

Notes on the Dialect and Culture of the Adirondack Mountains of Upstate New York

by Alex Shoumatoff, with deep gratitude to Ann McCrory, Bob Worth, and the Winslow Foundation for enabling me to get this fur.

Thirty years ago, in 1979, I was living in my native north-central Westchester County, and I started going up to a cabin that a friend in Katonah, Ben Kernan, had in Keene Valley, in the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Mountains, four and a half hours upstate by car. I wrote two books there, *Russian Blood* and *In Southern Light*, and fell under the spell of the ancient lake- and mountain-studded forest wilderness, which I had visited several times in the fifties when I was a boy (we climbed Mts. Marcy and Algonquin, and visited friends of my parents who had camps on Lake George and Black Mountain Lake).

In 1986 I bought forty acres on the very top of East Hill in Keene, the next town up the valley, and put a log cabin on it. The chain of previous owners included the philosopher William James, Jack Paar (the original host of the Today show), and three black cab drivers from Brooklyn. My two boys, Andre and Nick, and I would pile into our little Suzuki Samurai on Friday afternoon and head up to the Ads, as we called them, for the weekend, and we spent a lot of our vacations there. I was very nature and wilderness and traditional culture oriented, anti-city and modern world, having dropped out of a promising foreign-correspondent-track newspaper career and gone “back to the land” in the New Hampshire woods in the Sixties, and

spent months wandering in the Amazon and Zaire rain forests and other remote, inaccessible corners of the world that were off the modern grid. My wife, who was from Brasilia, didn't feel the same compulsion or have the same romantic feelings about nature and the country life, and was glad to get us out of the house, so she only came up with us sometimes.

The Suzuki's gas guage was unreliable below half a tank, and one Friday night, nearly at the end of our drive up, we ran out of gas at Chapel Pond, above the southern end of Keene Valley, and coasted all the way down to the little hamlet of St. Hubert's, coming to a stop at a ranch house with a basement garage on the right hand side of the road under some pine trees. It was eleven o'clock but the lights inside were still on, so I rapped on the door, and a grizzly old man in a checked work shirt, with white hair flowing over the collar, opened it and sized me up with shrewd, mischievous eyes. His name was Napoleon Smith, but everybody called him Bucky. Bucky was about eighty. His face had the ruddiness and weather creases of someone who had spent his life out of doors.

The Smiths were one of the old mountain clans. Bucky's grandparents had come from Ireland and changed their name from MacCarthy to Smith at Ellis Island and made their way up the Champlain Valley and eventually cleared a homestead in Keene Valley. Bucky belonged to a distinctive local rural culture, like most Americans until after the war; in his case the subsistence logging-farming culture of the central Adirondacks' High Peaks Region. I had already known a couple of ornery old cusses like him : the last of his counterparts in Westchester County and

southern New Hampshire. They had the same deep, gruff way of talking and mischievous twinkle and no end of stories and jokes, most of them dirty. Bucky reminded me a lot of Howland Adams, the last farmer in Westchester, who when I got to know him in the seventies was still farming the hundred acres in South Salem that had been in his family since the Revolution. I'd go see Howland and bring him my Homelite chain saw, an old clunker that was always acting up, which he would fix with a few tweaks of the choke, and he always had a new joke for me. "How come mice have such small balls?" he asked me one time. I don't know Howland. How come? I said, and he said, "Cuz only tin percent of em kin dance."

There was a dialect in Westchester that only a few hundred people still spoke in the 1970s, when I wrote my second book, a natural and cultural history of the county. Idea was pronounced idear. This is not unique to Westchester, but that's how I still say it myself. Pumpkin (the Guinness world record pumpkin in the fifties was grown in the county) was pronounced "punkin," Tuesday was "Toozdy." A porch was a stoop, which was a legacy from the old Dutch colonial days. A fellow writer at the New Yorker magazine, George Trowe, (we had known each other since the Harvard Lampoon, which he was the president of and I was the jester, and I followed him to the New Yorker in 1978) had a copy of Hans Kurath's 1949 Word Geography of the Eastern United States. It had maps of where the local people said porch, stoop, veranda, or piazza. Bill Devoy, one of the last subsistence woodsman/farmers in Hillsboro Center, New Hampshire, said piazza. So I was aware that there were local linguistic

variations in the way English, or any language, was spoken, not only in accent, but the words in use. Dialects, in other words. The boundary of where porch, say, gives way to piazza, is known as an isogloss. Having spent a dozen or so summers, up to the age of eighteen, in the Swiss Alps, I was also aware how the Swiss German varies from mountain valley to valley in the Bernese Oberland. In the mountain town of Kandersteg, “I don't know,” for instance, is (phonetically) *i vace nit*. In Adelboden, the next valley east, it's *i vace not*.

