RICHARD WELLS:
A NEWFOUNDLAND STORYTELLER AND
ASPECTS OF HIS STORYTELLING

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RICHARD WELLS: A NEWFOUNDLAND STORYTELLER AND ASPECTS OF HIS STORYTELLING

BY

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ABSTRACT

This work is a biographical, contextual, performance and aesthetic-oriented examination of a Newfoundland storyteller's art. As such, the focus of the work is on the narrator and the contexts, and to a lesser degree on the narratives themselves. It is the contention that the narrator who is the focus of this research, Mr. Richard Wells of Exploits Islands, Notre Dame Bay, has become known as a storyteller much more so because of his narrative style than the kinds of stories he tells.

The formal research began in the summer of 1979 and has been largely ethnographic in nature. It has involved field recordings and field notes taken over many hours and different situations up until and including the summer of 1985.

Several significant conclusions have resulted from this work. The narrator's style has adapted and continued to thrive in a community which has undergone massive change and upheaval indicating that traditional narrative styles may have widespread and universal appeal. Also implicit in this finding is the possibility that audience aesthetics are somewhat universal. The narrative style itself is indicative of the power which folkloric performance may have. The results indicate the value that research which focuses on individuals can have.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present study is intended to examine the narrative art of a Newfoundland storyteller, Mr. Richard Wells of Exploits in Notre Dame Bay, from a contextual point of view. It is an ethnographic study of narrative performance based on the premise that Mr. Wells has achieved his status as a storyteller more because of his style than because of the stories he tells. The role of the stories in this context is also examined.

In undertaking the present work, I found myself in a somewhat different position than most researchers do. Since my father's family has roots dating back to the early 1800's in Exploits and because I have spent considerable time there during the summers since my early childhood, I am quite familiar with the community. As well, I know the person who is the focal point of this study very well.

These factors have undoubtedly made my approach to my fieldwork different than if I had been an outsider coming to the area. I felt that background and historical information would be a necessary part of the study, and at the outset I had knowledge of a good deal of such information and knew where to look to add to it.

In many ways, my life-long rapport with Richard Wells assisted me in gathering the information on which the study is based. Richard and I have been friends for many years and we visit frequently during the summer months.

At the outset of my field research in the summer of 1979, I planned to do extensive field recording. My recording work, however, did not reach the proportions I had originally planned due to several factors. It proved to be difficult to find suitable time during the summer months to record Richard. Summer is his busiest time and his workdays run from daylight to dark. Then, at night, the occasions were rare when he would not have a number of visitors at his house until quite late. These times did provide excellent opportunities for observing and taking part in storytelling situations, and many points have been made in this work through such observations.

Those taping sessions I did arrange and conduct proved to be very good. Richard and I would talk at length, during which he would tell stories, tell of his personal and family background, and verbalize his thoughts on his own storytelling and the reactions of others to it. Richard preferred not to tape when others were present, and on the few occasions I tried taping him, other members of the audience seemed to pay great attention to the recorder which would subsequently distract the narrator. This was a significant factor in deciding to make a large part of my research ethnographic in

nature. Since the main point of this study is to analyze performance in context, and tape recorders do not record much of the context, I felt further justified in this approach.

Richard's ability to articulate his ideas regarding storytelling, performance and style, and audiences proved very helpful and insightful. As well, commentaries and reactions of audience members further enhanced the study.

The culmination of all these aspects of research has yielded a substantial and personally satisfying work. While a study such as this with a storyteller like Richard could be a never-ending task, I am confident that the research has been comprehensive and representative of the actual situation.

The thesis starts with a History and social development of Exploits from early settlement. Next, I discuss Richard Wells' personal history and lifestyle in order to give an understanding of him as a person in the community in which he grew up. Here, considerable detail is given on lifestyle, attitudes and world view. Next, the community is examined from the point of view of storytelling and storytelling contexts to which Richard has been exposed during his lifetime. Social change and audience are also integral to this section. The next section looks at specific contexts, that is the performance and style aspects of Richard's narration. This section includes a discussion of the scholarship on performance, style and context and further analyzes Richard's performance

style. Observations, generalizations, and conclusions are extracted throughout and the section concludes with a discussion of aesthetics and function. The final section recaps and highlights the findings of this research.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I wish to discuss previous narrative scholarship which is related to Richard Wells' storytelling.

Much has been written about performance and style by a number of scholars from disciplines such as anthropology, sociolinguistics and folklore and, as a result of the increased interest in this aspect of cultural studies, the term performance has taken on new meaning. Views regarding the whole notion of folkloric performance as well as interesting and important specific aspects of performance have been expressed by scholars such as Roger Abrahams, John Ball, Richard Bauman, Ray Birdwhistell, and Dell Hymes.[1] These scholars have dealt with aspects of performance such as keying, ways of speaking, tricks of narration, performance frames and many others.

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[1]Much insight has been gained into many of the specific aspects of performance from Roger Abrahams, "Personal Power and Social Restraint in the Definition of Folklore", in Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, eds. Towards New Perspectives in Folklore (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 16-30; John Ball, "Style in the Folktale", Folklore, 65 (1954), 170-172; Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance", American Anthropologist, 77 (1975), 290-311; Ray L. Birdwhistell, Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970); and Dell Hymes, "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting", in John Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds. Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 35-71.

Specifics such as speed of delivery, emotional involvement, gesticulation, and interplay with the audience have been dealt with by Gerald Thomas in his work with French Newfoundlanders.[2]

Roger Abrahams has been among the foremost in presenting a concept of performance, and sees it as a "demonstration of culture ... in which the attention and sympathy of the group needs to be enlisted; this is done by resorting to shared orders and experiences and ... techniques".[3] Hymes states that the concern is with performance as something "creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of the ordinary course of events".[4] Hymes also states that it is important to show that performance, "as a cultural behavior for which a person assumes a responsibility to an audience, is a quite specific,

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[2]See Gerald Thomas, "Stories, Storytellers, and Storytelling in Newfoundland's French Tradition: A Study of the Narrative Art of Four French Newfoundlanders" (Ph.D. dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1970); narrator's styles have also been studied by Lawrence G. Small, "Patterns in Personal Experience Narratives: Storytelling at Cod Harbour, A Newfoundland Fishing Community" (M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971); and by Richard S. Tallman, "A Tall Tale Tradition and the Teller: A Biographical-Contextual Study of a Storyteller, Robert Coffil of Blomidon, Nova Scotia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974).

[3]Roger D. Abrahams, "Personal Power and Social Restraint in the Definition of Folklore", in Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, eds. Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 28-29.

[4]Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough Into Performance", in Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein, eds. Folklore: Performance and Communication (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 13.

quite special, category."[5] It should also be noted that the audience is also responsible to the performer in that it must be competent to interpret the situation, though more onus is on the performer who must have an ability to gauge what is suitable for a particular audience. Performance is dependent on the audience and context as well as the performer and both must be competent to interpret the interaction in order for performance to take place.

Some of these views of performance have met with some criticism since there is no definite agreement on a precise definition of the term. In commenting on Abrahams' view, Sandra Stahl suggests that while this stance has moved away from the earlier views of performance to consider audience and context as influencing both the resources selected and the performance itself, it remains somewhat stifled by the attention to items of folklore as being the major resources available to the performer.[6] Other folklorists, as well as Abrahams, including Bauman and Ben-Amos, while having put forth some valuable ideas regarding the notion of performance, have also been criticized for following the item-centered view of performance too closely.[7] Stahl points out that

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[5]Ibid., 18.

[6]Sandra K.D. Stahl, "The Personal Narrative as Folklore", Journal of the Folklore Institute, 14 (1977), 12.

[7]Lauri Honko, "Genre Theory Revisited", (paper presented at the Folk Narrative Congress at Helsinki, 1974).

Dell Hymes' linguistic concept of performance represents more directly a general study of use, but continues that Hymes himself states that these other folklorists are quite close to his own position, and he suggests that folklore might be considered "as a special case of the ethnography of speaking approach".[8] Stahl went on to state that she is apprehensive of adopting a purely linguistic approach for fear that the "quality of folkloric performance would be lost as a challenging topic of research in its own right".[9]

Perhaps one of the foremost in presenting views on style in narrative is John Ball.[10] Ball points out that style "is an everyday facet of speech that characterizes both the social group and the individual."[11] He quite succinctly points out that "From the style of a tale that has been well told and well recorded we can see the continuing and developing dynamic relationship among style, story, teller, audience, and culture."[12] It is Ball's contention that examination of the full storytelling situation is required before we can begin to understand these complex relationships.

In addition to the importance of audience and context which emerges from a comprehensive view of these ideas, we also note

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[8]Stahl, 12-13.

[9]Ibid., 13.

[10]Ball, 170.

[11]Ibid., 170.

[12]Ibid., 170.

the real concern with folklore as a living process and realize that a movement away from a text-oriented study will lead to fuller understandings of folklore in context.

This study concentrates on Richard Wells' storytelling mainly from a performance viewpoint but does not ignore the items altogether. Some discussion on the scholarship regarding narrative is essential.

As with scholarship on performance, we also find varied opinions on the kinds of folkloric materials which form a significant part of Richard Wells' repertoire. Narratives of personal experience exist in all cultures of the world and scholars have attempted to extract the commonalities from this universal genre. Labov and Waletzky argue that only incidents which are unusual, unexpected or unique could possibly be recounted as personal narratives.[13] Another scholar, Teun van Dijk, also agreed that events have to be "remarkable" in some way in order to be considered as possibilities for personal narrative.[14] This approach does not really allow for more routine courses of events to be considered as possibilities for personal experience narrative.

John A. Robinson proposed an idea for the qualification of an event as a potential personal experience narrative based

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[13]William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience", in June Helm, Ed., Essays on the Visual and Verbal Arts, (Seattle: University of Washington, 1967), 12-44.

[14]Teun van Dijk, "Action, Action Description, and Narrative", New Literary History, 6 (1975), 273-294.

on its "tellability" in certain situations.[15] Robinson's idea allows for commonplace events to be considered in personal narratives as well as those which have "remarkable" features.

Commonplace events and stories about them certainly have their place in the lives of many people. Often, people will share stories about routine things when they have had similar experiences. Robinson notes that stories of this nature can be considered as tellable in such circumstances due to their routineness.[16]

In the case of some storytellers, routine stories or stories of commonplace events can be told with some added narrative appeal. Storytellers who have the ability to "perform" well and to inject humour and colour into such stories are able to make the stories appealing to what otherwise might be an uninterested audience. Richard Wells is one such storyteller and an analysis of his style will provide many insights into his success as a narrator.

The study of folklore from the performance perspective will provide insights into the means by which folklore is transmitted in communities and cultures; the role of folklore in a community and its relationship to behaviour; the skills a performer is required to have in order to become considered as a good performer; and, therefore, the aesthetic values at

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[15]John A. Robinson, "Personal Narratives Reconsidered", Journal of American Folklore, 94 (1981), 58-85.

[16]Ibid., 61-62.

work in a community which affect folkloric materials and performance.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNITY[1]

This chapter describes the community of Exploits and the lifestyle of the people who lived there. Discussed here are the general history of the community, the economic situation under which people lived, religion, schooling, and social activities. In covering such topics, the community context from which Richard Wells' storytelling has derived will be presented, thereby aiding in gaining a comprehensive understanding of him as a storyteller.

Geographical Description

The two Exploits Islands are located on the northeast coast of Newfoundland in Notre Dame Bay, lying approximately twenty miles north of Lewisporte and seventeen miles in a west-southwesterly direction from Twillingate. (See map, p. 16) The west island is of slightly greater land mass than the east one, though the trip to circumference either of them by water is a distance of about seven miles. The islands lie in close proximity to each other, separated by a

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[1]Much of this chapter has been based on the Census of Newfoundland from 1836 to 1945; other significant information has also been gathered from various oral historical accounts as well as from my personal observations.

channel of water which forms the harbour and which is comprised of a number of small coves. The channel, accessible at both ends, lies in a northeasterly direction, having a length of about two miles and varying in width from a distance of about one half of a mile at its widest place to about eighty feet at its narrowest point. (See photo #2, p. 17)

The harbour is fine for navigation purposes, with a depth of about four fathoms even at its narrow point, and with depths ranging from about four to ten fathoms elsewhere. A concrete bridge, which was preceded for a number of decades by wooden bridges, was built in 1945 at the narrow point in the harbour and still stands today, joining the foot roads along each of its sides and making the trip from one side to the other possible without going by boat. (See photo #3, p. 18)

The narrow point in Exploits Harbour, which is located about three quarters of the distance towards the northern end of the channel, creates a kind of physical division. The largest section of the channel, which is to the south of this point, came to be known as Exploits Upper Harbour, and the smaller section to the north came to be known as Exploits Lower Harbour.

Upon entering Exploits by boat, the place appears at once to have been designed purposely for settlement. The wood-covered hills on each of the islands slope down gradually to the sheltered shoreline creating a very striking view. Mercer

described it well in his work on the history of Methodism in Notre Dame Bay:

> Exploits has a very fine harbour which is landlocked and considered safe for shipping. The scenery is magnificent, and we have gone there in boat when the splendid natural attractions of the valley-like harbour, between its sloping hills, unfolded a most beautiful panorama.[2]

Outside the harbour, to the northeast side, the islands are exposed to the North Atlantic and present a very forbidding coastline of high cliffs and jagged rocks. On a high headland on the west island, known as Surgeon's Cove Head, is a lighthouse which has long served to mark the entrance to the Ship Run, the shipping lane to the port of Botwood.

Heading southward around the outward sides of each of the islands, the shoreline gradually assumes a much less rugged appearance, and the southern faces of the islands, which are protected from storms and lashing waves by the many islands lying to the south of Exploits, present a very sheltered appearance with sandy beaches, numerous coves, and grassy meadows.

The waters around the general area of Exploits Islands are very fertile fishing areas, and there are so many fishing grounds that it would take some years of fishing experience to become familiar with even a majority of them. These

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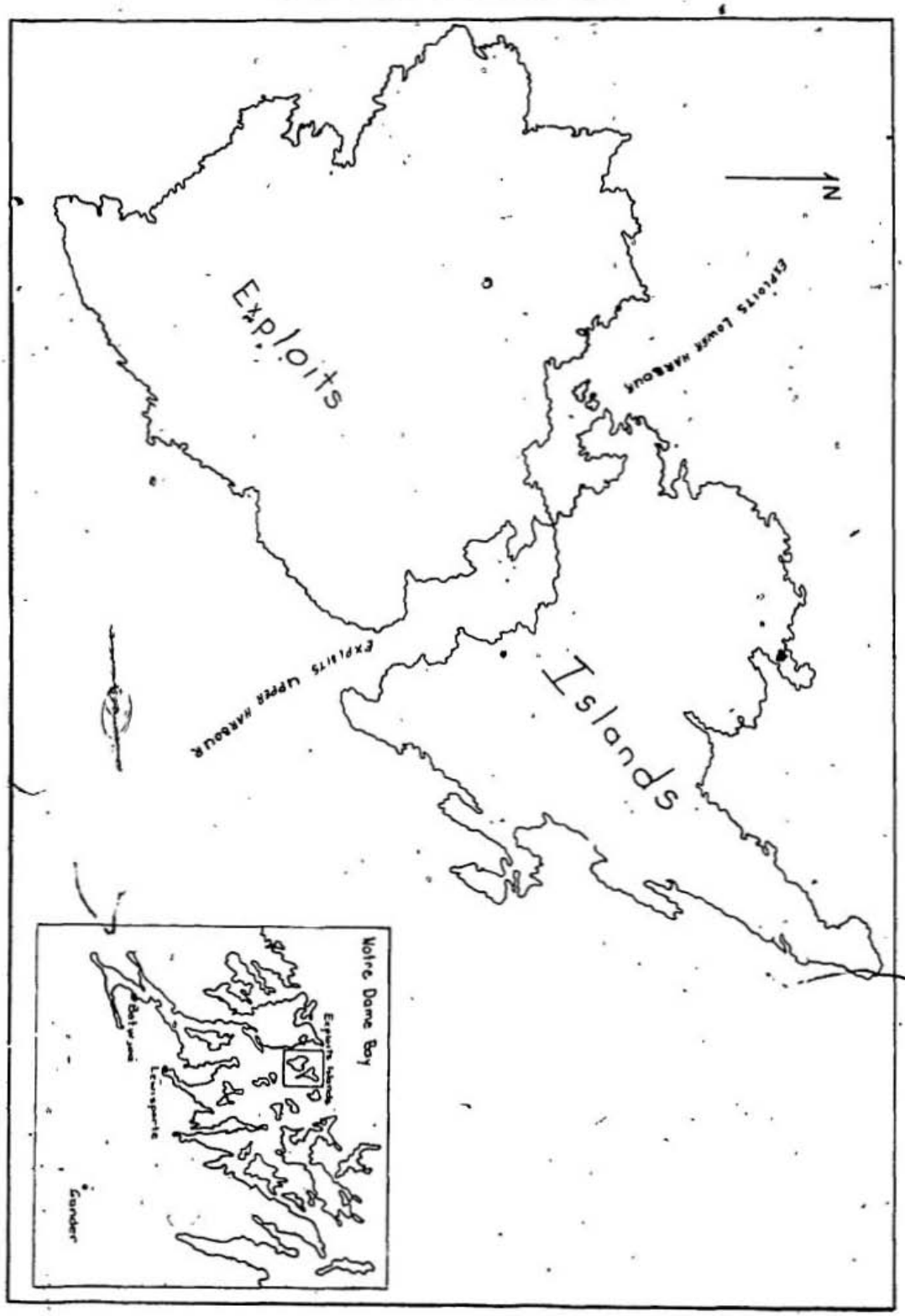
[2]W.E. Mercer, Centennial Souvenir. The United Church of Canada, Twillingate, Newfoundland. A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland, 1831-1931. (Twillingate: The Twillingate Sun, 1932), 128.

MAP OF EXPLOITS ISLANDS



Aerial Photograph of Exploits Harbour

The Concrete Bridge. Erected in 1945, it joins the east and west islands at the narrowest point.

grounds continue to be fished by many of the Notre Dame Bay fishermen today.

The fine harbour at Exploits, together with the excellent fishing grounds in the area, make it very easy to understand why early settlers would consider it a good place to live, and why the place grew to be a thriving community for a time, in spite of its considerable distance from larger centres in the bay, such as Lewisporte and Botwood.

Early History and Settlement

The first settlers in Notre Dame Bay took up residence there in the early part of the eighteenth century. These first settlers were English fishermen, and that they were English is obviously attested to by the vulgar English names[3] given to many of the communities in Notre Dame Bay.

