An Interview with Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey

M. Travis Lane

Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey, one of Canada's most distinguished historians and poets, is often regarded as the father of ethnohistory because of his seminal work *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (1937; 2nd ed. 1969). His essay "Overture to Nationhood" in the *Literary History of Canada* (1965), which he helped to edit, and his collection *Culture and Nationality: Essays by A.G. Bailey* (1972) are classics in their field. His books of poetry include *Songs of the Saguenay* (1927), *Tâo* (1930), *Border River* (1952), *Thanks for a Drowned Island* (1973), and *Miramichi Lightning: The Collected Poems of Alfred G. Bailey* (1981).

Playing a key role in the founding of the Department of History, the library, and the archives at the University of New Brunswick, Professor Bailey has held the positions of Honorary Librarian (1946-60), Dean of Arts (1946-1964), and Vice President Academic (1965-1970). Throughout his career, he has vigorously promoted the cause of poetry; nowhere is this more clearly seen than in his role as one of the founding editors of the literary magazine, *The Fiddlehead*, which now ranks as Canada's oldest literary periodical. He was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1951 and an officer of the Order of Canada in 1978.

The following interview took place in September, 1985.

MTL: In your preface to *Culture and Nationality*, you write that the degree of originality of the human mind seems to be "in large measure a function of the sociocultural environment."[1] Instead of just studying the sociocultural environment, you have both studied and shaped it. Your historical writing and your poetry have become part of the sociocultural environment. It is about that aspect of your work that I would first like you to talk.

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[1] (Toronto: McClelland, 1972) 5.

AGB: The question is, is the sociocultural environment responsible for innovation, or is the individual? I first began thinking about this when studying anthropology in 1932—reading Clark Wissler's book on the Indians of the Plains. For example, in the case of the Arapahoe sundance, at certain centers the ritual of the sundance was rich with diverse elements, but at concentric rings outwards, elements were dropped or simplified—an eagle's feather is omitted or a song shortened. Anyway, there is the richest amalgam of the culture at the center.

As time went on, I became increasingly interested in anthropology. A.L. Krober (he was of the University of California) answered some of my questions in his book about creativity. Genius occurs as a clustering in the population. It is biologically true that persons of high mental ability are fairly well distributed in the population; biologically, geniuses don't cluster, but socioculturally they do. It's best where two cultures interact, mutually enriching each other, as in cities which are trade route crossings; in these you get the highest degree of innovation.

So creative genius is a sociocultural product. There may be mute, inglorious Miltons in the country, but they would not be mute and inglorious when stimulated. Contemplating the beauty of nature is all very well, but it doesn't accelerate mental interaction. I prefer the city!

MTL: You sound like Samuel Johnson preferring London to the countryside. Or the narrator of poem "The Question, Is It?" on "cogitations/that it would not be well to abandon . . . for a trip to the woods in Spring."

How was New Brunswick as a crossroads of mental interaction?

AGB: Of course, originally the people came from without (Odell was from New Jersey). . . . Although Roberts later on said, or has been quoted as saying, that he was not aware that there had been any literature written here before his time, he grew up in a literary atmosphere; there had been such writers before him, but he hadn't thought of them as having been creative of the environment of his own day. A receptivity was created here, as a result of a generalized and anonymous stimulus. . . .

MTL: Why did you become interested in history?

AGB: I was surrounded by history from the very first. The house I was born in at 37 Sainte Ursule Street in Quebec was very old. There is a painting of our house reproduced in Marius Barbeau's *I Have Seen Quebec*—the caption is of a lady saying, "this is a portrait of our house"—but it was only rented to her by my great-grandmother. Five generations of my family were born there. We lived in it for one hundred and fifty years or so.

Everywhere was the visible presence of the past. The old house, built like the citadel, and still as it had been with the mid-nineteenth-century furniture—Toby jugs, horsehair sofas, dumbwaiters—all sorts of odds and ends in the attics and the coach house. My brother Loring and I used to rummage in the coach house. There were still carriages in it even after the day of the motor car. There were sails, canoes, boats, harnesses, top hats in leather cases, and horse pistols. My poem "Grandfather's Gray Top Hat" is about a real incident. My grandfather went out riding on the Charlebourg Road. He was held up by a highwayman. He had his pistols with him, but they were under his belt, so he dug his spurs into the horse, which charged right at the man, and the man fell over backwards. My grandfather rode on very hastily.

