

# Jeff Lumby's view from the country

EMAIL JEFF AT LUMBY@HALTONCOMPASS.COM

## The Charm of the Maritimes

This past week my travels took me to Montegue P.E.I, a quaint little town about 40 minutes outside of Charlottetown. I was first taken by how close P.E.I. is by air. For some reason I had it in my head that any trip to the Maritimes would be 4 or 5 hours in duration. Not the case at all. The flight to Montreal was 45 minutes, and after a quick change of planes I was in Charlottetown an hour and 10 minutes later. Anne of Green Gables... two hours away. Who knew?

As you make your approach to the beautiful island you can't help but be a little concerned by all of the rusty looking water along the shoreline. The explanation isn't far behind. Once your flight makes it over land quilted patches of red dirt are visible as far as the eye can see. It's what the island is made of. After landing, you soon discover this red earth is everywhere, on the roads, on the cars and on your shoes. I think it's what makes the spuds taste so good.

But forget Anne or the pretty dirt, what sets the Maritimes apart from the rest of Canada is their lingo and the characters that use it. Whether you're in Newfoundland or P.E.I. you can count on the word 'boy' ending a lot of sentences. From Pete the mechanic who picked me up at the airport ("so I takes the good parts off two cars to make the one, and lemme tell ya, she looked good boys!") to Steve, the guy who interviewed me from the island paper *The Guardian* ("Hey Winston, how ya doin' der boy?"). Yep, they're a colourful lot.

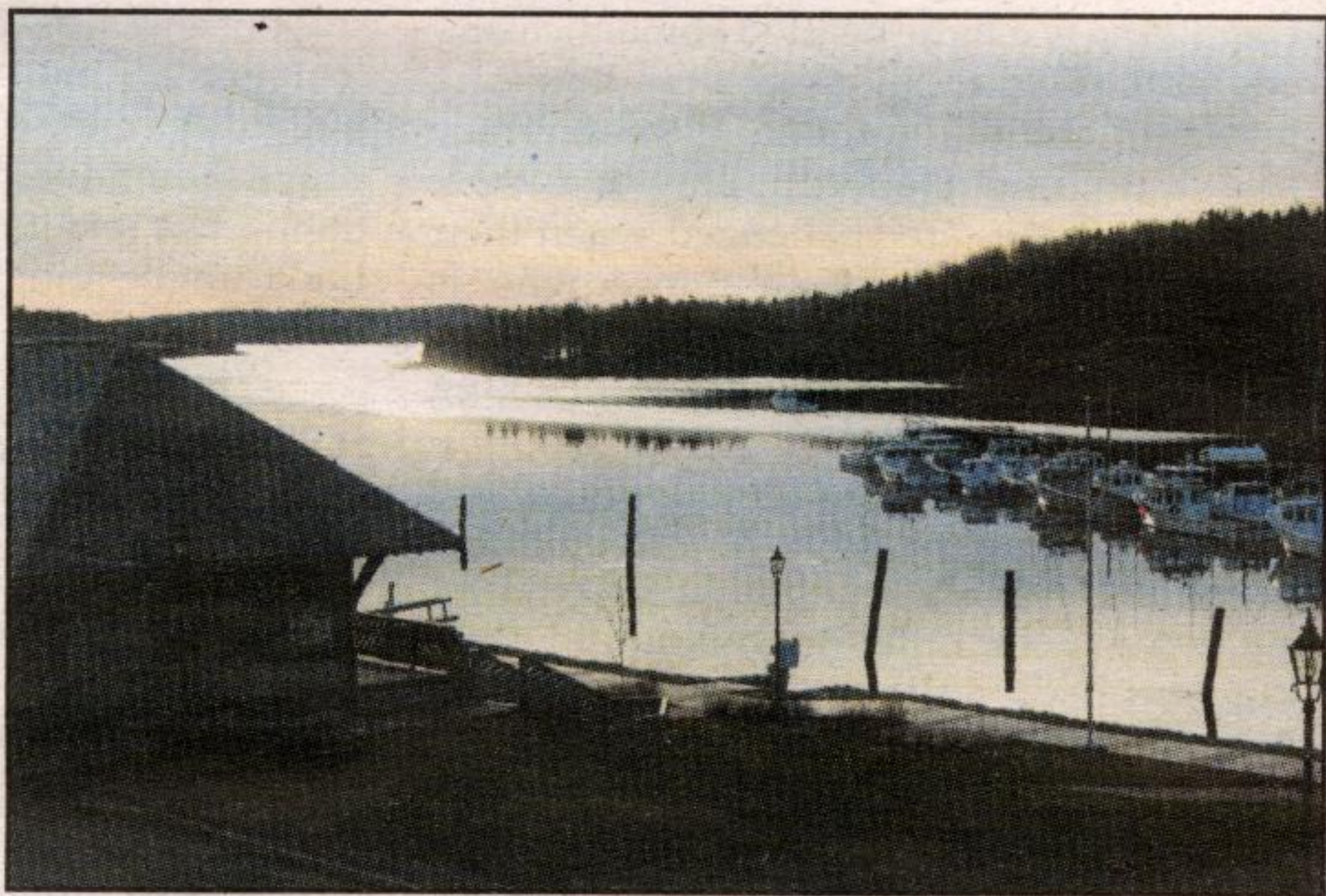
My first meal in Montegue was at "The Pub", which was attached to the Pizza Delight. April, the waitress, explained that I could order anything from the pizza menu or try some of the pub fare. I settled on the hot hamburger with potato wedges and a pint of Moosehead. After she scribbled it on to her pad I said, "that should be enough huh!" And said, "Oh ya, that'll be quite the feed!" I know she wasn't suggesting I go join some of the island cattle when I was done so I just laughed. And she was right, it was quite the feed.