Prior to settlement by the English, the French had fished about Notre Dame Bay, especially in the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century.[4] However, due to conflict with the Beothuks and the English, the French then moved their operations north to White Bay and further along the coast, where there were good harbours and fishing grounds, and where they were removed from their enemies.[5]

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[3]D.W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records, (London and New York: MacMillan, 1895), 279.

[4]Ibid., 277.

[5]Ibid., 277.

I have been unable to locate any record indicating the time of settlement of Exploits; however, Prowse suggests that it was settled in the early part of the eighteenth century, at around the same time that settlement took place at Twillingate and Fogo:

> Subsequent to the French attack of 1696-7, from about 1711, the English settlements were gradually extended north from Bonavista; some of the first 'liviers', in Old Newfoundland parlance, had by this time built their huts and fishing stages as far north as Twillingate, Exploits, and Fogo.[6]

Other sources put early settlement in Notre Dame Bay a little later than suggested by Prowse. Tizzard states that in the summer of 1732, Thomas Tizzard sailed from Bonavista with his family to arrive in Twillingate, becoming the first Englishman to take up permanent residence in that part of Newfoundland.[7] Head concurs with this stating that sources which he checked show that Twillingate was settled in 1732 and Fogo some three or four years earlier.[8] It appears reasonable to suggest, then, that Exploits was first settled at about this time or not long after.

As far as oral information regarding settlement at Exploits goes, I have one piece of information which has been given by

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[6]Ibid., 279.

[7]Aubrey M. Tizzard, On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979), ix.

[8]C. Grant Head, Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 57.

Richard Wells. He told me that the oldest document he has seen which indicated that there had been settlement at Exploits was a pamphlet which mentioned a 1777 wedding in which one party was a resident of Exploits:

> Well, the earliest thing that I could find...that was a...any record of anything here, was 1777...there was a...ah...there was a marriage an'...ah...one of the party...was a resident of Exploits.[9]

Richard has an interest in such information and has done some inquiring about the matter over the years, but this information is all he has been able to gather on the subject. My own experience also indicates that oral accounts of settlement at Exploits are scanty and vague.

The first census taken at Exploits in 1836 indicates that there were two hundred inhabitants, thirty-five dwelling houses, and one school at that time.[10] This merely establishes that the community had, by then, been settled for some time.

On the basis of the information available, it seems that settlement at Exploits first took place between the 1730's and 1770's.

I do have one interesting oral account which circulates among the older generation from the community regarding settlement, though it does not mention any dates. The local legend has it that the first settler who came there staked out his property in Exploits Lower Harbour. The next "old

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[9]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[10]Census of Newfoundland, 1836.

fellow" who arrived, upon seeing that he was not the first one there, is said to have gone as far to the other end of the harbour as he possibly could to build his premises. This story is told in a humorous tone to illustrate "contrariness" on the part of some of the "old fellows".[11] Further discussion of stories of this nature will follow in a subsequent chapter.

I have been unable to find much information as to the origin of the name Exploits. Bishop Howley could trace the name back no further than 1774, and found that earlier maps show the "Bay of Exploits" as the "Bay of Cork".[12] No doubt, some of the first settlers in Notre Dame Bay communities had not been in Newfoundland long before taking up residence in that bay. Still, others were probably people who had lived in Newfoundland for some time or who had been born there, and moved to Notre Dame Bay from the more eastern parts of the Island as settlement began to spread.

The first census statistics which reflect the birthplaces of inhabitants were compiled in 1857. By this time the great majority of people at Exploits were Newfoundland born, or at least they said they were. Of the four hundred and seventy-four inhabitants recorded, only seventeen claimed to have been born in England.

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[11]From field diary, June 20, 1980.

[12]Right Reverend Bishop Howley, "Newfoundland Name-Lore", Newfoundland Quarterly, 3, No. 4 (1904), 10.

As was the case in the majority of the Newfoundland outports, settlers of this community were fishermen-planters. They fished the sea, planted their own gardens, kept some livestock, and hunted when possible in order to sustain themselves. Exploits Islands could provide plenty of wood for building construction, boat building, and firewood; enough land suitable for cultivation, a good safe harbour, and easy access to many nearby fishing grounds. The conditions at Exploits, then, were generally favorable for growth of the community.

From the many oral reports that I have heard over the period that I have been visiting Exploits, the place certainly seems to have enjoyed a colorful history throughout its years as a thriving community. However, even in the community's earlier years, an event took place concerning Exploits which was to go into the history books.

Ever since the French and English had been coming to Notre Dame Bay to fish, there had been problems and encounters with the Beothuks. The problems continued after the bay was settled by the English, and, in the early years of the 1800's, several expeditions were sent to the Exploits River by the Governor to try and establish friendly relations with the Beothuks, each of which was a failure.[13] In 1819, John Peyton, a planter at Exploits who had suffered considerable

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[13]See Frederick W. Rowe, A History of Newfoundland and Labrador, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 163.

losses due to Beothuk thievery, was given authority to try and recover his property and, at the same time, to try and establish friendly relations with the Beothuks.[14] The venture ended with the capture of one Beothuk woman and the death of two Beothuk men.[15]

Several years later, in the spring of 1823, three Beothuk women, a mother and two daughters who were in a state of semi-starvation, gave themselves up to a William Cull and eventually ended up in the custody of John Peyton at Exploits, who was to try to reunite them with their people.[16] This failed, and the three returned to Exploits with Peyton, whereupon the oldest daughter and her mother died of tuberculosis shortly after. The younger one, Shanawdithit, remained at the Peyton household for five years.[17]

In 1828, she was taken to St. John's and died of tuberculosis in 1829. During her short time in St. John's, she produced a series of illustrations which represented the culture of the Beothuks. She was probably the last of her race.[18]

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[14] Ibid., 163.

[15] Ibid., 163.

[16] Ibid., 164.

[17] Ibid., 164.

[18] A good account of the "Beothuk Expeditions" is given in Rowe, 162-167.

Richard Wells gave me an oral account which has been passed along in his family telling of how Richard's great grandfather had known Shanawdithit when he was a boy:

> ...t'was during my grandfather's day...a...well, when my great grandfather was a boy...that they brought Shanawdithit here...'cause he knew her quite well and...ah...my grandfather passed along a good many stories, but the...ah...what, what his father told him about Shanawdithit and the things she...the way she acted and things she did over there on the premises there...there...they...he stayed...I mean, she stayed with the Peytons... er...over there an' there...and, of course, the Peyton's owned the adjoining property...so they was...I mean, he was always ah...seeing her during...during the time she was here. And ah...matter of fact an...apparently he was teasing her one time. or...or...or she thought that...that he was doing something an' ah...she was sewing a...she was sewing her boot...and he was watching her, he could have been teasing her or...or he provoked her some way or other, but she chased him with the...with the...awl (laughter) and ah...he ran for his life and he didn't know what she would have done if ah...there was a crowd up in the garden, t'was in the spring and there was a crowd settin' potatoes up in the garden, and they saw her...or saw what was happening and they ran and an...yelled at her and she went back and sat down again and ah...pointed at...pointed at the young lad, my great grandfather, and ah...and of course the old man (John Peyton) gave him a scolding and...drove him home. But ah...yes, he knew her quite well.[19]

Undoubtedly, stories about Shanawdithit and her stay at Exploits were popular among the settlers of the community for some time after. As was the case with Richard's family, stories about her got passed on through generations, as her stay at Exploits were of interest as a part of the history of Newfoundland.

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[19]From taped interview, August 17, 1980

Richard went on to say:

> Matter of fact, t'was over on their property that...right in...there in the corner where the...where the two properties joined that ah...a few years ago...that ah...you could dig up lots of ah...lots of little bits of Indian relics...now, whether she brought it there with her, like beads and stuff, and buried it or what happened, but there was...ah...several little things...that was dug up over there...or rooted out.[20]

There are still stories told by a few concerning Shanawdithit's presence at Exploits, and any Indian relics found are often taken as evidence of her having been there.

Exploits had become an established community by the 1820's and 1830's, as the 1838 census figures indicate. Many of the family names which are still commonly heard at Exploits today can be traced back at least to the first half of the nineteenth century. Some family names which have long association at Exploits are Arnold, Ball, Butt, Dart, Hutchings, Lacey, Lilly, Manuel, Milley, Pearce, Purchase, Rideout, Sceviour, Seymoure, Stride, Tuff, Wells, Winsor and Woolfrey. Other names which were once associated with the community but which are seldom heard now include Baker, Chance, Dalton, Evans, Frampton, Hann, Hodnot, Hynes, Janes, Jones, Langdon, Luff, Perry and Rowsell.[21] Many of the people who maintain

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[20]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[21]Many of the family names and their association with Exploits can be found in E.R. Seary, Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1976); some are mentioned in Mercer, pp. 128-129; a number of the names can also be found in records of land grants which are held by the Crown Lands Division of the Department of Forest Resources and Lands, Government of

houses and cabins at Exploits today have family ties with the community going back a number of generations. Throughout the nineteenth century, the community continued to increase in population until it reached its peak at around the latter part of the century. The census figures show that the population had increased to 623 and had dropped slightly by 1901 to 577. However, oral reports which circulate in the area would dispute these figures. Over the past several years I have heard a number of people from Exploits talk about the community when it was thriving. Invariably, the population figures given are considerably higher than those given in the census reports of the time. Many people have placed the figure at "something over 900" for the same period, while others have placed it up to 1400.

Richard Wells has done some questioning on the matter as well and he told me:

> Well, ah...as much as I...I've been able to find out, t'was around 1400 people...around the turn of the century.[22]

Generally there is quite a discrepancy between oral reports and figures quoted in the census reports. While it is likely that the figure of 1400 which has been gathered from oral history by both Richard and myself may be distorted, there may also be errors in the census returns. Census takers were often regarded with suspicion in Newfoundland, and people did not

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Newfoundland and Labrador.

[22]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

always give factual information for various reasons. The figure of about 600 would certainly be disputed by people from Exploits, including those who were born around the turn of the century. It is certain, though, that the population peaked just prior to 1900, and it is probably fair to place the population somewhere between the figure of about 600 as given in the census and about 900, the figure most often quoted by oral sources.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Exploits had two merchant families, the Winsors with their premises on the east side and the Manuels with their premises on the west side of the harbour. These premises are gone now, but from oral reports and old photos I have seen, the premises were extensive, having large wharves, a number of storage buildings, and large main shops.

The Winsor's premises were later sold to Cyril Sceviour who was the last major merchant to operate a shop at Exploits, closing his doors due to resettlement in the mid-1960's. The Manuel premises were sold in the 1920's to a Miss Nina Osmond of Moreton's Harbour, Notre Dame Bay, who operated the business through the twenties and thirties.

From about 1900 on the population of Exploits began a gradual decline. A few bad years in the fishery combined with low fish prices sent many of the younger men inland to seek other forms of employment such as work in the lumberwoods and trapping animals for their fur. Still others moved to

inland communities, and communities further in the bay to set up businesses or to seek other employment.

This trend continued, and in the twenties, thirties, and forties, more and more of the community's young men left Exploits to go to work. Many worked in the woods and then found other more permanent jobs in communities like Botwood, Grand Falls and Badger.

Finally, with the coming of confederation and the Smallwood government's resettlement program, Exploits was to be phased out of existence as was the case with many other Newfoundland outports.[23] People may have left Exploits of their own accord in sufficient numbers to bring about the same result. However, many of those who resettled either before or during

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[23]Joseph R. Smallwood was instrumental in bringing Newfoundland into confederation with Canada and became the first premier of the new province. His government introduced the resettlement program in the 1950's to move people from isolated outports to larger centres. For further reading on resettlement see Frederick W. Rowe, Education and Culture in Newfoundland, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976); Ralph Matthews, There's No Better Place Than Here: Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities, (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976); Elaine M. Duggan, "Resettlement of the Isolated Newfoundland Community", (Unpublished Manuscript, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1970); Parcival Copes, The Resettlement of Fishing Communities in Newfoundland, (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Rural Development, 1972); David Ralph Matthews, "Communities in Transition: an Examination of Government Initiated Community Migration in Rural Newfoundland", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1969); Cato Wadel, Marginal Adaptations and Modernization in Newfoundland: A Study of Strategies and Implications in the Resettlement and Redevelopment of Outport Fishing Communities, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1969); The Resettlement Act, (St. John's: Queen's Printer, 1965); and Fisheries Household Resettlement Regulations, (St. John's: Queen's Printer, 1965).

the program have very few words to say in its favour. The effects of the program will be discussed further in a subsequent chapter.

By the mid-1900's, the last church services had been held at Exploits, the last merchant closed his doors permanently, and a last reluctant few left their homes. Only three people remained as permanent residents, Winston Butt, Richard Wells, and Lydia Budgell. For a time, only a handful of people returned to the harbour to visit during the summer months. However, in the early seventies people were attracted back to the place to spend vacations. Many began to keep old houses in repair and some who had land there built cabins. For several winters, a few young American couples stayed there in houses they had either bought or rented.

The shoreline in the harbour is once again being taken up as those who return for the summer build wharves, stages, cabins and repair old houses. The harbour, which had only the occasional boat sail through for a time; is now quite busy in the summer. A number of fishermen return to the harbour and use their old places as base for their fishing operations.

The place has developed a kind of community atmosphere once again, and household gatherings are now a major part of the social life during the summer. In 1973 a community reunion was held; several have been held since, with future ones being planned.

Out of this increased activity in the community, Richard Wells' home has become very much a central point. Friends and strangers alike invariably end up at Richard's house. Richard has built up a reputation as a source of information about Exploits. He is often visited by people wishing to buy salmon, lobster, or other seafood, and is known as a talker and storyteller which results in his having many visitors.

The social interaction in the community will be discussed more extensively in a subsequent chapter.

Occupations and Livelihoods

As was the case in most Newfoundland outports, the lifestyle at Exploits was one of subsistence. While such an economy was centred around the cycle of the fishery, there were many other aspects of it which were of considerable importance.

With the fishery being of central importance and cod being the primary species, I shall begin at that point. The chief method of preserving cod was to salt it and then sun-dry it. This was a labour-intensive activity and required the efforts of all members of the family at some point. The actual catching of the cod was done by the males, often being a man and his sons of eight to ten years of age or older.

Methods used to catch cod varied at different times through the fishing season, depending on the availability and feeding habits of this species. The types of gear used ranged from

cod traps, cod nets and trawls through simpler methods such as hook and line and jigger.

Whatever the method, the process of getting the cod ready to sell was rigorous. Once the day's catch had been acquired, many hours of labour remained to be done before it was gotten ready for market. First of all, the cod had to be cleaned or "gutted", have the heads removed, washed, split and then 'salted away'. Cod were salted away either as light-salted or heavy-salted.[24]

The process of getting the fish "put away", which included all of the processes from having the fish removed from the boat until it was put in salt, could include a number of members of the family. Generally, the men and boys would take care of these aspects of the operation but it was not uncommon for women and girls to be involved in this process during busy times. Mainly, however, the work of women and girls was required in the "making" of the fish, that is in washing the salt from it and setting it out in the sun to dry. This activity went on for a number of days and required that the cod be carefully monitored. Thus, the role of females in the fish curing process was very important.

Other types of fish of economic value at Exploits included salmon, herring, mackerel, capelin, squid, and lobster. With the exception of lobster, each of these species were

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[24]For a detailed discussion of the different aspects of the fishery and fishing technology, see Tizzard, 281-310.

usually salted. Capelin and squid were salted and dried for preservation, but the other species were salted in tubs or barrels where they would remain until eaten. At this point, the amount needed for the meal would be removed from the barrel and soaked for a day or two in fresh water until the desired amount of salt had been removed. The fish would then be boiled with potatoes and perhaps other vegetables. Between the late nineteenth century and the 1930's, according to local oral reports, lobster were tinned at a small factory at Exploits.

In this subsistence economy, cod and other species of fish were the only products which a family could market in order to buy necessities which could not be locally produced. Typically, a fisherman would set aside enough of his fish product to see his family through the winter, and "sell" the remainder to the local merchant who usually arranged to have it shipped to St. John's for export.[25] The merchants supplied fishermen with goods on the credit system, for which the fisherman would pay with fish in the fall. In good years, a fisherman might have a little money left after all debts were paid. Even then, it was common to have this left on the merchant's books as a credit rather than to actually receive cash for it.

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[25]The merchant's role in the Newfoundland outport is discussed in Wilfred W. Wareham's Introduction to Victor Butler, The Little Nord Easter: Reminiscences of a Placentia Bayman, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, 1975), 15-19.

Until sometime around the middle of the nineteenth century, some of the men of Exploits went "to the ice" in the spring aboard locally-owned schooners to hunt seals. The 1845 census reports that four such vessels were operating out of Exploits that year. Richard told me a story of how his great grandfather had owned one such vessel:

> ...I got a...a letter here...ah...that was written back to England...sometime during my great grandfather's ...ah...prime, telling of the...ah...of the...of the...boat they had built the year before and how they had sent her to the ice and ah...what fat they brought back... apparently the letter was never mailed.[26]

Of course, many of the men in the harbour would also kill seals on the ice flows which came around the coast in the spring. Seals killed in this way were more or less for personal use. This type of hunt still continues in Newfoundland today and is known as the "landsmen" hunt.

Another aspect of the fishery developed in Newfoundland towards the end of the nineteenth century, and this became known as the "Labrador fishery" which was pursued until the 1950's. In this type of fishing, a man owning a schooner would get other men, usually from the same community, to go as sharemen on his vessel to the Labrador coast where they would fish for the summer. The catch would be divided upon the return home, with the largest share going to the owner of the vessel. The people of Exploits were involved in this type of fishing, and I remember my father telling me that when he was growing

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[26]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

up there in the late 1920's, there were perhaps thirty or more such vessels in Exploits.

Apart from fishing, many of the residents of Exploits kept gardens which provided them with a yearly supply of vegetables. Gardens were set in the spring and crops were usually harvested around the early part of October. As the population of Exploits increased and suitable land for gardening became scarce, people went outside the harbour to some of the other coves, as well as to nearby islands, to set their gardens.

Gardening was a matter which involved all able-bodied members of a family for there was always a great deal to be done. The ground had to be tilled by horse and plough or by prong. Next the furrows had to be formed, the seeds planted and fertilized, and then covered. During the summer, additional fertilizer would be added to the crop and later on weeding would be done. October was harvest time and brought a number of other labour-intensive activities. Women and girls played their role in these activities as well. This was often a very taxing role for women since they were expected to lend a hand in the garden and find time to prepare meals and take care of other household chores.