Tadousac, where I spent the summer for much of my life, is at the mouth of the Saguenay, which is much deeper than the St. Lawrence. It is ocean water, with beluga (they are having their troubles now with polluted water), fierce currents, tide rips, whirlpools; you don't go out far from shore in a small boat. Champlain or Cartier found Basques there. Chauvin founded a trading post there in 1600. It is regarded as the oldest building in Canada, older even than the settlement on Saint Croix Island. And the site of the place! It's a plain of sand and gravel, and beyond it the huge granite cliffs are pre-Cambrian, the oldest strata of rock on earth, while on the glacial, raised beaches it's the most recent geologic period, the Pleistocene, the ice age, with its relics of clay and sand cliffs. There's the long Pointes des Alouettes across the Saguenay from Tadousac, where Champlain made his treaty with the Montagnais against the Iroquois, which started the French on almost perpetual war. I imagine it was a purely verbal treaty, though sometimes the Indians kept wampum records.

Have you been to Quebec? You could be in seventeenth century Normandy. Lower Town below the cliff, then the upper city, and above that the citadel.

MTL: Did English-speaking Quebeckers think of themselves as Canadian?

AGB: We were British. There was no sense of a Canadian nationality in Quebec in my day. They imported many goods from England—pickles, salt, pepper—instead of buying them down the street.

MTL: Were the goods more expensive bought that way?

AGB: I don't think they were. Quebec was a great seaport. There were ocean liners docking just below where we lived. The British influence was very strong. There was no such thing as a Canadian citizen. We were British subjects with residence in Canada.

MTL: What started your interest in poetry?

AGB: My father was a native of Fredericton. My father was younger than Bliss Carman and Roberts (they were close friends of my father's family.) My grandmother was a very close friend of Carman's mother. I never met Bliss; I missed him by one day as an undergraduate, coming just after he had been here. But Bliss taught my father in school, and my father loved to recite Bliss Carman's poetry.

You know, old-fashioned poetry is "rhythm;" new fashioned poetry is "images." I started scribbling poetry in 1913 in high school, a strange old school, in Quebec, up on the Cape. *Poems of the Romantic Revival* was one of our texts in literature. One of my teachers was Claude Thompson, back from the trenches, a veteran of the first world war. He influenced my taste in poetry; he was a very good teacher. He was advisor to the high school magazine. In 1921 or '22 I became editor of the magazine, but I think I had already contributed a poem or two to it. It was very stimulating to be working on it.

Then I wrote for the *Brunswickan* [at the University of New Brunswick]; I was verse editor in my last year. I encouraged writers such as George Mersereau and Thede's daughter [T.G. Roberts' daughter, Dorothy Roberts]. I was trying to reactivate literature here. I had the idea of a magazine, but mimeographing had not yet been developed. In my final year, I wrote an article entitled "Verse" with the intention of stimulating people to think about developing

our local talents. I pointed out, for example, that there is a statue of Burns in Fredericton, why not one of Bliss Carman and two other poets [Charles G.D. Roberts and Francis Sherman]. I wrote to Dr Clarence[2] Webster urging that such a monument be erected to the Fredericton Poets. I was thus responsible for the monument to the poets of Fredericton on campus here.

When I was an undergraduate, Charles G.D. Roberts came here and read his poems in Memorial Hall. Was it 1925 or 1926? I was very moved. He read "The Stranded Ship" and "Today," a poem about Nashwaak's amber stream, which he had just recently written. He asked the audience to decide which they liked best, a poem he had written much earlier, which he had read to them, or the recent one, and they chose the recent one. So he was pleased to see he had lost none of his touch. He was quite a showman. He wore a long black ribbon on his spectacles for the effect it made, as he himself stated.

Later, on the sixtieth anniversary of Confederation, 1927, my graduating year from UNB, I was working on the Fredericton newspaper *The Fredericton Daily Mail*, and I reported on a reading given by Roberts, who read a poem about Canada written for the occasion.

I met CGDR again, with my father, at Niagara Falls, but I only once had the opportunity of a good conversation with him. It must have been 1943—he was coming back from the meeting of the Royal Society of Canada at Hamilton. On the train I sat with him and we talked, and I went to his apartment afterwards. I met his fiancée (later Lady Joan Roberts). I remember he had several cats, and he showed me the paper proofs of Elsie Pomeroy's book on him.

Thede was very proud of his brother but really disliked Pomeroy's book. He said Elsie didn't write it; she just wrote down what Charles dictated. He was so disgusted with the book, he threw it out of the window. The landlady's little boy saw the incident and brought the book to his mother, who took it to Thede Roberts, who threw the book out of the window again. Three times, I think!

