festival for three weeks this summer, or don't we?" There was a tie vote, broken by a single vote (Wooll's) in favor of the Festival. We found this animosity, or at least indifference, perplexing. Rarely had the Town Hall auditorium ever been used in the summer because, among other reasons, there was no air conditioning and the heat was unbearable. The Council, for their part, argued that it was unfair to rent the Hall to any organization for as long as three weeks, <u>just in case</u> some worthy community group might want to make use of it. At any rate the Festival did go on that summer, securing a lease on that 4 to 3 vote.

Gerry Wooll went on to become a dedicated and effective Shaw Festival governor. He continues to regret, however, that "we haven't managed tourism properly in our town - we didn't plan for traffic and parking - and that's our fault." Wooll remains stunned by the speed at which things developed. There was never enough time to solve the previous season's problems before the next season was upon us. "We should have put a freeze on the whole thing while we sorted out our priorities," he suggests now. "Some businesses are doing fine", he says, but the tax base is subsidizing the tourist amenities that fall under town upkeep". He estimates that in 1970 the cost of tourism to the town was $70,000, ten years later it was $317,000; and in 1990 it rose ...?

Gerry Wooll continues to believe that "small is beautiful" and that the Shaw Festival doesn't need the three theatres that it has today; one or at most two would be sufficient, and he regrets that with the increasing professionalism of the Festival with its concomitant funding

needs, control of the Festival has moved from the local community to a Board of Governors largely from Toronto. On the political level, moreover, Regional Government, begun in 19??, has forced the old Town of Niagara to become part of a larger Niagara-on-the-Lake centered in hereby Virgil. Now only three out of seven Councilors come from what is called the Old Town. Thus, many local councilors have been replaced by "outsiders" and by tourism and land development representatives who have no emotional attachment to Niagara-on-the-Lake. They faver expanded tourism and therefore the Shaw Festival. The Festival now finds itself in the camp of the tour operators and developers. Feelings continue to run deep and Gerry Wooll, while believing in the Festival at some level of operation, still "wants his town back".

Christoper Newton, the Festival's current Artistic Director, eloquently voices the Shaw Festival point of view. Newton was an actor during the 1964 Festival season and knew the town well at that time. In his words, "it was a little run-down town where it was fun to live at the Anchorage Motel at $35 a week for a short while and do theatre." Newton remembers Niagara-on-the-Lake with curiosity and affection, "a little country town that was more interesting in a pokey kind of way, than practical". He understands the "hostile" attitude of the town, born of its own decline, 1950s conservatism generally and nostalgia for a more glorious past. The 1900s were its heyday, Newton points out, and a particularly wonderful time for people with money. He says, "we forget the great number of people who stayed at the Queen's Royal Hotel at the turn of the century."

It is Newton's contention, however, that the Shaw Festival has facilitated a return to the kind of pride and excitement that characterized Niagara in its youth. This is a proposition equally applauded and resented by townspeople in the 1990s. Newton is convinced that many friends of the early Festival, like Gerry Wooll, believe that the Festival destroyed their town. They had discovered Niagara in the late 40s and 50s (when you could buy a house cheap) and decided that this was small town Paradise. They planted their cozy little gardens and didn't want any change at all. But with the encroaching of the modern world, change was inevitable. "You can't hold back a town that was once a capital," Newton points out. "After all, the Founding Fathers knew what they were doing. We have an excellent location between Toronto and Buffalo, where the river joins the lake; we're directly opposite Fort Niagara. This place wants to be a center again." For Newton, Niagara-on-the-Lake has become what it was before the war: a thriving cultural

center with flair and grace and lots of money. However, after World War II the millionaires did not come back, and "around town," says Newton, "there was a great deal of nostalgia for the bright world they knew as children."

"So," Newton concludes, " nostalgia for a pre-Festival period is certainly understandable, but not very understanding."

For Christopher Newton such a frame of mind paralyzes potential. "If the Shaw Festival hadn't come into this town," he states firmly, "I think it would have gone the way of a Garrison Village (a middle income housing complex on the edge of town) and simply become a suburb of Niagara Falls. Now, however, we no longer compare ourselves to St. Catharines or Niagara Falls, but begin to see our relation to Salzberg or Bayreuth - a small town with a world class artistic focus. Either you live in the past, or take the best of the past to invent a brand new future."

The irony remains, however, that Niagara-on-the-Lake today is compared by old-timers and newcomers alike to Niagara Falls, not in the sense of a suburb, but to the seamy side of the Falls, that is to say the overcrowding, the traffic, the souvenir shops, and the tourists who merely erupt from their buses and look and leave. And the same may be said for Salzberg and Bayreuth; the music is heavenly and it's wonderful for the tourists and shopkeepers, but what of the local residents? Are there any left? Have not these much larger towns maintained an historic core for the tourists, with the concert halls, restaurants and a few high-priced hotels, and banished the residents to periphery housing or satellite villages? Is this to be the eventual fate of Niagara-on-the-Lake?