A number of the families at Exploits also kept livestock. Many of the people kept hens, pigs and sheep, and a few kept cows. Horses were fairly common since they were used for hauling wood, ploughing gardens and for travelling in winter over bay ice to other communities. The responsibility of caring

for and feeding livestock was often charged to children, with women usually being responsible to see that the children performed these chores.

Women had other responsibilities as well, many of which were carried on year-round. They generally did all cooking, cleaning, washing, and baking. As well they saw to it that there was always fire-wood in the woodbox and water in the waterbarrel. In addition, they were responsible for sewing, knitting, and making of garments for the family. Added to this list would be any number of other seasonal activities for which they were solely responsible such as bottling of preserves and other foods. These "routine" things when added to the activities with which women were expected to help well illustrates the prominent role which women played in this subsistence economy.[27]

In addition to the kinds of things which most families practised, there were also people at Exploits who performed various trades. There were several blacksmith shops in the community over the years, and Richard told me that his great grandfather had a forge dating back to the first half of the 1800's. The Butt family also operated a forge which is said to date back to the 1870's or, perhaps, before. This forge was active up until the population dwindled away in the

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[27]For an excellent account of the role women played in traditional Newfoundland society, see Hilda Murray, More Than Fifty Percent: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport 1900-1950, (St. John's: Breakwater, 1979); also see Tizzard, 1-18, 262-279.

1960's. The remains of this forge may still be seen at Exploits, and the building which housed it was not torn down until the summer of 1979.

Coopering was another trade practised at Exploits dating back to the 1800's. Several families were involved in this business, making barrels for their own use as well as for sale.

Also operated by the Butt family at Exploits from about the turn of this century was a sawmill. People from around the harbour, as well as from nearby island communities like Black Island and Samson's Island, would cut logs and bring them to the mill to have them sawn into boat plant or building material. The mill also had a "shingle machine" for making wooden shingles which were in wide usage in the area as roofing and exterior sheeting material. I have a ledger used by my grandfather in which he recorded how much and what type of lumber was sawn, who it was sawn for and how much it sold for. The ledger covers a period of about five years in the 1920's during which lumber was sawn for about one cent per board foot.

Other types of trades which may be termed as "subtrades" were carried on at Exploits and usually done wintertime, which was more or less the "slack time". Included in this category would be such things as the making of shoes and boots, snowshoes, and sleds. Certain people who were particularly proficient in one of these types of trades would be engaged to make a number of items during a given winter.

Some of the men were highly skilled boat builders; and during the winter it was certain that a number of boats would be under construction. These men would build boats to sell to people at Exploits or nearby communities. Some large boats were also built, including a number of schooners.

In the early 1900's, another occupation availed itself to male residents of many outports in Notre Dame Bay, that of going "in the woods" in winter months to work in logging camps. The majority of these camps were located on the Exploits River around Badger and Millertown, and gave many men a chance to earn some cash.

For most people who continued to live at Exploits in the 1900's though, the fishery still remained the chief occupation and means of livelihood.

It can be seen then, that earning a living in a community such as Exploits meant that one usually worked at several occupations which involved long hours and hard work.

People were also dependent on one another for different skills and trades. In such a community, interpersonal associations are bound to be frequent as such associations are a necessary part of earning a livelihood and of obtaining many necessary goods and services. In many instances, success depended on people working together.

Communication and Trade

Being an island community, the main method of transportation to and from Exploits was by boat. Boats were essential to residents for fishing purposes as well as for transportation.

Residents of Exploits traded at places such as Twillingate, Lewisporte, and Botwood, and more frequently visited nearby settlements like Black Island, Swan Island, and Samson's Island. It is certain that a steamer service was being operated on the northeast coast of Newfoundland by 1880, and perhaps for some time before. The Twillingate Sun, a weekly newspaper which was first published at Twillingate in June of 1880, carried news of the coastal boat's whereabouts, and printed names of passengers on board and where they were headed. This newspaper was circulated in Notre Dame Bay, with subscribers in Bonavista Bay and as far east as Conception Bay.

During the winter months when the bay was frozen, it was common practice for people to go back and forth to other communities over the ice. Often they might go to Little Burnt Bay, some eleven miles away, and then go a further seven miles to Lewisporte. Such trips could be made by horse and sled, by dog sled, on skates when the ice was good, or by foot.

Within the community, travel was by foot road which extended around the harbour, more or less following the shoreline, for a distance of over three miles. There were also a number of other roads which went to some of the back harbours, as well as one which connected the lighthouse with the community. The task of building such a road was great, considering all the work had to be done by hand. The surface is sod-covered, and in some places has been built up for a considerable distance with large rocks. In early years, residents had to get from one side of the harbour to the other by boat but, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a wooden bridge was built which joined the two islands. At first, this was a drawbridge which could be raised to allow schooners to pass through but was later replaced by a standard wooden bridge and then a concrete bridge in 1945.

The community also had contact with other places by mail service. When the bay was free from ice, the mail was picked up and delivered by the coastal boat each week. In the winter, the mail was carried by dog sled. For most of this century until the Post Office at Exploits closed, a wireless telegraph service was also available. This service was very useful in tracing whereabouts of persons who were overdue on trips and in contacting doctors in medical emergencies, as well as for routine sorts of communication.

The lighthouse operated radio sets with ports in Notre Dame Bay, such as Botwood and Comfort Cove, for a number of years. The staff at the lighthouse continue today, as they always have, to aid people at Exploits in relaying messages, especially in emergencies.

Today, the major form of transportation used by people who go to and from Exploits is privately-owned boats. While no longer a regular port of call for the coastal boat service, the boat will call if there are passengers or freight to be dropped off or picked up.

Religion and Education

In its early years, as the census statistics show, the population of Exploits was predominantly Church of England. The 1836 census shows 236 Protestant Episcopalians (Church of England), ten Protestant Dissenters, and one Roman Catholic. By this time, a school was operated by the Church of England and a church had been built.

The 1845 returns show 274 Church of England followers, forty-eight Wesleyans, and four Roman Catholics. From this time on, the Wesleyan movement made rapid gains in the community and by the time of the next census, they outnumbered the Church of Englanders 268 to 206, and had their own church erected. (See photo #4, p. 48) There was still one school in the community which was, no doubt, shared by both denominations. (See photo #4, p. 48) The Roman Catholics

had, by this time, either left the community or joined one of the other churches.

The 1874 census shows a total population of 623 of which 510 were Wesleyans and the remaining 113 were Church of England. By 1884, the community had two schools, one belonging to each denomination. The Wesleyans came to be known as the Methodists around the turn of the century, and as the United Church in the 1930's, and dominated the population of the community until the community was phased out through resettlement.

The 1891 census returns show that Exploits had one resident who was Salvation Army. By 1901, the organization had seventy-six followers and had erected a church on the west side. The Salvation Army remained an active group at Exploits and were the last group to hold regular Sunday Services in the community. (See photo #5, p. 49)

The Methodists and Church of England continued to operate schools in Exploits up until the 1940's and 50's. (See photo #6, p. 50) After this time, the population had been reduced such that the government felt it was no longer justifiable to send a teacher to the community. After this time, any students living at Exploits had to take their schooling through correspondence courses.

For a period in the late 1800's and the early 1900's, the Methodists operated two schools at Exploits, one on each

side of the harbour. The Salvation Army never set up its own school, rather the children attended one of the others.

The level of education offered in most one room schools in Newfoundland outports was generally lower than that offered in larger communities on the east coast, like St. John's. In many cases, students got only enough education to read and write, and perhaps to do some simple mathematics. This was especially true during the 1800's, as children, especially boys, were needed to help with various forms of work. Many boys were fishing and doing a man's work by their early teens, after having been "apprenticed" in their pre-teen years. Quite often, children would attend school only for the winter months when there was the least amount of work to do, and would not attend for the full school year.

Of course, as time went on, more and more emphasis came to be placed on schooling and students generally began to stay in school for a longer time though the level of schooling most achieved was not high. In fact, not until the 1930's or later were many students in Newfoundland outports able to think of obtaining a grade ten or eleven education. It was also about this time that paper and pencil became widely available to students, and prior to this, work had to be done on a chalk slate which was undoubtedly a handicap.

In spite of the many drawbacks and inadequacies inherent in the school system in Newfoundland outports, schooling was considered fairly important to the people in many of the

communities, as was the case at Exploits. Religion, too, was important to the people, and some of the residents took their religion and denomination quite seriously as Richard told me:

> ...My Great Uncle Alec, he...he was a staunch Anglican and ah...he had great faith in the church an' anybody who didn't go to church, well, they were automatically going wrong. An' we used to get a great charge from him...he'd lambaste us about not going to the proper church, and he always had a saying that...what...what they said in the other churches was only trash.[28]

I asked Richard just how important the denomination was to some people, and he said:

> Oh, that was their thing, the church, I mean, my Uncle Alec, for instance, he was the...one of the old fellows that I remember, 'cause I don't remember my grandfather. But Uncle Alec, now, he...he had great belief in his church, the Anglican church, an' the...an' of course, the...to him the Bishops was...well, the...next man to God, an' ah...you dare not say anything a...about the Bishops or...or any of the clergy...of the church, 'cause if you did he'd be...he'd...he'd get pretty vexed.[29]

Many of the social occasions were wholly organized by the various church groups as is evident in the following section.

Social Activities

Social activities at Exploits may be divided into two basic groups for the purpose of discussion: one being formal social

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[28] From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[29] From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

activities and the other being informal social activities.[30] By formal, I mean those organized gatherings which centered around special times of the year. The informal activities are those kinds of daily social interactions which people engaged in, usually in small groups, to pass the time. I will first discuss the formal social activities.

The two important centers for organized social activities at Exploits were the Orange Lodge and the community hall known as the "Wigwam" because of its design. As far as can be determined, both of these halls were built around the turn of the century.

The busiest time of the year for socializing was Christmas which saw a number of organized gatherings in progress. The Methodist Church had a concert each Christmas in the Orange Hall in which the Sunday School group, the Women's Methodist Society, and the Girl Guides played important parts. The Sunday School group and the Girl Guides prepared skits and spent weeks practicing prior to the concert. Recitations and songs were also part of these concerts. After the concert was over, the Women's Methodist Society had a social prepared, which involved a meal and games for the children.

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[30]Much of the information regarding formal social activities at Exploits has been gathered from an interview I conducted with a former resident of Exploits in 1976, which is contained in William C. Butt, "Social Functions Throughout the Year at Exploits, Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland". (Unpublished paper, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, 1978)

Also included as part of the concert was the "Christmas Tree", at which each of the children received gifts.

Dances were also organized at Christmas, as well as during other times of the year. Interesting to note here is that all dances were held by Anglicans in the "Wigwam". Methodists and the Salvation Army considered dancing to be a sin and so did not partake in them. However, the Methodists' stand on the matter of dancing gradually changed during the 1920's and 30's and it became more acceptable for them to dance. Music for the local dances was almost invariably supplied by a local accordion player, who received no pay for his services.

During the winter months, a community highlight would be Missionary Meetings which would be conducted by the local minister, along with three or four ministers who were visiting from nearby communities. This yearly visit by other ministers was of great interest to people in the community.

The next big event which occurred took place at Easter during which the Sunday School and other church groups organized a program which would be presented at a special Easter Service in the Method st Church.

The Sunday School anniversary involving a special church ceremony, took place during the summer. The Sunday School picnic was also held in the summer and included a parade by the children followed by an outdoor picnic for all ages. Games and boat races were likewise an important part of the annual picnic.

Orangemen's Day was another notable community event, the highlight of which was the parade by flag-bearing Orangemen.

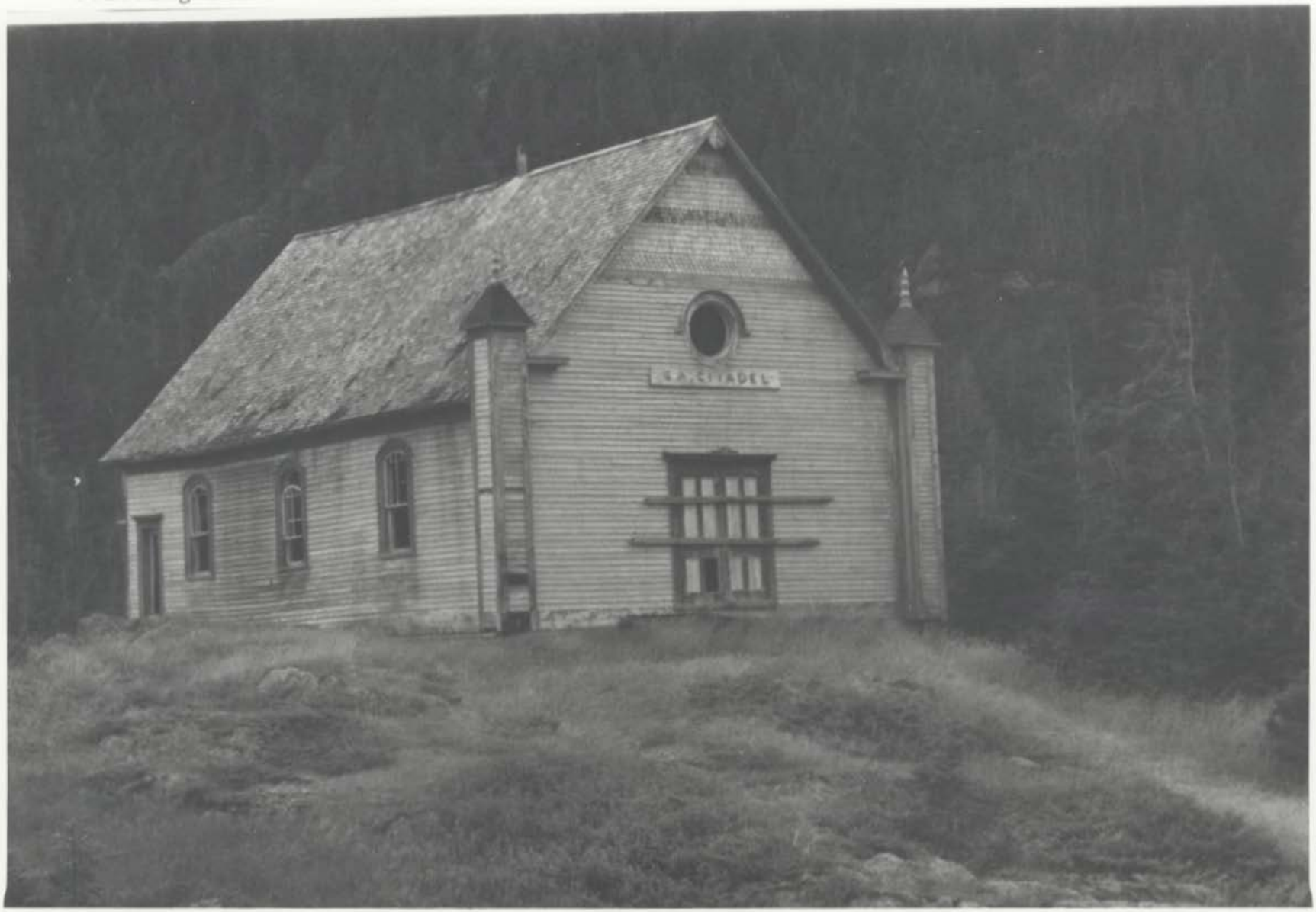
What I have outlined here are the major organized social events which occurred yearly at Exploits. As can be seen from my brief description, the church played a major part in the organization of such events in the community. The degree of involvement on the part of the churches in social activities reflects the importance of the churches' influence in the community and the role that religion played in the lives of the people of Exploits.

Apart from the formal kinds of social gatherings which took place at Exploits, there was also an intricate network of informal social interaction at work. These kinds of activities, which include storytelling and song-making, are of special interest in relation to Richard Wells and his narrative. I will give some general insight into these activities here and will discuss them more fully as they relate to Richard's storytelling in subsequent chapters.

In a small community like Exploits, talk was of utmost importance in the community network. Through the network of talk, the latest "news" in the community was spread around very quickly. Any number of topics might be subject of such conversation, including information on what fishing was like on a given day; what the weather was expected to be like; who had had a falling out or argument and why, or who had in the community. The degree of involvement on the part of the

An old Methodist church. This church was erected in the mid-1800s and also served for a school at times.

Salvation Army Church. Located on the west side, the church is now closed but the building still stands.



Schoolhouse. This school, owned by the United Church, was the last to operate in Exploits.

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There were also certain places where people went to get the latest news and to tell stories. One such place was the merchant's shop, for the merchant or shopkeeper was sure to have heard the current topics of discussion from his customers. The shop was also a favourite place for men to gather in the evening to discuss the latest happenings and then to listen to a few stories and generally "chew the fat"[31] afterwards.

Generally speaking, such gatherings were more common in the fall and winter months when the evenings had less daylight and there was less work to do than in the spring and summer months. Still, even in the busy part of the year, people still found time to talk and tell stories.

There were other places were men often gathered to talk and tell stories. In the winter, men frequently gathered in a fish store or stage loft and talked and told stories as they mended their nets. This type of gathering helped to pass the time as men effected slow and tedious repairs to fishing gear. Sometimes singing would take place among such gatherings.

People also visited the homes of their friends where talking usually took place in the kitchen. Men usually governed the conversation while women and children continued to work or listen to the conversation.

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[31] A term often used at Exploits, and in other places in Newfoundland, to describe talking and storytelling.

Women had opportunities to talk, however, but usually did not dominate the conversation if men were present. Women were busy during the day but sometimes got the opportunity to talk with another woman from a nearby household, or one who happened to be passing by the house. A trip to the shop also provided women with an opportunity for talk though they did not tend to loiter around the shop for the purpose of conversation to the extent that men did.[32] A husband and wife often traded information and discussed the news at meals and lunches.

The Christmas season also brought an increase in social interaction in the forms of visiting, household get-togethers and parties. Another kind of visiting also occurred during this time which was known as "janneying".[33] This meant visiting from house to house, often in groups, in disguise. This type of visiting appears to have been quite popular at Exploits and people regard it as having been a very enjoyable event.

Though I could give many other examples of places and ways people got together to get news and converse, or to socialize, I feel that the above descriptions should provide a kind of feel for the communication people had at Exploits.

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[32]For a discussion on the role of talk and of shops in the Newfoundland outport, see James C. Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1972), pp. 143-151.

[33]Extensive research on Christmas mummering or janneying is presented in Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, Eds., Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1969).