I was asked by the government of New Brunswick to arrange the state funeral for Sir Charles G.D. Roberts. I

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[2] Dr. Webster is discussed in more detail on page 236.

deeply regret there is no plaque here to Theodore Goodridge Roberts. There should be one, but when I was a member of the Historic Monuments Board of Canada and moved a resolution to that effect, and although the board agreed, the government had become suddenly concerned about overspending and curtailed the available funds. There is no record of Thede on campus. And he's at least the equal of Frank Sherman, says Mac [Malcolm Ross]!

MTL: You went to the University of Toronto after graduation.

AGB: When I went to Toronto, I had never even heard of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie—hardly any of the contemporary poets except Edgar Lee Masters. There I became a friend of Roy Daniells and of Robert Finch, who is, I think, the most outstanding living Canadian poet, maybe the finest craftsman in the whole range of Canadian literature.

Roy Daniells was a graduate student in English at that time. We met in the Diet Kitchen, a very popular tearoom. We met there once a week. We practised and did exercises in poetry, on T.S. Eliot's advice that one should keep ready like a well-oiled fire engine. We would practise different things. We would pick a subject at random, perhaps opening a book and putting one's finger down on a page without looking—and where it landed that would be the subject—and we would meet the next week and criticize each other's work.

MTL: I believe Finch keeps up the habit of regular poetic exercises.

AGB: Yes. Well, I joined them, and after Roy went to England for graduate studies, I met with Robert Finch every week for a year, and eventually our friend Earle Birney joined. It developed my writing in ways I wouldn't otherwise have taken. Roy appeared among us one night and read to us Eliot's *The Waste Land* and "Prufrock." We had never heard of Eliot before; it had a tremendous effect. Jean [Jean Craig Hamilton], now my wife, was present at the time. The subject of the urban wilderness was concerning us then, and Eliot's rhythms caught in one's mind. There was a lot of imitativeness for a while. Smith, Scott, all the people who were writing at that time, were very influenced by Eliot. I had a few of my poems in my new manner published by *The Canadian Forum* in 1932, 1933, and 1934.

MTL: Are there any other writers you have read since who have been as exciting to you?

AGB: In 1934 or '35, I was walking past the British Museum where there was a tearoom with little magazines displayed in front of it, and I picked up a copy of *New Verse* which had a Dylan Thomas poem, the first new kind of writing I had read in a decade. It was very impressive. But it didn't influence me as much as Eliot. I didn't meet any poets that time. I told Daniells and Frye about Thomas at breakfast in one of Murray's restaurants at Bloor and Avenue Road. They had not heard of him. I think he was then quite unknown in Canada.

MTL: You worked for a while as a journalist, didn't you?

AGB: I worked on a newspaper in the worst year of the Depression. Nobody could get a job. I went to Ottawa to inquire about a job as a lamp salesman; but there were so many other professional salesmen there, I didn't get it.

I went to see Sir George Foster, who died later that year. He was in bed; there was a nurse attending him. He had been a pupil of my grandfather and great-grandfather when he was an undergraduate at UNB. In 1868 he established the forerunner of the *Brunswickan*, which is the oldest college newspaper in Canada. And I asked him to write a letter to the Deputy Minister of External Affairs for me. You know who Foster was—he was a Conservative, of course—Canada's representative to the League of Nations, Minister of Finance in Sir John A. Macdonald's government, a great orator, a distinguished statesman, knighted by George V. In 1925 he lectured on the League of Nations to students here in the opera house. But the Liberals under MacKenzie King were in, and, besides, it was as though you had to be a graduate of Queen's to get a job in External Affairs!

So I returned to Toronto to try to find something to do. (I read a lot of Walt Whitman's poetry!) My father had been on the staff of a Halifax bank, and there he had known Beaverbrook's old partner, Isaac Walton Killam, who had just bought the *Mail and Empire*. (Lord Beaverbrook later told me that Killam paid three million for it.) So I asked my father to write him for a job for me. That is how I became a newspaper reporter in Toronto in 1930. That experience

influenced my style of writing more than anything else. You had to be really concise.

You know, before I got that job, I thought I'd go to Harvard. I went down to Boston and I waited for almost an hour outside the office of a famous history professor (Schlesinger, the one whose son wrote the life of Roosevelt). Finally he talked with me, and I told him I wanted to study Canadian history. "We don't teach that here," he said.