Even today, most middle income housing is being built on the outskirts of town. Only a few can afford homes in the historic district.

The debate continues.

I have said that Brian Doherty desired to found a theatre for the love of the art, to bolster his considerable ego, and to provide a wake-up call to a sleepy old town. He would have done this in any suitable place, but he had recently moved to Niagara and had here a ready-made stage, a community at hand and, it must be emphasized, a ready-made playwright. All three led to that first season, "A Salute to Shaw" in 1962.

When "Shaw" exploded from an excited group on that February evening, it meant that these people were serious about theatre; they had designated one of the world's great playwrights

as their focus. There were certainly other nearby theatres at that time, which come under the category of "summer stock". At Vineland near St. Catharine's one could see Tallulah Bankhead and Edward Everett Horton do one-week presentations of Broadway theatre, or at Melody Fair near Buffalo, road company productions of New York musicals could be enjoyed. Our group was not interested in this sort of summer fare. Rather, like wonderful Stratford and its Shakespeare, we sought a great playwright for inspiration and focus. We meant to make a statement about the art of drama. As Brian says in his memoir, "Who better than Shaw."

Besides being acknowledged as one of the great playwrights of the English language, Shaw had written enough good, and several great plays - over 30 with many one acts - to provide a Festival with excellent fare for many years. Shaw, himself, had said in fact that he was a greater playwright than Shakespeare. We didn't believe it, nor did he, necessarily, but it was a good talking point! So this theatre in the Court House was to be serious, but not heavy; intellectual and, as well, witty, amusing and fast-paced; in other words, high style comedy in the grand tradition. And, as Barry Morse, our 1966 Artistic Director, never tired of pointing out, Shaw must be "fun", to actors and audience alike. Bernard Shaw had served the Festival well, as much so in the '90s as in the '60s.

All of his plays have been produced over the last 35 years, and many more than once - Candida four times and Misalliance three. And each time, with new actors and directors, they seem as fresh and provocative as ever. We shall discuss later the continuing Festival mandate and artistic policy, but in the spring of 1962 just Shaw was enough.

Shaw, the playwright, has always been produced; intensively at certain periods, frugally at others. Brian Doherty, in his memoir, tells how he was brought up on Shaw, following the first World War, at the University of Toronto's Hart House. He write, "The memories of these productions of Pygmalion with Gertrude Lawrence, and Candida with Katherine Cornell led to his conclusion: "The success of these visiting companies convinces me that Shaw, the playwright was far from dead as far as Canadian audiences were concerned ... from that time on I began to explore the idea of a Shavian theatre in our country." To my knowledge no one ever heard Brian speak of a Shavian theatre until winter 1962; but, no doubt, a germ long planted was coming to fruition.

My own experience was not dissimilar. While reading Shaw in college, I could see as well Princeton's McCarter Theatre production of Man & Superman with .....? in the leading role, or on Broadway the wonderful Uta Hagen in St. Joan. In New York City in the '50s Broadway was thriving and Off-Broadway was surging. Vivian Lee and Lawrence Olivier were starring in Caesar & Cleopatra, and Katharine Hepburn in The Millionairess. Many fine Off-Broadway productions of lesser known Shaw plays were commonplace. By the time "Salute to Shaw" was underway in spring of 1962, my love of theatre, and Shaw in particular, had long been confirmed. To have a direct hand in a Festival of Shaw's play was, for me, an immensely exciting prospect.

Theatres tend to be founded in at least two ways, and the Shaw and Stratford Festivals were poles apart. Stratford emerged on the scene in 1954 full blown; with world-renowned director, Sir Tyrone Guthrie, and the redoubtable leading actor, Alec Guiness, showing the way. The wonderful stage was housed in a large tent with the idea that a permanent theatre structure would soon be built - which it was. The only comparison to the Shaw Festival was the comparable heat, equally fiendish in the tent and in the old Court House on Queen Street.

At the opposite extreme to Stratford's heady start was the Shaw Festival. It began as an amalgam of "little" or amateur theatres from St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls, New York, with Maynard Burgess of Niagara Falls in charge of things artistic, Brian looking over his shoulder, of course. Maynard had been a professional actor in New York City, but was now a chemical company executive in the Falls and artistic director of the Niagara Falls Little Theater. The word "amateur" is misleading and is in no way derogatory. Many so-called "amateur" actors in the early days of the Festival, like Maynard Burgess, had worked professionally in the US, in Canada and in England and belonged to Actors Equity. They gave up their professional status to take other jobs, but often played in "little theatres", non-equity, and without salary. Many were fine performers and comprised an important resource for the Shaw Festival, not only in 1962, but often through the 1960s.