CHAPTER IV

RICHARD WELLS - PERSONAL HISTORY AND LIFESTYLE

This chapter is one which deals with Richard Wells' background, lifestyle, world view, personality and other factors which have influenced him as a storyteller. Any study of Richard as a storyteller would be incomplete without consideration of such factors. It is hoped also that this chapter will enable the reader to develop some sense of appreciation for Richard's character.

Family Background[1]

The first of the Wells' family to settle in Newfoundland was James, Richard's great-great-grandfather, who, according to the Wells' family legend, came from Christchurch, England to Culls Island, Notre Dame Bay in the early 1800's...

> Well, the thing was to go to the New World then, and...he ran away from home practically, and he came over as an apprentice or English youngster they called them...ah...as an apprentice to Mr. Rowsell in Leading Tickles. And...there he met the old man's daughter

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[1]This section on the Wells family background is based largely on a taped interview, August 17, 1980.

> and eventually married her. So after he got over for a while after the fishing season ended...he...he had an uncle in Fogo...so James went down to visit his uncle, of course,...James now was twenty-one or twenty-two and he went down to visit his uncle in Fogo thinking that his uncle would be glad to see him and ah...when he landed there to his wharf the old man looked at him...his uncle looked at him, "Why", he said, "You young rascal! What are you doin' over here?" He said, "Now, you runned away from home. You be off home and help your father or I'll put a ropes end about your rounders! Now, be off with ya!" He never even asked him up to his house so my great-great-grandfather, he just went back aboard the schooner that he came down on and went back to Cull's Island and stayed there a while and then, in the following summer, he came down here and looked up a place here. Cause then, they thought Cull's Island was overcrowded ...Leading Tickles was overcrowded there, so they came down here (Exploits) and so that was...there wasn't too many people here...just a few people here and they staked off an area here and started to clear the land, him and his wife.[2]

Richard's great-great-grandfather lived on the east side of Exploits Harbour for a number of years where they operated a business. His great-grandfather, Henry, moved to an area known locally as Lumber Point on the west side. Richard's grandfather, Samuel, and his father, William, were born here but moved to Swan Island, about three miles to the south-southeast, when his father was a boy. This, Richard believes to have been between 1885 and 1890.

Richard's father settled at Swan Harbour and had eight children by his first wife and one other, Richard, by his second wife, Sylvia Rideout from Wales Gulch. Richard was born at Swan Harbour but he has not revealed the exact year to me.

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[2]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

This seems to be a secret he wants to keep from everyone. However, I do know that they moved back to Exploits when Richard was a "biggish boy" in 1946, so I estimate that he was born somewhere between 1932 to 1934.

Over the years, there were other families on Swan Island, including those of two of Richard's uncles, as well as families of Jacobs, Dawe and Cramm.

The Wells family fished mainly for cod with hook-and-line in the area. Only occasionally would they go to Labrador on someone else's schooner, this being when the local fishery was experiencing a poor season.

Growing Up

Richard Wells began learning the fishery at an early age, as he recalled for me:

> Yes, I went out fishing with my father when I could only row with one paddle...we didn't have a motor boat then so we went in rowboats and I used to row with one paddle when I went fishing with my father first. I wasn't very big...I couldn't have been any bigger than four, anyhow. I was goin' out with Dad a long time before I was man enough to haul up a fish. I used to get hold a fish and, if he was any bigger than a tomcod, he'd have to come aboard and haul it up for me. But ah...I enjoyed it. Looking back on it now I wouldn't want it any different.[3]

This comment is indicative of the pride which Richard takes in the fishery, a pride which he developed at an early age. It also brings out his love for the lifestyle with which he

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[3]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

grew up, one which has not changed greatly for him even today.

The Wells family were traditionally Anglicans, as indicated by his Uncle Alec's comments in Chapter II. Richard's views regarding the denomination were not staunch as indicated by his remarks on what his Uncle Alec had said:

> But, of course, we always took it very lightly. We used to get a great charge out of him...but, of course, we used to kid him sometimes and...ah...of course, he knew I was only kidding him but he'd growl at me just the same.[4]

The inclusion of this comment should not create the impression that Richard did not follow any religion, rather that he was not as caught up in the denominational aspect of it as was his Uncle Alec. Richard's father was the first of the family to leave the Anglican Church by joining the Methodists sometime after he returned to Exploits in 1946.

> My father...my father...joined the Methodist...or United Church but the rest of the family, they all stayed Anglican for a long time. A lot of people...a lot of his friends left the Anglican and joined the United Church and so he...he decided well, he might as well go to the United Church. My father was never very particular about what church he went to...it...it could be any church. He always went to church when there was church open an...he couldn't care less if it was (Salvation) Army or United or Anglican or what it was. He...just as long as it was a church then he went.[5]

Richard seems to have followed what may be termed a more broad-minded view of religion which his father chose. This sort of thinking perhaps provides us with some insight into

[4]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[5]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

what may be called Richard's world view. It is my observation that Richard is very broad- and liberal-minded, especially considering his background and context in which he grew up. This, I am sure, is largely due to his own efforts to keep abreast of things happening at the local, national and international levels, something which he has done all his life.

The point at which the Wells family moved to Exploits brought about a significant change in Richard's life. At this time, in 1946, Richard was, as he says, a "biggish boy" of probably between eleven and thirteen years. There were still a fair number of families at Exploits during that time which meant that there were many more people to interact with than on Swan Island. Also, Richard was now provided the opportunity to attend school for the first time.

R.W. Well, I was self-taught but then I went to school here and it took me a while to catch up to the other...with the rest of the crowd my age. Took me a while because I had to go through all the grades, they wouldn't give me any breaks... they...I had to take all the grades and that was that so...it was kinda rushed...I was sorta rushed through the lower grades...and made it up to grade nine ...matter of fact, I took grade ten but I never wrote any exams...But I managed to scrape up enough education to get by on, y' know...managed to...

W.B. As much as most people had at the time. A little more than a lot of 'em.

R.W. Yeah, a lot...a lot quit at grade seven and eight. But...I went back to school winter time...I used to go to school after that but then I was older and had to get out and work so I just used to go to school

winter time.[6]

That Richard took it upon himself to make up a formal education in spite of the handicap of starting so late is probably reflective of his drive and willpower, characteristics which he still has today. His ability to go through two grades a year in order to catch up did not go unnoticed among his peers and one person who attended school with him commented:

> Richard came to Exploits when he was twelve, never went to school a day in his life. He took two grades a year and went on through, no more to it than that. Teachers couldn't get over it...and very, very intelligent.[7]

The same person continued with regard to Richard as being somewhat of a local performer, even during his school days.

> Richard wanted to take part in concerts but had a stuttering problem, but he kept on so they let him. He did the recitation without stuttering once! So he took part all the time after that. Of course, as a boy he used to tell recitations at house gatherings all the time.[8]

This passage indicates that Richard was somewhat of an outstanding individual right from the time his family moved to Exploits. People were especially impressed with his very keen memory and I have heard from a number of people that he could recite long passages after hearing them only once. He remains noted today for his great powers of recall.

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[6]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[7]From field diary, July 12, 1982.

[8]From field diary, July 12, 1982.

At Exploits, Richard learned to fit in very well with his peers, and took part in the usual kinds of things pursued by young people of the day. Entertainment in these times was largely self-initiated and one of the local shops would often be the meeting place for young people in the evenings. Such evenings might be filled with talking, jokes, and pranks.

Richard notes that the one thing that never changes is the interest in courtship, and so the young fellows were ever alert to an opportunity to walk one of the favourite young ladies home. A twinkle usually appears in Richard's eye when he recalls these events.

It seems that the stuff of courtship always makes for good yarns and so choice pieces of information regarding young couples made for interesting tales. As is the case in small communities, talk is of the utmost importance and what people find most interesting is talk regarding the affairs of others.[9] So it was with Richard and his friends that a major activity in their youth was discreetly pursuing the affairs of others.

This type of activity seems to be an interesting sort of game in which people were involved. There was the aspect of investigating the affairs of others, and of trying to maintain secrecy regarding one's own affairs. Reactions to gossip about

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[9]See James C. Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement, (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1972), pp. 143-151; also Lawrence G. Small, "The Inter-relationship of Work and Talk in a Newfoundland Fishing Community", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1979.

one's self could vary. Boys, for example, would give information to a friend warning him not to tell, but sometimes hoping and knowing he would do so. Then when verbally confronted in front of an audience at the local shop one would have the opportunity to grin like the proverbial Cheshire cat. It seems that it was more glorious to be noted in this manner than to tell it oneself and appear as a braggart. One was also less likely to be accused by the girl in question of having told if the matter was dealt with in this way.

Girls often shared courtship secrets with best friends who were sworn to secrecy but sometimes news of the encounter would mysteriously "leak out". Of course, it was difficult to actually blame either males or females for having told such news because the practice of "dogging" was common.

"Dogging" involved following a couple secretly and observing any noteworthy activities that might transpire for the next round of gossip. To be the holder to such a news item was indeed prestigious and these "investigators" usually took some time to tell the whole story. After all, with such a precious news item, one would be the centre of attention for a while.

"Dogging" was often an activity carried on by younger boys who were not quite of the age to start dating girls but who were certainly curious. It was not uncommon, however, for "doggers" to be peers of those being followed.

Summertime brought some different opportunities for young men and women to get together. Teenagers were fond of "moonlight

parties" in Richard's day. These involved a group of young people going by motorboat to a nearby island to have a beach party. A focal point of the party was a "scoff"; a big cooked meal of fish and brewis or salt meat and vegetables. It also included singing, storytelling, and opportunities for courtship. As Richard says, "At times there would be competition for certain girls."

In his teenage years Richard was often the primary organizer of such moonlight parties, he being one of the few who had access to a boat big enough for such a purpose.

As a boy and a young man, Richard routinely did chores and worked with his father in fishing, gardening, fence building and tending animals. After his mother died in 1961, Richard and his father were also responsible for their own cooking, washing, cleaning and numerous other household chores. Through his boyhood years, he developed a strong sense of work and productivity, working quite often from daylight until after dark.

Such a work cycle is probably unimaginable and certainly unthinkable to many people today. Yet, this is the cycle which the subsistence economy of the Newfoundland outport required. Many who were brought up in this way have changed their lifestyles in keeping with contemporary occupations and social life. However, Richard Wells emerged from boyhood determined to keep the way of life which had become so dear to him. In effect, he has done just that, maintaining a

subsistence way of life into the 1980's.

I shall now proceed to discuss Richard's life since the early 1960's. This period marked two significant changes in his life; one being the death of his father in 1963, and the other being the impact of the resettlement program.

Lifestyle

The lifestyle which Richard Wells has chosen, since the previously-noted major changes in his life took place, is certainly deserving of some discussion in this work. It is also crucial background for the discussion of context which will be a focal point of this research.

These are, of course, always valid reasons for including various background data on those with whom we undertake out research, but in Richard's case there are several somewhat unusual points to consider; Richard has maintained in very many ways the traditional lifestyle with which he grew up and he has chosen to live in a common-law relationship, something which was unusual for his generation.

The fact that Richard has chosen to live a traditional lifestyle is remarkable in itself given that few of his generation chose to do this. It is even more remarkable when we consider the resettlement program which the provincial government introduced in the mid-1950's.

Before proceeding any further, it will be useful to sum up briefly the policies and effects of this program. The

Smallwood government saw a number of problems developing in Newfoundland with regard to providing services, such as health care, education, communication, and transportation in isolated communities, particularly island communities. The government felt that by relocating people from such communities to more central locations, they would receive higher quality social services and better opportunities for employment. As a result, various pressures were brought to bear on communities earmarked for resettlement including financial assistance to those who agreed to move.

The whole concept became the focus of a debate which raged at all levels in Newfoundland for two decades, and which is sometimes disputed today, for a whole variety of reasons. The program caused bitterness between friends and families within affected communities as arguments developed. It is not my intent to discuss this aspect of resettlement here for that is a major work in itself; Suffice it to say that the program resulted in some 279 outport communities, many of them islands, coming to an end under this plan.[10] One of these communities was Exploits.

The implementation of this program at Exploits in the late 1950's succeeded in bringing an already diminished community to an end, but it took a slow and painful ten years to complete. The population of Exploits had already dwindled

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[10]Frederick W. Rowe, Education and Culture in Newfoundland, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), 59.

significantly from the level it had reached in its heyday at the turn of this century. Many people had gone to other towns such as Gander, Grand Falls, and Lewisporte in search of new and permanent employment opportunities.

Still, until the resettlement plan was introduced, there had been stability in the community. There were several churches in operation, a school, a post office, a general merchant, and the community had regular coastal boat service.

Gradually, some people were enticed to leave by the financial incentive offered, probably having had the idea of leaving on their minds for some time. This subsequently placed extra pressures on those who remained; and some of these moved as they felt that a fight to stay would be futile. Slowly, services were removed; the Post Office closed, there was no teacher, churches, or merchant's store. By 1967, there was little left of Exploits as a community save for the empty houses and churches and abandoned wharves and fishing stages.[11]

Richard Wells, however, had decided to stay, despite pressures brought to bear by various government representatives. Around 1966, Richard was told by a government official that if he didn't move willingly then he would be removed by

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[11]Stage is a term used in Newfoundland to refer to the building which fishermen build near the water in which fish were cleaned, salted and stored and which is used to store fishing gear.

officers of the law. Richard's reply was, "We'll see about that!". He remains there to this day. (See photo #7, p. 68)

Richard's housekeeper-turned-common-law-wife, Lydia Budgell, decided to stay also. One other resident of the community also stayed until the winter of 1983-84, Mr. Winston Butt. Mr. Butt now returns to Exploits in the spring, fishing until the fall when he returns to his new residence at Little Burnt Bay.

Richard and Lydia have maintained a very traditional lifestyle in a great many ways. For a number of years, their lifestyle remained totally unchanged with the exception that they had to adapt to living in a community that had practically been abandoned. In this setting, they pursued the fishery, maintained the gardens, raised sheep, chicken and ducks, cooked on a woodstove which was also the heating system for the house, and did without many of the amenities of current living. The things they did without are those which are basic to many now; refrigeration, electricity, central heating, television and telephones. As well there was the isolation which can make transportation and communication difficult, especially during the winter.

Until the mid-1970's, Richard used the same motorboat that had been in the family for years, with its slow, cumbersome, archaic inboard engine. In spite of the fact that he has since used an outboard motor, the fishing cycle and methods he uses have not changed much from his father's day.

> Well, my father and grandfather were lobster catchers. Yet, it (the fishing cycle) hasn't changed

> that much. When I was a kid, my grandfather and my father, when I was a kid we fished from a rowboat. Then we went into the inboard motor and now, I use the outboard motor for fishing. It makes it a lot easier and a lot faster moving...I wouldn't say there's too much difference in the amount of lobster...there was when I was a kid. An...of course you don't get as many because where...when I was a kid, where...where there...was five...five pots set, now there's, I'd say...well at least ...ah...fifty. And ah...of course everybody'd get a fair amount of lobster so that cuts down the amount each gets but quite a difference in the price. When...the first that I remember selling we got...ah we got...three cents a pound. Now, this year, we...our last lobster was two dollars a pound. Quite a jump in those many years. There's just as much cod now with hook-and-line as there was when I was a kid. So things haven't changed all that much. Except the type of gear, of course, have changed. We use all nylon now where it used to be cotton and hemp and manilla and bass rope. Now we're into the nylon or whatever you call it...plastic coated stuff which makes it much easier to work.[12]

With the exception of the type of gear and boats used, Richard still prosecutes the fishery very much in the traditional way. (See photo #8, p. 72) As well, he keeps a number of sheep, usually about twenty-five winter time and perhaps forty during the summer.

The work cycle which Richard and Lydia follow is difficult for many people to fathom. From daylight to dark they go, with a varied and lengthy array of chores. The delineation of chores is somewhat traditional. Almost all household work is Lydia's responsibility. She is up at around daylight with Richard on workdays to prepare a hearty breakfast to get him started for the day. Sometimes she accompanies him and helps with the work he has planned for the day. This is

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[12]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

A view of Exploits Harbour from the west island. Richard Wells' house is at extreme left of photo.

especially true in the spring and summer during the lobster, cod, and salmon fisheries. Usually, they return from fishing at about 10:30 a.m. By this time, Richard will want a lunch, for he is the first to admit that he has a hearty appetite.

The lunches which Lydia prepares for Richard will include, depending on seasonal availability, such things as cod's heads, cod tongues, britches and sounds,[13] salmon, salmon heads, salmon liver, and herring and mackerel fillets. In addition, home-baked bread, biscuits, cheese, tinned fruit and strong, loose tea are also part of the regular fare at such lunches. Richard's lunches are what most would consider meals.

After this, it's back to the next chore of the day, which may be more fishing or some other activity, depending on the season, the weather, and the availability of fish. There is often firewood to saw up, about a dozen buildings to repair, animals to tend to, water to bring from a well some 400 feet away, and a host of other possible activities.

At intervals, Lydia may take part in or perform any of the above activities. In addition, she has sole responsibility for household chores other than cooking. She takes care of washing dishes, house cleaning, washing clothes without the use of any kind of washing machine, keeping the fire in the

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[13]"Britches" is a Newfoundland term which refers to the egg sac in female codfish, which is delicious when fried; "sounds" refers to a thin white-coloured sac attached to the cods' backbone which is the lung. These are quite tasty when fried.

stove and other household activities such as baking her own bread, and bottling a variety of foods, particularly jams, in season.

The next is the noonday meal with usually consists of some cooked fare of the kinds previously mentioned. There is a mid-afternoon lunch and then supper which is between five and six o'clock. Before bedtime, Richard will also have several lunches.

Richard is generally responsible for fishing, cleaning fish, tending to the boat, cutting wood and other kinds of "heavy" work. Lydia also helps if she is free from her regular chores.

Their schedule has always remained particularly busy throughout the spring, summer and fall. Moreover, on any given summer day when the weather is pleasant, it is not uncommon for Richard and Lydia to have upwards of fifty or more visitors at their house. Quite often, Lydia will also prepare a lunch for the guests.

Richard spends some time each day talking to these guests, discussing current news items, politics or other matters of general concern, and sometimes telling a story or two. This aspect of such visits will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters.

The frequency of such visits of course diminishes as summer fades into fall and then winter. Yet, Richard remarks that it is a rare day during the year when no one at all shows up at his place. With longliners on the bay until late fall,

people travelling over the bay ice on snowmobile during winter, visits from the lighthouse keepers, the occasional helicopter visit by the R.C.M.P., and the heavy summer traffic, more people pass through Exploits than one would initially imagine.