It was about that time that I went to visit my great aunt in New Canaan. Aunt Eliza was the widow of Professor Bailey who taught botany at Brown. My aunt had two children, Whitman Bailey (the artist for Bliss's posthumous volume *Sanctuary*) and Margaret Emerson Bailey. She was a friend of Elinor Wylie and taught at a well-known girls' school in New York, the one to which Lady Jean Campbell much later sent her daughter. She was the author of *Rain Before Seven*, *Goodbye Proud World*, and a volume of poems, *White Christmas*. Her poems used to appear in *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Carman had lived next door to her. She had been largely responsible for making the funeral arrangements for Carman's funeral. Her description of Mary Perry King's behaviour after the funeral (she was Bliss's friend) is very comic. It's in the UNB archives; you must read it.

I spent an evening with Mary Perry King. It was the oddest evening in my life. She was all in white—white hair, a dress like a nurse's, white stockings, and white shoes, and there were white sheets all over the furniture and the carpet. And a chandelier glistened and accentuated the whiteness. She never stopped talking. To quote someone whose name I can't think of [Disraeli], she was "intoxicated by the exuberance of her own verbosity." There was an avalanche of long words with Latinate endings. I remember only one sentence: "Bliss never went to the poetry society—because there was no poetry and no society."

Anyway, I went back to Boston, felt lonely, went back to Toronto, and then got into newspaper writing. *The Mail and Empire* was the best-written newspaper in Canada. We had to get the maximum meaning into the minimum of space. It really concentrated my writing. I was sent out everywhere. Once I was sent out to a secret meeting of race track touts who appeared to be fixing races and who

threatened me when they found out I was a reporter. I was usually up until two or three a.m., sometimes without time off for food. My first task was to cover the waterfront with two assignments at opposite ends at about the same time. I really had to run. I did the courts with all the legal lingo, labour news, communist meetings. And I did an article on the city dump, where men were living in tarpaper shanties and eating garbage. The editor said, "Nobody is going to starve in the pages of this newspaper," and he tore up my article. Later I gave up and went back to do my Ph.D.

MTL: In history *and* in anthropology!

AGB: It is a strange thing that anthropology in Canada was so backward as compared with England, America, Australia, or New Zealand. Sir Daniel Wilson, who was president of The University of Toronto around 1900, gave a course in ethnology for two or three years; then it stopped. T.F. McIlwraith, who was curator for the Royal Ontario Museum collection of North American Indian material, taught the first courses in anthropology in Canada, and the reason my Ph.D. was in history is that there was no Department of Anthropology at that time. It was really a three-cornered thesis that I undertook to write, in history, anthropology, and economics.

Going back to my graduate student days at Toronto . . . . During my last year there, I met Malcolm Ross. He was rooming next door to me, and we naturally had a great interest in each other because we came from such similar backgrounds: Fredericton, UNB, knew Roberts, admired Carman, interested in Canadian literature.

Did I mention the Nameless Society? I heard about the Nameless Society through a friend, Tom James Keenan, who knew a lot of honours students and graduate students in English. They had meetings in a room in University College presided over by E.K. Brown. I've never known a man so venerated and so deferred to, so regarded as an authority [as Brown].

MTL: Not even Norrie Frye?

AGB: Not even Norrie Frye. And it wasn't just students who venerated him. Brown was venerated by senior members of the faculty. Even MacKenzie King invited him down to Ottawa as an advisor. My wife (she wasn't my wife then)

came to the Nameless Society, too, sometimes. Also Dorothy Livesay. A member would read a paper on some phase of Canadian literature, and another would write up the minutes in verse.

Jocelyn Moore gave a paper on *Jalna.* I remember writing "calmly" (and you'd have to know Jocelyn), "calmly and without caper, Jocelyn read her excellent paper," and "Grandmother Whiteoaks grabbed her stick: 'Kiss me somebody, kiss me quick!'" She was always saying that in the book, you know. And Jocelyn had a kind of drawl, and I got that somewhere in a line in the poem, but I can't remember how it went.

The minutes of the Nameless Society, I believe, are in the possession of Marjorie James, a librarian in Ottawa. (She may be married and have another name.) Somebody should publish them. That would be a good project for someone!

E.K. Brown thought very highly of Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, but had no use for Roberts or Carman. I may be pitching it too strong! I was asked to give a paper on Carman. Well, he fell on me like a ton of bricks. I said I thought "Low Tide on Grand Pré" was the most beautiful Canadian poem, and he said, "Why is it beautiful?"

MTL: Surely it is impossible to say why it is beautiful?