The Adirondack region is placed by Kurath et al. in the Upstate New York/Western Vermont linguistic region. Other linguistic maps place it in the Middle Atlantic region, with New England to the east, or lump the eastern half of the Adirondacks with Western New England, and the western half with the Northern or Inland North region. But the truth is, I realized after moving to the Adirondacks full-time in 1988, that it is a dialect of its own, which has never been described, which is why I am taking this preliminary stab at identifying its basic characteristics. Our mountain valley has considerable linguistic input from western Vermont/New England and Champlain Valley, many similarities to Western New England speech. Doctor is pronounced dacter, chocolate is chaclit, caught is cot. But there is also, as I realized after moving to Montreal in 1999, important French-Canadian input. Up to the mid-19th century, when logging was the main economic activity in the Ads, everything flowed north, to Montreal. Then as railroads started to be built and iron mining became more important, it flowed south, to Albany. But the French influence is still strong in the northern Ads. In 2005 I biked

from Montreal to Keene, about a hundred miles. On the Quebec side of border, nobody spoke English, and on the American side, nobody spoke French, but they were all cousins. The border was a dramatic isogloss. Last Saturday (January 9, 2010), on my way to Cannon Corners, the obscure little border crossing I had taken on my bike trip I stopped at a seven eleven in Morris Corners, a hamlet so tiny it doesn't even have a sign. The gal who served me my sandwich looked very Quebecoise, and her father, she told me, was from the province, but she had grown up on the American side and didn't speak a word of French. I asked her if she knew any French words, and she said, "Well, my mom used to tell me when I was little, *enfant chantouilles*." I said I know what *chatouiller* means : to tickle. But *chantouilles* is a first for me. What does it mean ?" and the woman said, "Don't ask me. I think it means hush child." *Chantouiller* is not in the dictionary, but on Youtube there is a short clip titled Balthazar Chantouille of a baby burbling in its sleep in its mother's arms. My bilingual Montreal friend Bob Olivier tells me that *ouille* is a diminutive, so *chantouiller* means to sing in a tiny voice, the way babies murmur melodiously in their sleep or just as they are dropping off. I asked the woman in Morris Corners if she knew any local expressions in English, and she said, "They call this God's country." Her face radiated the simple, uncomplicated contentment of someone who is rooted in where they are, who have lived in the same place all their lives.

So another equally relevant (or "revelant" as some people in rural Ontario say) line could be drawn east-west two thirds of the way down across the Adirondacks, where

the French Canadian input peters out and gives way to upstate New York Yankee farmer. The Adirondacks are a vaguely and variously described transition zone that has never been studied. It has its own “isms,” as Josh Whitney, who runs the cable t.v. and Internet company in our valley with his Dad calls them (the Whitneys are one of the more dynamic old local families. Some, like Josh, have been out of the Ads and seen what the rest is like, some haven't). Native residents of Ausable Chasm call it the chasm, pronouncing the ch as in church. Bomagillia (balm of Gilead) is a species of aspen with sweet-smelling flowers. Beams on a bridge can be “too fur apart,” and a guy directing a backhoe driver might say, “Raise 'er down.” And there is a lilting, lyrical way of talking that once you develop an ear for it, which took me a few years, is unmistakably Adirondack. I remember standing in an airline check in line and listening to the woman in front of me talking to the check in girl. I said you must be from the Adirondacks, and by Jeezam (that's a big local expression) she was. Right from Saranac.

Bucky Smith offered to sell me the eleven acres he had behind his house, but his neighbor had to give me a right of way for the driveway, and he wouldn't do it, so I ended up getting the land in Keene, eight miles north. So Bucky and I saw less of each other. But whenever I was up to St. Hubert's, I'd drop in to see how he was doin', and each time I'd learn a little more about his life and his neck of the woods, the localized world of the upper East Branch

of the Ausable river valley, comprising the town of Keene, which includes Keene Valley and the hamlet of St. Hubert's, he had spent it in and only ventured out of a couple of times. There were a lot of Smiths in the valley. Most of them were Bucky's children and grandchildren. He had eight kids by three wives I think, and pretty much all of the Smiths were kin except another cluster of Smiths, who were summer people who had packed it in and become permanent residents, as I did in 1988. And there were a lot of people, half the people in the valley, it seemed, who were not Smiths but were also cousins, often several different ways. That's the way it is in rural communities. After six generations or so pretty much everybody is the genetic equivalent of second cousin or closer, due to the multiple consanguinity. As Chick Lawrence's wife, who wasn't even from the valley, but from Wilmington (really Wilmington, but the g is dropped) told me one time, "I was already related to Chick two different ways before we got married."

Bucky had spent his fifty-some working years mainly in the woods, but like most men in the Adirondacks he had done whatever he had to and his life had been a nonstop struggle just making ends meet, working himself to the bone, never getting ahead of the game. The worst time was during the Depression. The only work he could find was in an apple orchard, which was three hours away on foot, so he was putting in six hours days just to get there and back and getting paid "diddlyshit," as he put it. Tears came to his eyes as he remembered those years.