Since the last local store closed in the late 1960's, Richard and Lydia have gotten their food provisions from Lewisporte. This is done by going to Little Burnt Bay by boat and engaging someone to drive them to Lewisporte for the day to make the necessary purchases. During the summer months, this is a weekly or bi-weekly practice. In the late fall, however, they have to get in a winter's supply of foodstuffs, which may entail making several trips to transport the goods or hiring a larger boat for the purpose.

The foods which Richard and Lydia eat are generally in line with the traditional foods of Newfoundland. However, they have very little fresh meat, because of the lack of artificial refrigeration. The meats they do have on a regular basis are salt beef, salt pork riblets, and salt pork. Occasionally, they purchase fresh meats such as beef or chicken in Lewisporte which have to be cooked within a day before it spoils. Apart from this, other meats might include bottled rabbit or saltwater birds, such as turrs[14] or ducks, and commercial varieties of tinned meat.

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[14]"Turrs" are saltwater birds approximately the size of an eider which are hunted by boat, usually in the fall.

Richard Wells' fishing stage and wharf

Fresh fish forms a large portion of the diet during the fishing season. In winter, however, there is dried salt cod, salted herring, salted mackerel, and sometimes salted cod tongues.

Richard consumes more potatoes than most people and these are cooked at least once a day. All the potatoes are grown in their own gardens. Other vegetables which they may purchase by the sack for the winter include turnip, carrot, and cabbage.

Apart from this, biscuits, cheese, tea, flour, butter, sugar, and tinned meats and fruits comprise the majority of the other items in their diet.

In recent years, Richard and Lydia have "modernized" to some extent. They now own a snowmobile which was purchased about 1980 for hauling firewood and logs and to make an occasional trip to Lewisporte on the bay ice if necessary.

As well, Richard has rented a mobile telephone since 1982 which enables him to call practically anywhere in the world he so chooses. People will often visit Richard's house to avail of the telephone service. In the past few years, Richard and Lydia have purchased a small portable generator and a 12 volt television. The generator is used chiefly for charging the wet-cell batteries on which the television and the telephone operate.

Richard's most recent acquisition is a 20 inch propane range. This was purchased in response to their hectic summer

schedule which requires that lunches be prepared more quickly. This was simply not feasible on the woodstove which had to be relit every time they returned home. As well, the heat caused from cooking on the woodstove was at times unbearable.

Entertainment is a priority with Richard and Lydia. In spite of their busy summer schedule, both do quite a bit of visiting or entertaining at home during that time of year. They receive invitations to visit from people who have cabins at Exploits or from those who visit by cabin boat. Combining work with this form of recreation provides Richard and Lydia with eighteen- to twenty-hour days practically during the summer and both show amazing stamina in their abilities to maintain such a routine.

These are the more notable features of the lifestyle by which Richard and Lydia live as well as those which are of most relevance to this research. The following section will deal with Richard's personality and will help the reader get to "know" something of Richard's character.

Personality

When people meet Richard Wells, his appearance almost invariably stirs curiosity. His gaunt figure is striking in itself. (See photo #9, p. 76) Adding to this effect is his usual working attire, which at first seem to indicate a complete lack of concern for physical appearance, and an unruly flock of hair creating Mozart-like images as the

bangs beneath his tam blow in the wind. This is often the first impression people get of Richard Wells.

Drawing closer to the man, however, a perhaps more interesting image presents itself. The skin which covers Richard's face and neck speaks all too well of the lifestyle of its bearer. Weathered, wind-burned, and worn from the countless times it has been salt-washed in its entirety, it contours over sharp facial features; high cheekbones, drawn cheeks, a protruding nose and high forehead. But perhaps the most striking feature of all are the eyes which permanently squint as a result of life-long attempts to protect themselves from sunrays reflecting off the water, driving winds and rain, and salt spray, all of which relentlessly try to blind their vision.

These eyes fix on newcomers with a knowing yet inquisitive look. During times when he is busy, the look may be just a glance as the eyes return to the task at hand. However, the flurry of activity will come to an end as Richard's curiosity about the newcomer gets the better of him. A conversation is now in order. Quite often, Richard will use the urge for a hand-rolled cigarette as an excuse to stop and talk.

When approached by friends, the greeting is usually light-hearted or joking, as he usually tries to outwit such people in friendly verbal play. The enjoyment he extracts from such verbal encounters shows through in the gleam in his eye and his grin.

Richard Wells relaxing at home

The seeming disregard for appearance created by his loose-fitting trousers, old jackets and oil-skins in which he works is false. Cleanliness and tidiness are important to him, which is apparent when he is socializing or relaxing on Sundays; Richard has a very definite sense of propriety with regard to such matters. Sunday is still observed by Richard as the day of rest and the day on which it is improper to do work. This reflects his Christian upbringing and sense of morality.

Whatever the situation in which one encounters Richard, whether an acquaintance or not, there is definite interest created by his presence. Even though his physical appearance accounts for some of this, there are other factors to consider. Richard's character and personality are powerful and "magnetic", enabling him to command people's interest and attention.

Richard is basically a happy person. He has a great love of life and enjoys most of the aspects of his lifestyle immensely. I have heard him time and again express his love of the sea in comments such as, "It really feels good to be afloat." A trip to the fishing grounds doesn't have to be bountiful for Richard to enjoy it. Even during periods when fishing is poor, he will go if only for the enjoyment of it. It is routine on summer evenings to see Richard head out to the fishing grounds an hour or so before sunset and to hear his outboard motor on the return trip an hour or so after dusk.

He also enjoys many other aspects of his lifestyle. The

conducting of his chores on his own schedule is a freedom he cherishes. Even though he has a great number of things to do, they are done largely at his own discretion. As well, he gets great enjoyment from simply talking to people and from being able to do so as the opportunity occurs.

Richard loves to eat, and he also loves the kinds of foods he is able to eat in his lifestyle. He is convinced that the various forms of fish and other foods which he provides are essential to healthy living and longevity. He often jokes that he is going to live for a long time. On one occasion he remarked that he would live to be "one hundred and fifty". When this topic was brought up the following summer, Richard remarked, "No, I've got that revised now. I'm going to live on forever!"

Generally speaking, Richard Wells enjoys life and likes to be part of things that make him happy. This is not to say that he doesn't get angry, however, because there are certain things which can raise his ire. People coming to the harbour and destroying things have gotten Richard quite upset and he has been involved in a number of such incidents because he is caretaker for a number of cabins. As well, incidents which have arisen over whether or not his sheep should be allowed to roam have gotten Richard upset and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have been called in on several such matters.

Of course, there are less serious happenings over which Richard can get upset. When something doesn't go according

to plan or he has a problem with an outboard motor, for example, he can get upset and do some swearing.

A brief discussion of his common-law relationship with Lydia will shed further light on Richard's character. He and Lydia are very close and spend a lot of time together at home and at work. At no time are they separated for any length of time. Even for trips to Lewisporte for provisions, they usually go together. Overnight separations in their relationship have been practically non-existent.

Outwardly, there are few overt shows of affection between the two. Generally, in public, they behave as very good friends which, of course, they are. The intimate side of their relationship is kept very much between themselves and to comment on the nature of it would be purely speculative.

Richard and Lydia do care greatly for each other and are very dependent on each other. In their lifestyle, it would be difficult if not impossible for either to exist alone. Richard does not like to be away from Lydia for long. Many have proposed that this is due to jealousy but this is largely unsubstantiated. It may well be due to the fact that he is dependent on her for many things. The situation is mutual in this respect for Lydia does not want to spend much time away from Richard.

I feel that their relationship has been completely monogamous. From conversations with Richard, his views of sex could not be said to be overly conservative. He has

referred and alluded to this topic when discussing his youth and his views are generally liberal. Even today, he remarks, often in Lydia's presence, that he would like to spend a night with certain girls or says what he might do if he were alone with certain females. This is largely superficial in my opinion. From other conversations I have had with him, I have gathered that he would be very hurt if Lydia were to be involved with another man. Therefore, his verbal 'play' on the topic cannot be taken as a true reflection of his feelings.

Richard and Lydia have no children, although I have never really figured out exactly why. I feel that it is a mutual decision, though I don't think it is because they wouldn't want children. Both spend a lot of time with other people's children who visit.

Richard and Lydia are very good at entertaining children and obviously enjoy having them around. I think the key factor in their decision not to have children is the isolation in which they live. Education could not be provided for children at Exploits so Richard and Lydia would not be able to live there any longer. I think it is a case of having to forego children of their own for the lifestyle they want.

The fact that Richard and Lydia have maintained a common-law relationship is worthy of note. Such a living arrangement is accepted today, but was less acceptable at the time when they began this living arrangement. Whether this was more a reflection of the way Richard wanted things than did Lydia

is difficult to say. However, both certainly had to agree and are happy with it. To some degree, I feel it is a reflection of Richard's independent nature, willpower and self-esteem.

Richard Wells is certainly a man who follows his own mind once he has decided on what is right for him. This is not to say that he is unwilling to listen to information on a topic or makes rash decisions. However, once he has considered all factors regarding a decision he must make, he will stand firmly by his position.

Although some people think otherwise, Richard Wells is a very well-informed individual. Richard proves himself to be very knowledgeable on a whole variety of topics of local, national, and international interest. He gets this knowledge from a variety of sources, including radio, particularly the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, television, a whole variety of magazines, books and, of course, from talking to people. He really enjoys good conversation and derives a certain satisfaction from debating issues of general interest.

Because of his work routine, much of the reading and television-viewing that he does takes place in the winter season. During the remainder of the year, his busiest time, he keeps abreast of current affairs and news items through radio and conversing with others.

Richard's world view, considering his lifestyle, is very broad; indeed I find him much better able to discuss current

events than many people who live in urban settings where information is more readily available. Indeed more than one person who has made his acquaintance has been surprised by Richard's astuteness with regard to foreign politics, for example.

Other aspects of Richard's world view are also of interest. He is a keen observer of people, their behaviour and social changes which take place. His interest in these is international in scope, as well, and he is always curious to learn of ways of life in other parts of the world. Television, magazines such as National Geographic, radio, and conversations with people from abroad are Richard's resources for such information.

Within the Newfoundland context, Richard has been interested in the study of people and social change all his life. He loves to talk of people and why they do certain things, sometimes in amusement, sometimes in disgust.

Richard enjoys discussing young people, social change as it relates to them, and the things which young people sometimes do. He made the following comments in this regard:

> ...And you know, Bill, you look at it now and ah...the years that...the times now and the girls and all the young fellows and the carrying on...the going on, the fun and what-have-you and all the drinking...some fellows, some people they say tampered with this pot and grass and what-have-you and all this, you know, really haven't changed all that much. Now the big thing is pot, and when the old fellows was boys they got at the elders' liquor...and there was some great stories told...the old fellows used to tell when they were young fellows how they...how they sneaked aboard the schooner and got at...got into the liquor...got into the liquor. And ah...how they

> had...one way or another they'd work to get liquor which...that you weren't supposed to have. And ah...anything for adventure. And they knew...they were only twelve...fourteen year olds and they'd...they'd sneak the liquor out to the younger fellows and...that's providing that the younger fellows was hardy young fellows and they was out with them...well, they had a taste of liquor. And, ah...you look at it now, it haven't changed all that much. When I...when I was a...when I was a boy we sneaked...fellows sneaked me out liquor, beer and cigarettes and now, of course, pot have come on the scene and...and if pot had been around in the old days, some fellows would have been smoking it.[15]

Richard appears to be of the opinion that people will adapt to whatever changes society might bring and that actual ways of thinking and behaviours are not as different as we may think. He often views things in this broad sense in order to put things in perspective.

It is indeed apparent that Richard Wells is a somewhat unique individual by today's standards. It is against this background which the ensuing discussion of his narrative art is set.

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[15]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT[1]

The intention in this chapter is to present a thorough perspective of the storytelling contexts which Richard Wells has experienced. Such a discussion will give an overview of the storytelling tradition which influenced Richard in his childhood years on Swan Island and the tradition to which he was exposed after the family's move to Exploits in his boyhood years. Subsequently, those storytelling contexts which Richard became part of in his adult years will be examined, taking into account major changes which have affected the community such as resettlement.

Early Influences on Storytelling

It was during the interview with Richard regarding his and his family's background that I gained some real insight into the roots of Richard's storytelling abilities and the beginnings of his interest in storytelling. However, I had some indication of these things for some time prior to this. Richard has an uncanny ability to recall many of the stories which he heard as a boy and he derived great satisfaction

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[1]Information presented in this chapter is based on field recording, field diary notes and personal observations.

from listening to the stories that his father, uncles, and other people told him. One very interesting family legend which he heard in his boyhood days follows:

> He (Uncle Alec) had great pride in the family tree as well. He always told the story about...many generations ago...ah...the old...one of the old Wells fellows...they're our ancestors...ah fought with Harold at Hastings and ah...he always said that he was with Harold right up until the standard-bearer fell. And ah...he always said that ah...that he cleared a path for Harold with his hatchet through the Normans and ah...he...he had...but when...when Harold got hit by the arrow that...they fell back and, of course, he fled for his life. Because...and Uncle Alex always claimed that there wasn't a drop of Norman blood in any of his...in any of his ancestors. They were all pure English. But whether that was fact or legend...but we...of course, as kids we believed it...but...that's something else. But...he always claimed that the family sword was handed down for all the generations...that the old man used at Hastings.[2]

This legend is a very good indication of Richard's ability to recall things which he heard many years ago, and also shows a longstanding pride in the Wells family tradition which is still very much alive today. Richard takes great pride in his family tradition and in his lifestyle today.

While living at Swan Harbour, Richard didn't obtain any formal schooling. There had been a school, which also served as a church, which was operated for four or five months of the year, but this had been discontinued by the time Richard was of school age. However, he was somewhat self-educated at Swan Harbour and it was there that his interest in stories was fostered.

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[2]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

> Oh, yes, it (storytelling) was something I grew up with 'cause my father was a storyteller and he remembered all the old stories his father and...and his uncles told him...and his grandfather. And ah...about shipwrecks and men that got lost and ah...close...close shaves fellows had and the comical situations fellows got in and ah...tales were told that everybody knew was lies but ah... fellows made 'em up and told 'em just...just for kicks. And so he told...he told us all kinds of stories and ghost stories and...stories of wrecks and ah...so I got interested as a small boy and...ah...and I've been collecting them ever since. There's literally thousands of stories when I think about them that come to mind of different things, you know.[3]

Through these comments we are given some indication of the kinds of stories to which Richard was exposed as a boy. It is the kind of stories which Richard mentions here that he enjoys telling today and which most of his audiences enjoy listening to. His comment regarding the stories which were known to be "lies" but which were told anyway shows that entertainment was a critical storytelling function.

I asked Richard to describe some of the storytelling situations which would typically arise during his boyhood days:

> Well, when we lived on Swan Island...my father often told us stories when...while he was working like in the...down in the store. Something would come up to remind him of and he'd say, "That's like...ah...that happened when so-and-so ship was lost"...Like maybe there'd be a storm on like there is today and he'd say, "Well, this is how the wind was when so-and-so was lost or...some guy got...got...almost got lost or, you know, a narrow escape". And then he would tell a story of what...of what happened and ah...of course, we'd be all ears to listen and then other times then...ah some fellows would come in...some of the other fellows would come in and sit around and ah...talking one

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[3]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

> thing and the other and they'd come up with a story, and...and ah everybody'd have...have a turn telling a...telling a story about shipwrecks or days on the Labrador or days in the coastal trade 'cause most of them...was in the coastal trade one time or another from St. John's...from here to St. John's and ah...they would tell of shipwrecks and...and of how their friend related stories to them that...about shipwrecks in their area. But...so the stories would come around and...then probably someone else would come along with another story and then you'd get like ghost stories. That was usually sitting down on the wharf in the evenings when anybody'd come there. Over there in Swan Harbour...one time there was nobody there, of course, but ah...they would come up with (Beothuck) Indian tales and ah...ghost stories and stuff...what happened to old skipper so-and-so and they...the stories got around what their fathers or their grandfathers told them and by-and-by it would...it wound up that I had collected literally hundreds of stories of ah...shipwrecks, and people and what-have-you...ghosts, ghost ships and all kinds of things.[4]

This passage illustrates that Richard Wells was exposed to many different legends, personal experience narratives and memorats throughout his youth. The storytelling situations he describes are probably fairly typical of the kinds of situations that arose in many Newfoundland fishing communities.

Of particular interest is Richard's comment that he had collected literally hundreds of stories. This points out the keen interest in the stories he had heard at an early age and also his exceptional memory. I have heard him tell many of the stories he had heard in his youth and am always impressed by his powers of recall.

I asked Richard whether more stories were told wintertime than summertime while the family lived at Swan Harbour:

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[4]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

> Yes, to a degree, yes. My father told more stories wintertime to us because there was... during...when I was growing up because there was no one else on the island so ah...like he'd be working...or at night he'd be working and ah...he would tell a yarn about ghosts or something like that and...or tell two or three probably that same night. But in the summer there'd be a lot told because there would always be fellows around, y'know. Some of my father's cousins or uncles would come to visit and ah...like down on the squid-jigging ground would be a great time for telling stories...when there was only a couple or three boats there and ah...waitin' for squid, somebody'd start off with a yarn about...about something about sharks or whales or something like that and...by the time it ended up they'd got into ghost stories or something like that.[5]

The stories which Richard was told while living on Swan Island were told mostly by his father or uncles who were visiting. This situation changed considerably in 1946 when Richard's family moved to Exploits and took residence in the same house in which Richard lives today.

Storytelling at Exploits

At the time when Richard and his family moved to Exploits, he was, as he says, a "biggish boy" probably in the eleven to thirteen year range. The move to Exploits was a significant one for him. There were now many more people with whom to interact. Making new friends and going to school were also new situations to be dealt with.

Richard found that the storytelling situations he encountered at Exploits were new and varied:

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[5]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

> Yes, over here there was a lot of old fellows we called them...a lot of old timers and they...and sometimes I'd go down and...one place, down in the old house, what we called the old house...Wes Sceviour's store...ah...that's where the Lower Harbour...the old fellows in Lower Harbour would gather in the...wintertime, there in the store and ah...we used to have a fire there...with or Wes or Joe or some of them'd be working in the store. And they'd get there and tellin' yarns and ah...you'd hear a lot of stories there. And then...ah... people'd come in and I'd hear...telling Father new ones that I'd never heard before and ah...like Skipper Charlie or Skipper Sam or some of those fellows...Skipper Fred or Uncle Andy or some of those fellows 'd come in and they'd spin a yarn about men lost or all kinds of stuff. Of course, I'd be all ears! And then because I tell a good many stories ah...it sort of freshens them up in my memory and ah...you know what I mean, it's just a natural thing that I remember them because most of them, one time or another, I've repeated them for somebody else. And lots of them I've told dozens of times.[6]

His comment that he would be "all ears" indicates the great desire he had to be involved in such situations. Also, it is certainly interesting to note the casual way in which he mentions that he still remembers these stories today. His powers of recall are certainly exceptional and on numerous occasions I have heard him recall events from many years ago.