AGB: Oh, but E.K. Brown felt he could say why a thing was beautiful. He had studied with a famous savant at the Sorbonne. He didn't really have a sense of music or rhythm. And, of course, nobody is as musical as Carman. But all these poets were shoved aside and put into the discard after the discovery of Eliot, Auden, and C. Day Lewis.

MTL: I see much in common between your verse and Auden's. The sense of the emotion of thinking, the carefulness of the way of putting things.

AGB: I don't know that I can say anything about Auden. The paramount influence on all of the writers of that day was Eliot—except Finch. He was not influenced by Eliot, but by the poets who had influenced Eliot: Laforgue, Cocteau, the Symbolists. He knew some of these people as he lived part of each year in Paris.

Anyway, the poets of my generation had seen all the old Romantics rejected by the new poets (but not by the poets in the Canadian Authors' Association); they were not university poets, except Nathaniel Benson. He had a fine poem in Gustafson's first anthology; it makes one very sad to read it. It is about a poet who died young (and Benson died young), a poet of great promise. I had a long poem Benson wrote, a Ryerson chapbook, but I have lost it. He didn't belong to the new poetry at all. Hardly any of the people in *Modern Canadian Poetry*, an anthology edited by Benson, have survived.

The greatest break-through—1943 was it?—was Smith's first anthology and E.K. Brown's essay "On Canadian Poetry." How astonishing it was for me to read last year a short article by the editor of *Canadian Poetry* which shows that Bliss Carman was an influence on Pound and Wallace Stevens!

MTL: I can well believe Carman influenced them . . . . After graduate school you worked at the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John?

AGB: Yes, under Dr. J.C. Webster, who was an outstanding man, a world famous gynecologist and obstetrician. His textbooks were translated into several languages and used all over the world. A graduate of Mount Allison and Edinburgh gold medallist, he later trained in Germany. He was a professor of medicine at Edinburgh; his health broke down, he went to McGill, and then he went to Chicago and became head of the medical school there. He became very wealthy and retired to his Shediac estate. He started looking around at the Maritimes and saw an intellectual and cultural vacuum.

MTL: I've seen a reference to his pamphlet *The Distressed Maritimes* (Ryerson Essay No. 35, Toronto, 1926). I gather he claimed that the serious stagnation in education was even more serious than the stagnation in economics, and that the neglect of the arts and of education was the Maritimes' most serious problem. How bad was the neglect?

AGB: New Brunswick was the only province in Canada that had no provincial archives. It was symptomatic.

MTL: How come?

AGB: Well, Nova Scotia had archives, perhaps because its people had a sense of place. Perhaps the New England township system, which they retained to some extent in Nova Scotia, provided a sense of belonging. The Nova Scotia Yankees, you know, they kept community records. But in New Brunswick, I don't know, they felt *déraciné*; there was no sense of place. Their emotions were for the empire and the crown, as a whole, not to the local community. There was gross neglect of community records. You know of Dr. W.F. Ganong, New Brunswick's greatest scholar; he taught botany at Smith. The Department of Agriculture here asked him to give them a copy of his monograph on the origins of settlement, and he said he would if they'd "chain it to the desk," and so they did. You know the story of the Ganong collection?

MTL: What's that?

AGB: He was looking for documents. He went to the Old Government House, which had been closed in 1890 and was used for storage. They told him there would be documents in the attic. Well, when he got there, there was a bonfire, and the caretaker was burning up the public documents of New Brunswick. He said he had already thrown some down the river. Dr. Ganong hired a buggy and loaded it up. That's the Ganong collection.

Old Dr. Milner gave a sarcastic address on archives to the Canadian Historical Association in which he said the records of quarter sessions of the New Brunswick courts (that managed the local government) had been found in a barn amid cows, who no doubt appreciated them more than the people of New Brunswick! I spoke more mildly on the same subject later. New Brunswick never really looked after anything.

But, finally, the government of New Brunswick began to feel it might not have been fairly treated after Confederation, so it became interested in history. I was drawn into this while at the museum—hence the essays in *Culture and Nationality*. . . .

Dr. Webster's influence was very great. He was partially responsible for the re-establishment of Louisburg, and also for the historic park and museum at Fort

Beauséjour, and for the New Brunswick Museum. He was lavish in his generosity. Mrs. Webster was a very remarkable woman, Paris-educated, and quite wealthy. She and Dr. Webster were largely responsible for the New Brunswick Museum and gave it their collections. Hers was devoted to the arts and crafts of the Middle East and the Orient.