With the playwright already chosen, Brian and Maynard went about selecting the simplest and most economical plays to put on, at practically a moment's notice. As Brian tells it: "We decided on Candida and the "Hell Scene" from Man & Superman. Both had advantages for our company, penniless as it was, of requiring only one set and a small cast, no one-actor,

director, off-stage worker - was to be paid a salary. We dubbed the enterprise "Salute to Shaw", and announced a season of four weekends between June 29 and August 11. It was, as they say, a shoestring operation, a far cry from Stratford's glamorous beginnings.

And Niagara's Court House Theatre was not much more than a shoestring itself. But very theatrical! The Court House itself was built in the 1830s and was the area's judicial center until 19??. It remained the seat of local government until 19?? at which time Regional Government was installed and the local seat moved to nearby Virgil. The Court House is a landmark building on the south side of Queen Street, one block from King and just opposite the brick clock tower, (itself built in the 20s as a memorial to soldiers killed in World War I). In 1962, as theatre patrons walked up the steps to the first floor, they saw on the right the Lord Mayor's office, and on the left - to everyone's eternal amusement - an antiquated jail cell, which in modern times was used as a holding cell for drunks and other disturbers of the peace. At the end of the hall and continuing up a rather grand but shabby staircase, the audience might then turn right into the small reception hall, one third of which would eventually be occupied by actors dressing rooms. Off this hall was a rather romantic fire escape, from which actors and audience alike - a very few at a time - could sit and view the stars over Niagara as well as viewing the town's only parking lot directly below. Alternatively the patrons could turn left at the top of the stairs and enter the main auditorium square and flat with no elevation and two windows on each side which generally refused to open. Straight ahead on the East wall was a small proscenium stage with an elegant seal on top. On each side of the proscenium were two small rooms which were once judge's chambers and provided the only wing space available. After the third year of the Festival, the stage right room was completely taken up by a large and noisy air-conditioning unit. Between the two halls was a small kitchen with one continually dripping spigot. Along the right side of the auditorium, between two halls, there was constructed a covered runway, so that actors could reach the stage from the kitchen where during the early days the actors had their dressing rooms, partitioned off by blankets, sheets and towels. Overlooking the auditorium was a two-row balcony - the best seats in the house - reached by narrow staircase to the left before entering the main hall. (Years later it was from this balcony that Chris Sarandon, who in 1972 played Marchbanks in Candida, attempted to assassinate Martin Sheen in the climax to the Louis Kronenberger/Stephen King film, The Dead Zone) To top the Court House off, on the roof

wailed the local fire siren calling volunteers from miles away. Many a night this siren went off during performances, with an earsplitting roar, causing the actors to freeze in their stance until minutes later they could resume their roles.

To put on that first season and several subsequent ones, stacking chairs had to be borrowed from the local Anglican Church, blackout tapes installed on the windows (which prevented them from being opened), and the kitchen, as mentioned, was turned into a communal and makeshift dressing room. Saturday, June 29, 1962 was a fiercely hot day, and as Brian Doherty has noted in his memoir, Dorothy Middleditch and I did run up and down the main street of Niagara borrowing large fans to place in the corners of the auditorium. They didn't help. Brian writes: "The Court House despite its high ceilings and stone walls was a furnace - torture for actors and audience alike." We have always looked back on that first opening night as the true "Hell Scene", where I shall never forget members of the audience bursting through the closed doors at the curtain, choking and gagging for breath.

Peter Brook has written that all one needs for theatre is two planks and ...? He forgot air-conditioning. But on second through perhaps he was right; an audience did return - none of us really knew why. I remember theatre goers returning from Stratford in 1954, praising to the sky the Guthrie-Guiness magic and begging for more. I clearly expected letters to us at Niagara shouting that patrons would never come back until there was clear air and cushions on the seats. Yet, an audience did show up for the next three performances of the "Hell Scene" and many more returned for Candida two week later, when the weather had changed for the better.

We may speculate why that audience did return. Obviously we all invited our friends, and asked them for small donations to help out on costs for the first season. They were good enough to respond. Surely there was a curiosity for this new theatre venture, and for many just a true love of theater whenever it occurred, regardless of the conditions. Stratford had paved the way by developing theatre audience in our area, and instead of driving three hours to see Shakespeare, many were willing to try us out - more than once. Also many of the Shaw Festival's early supporters were newcomers to Niagara, men and women emanating from large cities with considerable theatre experience. One such person was the Festival's long-time Board Secretary, Dorothy Middleditch, originally from England, who has said: "I could sit and listen to Shaw all night long, even on wooden benches and in foul air."

While the "Hell Scene" from Man & Superman was composed of Welland Ontario, and Niagara Falls NY players, the second production, Candida came from the St. Catharines Little Theatre, with Barbara Ransom in the title role. A professional painter, Alice Crawley, did the sets, and dress designer Louis Berais, the costumes. The first newspaper review came from Betty Lampard of the St. Catharines Standard, beginning a long and friendly relationship. The local scene provided all that was needed for that first season, and attendance was good. We concluded on a note of optimism. We also showed a profit of $288.

There was no question of another season; the only question was how best to proceed. Indeed!