I knew that Exploits was rich in storytelling, particularly when the place was thriving. I had also learned enough to lead me to believe that many of the stories which males would tell

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[6]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

among themselves would not be told with females present. I asked Richard if indeed there were different stories for different audiences.

> Oh, yes, quite different! Usually it was... the...the old fellows would get spinnin' yarns about. the girls they knew when they were young fellows, and ah...if the girls in question had long since deceased then...ah...they'd mention names but if they were still living, they'd mention no names. And...ah...but they knew...they knew who each other was talking about but we wouldn't know. We were only...bedlammer boys and if there was anything real snazzy they'd whisper it! But, lots of times we'd...we'd sneak in and listen and t'was quite interesting ...There was some great stories told. I remember when...one year they did...I didn't know how to do linnet (netting) very well and I don't know very well now certainly, but...I can manage to mend a hole in linnet but I had a seine and I had some fellows done...a fellow there in the store helpin' me, an old fellow and, of course, some of the other fellows gathered in there and ah...of course, I was a man then so I could get in and listen on it and, by', the yarns they told when they used to be at the seine there, t'was good as a concert! I really enjoyed it! Yarns that I'll never forget for sure...about girls they knew and about adventures they had with liquor and beer and moonshine and the 'deviltry'...they used to be up to and this...man, t'was really worth listenin' to. And it never ended...because when one fellow 'd tell a story...yes, and the other fellow 'd say, "I remember that and can you mind the time that we did so-and-so?" You know and they'd come up with another one. And ah...and they...of course, we...when they had neither one to tell we'd prompt them to tell one about something we heard a sketch of and they'd come up with...with a real snazzy one.[7]

It can be discerned that the subjects of drinking, partying and courtship were not to be discussed with females present. This was generally true of the Newfoundland context for many years and is perhaps one thing that has changed in more recent

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[7]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

years. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to hear men telling such stories and, in many cases, to hear women participate in the discussions.

Richard gave an example of the kinds of stories which were reserved for male audiences in his earlier years at Exploits.

> Uncle Wes always tells the story that when he was a boy, young fellow, one...one occasion when a schooner came here from Cottrells Cove. There was a young fellow on here...that was in the fall when she came back from the Labrador and she had her fish made and come down and shipped her fish to Manuel's or Winsor's, one of the firms here...While she was tied up, one of the young fellows...all the rest of the crew went ashore to...'cause they knew all the old fellows here...so they went ashore for a night...night talking an' chewin' the fat and ah...this young fellow aboard asked...he knew the boys as well, so he asked them all aboard, so they all went aboard and got at the old man's locker and they found the key and unlocked the old man's locker and got out a...got out a jar of whiskey and ah...they sat down and started to drink and they were drinking it straight...with a jug a water...they'd take a...a gulch'o liquor and a drink a water and they didn't realize they were getting drunk...they were only fourteen...fifteen year olds, they didn't realize they were getting drunk so the fellow who had them on board, the fellow from...from the schooner, he got polluted...first one to get polluted so they didn't think they were drunk the rest of them...there was Uncle Wes and Uncle Nat and Skipper Arch Dart that was the jovial crew and...they stood up to put buddy up in his bunk and the four of 'em fell flat on the floor. And...ah...anyhow ...Nat...there was about a little over a drink left in the bottle, in the jar and Nat said, "I be Goddamned...if we be...if we wastes that!" So he downed that...so they finally got buddy in the bunk and they crawled ashore and ah...you probably heard...heard about the time Nat said, "Heaven and Hell shall pass away!" Well, that was the time he said it down on the Wellhouse Hill. Wes wasn't quite as bad as Nat but he was pretty bad and Nat lay down on the hill and Wes used to say, "Nat, you gotta try to get down the house." And he'd say, "No." And he'd swear and he said, "Boy"...he kept on at 'em and he said, "Heaven and Hell might

pass away but I be damned if ever I gets down over that hill tonight." And Wes finally got so bad that he had to go on. He crawled home. But ah...Nat's father come up sometime in the morning, comin' on towards daylight, lookin' for Nat...picked 'em up an carried 'em down, stone dead to the world! Carried 'em down an' put 'em in on the couch. Next day, I believe it was up in the middle of the day before he come to. But Wes crawled home and he didn't fare so bad. An' Arch Dart...he went up and that's where some of the crew...that's where the older...the skipper of the crew was up to Arch...Skipper Arch's father's house...so Skipper Arch went home, and when he got up 'gin the house he started listenin'...he heard the old man in there talkin' to his father...he was afraid to go in so he said he'd lie down a bit...wait for 'em to...wait for the old man...wait for the Skipper to leave so he lid down and that's all he knows about it. When he woke again it was gettin' daylight and it was rainin' and he was down in the ditch. Down in the drain between the road, the path and the...and the platform...drain there by the side of the house and this was where...this was where Skipper Arch woke, down...down in the drain and it rainin' on 'em. But ah...they had an awful time...they had an awful time 'cause when they had...while the party was on, they...they went ashore and they got so many of the girls to come aboard and...the young fellows...they had a whale of a time aboard. They had all kinds of goin ons...there was real snazzy parts to it but...one of the girls, gettin' one of the girls ashore, the girls didn't drink but they...they were havin' a good time aboard and one of the girls...gettin' one of the girls ashore, she stepped on the...they had planks there across the blubber puncheons and walked across the plank and her feet give out and she went right to her waist on blubber in one of the puncheons! And they got her out and there was only one...only one thing for to do...dip her overboard. They dipped her down in the water, so many of 'em, oh, they had an awful time! All this, now, was unknown to the...to the elders of the crowd...to the old fellows we'll say...but there's hundreds of things, hundreds of little stories like that one...things that happened that was a great laugh now if t'was told...[8]

[8]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

It is apparent that the storytelling tradition being dealt with here is largely a male-dominated one. Women did tell stories, however, in this male-oriented community and society in which males were typically "the head of the household", male storytelling usually took precedence over storytelling among females. Due to the nature of work in which men were involved, the realm of their experience was often more adventurous than that of females and so the personal experience narratives they told would be more interesting.

As well, because of the rigid male-female role distinction, there was less mixing of men and women in social situations where talk could take place. Of course, there were also those topics which were not proper to talk about in the presence of women.

My informant, however, was part of the male tradition and could not really comment on storytelling situations involving females exclusively.

In light of this, I thought it would be interesting to find out if there were occasions when there was female participation in storytelling situations, suggesting that perhaps Christmas might be such an occasion:

> Oh, usually...usually at that time,..mostly it would be the older fellows would tell yarns of...of Christmas gone by and of things they did and...and where they spent Christmas in years before...at sea or in St. John's which was...if you spent Christmas at St. John's at that time well you had been somewhere for Christmas... Probably they'd be on a coaster and ah...be in St. John's over Christmas or for some reason they'd be in St. John's and wouldn't get home till after Christmas

> or they'd spent Christmas somewhere like that and ah...and ah...a few people that could read...would read about...that had read about Christmas elsewhere and what Christmas in other lands was like and ah...other places was like and ah...they would tell of old traditions in other places and then others would tell funny stories that had happened on Christmas...what happened...how they fitted out for...for the night Janneying...[9]

I have to discern from Richard's comments that his interpretation of female participation in storytelling indicates that there were a few times when women would be present while stories were told. His statement that "mostly it would be the older fellows" who would do the storytelling reinforces the idea of male-dominance in this tradition. I discussed this point with Richard on several occasions since the interview and have concluded that whatever storytelling done by females was done primarily in an all-female context.

The preceding discussion has been intended to create a feel for the kinds of storytelling situations which prevailed at Exploits up until the early 1960's. It is the kinds of situations discussed here which influenced Richard as a storyteller during his teen years and as a young adult.

Storytelling Contexts -- The Post-Resettlement Period

The previously outlined resettlement program had a major impact on the community and the lives of individuals. It has, perhaps, affected the lives of Richard Wells and Lydia Budgell

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[9]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

more than any others because of their determination not to give up their traditional way of life. Resettlement also brought about some major changes in the kinds of storytelling contexts in which Richard would be involved.

Here I would like to present a little of the social history of the period between about 1960 and 1970. During the first half of this time period, most of the residents still remaining at Exploits moved to other communities, many to nearby Lewisporte. It was a time of upheaval and uncertainty. Many left with varying degrees of reluctance, and never returned even for a visit until some years later.

For Richard and Lydia, it was a period of upheaval as well. Though they maintained their usual work cycle, they saw more and more residents go, leaving them with fewer and fewer places to visit or chances for socializing. The close of the post office and merchant premises placed a requirement on Richard and Lydia to go to Lewisporte or some other community for provisions and goods.

During this time Exploits had a few vacationing summer visitors most of whom had left of their own accord before resettlement. One of these families was my own. Activity was slow during this period and, even in summer it was a noteworthy event when a boat would steam in or out the harbour. This situation continued for the latter half of this decade. Houses, sheds, stages, wharves and other marks of man's habitation began to deteriorate and vanish from the

landscape. Houses and premises were bought and sold for a song, as the saying goes. People from other parts of Canada, together with draft-dodgers of the Vietnam War from the United States began to settle there to escape prosecution. Break-ins and looting became quite common as people realized the potential value of some traditional commodities. It was often suspected and sometimes known that these break-ins were the work of former residents, though many of these people would circulate stories implicating people from other Notre Dame Bay communities.

This ten-year period may be described as a settling-out period for Exploits, as the place gradually adopted a new character. During this time, Richard Wells also adopted a new status in the community. He became well-known simply because he stayed, but this was only part of the reason. He also gradually adopted the unofficial position of authority on local history, and his stories of local events of years gone by became more and more noted and sought after by visitors. Richard was also known for his stories; legends of ghosts and pirates, of early settlers and the Beothucks, of shipwrecks and men lost at sea, of local characters and their doings, and of courtship between young fellows and girls. To some Richard was an eccentric, others saw him as a deviant, some thought him to be stupid while others considered him a genius. He has been admired, hated, envied, praised, condemned and revered.

The happenings of the latter part of this ten-year period increased the importance of storytelling in the community. At the beginning of resettlement and for perhaps a year or two before, several residents of Exploits had acquired generators and televisions. This, according to Richard, brought about somewhat of a decline in storytelling because the fellows who used to gather and tell stories now watched television. Television was something new and before the novelty began to disappear people started to move away, causing a lull in storytelling.

> ...it was a general thing that, to tell stories but then when the television came all these fellows 'd gather around, usually went to somebody's house, to watch TV and...or listen to radio or what-have-you. That changed a lot. But, I see now, storytelling is gettin' to be a little more...seems to be coming back or I hear more stories told now the last few years...the last couple a years than...there've been for a long time.[10]

With the increased importance of storytelling, Richard's house began to become the focal point of the community. People began to visit to borrow things, to seek information, and to chat.

In the early 1970's, things began to move more quickly at Exploits. Former residents were coming back to spend summer vacations and to repair the old premises or to build cabins on the family land. Some regretted having sold their places. The value of real estate began to increase dramatically as doctors and businessmen took an interest in having a summer

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[10]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

residence at Exploits. It became fashionable to return to resettled communities to get away from the usual hectic pace of life in larger towns. This trend has continued to today and it is now practically impossible to find a piece of land for sale at Exploits. The shoreline has now become rebuilt as new cabins, stages and wharves appear. In summer, the harbour has taken on a new character, with vacationers and fishermen going about their daily activities. Marine traffic in the harbour is constant so that, unlike the 1960's, no one takes much notice any more.

This increased activity in Exploits has brought about a significant increase in the kinds of socializing which goes on. With the exception of a few people with whom Richard is not on good terms, much of the socializing involves Richard. On any given night, especially on weekends, he has a number of invitations to visit one house or another, or to visit on board cabin boats. Often, though, he doesn't get the opportunity to follow through on invitations, for people stop by to visit him and Lydia and spend the evening with them. In this context Richard would deem it discourteous to inform people that he had been invited out.

With the increased summer population Richard has found himself more and more at the centre of conversations and storytelling. Often he will have a number of invitations and the people involved often wonder which of the invitations he will accept, each hoping that it will be theirs. People,

young and old alike, enjoy Richard's company, conversation and storytelling so an invitation to Richard is almost like a bid for some good entertainment. The obvious interest in storytelling displayed by the majority of people with whom he interacts raises some interesting questions. I asked Richard, for example, if he found himself telling stories more often in recent years:

> Yes, 'cause a lot of people...a lot of people ask me... 'll ask me about "I s'pose you knows lots of stories about Exploits', or about this and that and somethin' else and, 'cause I can't remember", they'll say, 'Cause I never paid no attention to Dad or to Grandfather when he used to be telling it and now I got it all forgot. I s'pose you knows about certain schooners or certain fellows", or, you know, what-have-you and if I know, well I'll say, "Yes, by', I've heard that, stories have been told about it", and all that, you know and...and a lot of people's gettin' interested in what their fathers and their grandfathers did and the old stories they told an'...it seems to be sort of falling away from television more than...cause I remember the crowd y'know. The people around here, anyhow, first when...when television came here, I mean, there was nothing else mattered in the world only...only the screen...the television screen! That was everything...but' tis alright now, I like television, you know, but not to watch continually, not interested at all in it that way, but then there's some. I likes to watch some...some of the shows they have on...But, I notice one thing. I notice the last year or two, a lot of the kids is...a lot of the younger kids is losing interest in...in television. Like, I mean, first when ah...the crowd moved away and they used to come back summertime, the kids couldn't wait...they couldn't...they couldn't content themselves to stay out here at all. Great daytime but nighttime they wanted to get back to watch T.V. But, now, there's an increasing number of the younger generation, y' know, like the teenagers is, you know, they'll say, "Well, I like television alright. We wish we had a television so we could watch..." a said thing, but they don't bother, y'know, they...they'd rather stay out here and enjoy themselves like to parties and doing the

> things like you do out here. It's (T.V.) not...you know, it have dropped. I mean to say I don't know how that's...how the trend is across the province but I know that of the crowd who come out here that there's a lot more that don't...well they're not fussy about watching T.V.[11]

Richard attributes the increased interest in storytelling to several factors. For example, people are inquiring about their families and Richard is often viewed as the most likely non-relative to have such information. This type of knowledge has furthered his reputation as a local historian.

Another factor which he feels has led to increased storytelling is that people may be less interested in television than they used to be. He is also of the opinion that more young people are interested in stories than they used to be.

These reasons are probably quite valid. And together with a general increase in activity in the community, summer visitors and fishermen, and Richard's reputation as a local historian and storyteller, storytelling has gained importance.

There is another factor concerning the whole storytelling situation at Exploits which needs to be mentioned here. The current summer population is comprised of people from all walks of life who come from different parts of the province and the world. This rather eclectic mixture creates an unusual context for storytelling.

Whenever Richard is found in this small but diverse context, he is involved in narration and he is more likely to visit a

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[11]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

A view of Exploits Harbour looking towards the south entrance

particular person or group if the resulting get-togethers are conducive to talk. Situations do arise, however, where music and song are the order of the evening and these Richard does not seem to overly appreciate. This doesn't mean that he does not enjoy music, for he has probably been one of the most astute followers of music to come from his generation in Newfoundland. However, at such gatherings he has to find a situation in which he can converse with someone for some of the time. If he cannot do this, and such times are rare, he may not stay long. Talk can probably be called Richard's "stock in trade". It is his contribution to a gathering and is something from which he derives satisfaction. I feel certain that he is aware of his abilities as a "talker" and it is therefore important that he use these abilities to maintain his status in the community. Being the focal point of conversation and storytelling is not a position he wishes to relinquish.

CHAPTER VI

Performance and Style

As I have stated, Richard Wells' popularity as a narrator is largely due to his abilities as a performer. While he has a large repertoire of stories from which to draw, which is undoubtedly partially responsible for his popularity, the stories which he tells are mainly of common types which are told in many parts of Newfoundland.

The kinds of stories which Richard tells fit generally into the following categories: personal experience narratives, memorates, and anecdotes. While the ghost stories he tells may be considered as legends, they are also forms of one of the three former categories in most cases and the narratives which Richard tells usually deal with humourous, adventurous, supernatural or historical aspects of Exploits and the area. In the case of narratives about commonplace events, he adds his own humour and detail. As Richard has told me, it is with these kinds of narratives which he became familiar as a young fellow, and so it is apparent that it would be reasonable to conclude that it is stories which possess one or more of the above characteristics that are and have been best received and most widely circulated in the community. This being so, it is reasonable to expect that his status as a storyteller has been achieved mainly because he "knows" how to tell a

story.[1] I will show what factors are involved in this knowledge of storytelling and how they are related.

Involved in Richard's narrative style are many linguistic devices, gestures, and actions which he employs in order to make his stories most effective in a particular context. Included here are devices such as hand motions, head nods, facial expressions, eye movement, body movement, voice intonation, and variation in the speed of speaking. Richard Wells makes use of many of these tricks of narration[2] in storytelling in order to keep an audience interested and to impress them.

Richard, we know, grew up listening to and learning to tell stories, having been influenced by a number of older storytellers with whom he was acquainted. When one is exposed to storytelling styles for a long time, some of them are transmitted as are the narratives. Involved in this process is part of the basic nature of folklore, that of its being expressive of norms and rules within a community and, of the community's traditions. We have seen that performance must draw to a certain extent upon traditional, shared resources. A person is bound to do certain things while

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[1]For a discussion of achieved and ascribed status, see Gerald L. Pocius, "'The First Day That I Thought of It Since I Got Wed': Role Expectation and Singer Status in a Newfoundland Outport", Western Folklore, 35 (1976), 109-122.

[2]This term has been borrowed from J.H. Delargy, "The Gaelic Story-teller", Proceedings of the British Academy, XXXI (1945), 177-221.

performing within the tradition which are in keeping with the cultural norms. For example, it is common practice to consider the audience when selecting stories to tell. Richard would not tell a story of a sexual nature if children were present or others whom he thought might be offended.