I was curator in the museum for three years. I had to do all kinds of work, from finishing furniture to arranging exhibits and lecturing on everything from the French régime in Canada to Ming Dynasty porcelain. This was during the Dysart government, the height of the Depression. New Brunswick was very badly affected by the Depression, and everybody was asking how we got into it. This was not the first time there had been thoughts about Maritime Rights (you can see Professor Ernie Forbes' writings on that), but it was a revival of the sense that New Brunswick had not fared well under Confederation.

The Minister of Education and head of the Federal and Municipal Relation Departments, A.P. Paterson, had some theories about this. He believed that Confederation was a compact between the provinces and that the federal government was an agency to carry out the terms of the compact. This became the official view of the New Brunswick government. It was quite a public issue. I took an interest in the whole question and went to see A.P. Paterson. As a sign of how hot a question it was, when I gave an address on this at the YMCA, it was reported in the press that the address was followed by a crowd in "animated discussion in the street."

I began to write a history of New Brunswick in relation to Confederation; some of the chapters in *Culture and Nationality* are from this, but there are several other chapters still unpublished. I began to examine Paterson's theory. I didn't really agree with it. But I agreed that the Maritimes had rejected the Quebec resolutions in 1864 and also about the London conference in 1866 which re-adopted lots of the Quebec resolutions and made some modifications. . . .

MTL: You were at the museum for three years?

AGB: My Carnegie and Rockefeller grants were coming to an end. The Carnegie grant, really the one I was living on, was of a class that was given to people to train as museum cu-

rators. The museum didn't have any funds. In the last year, Dr. Webster wanted me to give lectures as a service of the museum. It occurred to me that the provincial museum could serve the provincial university, since there was no Department of History there. I was up here giving a lecture to the York Sunbury Historical Society, and talked it over with Dr. Jones, the president. I was looking for a job. Dr. Jones said, "If you can get the provincial government to increase the deficit to the university, I will establish a history department and appoint you to it."

When I was at the university in the twenties, there were perhaps 12 professors and 180 students. When I started to lecture here—a whole year without any remuneration except train-fare—I would have to rise at six a.m. on Thursdays, lecture for an hour in the morning and give a two hour lecture in the afternoon, and return to Saint John by ten or eleven at night. By that time there were 17 or 18 professors, 350 students. The university statutory grant was $35,000 a year, I think. Professors' salaries began at $2,300 and stopped at $2,800. Every year Dr. Jones had to ask the legislature to vote the deficit. So before I made an appointment with J.B. McNair, the Attorney General, I did a lot of very deep thinking, a desperate sort of thinking, in order to arrive at the appropriate arguments which would influence him.

He met me very kindly in the executive council chamber. I talked for half an hour, and he didn't change the expression on his face at all! But, at the end of it, he said, "You know, I agree with you fully. I'll put your idea before the Cabinet at their next meeting."

Mr. McNair told me a funny thing that happened. The Premier said, "I've got just the young man for the job, a friend of my family, at present teaching in a ladies' college in Missouri." And McNair said, "We can't tell them whom to appoint!" So, he saved my life a second time. McNair is the best premier this province ever had—this is by no means the only reason why I think so!

Well, I got into too many jobs. I was involved in everything under the sun. I taught all the courses in history for seven years. I set up the courses and had to prepare for them, sometimes staying up until after midnight to do all the reading. I taught two courses in European history (one from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, and the other nineteenth and twentieth century), Canadian history,

British history, American history, Chinese history, the history of Latin America, the philosophy of history. And anthropology on top of that.

After I started the history department, I wanted to give a course in anthropology, a subject which had formed a part of my work for the doctorate. I asked President Larry MacKenzie, and he said, "Put it before the faculty." Some of the faculty didn't seem to know what anthropology was. But they agreed. It was the first full-year, degree-credit course in anthropology taught in Canada outside Toronto. About 1940 or 1941.

After seven years the vets came back. I wanted to appoint MacNutt. Somebody in another department tried to foist someone else on me, but MacNutt had done work in Maritime history at King's College in London. When MacNutt came here he had just come from the Italian campaign, and he wanted to make his field Italian history. I had a hard time dissuading him. I told him everybody had written on Italian history, but almost nobody had written on New Brunswick history. I think I did a good job there. I think MacNutt has written the best books in Canada on the subject.

I tried to secure personnel in special fields. Most of the people at the beginning were my own students: Jim Chapman, Toby Graham, Murray Young, Steve Patterson, and Peter Kent. Then I began to secure others who were not, such as Wallace Brown, who became an authority on the Loyalists, and Francis Coghlan, and others. I shouldn't praise my own creation, but I do think the UNB history department is as good a history department as exists anywhere in Canada (and Pacey built up a very fine English department—the two departments can stand comparison with the finest).