I didn't realize how small a place Montegue was until I called a cab for a lift back to the hotel. Dennis picked me up in his nice, white Grand Marquis and after we got talking a bit, he tossed me his card and told me to call up if I needed any further

transportation. I said, "can I ask for you when I call." He said, "sure, but if you don't get me you'll get the wife." He then warned me to call ahead if I was going to need a ride on Friday. I said, "so Friday's are busy huh!" He said, "Oh ya, we'll have both cars out on Friday."

For breakfast the following morning, I was told to go to Doc Johnston's. And why would you not go to a place with a great name like that. When I travel I love having bacon and eggs in the morning so I went with the old standard. But I could have ordered the omelet with loads of cheese, or the liver with heaps of onions. Heaps, loads, feed, the wife...it's a refreshing change from pine-nut slivers in a demi-glazed, organically grown shallots, sautéed over glowing hickory embers and "my name is Celeste, I'll be your server for this evening." In Montegue it would go a little something like this: nut-sauce, fried onions and "what do you want?"

Places like Montegue rely on the summer months for the bulk of their tourism dollars. A lot of waterfront restaurants actually close their doors for the winter. The tiny inlet harbors the fishing boats that are responsible for their active lobster industry, although the yield has dropped in recent years. I wanted to bring a couple back for dinner so I asked Darlene, my ride, if they sold live lobsters at the airport. I sure know how to make a girl laugh. "Where'd ya get the idea we sold 'em at the airport?" I didn't admit that I was told by a certain someone, the wife, that all the maritime airports sold live lobsters. Once again the joke was on me. Just as well, had I brought home live lobsters, Julie would have named them. And fellas we all know that once an animal has a name, men go hungry.



Montegue harbour at dawn

# Profile of Charles Simon, Eden Mills Architect

By BREN CHISHOLM

Charles Simon is preoccupied these days. It's not enough this Eden Mills Architect/Planner is responsible for the engineering of Canada's first passive solar house in Arkell, he has also produced designs for a complex of buildings at the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA's Environmental Learning Centre.

Simon holds the reputation as a specialist in environmental design and confidently states, "Society finally may be willing to reconsider the much broader and more important issues of the unsustainable patterns of development which we are covering the land with."

Being a pioneer of greener thinking, Simon's business (see website [www.simon-archplan.com](http://www.simon-archplan.com)) recognizes the fact that urban sprawl is "totally unsustainable environmentally and fiscally". But instead of making broad statements and not acting on them, he and his firm are working towards tangible goals that include green (ecological) architecture and planning; healthy buildings and communities; and, affordable housing. These are all part of the creation referred to as, "future heritage"- a theme dedicated to timeless design that honours the past while looking to the future.

There is a great deal to be done but Charles Simon's focus is an exciting combination of holistic and integrative endeavours with a generous dose of "forward thinking".

Since establishing a private practice in 1970, Simon's trailblazing work in environmental design both depends on and generates research from passive solar and alternative energy technologies to the shaping of ecologically sound communities. But his initial endeavours weren't readily accepted.

"I got more than strange looks in the early seventies (particularly pre-OAPEC) as the idea of conservation of any of our seemingly limitless resources seemed entirely irrelevant to my colleagues in either the architecture or planning professions.

Canada had enjoyed 20 years of uninterrupted economic growth (the entire lifetime of the boomer generation). There was a brief interest post OAPEC, then oil prices dropped like a stone in the 80's and my colleagues repeatedly asked, 'are you still doing that stuff?'. The implication being that I was sadly out of step with the times! My reply was that Ontario-Hydro was

continuing to run up a debt higher than most 'Third World' countries, we were continuing to run lower and lower on resources (including land - the ultimate non-renewable resource), the air was continuing to get more polluted, and one of these days we would have to pay."

Simon's perseverance has paid off because his firm has demonstrated that good design, environmental responsibility and the creation of liveable environments are not expensive luxuries as once thought. In fact, they are definitely within reach.

These days, people are showing more responsibility for their surroundings and the impact on the lives of their children's children. "Our experience of working with community residents, public officials and private developers has convinced us that there exists a great receptivity to - even a hunger for - creative alternative ideas," says Simon. This is where the expression "future heritage" is key because they know their contribution towards the future heritage spells a sustainable future.

Simon and his firm want to plan differently. Their carefully defined goal is to restore and create environments that are more sustainable, appealing, people-oriented and something that has thus far been overlooked, fiscally responsible. Simon believes that newspapers and the media could play a vital role in relating all kinds of ways in which our lifestyles could help ensure a more sustainable future for our grandchildren. "In whatever modest way possible," he says, "I want to devote an increasing amount of my energies to bringing such possibilities to a broader audience."



The Mill, Eden Mills

Home and office of Charles Simon. Built in 1842, the burnt out shell was recycled as a 'green' mixed-used building.

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