In verbal performance the performer does certain things, for example, makes certain gestures because these things "belong" to the culture and are interpretable and acceptable to the audience. Aspects of the performance are done consciously while others are done unconsciously. To illustrate I will compare examples of Richard's performance, one formal and several informal.

Community concerts, as I have discussed in the chapter dealing with the community, were regular features at Exploits and highlighted certain special occasions such as Christmas. Richard took part in many of these concerts, especially during his younger years, and his participation usually involved a recitation.[3] This was performed while standing on the stage. Gesture and action were not part of this performance and, in fact, it was more or less expected that the performer would stand with as little movement as possible. The requirement that he stand still was a conscious requirement of the performance in this situation as recitations were evaluated for verbal delivery.

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[3]For relevant work on monologues and recitations, see Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Monologue Performance in Great Britain", Southern Folklore Quarterly, 40 (1976), 7-29.

The audience at these concerts consisted of the majority of the community's members, both young and old. These were special times and were very well attended. People dressed in their best attire to attend such events and the atmosphere was somewhat formal. This undoubtedly put some pressure on the performers who not only had to dress appropriately but also perform well. Richard has commented that there was considerable pressure on people, particularly children, to perform well as the sense that they were being evaluated in some way. As a result, considerable practice often went into such concerts.

Now, if we examine a storytelling situation in Richard's home where he is involved in telling a personal experience story, the case is quite different. Here he is free to shift his body from one sitting position to another during narration, or he may shift his weight from one foot to another if he is standing. The point is that these kinds of movements are unconsciously done and are not deliberate kinds of techniques used by the narrator. However, they are indicative of culturally acceptable norms in the situation and, as such, are part of the performance. In fact, in such a situation lack of movement, or near stillness, would be as obviously out of place and noticed by the audience as would any discernable body movements while doing a recitation for a concert.

It should be noted that recitations done in the home, or in other less formal contexts than the concert, are also largely

done for the verbal delivery[4] of the text. While such a situation would be considerably less formal and the norms for movement not as restrictive, it is generally accepted that the piece will be delivered verbally only. Gesture or reenactment of actions in the recitation are not performed, and even a number of body shifts on the part of the performer would likely distract from the audience's concentration on its verbal presentation. The audience also remains as still as possible during such a performance.

This demonstrates that unconscious kinds of body movements do play a part in assessing the abilities of a narrator. While such movements may not be major factors in assessing a narrator's ability, they do give the performance a sense of "fit" in the particular context and, therefore, must be considered as part of the performance. These kinds of factors comprise the very traditional and culture reflective part of the performance over which the performer has little control.

The most interesting description of a storytelling situation that I can give took place while I was visiting Exploits on a sea-bird hunting trip one fall.[5] This trip was a regular visit for me, Mr. Jack Hynes and his family and a number of other friends each fall. On the second evening we were there, Saturday, it became very cold and started to snow. As the evening went on, a snowstorm developed as the wind

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[4] Ibid, 12-14.

[5] From field diary, November 12, 1978.

increased.

Along on the trip on this particular occasion were Jack Hynes, his wife Mildred, and six of their children who ranged in age from ten to twenty-one. Also present were Ronald and Owen Freeman, Gordon Beaton, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Noble and their son, Paul, and myself. We had all gathered at the Hynes' summer home and Richard and Lydia came to visit as had Winston Butt, another local resident.

The Hynes' summer home was a large, two-story house and contained a traditional large kitchen of about twenty-two feet by twelve feet in which we could all gather quite comfortably. Most of us who were on the trip had come to the Hynes' at around seven o'clock in the evening and Richard and Lydia arrived around eight. Some drinking had started by this time and the conversation went from topic to topic; the day's hunt, the availability of fish, the weather, discussions of mutual friends and so on. At times, two of three conversations were ongoing and, as the drinking continued, the conversation intensified and people became more involved.

About an hour after Richard's arrival, several of the youngest children began urging Richard to tell some ghost stories. The weather outside seemed to help trigger the suggestion for the wind whistled by windows and around corners and the snow could be seen swirling outside the windows by the dim light of the lamps and lanterns inside. In the kitchen, the woodstove crackled as it warmed the

house and the boys kept it filled with firewood.

At the suggestion, the children were wide-eyed in anticipation, partly because they had heard a few ghost stories from Richard before. Their enthusiasm obviously indicated that they thought this was the perfect occasion for ghost stories. The expressions and comments of some of the adults also indicated a good deal of interest. Several verbally encouraged Richard to tell some ghost stories while others showed their interest with looks of anticipation and smiles and laughs as they wondered what they might hear. It took relatively little encouragement to get Richard started on this occasion as he apparently felt that the atmosphere was just right for such stories.

The storytelling session began shortly after nine o'clock and Richard immediately commanded the attention of everyone present. The lively discussions and conversations which were taking place around the room came quickly to an end as all eyes and ears turned their attention to what Richard had to say. Everyone, except for the children of course, was partaking of the several bottles of rum we had. While Richard was telling a story, there was little comment or interruption on anyone's part, except perhaps for sighs of amazement and fear by the children, and chuckles of amusement or wonder by adults.

Richard's skill as a storyteller is indicated by the simple fact that the adults as well as the children listened intently

and interrupted infrequently. Even with a considerable amount of drinking taking place, the usual commentary and conversation which accompanies this activity was minimal. Even when one of the adults would pour a new drink during the telling of a story, care was obviously taken to do so quietly. Whether or not anyone believed any or all of the stories, all were interested in hearing them and in watching Richard tell them.

At the end of a particular story, some commentary usually took place. The children got more excited and fearful as the evening went on as the idea of ghosts seemed to become more of a real possibility to them. The reaction of the adults varied from person to person and story to story. At times, a person might comment that these stories or a particular story was foolishness and try to offer what they felt was a logical explanation. At other times, some degree of belief would be expressed and several adults reiterated Richard's stories with versions of similar occurrences that they had heard somewhere else. Whatever the degree of belief, Richard maintained the interest of everyone present right up until one o'clock in the morning. When doubts about a story were expressed, Richard was quick to counter with another story or further information to strengthen his case. Richard's views on the supernatural, his dealings with audiences, and features of his style are discussed fully in this chapter.

The stories Richard told that evening ranged on a variety

of topics from ghost boats and sightings of ghosts and apparitions to unexplainable noises and happenings.

After Richard finished telling stories, the discussion drifted back to more ordinary kinds of conversations. A lunch of tea, soup, bread, jam and biscuits was served and the time came for all visitors to leave. The children expressed some fear of going to bed so lamps were taken upstairs to help them overcome this. After Richard and Lydia left, there was some further discussion about the ghost stories. Some of the adults expressed some degree of belief in the supernatural and everyone seemed to wonder about it somewhat. Whatever the case, everyone had enjoyed the evening. We all left that night wondering and curious about many of the things we had heard.

On that particular occasion, it became very obvious to me that Richard had taken advantage of a perfect opportunity to discuss the supernatural since everything was right to give him complete control of the situation. I shall now discuss those parts of performance, as they relate to Richard, which may be considered as "artistic" features over which the performer has control and which are culture reflective.

One of the most notable features of Richard's narrative style is his use of voice.[6] He knows when to raise or lower

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[6]Narrative style is discussed in John Ball, "Style in the Folktale", Folklore, 65 (1954), 170-172; and in Linda Dégh, Folktales and Society: Storytelling in a Hungarian Peasant Community, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

his voice, when to speed up or slow down his speech, and when to pause for effect. This comes partly from the extent to which he becomes involved in his storytelling.

Richard will often raise his voice and, perhaps, increases his speech rate when he comes to a part of a story which is exciting or which concerns description of action in the story. However, these types of voice shifts are more noticeable and pronounced in Richard's longer forms of narrative which Richard sometimes tells.

In telling some of his shorter stories, Richard will often use a louder voice and slightly increased speed of speaking (as compared to normal) throughout the story. This is done especially when a group of people are talking and someone mentions something that reminds Richard of a relevant story of a shorter form, such as a humorous anecdote. Then he will often start by saying, "It's like the time..." in such cases. His voice will be slightly louder than usual and he will continue the story in that manner. Also, the tone of voice is an indication to others that the has something interesting and relevant to say.

Pausing during the telling of a story is also a technique Richard uses for effect. One of his favourite ways to achieve this is to commence the rolling of a cigarette during the telling of a story. Then, at an exciting part of the story when the audience has become deeply interested and are listening intently, he will stop to light the cigarette. This keeps the audience

waiting just long enough to make them excited and it is very effective in adding to the performance of the story. A similar technique which Richard employs is to pause for a draw on a cigarette at various interesting points in a story. It should be noted that Richard does not strategically place each draw on a cigarette but that it is an effective technique which he sometimes uses.

Another technique which Richard uses to increase interest is to be very meticulous in describing events or actions in a story. He spares no detail and describes things such as weather conditions, the time of year, and objects involved in the story. This detail adds to the realism, making his stories much more interesting and believable. A good example of his use of description is from a recording of stories Richard did for me early in my fieldwork. The story is a version of "The Flying Dutchman":

> No doubt you fellows have heard of the ah, of the Flyin' Dutchman. Well, my father told a story of the...they thought they saw...he may have seen the Flying Dutchman. One...one year when they were coming home from the Labrador, and ah...an' ah...the schooner he was on...she wasn't the best. With the least bit of swell her decks would open up. An' she'd twist all...twist all over the place. But ah...anyhow, they waited on the Labrador until ah...they got a good time and ah...they had a...they had a full load of fish. And they left for home. 'Bout half ways across the straits, up in...they were...they were up around Cape Bauld. But it got in the afternoon, and they were all that evening...all the first part of the night with not a hair of wind. And ah...the skipper...he was worried about it because it was...it was dark and ah...he was afraid...he was afraid they were goin' to get hit by some ship running in the straits, see? (right) So ah...he told everybody

in case they'd have to leave her. And ah...about eleven o'clock, the watch said that ah...there was lights, there was lights comin' up behind them. And ah...they went up an' sure enough, here was this...what looked like a big ship...comin' up on an' comin' very fast. And ah...Uncle Saul said ah...he was the skipper, he said, "Tha's an...that's a steamer alright, bys", he said, "she comin'...she's comin' fast, so be all ready, an' get...an' be already to leave her", because all they had was their...was the lanterns. And ah...he was afraid that ah...the ah...that they wouldn't see 'em. And ah...bye...bye and bye, she kept on comin', and Uncle Saul was on deck an' he said, "My God", he said, "She's under sail", he said, "I can see...I can see...I can see her canvas", he said, "from the glow of the lights! Haul in all our canvas", he said, "get ready because...the...there must be a...she must have a gale a wind where she's too!" And ah...anyhow, he got, they braced everything down, tied everything down, an' got ready and, bye and bye, she was gettin' close by and she was comin' straight for 'em. And Saul had t' chop the sail. And ah...from the glow of her lights shining on the water, they could see she was in a dead calm, t'was a dead calm all around her. And ah...she had...all her canvas was full...she was a big ship, with ah...under full sail an' all her sails was full, an' she came up close enough to 'em that ah...they could almost throw something aboard. An' ah...they could see the men on her deck, close enough for that. An' she just went on past and went out of sight...an' not a hair of wind! She was goin' like the devil and not a draught of wind! Uncle Saul said...Uncle Saul said, "Watch out", he said, "we'll have it (a gale, storm) 'fore daylight!" And ah...they braced everything down...stowed everything away, and had everything ready. An' t'was about four o'clock in the morning and here she hauls, here she hauls, a gale or northerly wind, and rainin' showers! And ah...they just got up...they got up a reef, and started to run for shore an' some time during the day, they hauled in around Cape Bauld and runned up into the White Bay. An' the...it was so bad that ah...the decks used to open up and the water go down through everywhere! And they had all the pumps goin'. An' they were drawin' water out of the forecastle and out of the cabins with buckets and ah...she was runnin'...you had...you had to have your long rubbers on all the time and the water was goin' right across her. An', of course, Uncle Saul was

> a excellent skipper, an' ah...he eased her around Cape Bauld and got her up into the White Bay. And waited some hours there in the White Bay an ah...they only just saved her! An' they got her, when they got tidied away, Uncle Saul said, "That was...she had to be the Flying Dutchman!" (What was it about her that made him think it was the Flying Dutchman?) Just the very fact that ah...that ah...she was running under full sail with no wind. And ah...he said that his grandfather had told him one time they saw her. But not in the straits, they saw her out...out off the coast of Newfoundland. He was a foreign going seaman and ah...they had a run in with the Flying Dutchman ship that passed 'em under a full sail with no wind and just went on.[7]

It can be seen from this transcript that Richard is very adept at description, and spares no detail in recreating the happening, especially when he wants to be convincing. It is clear from analyzing this transcription that it is Richard's detail which makes the narrative interesting.

Another point to be noticed in the foregoing narrative is Richard's reenactment of dialogue at key points in the story. This technique is one of the most frequently used and effective tricks of narration employed by Richard in telling stories. The technique adds to the believability of the stories as well, for he changes his voice to imitate that of the person he is quoting. This technique is much more appealing to an audience than that of paraphrasing a statement.

As can be seen from the Flying Dutchman narrative, Richard used this method in several instances to point out what the ship's captain said. An example follows in which he relied

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[7]From taped interview, October 8, 1978.

heavily on voice impersonation and quoting:

W.B. Do you know any more about ah that type of story where someone was s'posed to be seen in the form of another person or another animal?

R.W. Let's see, ah...Yeah. Ah. This thing happened over across the run over in what you call Waldrons Cove, and ah this is ah, this happened, this thing happened, the people concerned, the man concerned told my father this himself. And it was the time of the great flu an' ah, at that time a lot of people died around the coast and ah...a lot of people died here.

W.B. Yeah.

R.W. But this happened over in Waldron's Cove and there were two brothers and they fished together, and ah, they were very close. So ah, one of 'em had the flu an' had it really bad, now they fish in the stage an' they wanted...t'was in the fall, I think then, they had fish in the stage, anyhow, that wanted to be washed out, and ah, his brother...his brother that was...that was sick,he spoke about the fish an' the other fella said to him well, "you stay in...you stay in the house and ah, I'll go down tomorrow morning and wash out the fish myself. You may get a cold or something...another cold on the..." He was already pretty sick. An' he said, "Alright then so that was in the night, so the next morning really early his brother got up and was goin down in the stage and start washin' fish, and ah, when he was goin' down the path he met his brother coming up with his oil clothes on. All wet y'know. Like a man that'd been in the stage washin' fish and ah went on up over to -- up over the hill to his house. An' ah...the brother got vexed...got very vexed he said, because he had no business down in the stage washin' fish with he with the flu y'know.

W.B. No.

R.W. And ah...he was really mad. So he turned an he went up to his brother's house and ah when he went in his wife was in the kitchen, sittin' down in the kitchen and he said ah he said ah "What business", he said "did Jim have down washin' down fish, this morning, an' he an' he with the flu? He's goin' to have a cold", he said, "so sure as hell". "Oh, no", she said, "Jim wasn't down washin' fish".

She said, "He's in bed". "No, he's not", he said, "I just saw him come up", he said, "just a few minutes ago, an' with his oil clothes on". An' ah he came on up the house here", he said. "He been I s'pose he been down washin the fish, an' I was goin' to' wash the fish this morning for 'em. No need of he down there". "No" she said. "No, Bill", she said, "he's not. He haven't been out of bed", she said, "he's really bad this morning". He said, "No there's no way", he said. "I just saw Jim comin' up over the hill with his oil clothes on". "Well", she said, "you never saw Jim", she said, "you couldn't have". "Well", he said, "I tell ya I did", he said, "I wasn't I wasn't ten feet from him, I spoke to him but he never spoke", he said, "he came on up over th' hill", an ah, he said, "I figgered he was too sick to talk". But ah he said, "He just come up over the hill an' he's oil clothes was all wet". "Well, she said, ah, she said, "Go in an' talk to him". An he went in the other room an' sure enough, Jim was in bed. An ah, well you couldn't hear him speak, an he was practically dying, well he died, he died the followin' morning. An ah, no way he could have got out of bed.

W.B. No.

R.W. And ah, all of a sudden he realized that ah...that ah...It wasn't him y' know, it couldn't have been Jim, in reality, but the man who he...that he saw comin' up over the hill, up from the stage, ah, well was Jim, was a token of him...was a token of his brother.

W.B. I see.

R.W. And ah...the man said he wouldn't tell a lie about his brother, he said, but he saw him comin' up over the hill and he wasn't ten feet from him when he passed...when he, when he went by, went out and turned up his own path.

W.B. I see, so he was close enough to be sure that...

R.W. He was quite sure, there was no one else in the cove that resembled the man, y' know, they were two brothers and ah and ah, nobody else in the cove that resembled the man. There was nobody else around. Thas not...down around their premises, so that's ah

/ that's another tale of the supernatural.[8]

A major portion of this story is the reenactment of the conversation and, with Richard's use of expression, is much more effective and interesting than a paraphrased version would be.

Richard has become known for the use of this technique in his storytelling and many people enjoy it. He is often called upon to retell certain stories in which voice impersonation is used because people like to hear his impersonations, especially when a story is of a humorous nature. People call upon Richard to tell stories of this nature most often when they know there is someone present who would enjoy hearing it.

Sometimes Richard gives cues during his storytelling. For example, if someone is talking and mentions something which causes Richard to recall a particular story, he will sort of straighten up, and lean back and raise his head before he begins to speak. This is a signal that he has a story to tell or, at least, some relevant comment. Also, in similar situations, he sometimes will suddenly fix his eyes on the other person and if he happens to be smoking, exhale smoke rapidly as an indication that he has something to say. He will frequently begin a story in this fashion: "I'm goin' to tell you now..."

If, during the telling of a story, Richard gets off the story onto another topic as he sometimes does, he will revert

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[8]From taped interview, October 8, 1978.

back to the story by saying: "And anyhow..." Richard's use of voice tone and speech speed may also be considered as cues in his storytelling, indicating when exciting parts of a story are to come.

This discussion of cues leads me to discuss Richard's use of gesture. Those gestures which hold the most significance in his storytelling are head nods and hand gestures, as well as deliberate imitations of the actions of others. Such gestures are often used to strengthen or reinforce what he is saying. When he wishes to emphasize a point while telling a story, he will often nod towards the person to whom he is talking or, in the general direction of the audience. Hand gestures are also used for the same reason.