MTL: And you got into administration.

AGB: In 1946 I was set up as Dean of Arts. There hadn't been deans before. The university had not been formally divided into departments, and there were no such things as faculties or deans, though old Dr. Stephens had an ornamental title, being known as the Dean of Engineering at an early period. And I was appointed Chairman of the Faculty Committee and then Dean. Scrapper Jones was Vice Chairman.

There had been complaints from all and sundry that the university needed an adequate library. Miss Sterling (an alumna) sat in the library. There were eight or ten thousand books, many of them donations of books people hadn't wanted. And they were not properly catalogued. You couldn't do honours work properly, much less graduate work or faculty research. The arts and the sciences probably suffered the most. So Dr. Gregg asked me to take over the administration of the library.

By that time Mrs. Thompson was called the Librarian. She was a very nice woman; I have the greatest admiration for her. She'd had two years at Dalhousie, but she was not a university graduate, and she'd had no library training except a summer course at Brooklyn Library. "Let's not change her title," Gregg said. "We'll call you Chief Executive Librarian." Well, I made a terrible mistake. I said, "Since there is no salary attached, call me the Honorary Librarian." Well, in the library world, an honorary librarian is usually a benevolent interferer with the legitimate tasks of the library. I was in the Canadian Librarians Association and on the National Advisory Board of the National Library of Canada, but they did not tend to think of me as the head of the UNB library.

I ran the library for fourteen years and set about the task of trying to turn the library into something that could be called a proper university library. You know the old adage: a university is a three-cornered thing—an institution where knowledge is accumulated in a library, is disseminated in teaching, and is added to in research. But you can't teach or do research adequately without a library. The three are interdependent.

At the time that I took over, each department received thirty dollars a year to buy books and another ten dollars for periodicals. I appointed an advisory committee: Frank Toole for sciences, Desmond Pacey for arts, Foster Baird for engineering, and Miles Gibson, the Dean of Forestry. I asked Mrs. Thompson to be secretary. Frank Toole once said (it was very complimentary) that I had been responsible for turning a glorified high school into a university—which is not to decry high schools, but the purposes of a university are different.

MTL: How did the archives get started?

AGB: Well, just at the end of the war the people at the Rockefeller Foundation became interested in postwar social conditions throughout the world, and they wanted to explore the question as to whether areas had regional mentalities. They wanted to know if upper New England and the Maritimes had a common mentality. They proposed a conference to be held at Ogunquit. Dr. MacKenzie asked me to go. R.A. MacKay, professor of political science at Dalhousie (he was the father of the recent president of Dalhousie), and the archivist of Nova Scotia, D.C. Harvey, were delegates. Among the United States representatives were the novelist J.B. Marquand, F.O. Matthiessen, author of a study of T.S. Eliot and the monumental work entitled *The American Renaissance*, and Granville Hicks, a famous radical and intellectual historian. I spoke on one thing, among others. I said that New Brunswick had no public archives, that there was no collected material anywhere, except, to a limited extent, in the New Brunswick Museum. I spoke of a serious need for studies of New Brunswick, of its past, and of the formative influences that had been brought to bear on its development.

It was astounding. We had so little here. There was nothing to work with. The Honourable A.P. Paterson said, "We can't even find the document that established New Brunswick," so I wrote to the Dominion archivist for a copy of the Order in Council of the Imperial Cabinet in London that established the separate province of New Brunswick, and I gave it to the government.

In my experience, there wasn't *any* assessment of Maritime history. Hardly anyone knew there was any. In my day, practically everybody went down to Boston. Boston was the capital of the Maritime provinces. People didn't go to Montreal or Toronto. I was the first person who ever came down from "Canada" to go to college here. I started a slight trickle of Quebeckers coming in. I don't think anybody ever thought about Maritime history. There was no chance of advancing here. They all had cousins in Boston: "Soon as I graduate, I am going to Boston. They had no thoughts about the local past. That may have persisted. And, of course, nobody "up in Canada" thought *this* little country mattered!

I received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to supervise and publish theses, but I actually published only one: Katharine MacNaughton's book. Frances Firth's book (she is now Mrs. Donald Gammon) was to be next; then, at

that point, Lord Beaverbrook arrived, and I became caught up in his affairs. I renewed acquaintance with him—he had been a friend of my father's when they were very young—and I became so busy I had to drop something. I induced Lord Beaverbrook to take an interest in the library. We were building from the bones up. I worked so hard my health broke down. I had to spend a winter in the Arizona desert. Lord Beaverbrook got me the sick leave.

MTL: How did you go about collecting books for the library?

AGB: Well, we had bibliographies, you know. I would compile great lists and send them across the Atlantic. His secretaries and staff would be scouring the second-hand bookstores all over England and Scotland, because many of these things were out of print. It was quite a scramble. It was like the battle of Normandy, with Lord Beaverbrook turning out his spitfires. He even got Winston Churchill to give us copies of his books. I spent a whole morning composing a letter of thanks. It was a tremendous job.

I put Frances Firth in charge of the archives, and I had a secretary, Elizabeth Nettleton, and a girl who worked on the Beaverbrook library as my assistant. Beaverbrook wouldn't buy anything in the United States. A.J.P. Taylor makes me so angry. He says in his book on Lord Beaverbrook that Beaverbrook never asked people what they wanted but just gave them what he wanted himself! And I and my committee spent day and night for years compiling lists for his consideration. He bought practically everything that we asked for. I must have bought 50,000 books altogether. And, of course, when Lord Beaverbrook took an interest in the library, others did. The Board of Governors heard of it, and I got larger grants. I had to get larger grants. I built up the staff from one to fifteen—archivists, cataloguers, purchasing personnel, reference librarians. I worked at it for thirteen or fourteen years, but I had to give it up.

I'd hate to tell you all the boards and committees I was on. I used to spend half my life going to and coming from Ottawa. I was on the planning commission of the National Library. In the forties, I was on the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada, and I was also on the Humanities Research Council for a time. They were designed to support academic research in the social sciences and humanities. Harold Innis was very prominent in them. The funds

all came from the Rockefeller Foundation, and they became very restive because all this money was pouring into Canada and nobody in Canada was giving money to anything. Even in the mid-fifties, no money was coming out of Canada for fellowships or scholarships. They wanted funding organizations.

There was a joint meeting of the two councils, and we discussed the Rockefeller people's feelings. We were ashamed that nobody in Canada was contributing. So we decided to appoint two members (fellows of the Royal Society of Canada) to go to the Royal Society to ask them to appoint a committee to wait on the government and to propose the setting up of a funding organization. And that was how the Canada Council came into being. However, the Rockefellers did continue to give aid. They established the Innis Visiting Professorship at the University of Toronto—three or four years it lasted. The University appointed a different person each year, all former students of Innis. In 1955 it was offered to me, and I went up there for a year. In 1946, Innis had offered me a professorship of sociology at Toronto, but I had just become Dean of Arts here and had also just taken over the library. I couldn't desert the ship at that point!

In the fifties, the Rockefellers gave a grant of $50,000 through Ralpeigh Parkin—funds to help writers. A committee was set up for this consisting of Roy Daniells, Northrop Frye, and myself. We met every year or twice a year to disburse the funds. Among the people to whom we gave grants was Adele Wiseman, author of *The Sacrifice.* Well, this developed eventually into something else. And I was on the Council of the Canadian Historical Association and on committees of the Royal Society. At the Royal Society I always complained that people were nominating the chaps across the hall, but not anybody in the outland; nobody from the "ütland" places ever got in. I nominated, among others, Desmond Pacey, Stuart MacNutt, and Malcolm Ross.

MTL: Tell me about your initiating the Bliss Carman Society and *The Fiddlehead.*

AGB: Well, during my three years at the museum, I had had virtually no holidays. I worked on Saturdays and Sundays. I didn't have the time to write poetry then. So, when that was over, I thought to revive the literary movement here. I brought together a group, meeting at my home, to write on

subjects picked at random. Robin Bayley (no relation), Linden Peebles, and Dorothy Howe, at first. Later I invited others. The Bliss Carman Society was not really a society but my guests. We would listen to each other and criticize each other as constructively as possible. Gradually, after five years, the original idea of doing exercises was given up. When I stopped having meetings after about six or seven years, Fred Cogswell took over at his house. Elizabeth Brewster was a member, and, later, Robert Gibbs. Donald Gammon was the first editor of *The Fiddlehead.* Fred Cogswell is the one who turned *The Fiddlehead* into a national magazine.

It began because I kept the minutes of the Bliss Carman Society, which were copies of all the poems, which I kept in a loose leaf note book. After a time everybody wanted to have copies. So we mimeographed the poems and, finally, there was a cover, and the emergence of the idea of *The Fiddlehead.* I chose the title.

Make me over, mother April,
. . . . . .
To revive the days that were.

That's Carman, you know.

University of New Brunswick