I also asked Richard about his use of gesture and reenactment in storytelling and whether he thought it had any effect on the audience. He made the following comments:

> Yes, it do have effect. Like, if I'm telling a story about a fellow that's ah...like...a fellow that was...ah...a...especially the older fellow, an older fellow, I'll try to...put emphasis on his voice.[9]

This comment reflects the point I made earlier regarding his use of voice impersonation. Richard continued:

> ...Or ah...if it's a flurry of movements then, ah...I use gesture sometimes to ah...y' know, impress upon the audience what happened...probably not as much as some storytellers, but ah...I use gestures, y'know, especially if I'm in a very, very good mood for...carrying on and telling stories.[10]

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[9]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

[10]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

From these comments we see that Richard is certainly aware of how voice and gesture are important in the presentation of a story. It is interesting to note his comments regarding the impersonation of old fellows especially. This, perhaps, reflects the kind of stories he listened to in his younger years, and the ways in which older storytellers presented stories. His noticeable respect for older fellows is indicative of the place such men had in the community. They were generally highly respected for their knowledge and experience and, as such, became prominent in storytelling circles in the community. Any reenactment on Richard's part of things older men did or said is generally done out of pride and admiration for them and is not meant to be derogatory.

Richard's comment that he probably doesn't use gesture as much as some storytellers is quite interesting. This further stresses my point with regard to his placing primary emphasis on voice usage and employs gesture as a secondary aid. This is further illustrated by the following comments he made after I asked if he thought the use of gesture caught the attention of an audience:

> Yes, I think it do. That's some (people). There's other people...there's other people don't ah...don't follow gesture at all, they...they...they visualize the whole thing in their mind, but then, there's other people who like gestures an' the...ah...the sound, the imitation of somebody's...an old fellow's voice or, y'know, I mean that kind of a thing.[11]

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[11]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

Richard's awareness of the audiences' tastes is obviously very keen and he is usually able to govern his performance to best suit the audience at hand. As he says, some people follow his description, along with voice imitation, in order to visualize what he is referring to. Others like to follow his gestures and listen to his imitations.

Richard feels that the use of gesture is generally helpful in telling stories, but how much of it is used often depends on the audience. This is apparent from the comments he made when I asked him if he thought gesture might detract from the enjoyment of a story for some people:

> No, I've listened to...the old fellows tell stories an'...and watched them in their gestures and ah...well, like my Uncle Alec, now, he used gestures all the time, especially if he was explaining how a thing was done, he would go into every detail. Like, well like, for instance, when he was telling about the...the...the old...old man Wells when he fought with Ha...by Harold at Hastings, he always demonstrated how he...how he chopped the heads off the Normans with his big hatchet...and how he brandish...how ...how he...how he used his sword, and ah...all this...an' he would be making with his hatchet and his sword an' all this kind of stuff. An' to me it was...as a young fella, and the rest of the crowd...was there as well, it...it...it was more impressive than if he had just sat down and told it, y' know. H...he would stand up and sway his arms over his head an' ah...brandish his sword up over his head or...if he had something in his hand up over...he'd put it up over his head an'...or he would...the different gestures that they use in sword fighting or...or spears, an' he would come up with all the...we thought that he had almost been there himself. But that's the kind of a thing that impressed us and ah...I've watched other fellows telling stories and ah...their audience have been impressed by the gestures that...they have

captured their full attention.[12]

It is apparent that in the tradition in which he grew up, the use of gesture in storytelling was very important.

Richard, then, uses gesture in his storytelling as well, though he feels that perhaps he doesn't use it as much as some storytellers. However, he uses it fairly extensively and many times I have seen him stand and imitate the actions and gestures of others. As he says, some of it depends on his mood, and generally, how energetic he feels at the time. If he has a particularly long and hard day of work, he tends to be more restrained both verbally and in the use of gesture than if he is well rested. Such factors probably affect most performers.

There are also times when he is probably more restrained than he would be due to the presence of certain people. For example, if he feels that there are persons present who are not familiar with him or the dramatic kinds of storytelling situation in which he sometimes becomes involved he will select ordinary stories requiring less dramatization. In such situations, he will not tell certain stories if he knows that the audience will not understand the humour, events, or circumstances involved.

It is readily apparent that Richard takes into account an audience's competence to understand a story and properly interpret it. If he feels that these conditions are not met, then he is not likely to tell the story at all, even if

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[12]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

it is requested. If he does tell it, he will do so in a very general way.

Facial expressions also come into play, and his facial expressions usually are reflective of the kind of story he is telling, or is about to tell. Often, I have seen Richard, when a humorous story comes to his mind, stop and laugh a little, while he gestures with his hand towards the person he is talking with. His facial expression is indicative of a humorous story to follow.

On the other hand, in telling stories of a serious nature, his facial expression is quite different and reflects the nature of the story. This is perhaps best exemplified when he is relating an experience of his own regarding ghosts or apparitions. In telling such stories he does all he can to ensure that his audience believes him no matter what the explanation may be. In telling ghost stories, Richard will adopt a stern facial expression and proceed with the story in his vigorous detailed style. At times, he will fix his eyes on some member of the audience and adopt an expression which would probably be somewhat intimidating to someone who didn't believe what he is saying. The expression almost says that he can tell what a person is thinking.

Of course it is ghost stories or "tales of the supernatural" which Richard best enjoys telling, and he has made some very interesting comments to me regarding these. He has made it obvious that he certainly is most intrigued by telling ghost

stories. I asked him if the kinds of stories he tells are influenced by the audience and he responded:

> Well, it has to do...a lot has to do with the audience, but...if I was telling...I prefer to tell a ghost story, because it's sort of a challenge because a lot of people who don't believe in...in ghosts...yet...they'll...they... they'll deny there's any such things as ghosts and say you're silly and crazy to tell a ghost story, but yet...ah...you know...ninety percent of them, deep down, or ninety-nine percent I'd say, deep down...it sort of sends a shudder over them, if they got...fine and dandy if they're goin' somewhere and there's a crowd of them...or if t'is in the day, but...ah...at night if they got to go out into the darkness alone like...a place like this (Exploits) where there's no street lighting...you know that it...it...it hits them...although they...they'll say they don't believe in the supernatural, but still...(There's a question mark?)...yes, there's a question mark on their face and you...you can feel it, but they'll always say, "Oh, that's foolish, there's no such thing", but yet, they'll always like to listen and of course, I wouldn't tell a real... a real...dreadful; ghost story to ah...to kids if I knew they had to go home alone or anything like that, but ah...there's times that I'm...there is some ghost stories sometimes I tell that ah...is kinda...makes it kind of spooky for them but a lot of people will...a lot of people love ghost stories, and ah...some of my friends, we get together and...spin ghost stories by the hour, 'cause there's hardly any limit to the amount of...number of ghost stories that I know, an' ah...that I've gathered in...that I've gathered up over the years and ah...some of them is pretty dreadful and others is...is just natural things, but ah...some of them that I tell is pretty... would give you the shudders if you had any...if you had a seed of doubt at all.[13]

It is apparent that Richard believes in the supernatural and he likes to impress such experiences upon other people who are doubtful. He has told me that he tries to show that

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[13]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

there is more evidence to support the existence of the supernatural than there is against it. As he says, he is able to feel the sense of doubt which some people have, but uses it to his advantage in order to argue his case. It is obvious that he enjoys telling ghost stories as he says that he and his friends sometimes tell them by the hour. This experience I have been part of on a number of occasions.

Richard enjoys telling ghost stories to people who express doubts more so than to people who believe in them. He sees the telling of ghost stories to "non-believers" as a challenge but this challenge is not the same if people believe in ghosts. It can be said that Richard's stories serve different functions in each of these cases. In the case where he doesn't have to try and convince anyone of the existence of ghosts, the functions of the stories are largely for entertainment and, perhaps, to renew the belief. In the other case, however, they become a test for both Richard and the audience. As he says, he tries to be more convincing in telling ghost stories than he does with other kinds of stories:

> Yes...yes, I do. If I'm...if I'm telling a ghost story to the audience, and ah...they're all interested and probably one or two 'll say, "That's...that's foolish, that's...there's no such thing as ghosts." Well, I'll say, well I'll bring out...I...I'll tell them something that will bring out my point, that ah, "Well, then, tell me what happened so and so time", why this happened or that happened. And ah...if they can come up with...with a logical explanation of what made a so and so sound or a light or a noise, well then, I'll say, "Well, try this one. What happened...what happened to that...where'd that light come from?" or "What made that sound?" or "What showed up at so and so place?" Well, if

> they can't come up with a logical answer of what it was, then, "Why can't you, you know, if you think...don't think t'was any ghost then what was it?" We, y' know, we gets into a...not an argument but a discussion on it, and ah...I sow seeds...I always try to sow seeds of doubt in their mind, I never really try to convince them that there is ghosts but, I always likes to know that I've sowed seeds of doubt in their minds... "Well, I wonder is there anything to that?" or, y' know...there's a seed of doubt, if I can sow the seed of doubt, then I've won. I don't want to convince them, actually, there is ghosts, but, that doesn't matter, but ah...I always try to s...sow the seeds of doubt.[14]

He agrees that he is more vigorous in presenting ghost stories than he is with other forms of narrative, largely because they are out of the realm of everyday occurrence and enter the realm of the unknown. Because Richard has seen more which convinces him of the existence of the supernatural than he has seen against it, he wants to relay his experience to others. While he doesn't say that the supernatural absolutely and categorically does exist, he is all but one hundred percent certain that it does. He, therefore, is willing to listen to arguments which dispute the existence of the supernatural, but says that he has really not heard much that "holds water". He then likes to sow the seed of doubt in the minds of others, to get them wondering as to whether or not there is a supernatural world.

He argues his case, especially with regard to his own experiences, presenting the facts as he sees them, and tries to come up with logical explanations for the happenings, being

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[14] From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

willing to listen to explanations others may offer. In many cases where no reasonable explanation can be made, he feels that the occurrence must be attributed to the supernatural. He is of the opinion that this approach is much more sensible than the approach taken by people who just discredit the existence of the supernatural with statements such as "Oh, there's no such thing as ghosts", without really presenting any arguments. His response to my question regarding his belief in the existence of the supernatural reflect his opinion:

> Well, yes, ah...until I can get some...answers, then I'll say there is supernatural things that have happened around. Ah...things that I...well, I've...experienced things myself, that it has to be supernatural, unless somebody can come up with something than can prove otherwise. So there's not...nothing logical about it, there's nothing that I can come up with that ah...y' know, that could answer any questions, answer the questions that I'd like to have answered. An' I've told lots of people about the, some that, well, it could be this or that or something else, an' I'll leave that out, but there's times...things that I know that...'till I find a better answer well, I'll say it's supernatural.[15]

Richard places his ghost stories in a kind of special category. He is much more selective about the times when he will tell ghost stories than he is about telling other kinds of narrative. He says the atmosphere has to be right for such stories, since he feels it is important in achieving the desired affect. This points out clearly that Richard is obviously aware of the impact his storytelling can have on an audience and that his stories do indeed have important

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[15]From taped interview, August 17, 1980.

functions for everyone. His awareness of the aesthetic qualities of storytelling is also a very conscious thing.

Becoming more and more apparent throughout this section is the concept of aesthetic as it applies to Richard and his storytelling. From his comments and my own experiences with him, it is evident that he is keenly aware that there are very definite aesthetics involved in the making and presentation of a good story. He realizes that, as the narrator, he must deliver his stories in a manner which is appealing to his audience.

Richard's ability to discuss storytelling in the general context with which he is familiar, as well as his own storytelling, has been of immense help in uncovering the aesthetics involved in this particular context. This has made my research much more profitable than it might have been, as eliciting such information directly is rarely possible. As Tallman states, in regard to determining the aesthetic of a storyteller with whom he worked, "First, the methods used to determine a folk aesthetic must be outlined, for aesthetic principles are not readily or easily verbalized at the folk level of culture".[16] I have found, however, that such has not been the case in my research with Richard.

As Tallman says, three aspects of tradition must be considered in determining a folk aesthetic, the item or the

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[16]Richard S. Tallman, "'You Can Almost Picture It': The Aesthetic of a Nova Scotia Storyteller", Folklore Forum, 2 (1974), 122.

text, the creator or performer, and the context and its functional meaning.[17] The kinds of stories which were locally popular have already been discussed so I shall discuss aesthetics as they apply to the performer.

As a performer of these forms of narrative, Richard gives some interesting insights into the notion of aesthetics. From the examples given, it has been revealed that the use of detailed description and voice impersonation are important devices in his storytelling. In fact, it seems that if these stories were stripped of these features and only the bare essentials of the stories presented, there really would be no story. Richard is able to tell about a happening in such a way that makes it entertaining as well as informative, instead of its being just informative.

The eclectic nature of the present audiences at Exploits is interesting to consider from the aesthetic viewpoint. It has been a long-standing observation of mine that people generally enjoy Richard's stories, regardless of their background. Of course, many of the summer visitors do have family traditions coming from Exploits which is a factor which might explain some of the interest. However, there are many others who have no historical ties with the community and little knowledge of Newfoundland, and it is therefore interesting to speculate as to why Richard holds such appeal given these circumstances.

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[17] Ibid., 122-123.

The nature of the stories he tells is a factor for consideration. Narratives which contain elements of adventure, the supernatural, or local history all can be said to have a certain universal appeal. Then there are stories of commonplace events which comprise a fair portion of Richard's repertoire. These stories also are entertaining and appealing to his audiences. His abilities to perform and inject humour and great detail into such stories certainly must add to their wide appeal.

I am certain that many of the "ordinary" kinds of stories which Richard tells would be uninteresting if told by others who would be less adept at performance. It is this edge that gives Richard a seemingly "magical" appeal to listeners and gives him the knack of telling almost anything and making it appealing. People seem to enjoy the performance of the story more than the stories themselves. The implication here is that audience aesthetics are very much related to how stories are told.

Humorous forms of narrative are told primarily for entertainment, regardless of the audience, though the telling of such stories has often helped Richard establish rapport with various people. Adventurous and exciting stories also serve as entertainment, but often have an added appeal of satisfying curiosities of things that happened in years gone by. Such stories are informative and, for many people, also help satisfy a sense of "romanticism" about the past. The telling

of such stories places Richard in a prestigious position and is therefore satisfying for him to tell, even though he may have told a particular story many times before. A few people, however, usually former residents, seem to dislike Richard, a factor which I partially attribute to the popularity he has achieved as a storyteller. Whatever the case, his narrative performance has established a reputation for him in this community context. It has made him feel a unique importance to many of those who visit. That, to Richard, is perhaps the most important function of all.

Aesthetics, performance, context and function are closely related aspects of storytelling and must be studied in conjunction with one another in order to understand the place of storytelling in a community. With other such studies and comparative work, the relationships between and significance of these aspects of folklore studies will become clearer.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of conclusions since findings of my research have been discussed throughout the work. Here I will review some of the key points made in this work and discuss some of the underlying ideas behind this research.

The approach in this research has been to examine the narrative art of a single storyteller who has widespread popularity to determine the reasons for his popularity, the influences on his storytelling from both the past and present, and to try and establish what aesthetic principles are at play in this case. The approach has been a contextual one, for only in the true context could the performance of the items, their functions and the aesthetics involved be weighed against each other with any degree of authority.

The general historical and social background of the community has been presented in considerable detail. Chapter II deals with the general history of Exploits from the time of settlement through to discussing some of the kinds of activities from work to entertainment which people traditionally took part in. Chapter III which presents a personal history

and lifestyle of Richard Wells also ties in with the social and historical development of Exploits, but concentrates on more recent changes and events. At the same time, this chapter is intended to give a true feel for the character of Richard Wells and the lifestyle by which he lives.

Chapter IV concentrates on the community context from the storytelling perspective, presenting detailed information on context over the period of Richard Wells' life. The community social interaction is a focus of this chapter.

Chapter V focuses on the more specific aspects of Richard Wells' storytelling, specifically performance and style. It also deals with the kinds of stories in his repertoire and the aesthetic and functional aspects from the narrators, and the audience's viewpoints.

This approach has woven a contextual thread throughout the work in order to present a true and clear understanding of the entire situation in which this research was conducted. It is also my contention that such an approach has been the most logical in terms of extracting observations and conclusions from the research.

There have been certain aspects of this research which might be considered as unusual in some ways. The community in the formal sense does not really exist anymore since the resettlement program. Yet, in terms of the number of regular visitors and part-time residents and the resulting social network, there is a sense of community in many respects.

As an individual, Richard Wells is unusual in some respects. The lifestyle which he chooses to live by in relation to the times in which we are living and that he and Lydia have chosen to remain living in common law are also uncommon. His general knowledge and world view are developed well beyond what might be expected of someone in his lifestyle. Of course, as a storyteller he is also unusual.

The audiences to which Richard practises his art have developed into a somewhat unordinary group, given the transient nature of the population. These factors have added to the interesting nature of this research.

Some noteworthy findings have resulted from this research. It has noted a kind of evolution of Richard Wells' storytelling from a kind of traditional setting in the general Newfoundland context to a form which has adapted to a new and unusual part-time and eclectic community. Richard's storytelling has adapted well to this change, in fact thriving especially during the warmer times of the year. This is perhaps indicative of the flexibility of traditional narrative styles to adapt to new kinds of settings and more contemporary and sophisticated styles of living. Most of the people who comprise audiences for Richard Wells lead such lifestyles and we can detect certain changes in Richard's own lifestyle in this direction, though they are relatively small ones.

This adaptability of a traditional narrative form and style points to possible features of the universal appeal of

such forms and speculation as to the reasons why these forms in general have survived over centuries. Implicitly related to this is the concept of performer-audience aesthetics and the universality of this notion. It is clear that the style of narration which Richard Wells has developed can endure significant social change over a number of years. This can point to speculation as to the ability of such narrative style to transcend many generations if new performers take up the art and learn it.

The widespread appeal of the narrative forms which are the basis of Richard's repertoire has also been noted. Certain qualities which these stories possess many indeed have global appeal.

The technical aspects of Richard Wells' narration have also proved interesting. The extensive observation and study of this which has been a focus of this research points to the power of performance in folk narrative. It is my general observation that Richard has achieved his status as a storyteller because of his style rather than because of the kinds of stories he tells. Many have heard these stories or similar ones but no one tells them like he does.

The findings of this research point to the value of contextual approaches in the examination of narrative and oral forms in general. This perspective allows observations, generalizations and conclusions to be drawn which could not be logically extracted otherwise.

Also significant is the importance of style in oral folklore as opposed to purely textual studies. A study of Richard Wells' repertoire in itself would not have produced the findings which this present work has made.

The general aim of this work has been to provide a comprehensive overview of a Newfoundland storyteller through a thorough contextual study. The findings have been worthwhile and point to the value of further studies of this kind as well as ones of a comparative nature.

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