In 1987 I split up with my Brazilian wife and gave her the house in New Rochelle and moved up to the cabin in

Keene full-time with Rosette, a Rwandan woman who became my third wife and I'm still with 22 years later. We had our three boys there and became part of the community, no longer "summer people." I still had my office at the New Yorker, but I quit the Century and the Harvard Club, and got down to the city less and less often but continued to do a lot of world traveling, mostly to remote inaccessible places off the modern grid. I was glad to be living in the woods again, which I hadn't done since New Hampshire, 1970. That was when I got close to some of the local country people, Bill Devoy and his wife Clara, and a hermit named Weasel Burbank, who was distantly related to the plant breeder Luther Burbank, and hadn't been to town in twenty years. Weasel was a pack rat and had everything he had ever owned inside his weathered clapboard house, or out in the dooryard (what a yard is called in New Hampshire). Each room was piled to the ceiling with stuff, and there were only narrow corridors leading from one to the other, so narrow that you couldn't help knocking something down, like a pack of a cigarette brand I never heard of that went under in the forties, or a nail clipper whose top lever you didn't have to turn around, but that latched in place, which was outcompeted by the swiveling lever and never caught on. One of the wrecks in the dooryard, with grape vines growing over and through them, was a Crosley. Weasel and the Devoy's were on the same wavelength as Howland Adams and Bucky Smith. They were local variants of the old rural American culture, which I was just catching the last legs of. People whose entire universe was maybe 20 miles by 20.

A smoking twenty-one-year-old African beauty, Rosette was something of a novelty in the valley. She was in fact just about the only black person for fifty miles in every direction. I knew that racism is endemic in the redneck Adirondack culture, like everywhere in the rural U.S.. Nigger jokes are a staple at the bars. The local topography used to be sprinkled with names like Nigger Pond and Nigger Hill. An Afro-American who on top of being a “nigger “was also gay had made the mistake of buying a place in Keene Valley. He didn't last long. One night some of the local boys smeared shit on his windows and dumped trash cans on his lawn and he got the idea and lit out. So to avoid any unpleasantness I put out that Rosette was a princess, which she actually is, or would be, if Rwanda's monarchy still existed. It wasn't necessary, because she is a warm, big-hearted person and lady with real class, and everybody loved her. The only incident that ever happened was in a local restaurant when we were leaving and I said to several local boys sitting at the bar, take er easy, and one of em said, I'll take er anyway, right on this table, right now. Rosette, who was still having trouble understanding American, let alone Adirondack English, fortunately didn't get what he was saying, and we just continued out the door. This guy, whose name I don't remember, had a real mean face and disposition and he was living with Marty Hebert, a master carpenter whose mom was a sweet lady who worked at the Noonmark Diner. The Heberts were not originally from the valley but were from the sound of their name French Canadians who had become Adirondackers I don't know how many generations ago and had lost their culture, like many of the natives who

had French names like Leclair, Lapine (with pine pronounced the English way), and Gagnon (pronounced Gagnon, with the second g hard). When we expanded the 20 by 30 cabin into a real house a year later, Marty did the cabinet work and the shelves for my book-lined study, and one day he brought his brother Victor, who he said could do the staining, so I hired him. Victor had been in and out of prisons most of his adult life for things like stealing cars, and had just finished a long sentence in Texas. He was a member of the Aryan Brotherhood and had the tattoo to prove it, which he proudly showed me. Hearing that I was a minister one day he brought up a girl he had just met two days earlier and asked if I would marry them and I said why don't you give it a couple of months and if you still want to get married, I'll do it. After a few weeks Victor began to get increasingly agitated and at loose ends. He had been in prison so much longer than he had been free that he didn't know how to cope with being on the outside. When the expansion was done, I paid him and we noticed that the engagement ring I had bought for Rosette was missing, as was my camera and a stack of Brazilian million-cruzeiro notes that with the rampant inflation were only worth ten cents apiece. Later we learned that Victor, seeing all the zeros and thinking they must be worth a lot, had tried to fence the money with Novatenski, who sold used cars down in the valley. But Novatenski told me he didn't give him anything for them, and Victor skipped town and I never saw him or heard a thing about him again. Marty was a really creative carpenter, a real artist, but he was also a hopeless drunk and drank himself to death a few years later. There was another brother who

was into some shady stuff, people he did work for had lost some their possessions, too, but none of the Herberts are around the valley any more. Even the mother is long gone.

During the Gulf War of 1990-92, “sand nigger” jokes became popular at this and the bars in the valley. I first heard the term from Mike Leclair, one of the Leclair boys--the Leclair were another local clan, like the Smiths and the Whitneys and the Ashes. Mike brought up the trunk of a huge weeping willow tree when he was putting gravel around the new house and used it to stop the erosion of a bank he had excavated, and the trunk sprouted lots of suckers, some of which have grown into small trees and are probably the highest weeping willows in New York State. One evening I met Mike at Purdy's, a.k.a. the Elm Tree in Keene. This was the main watering hole in Keene, but a few years later Monty Purdy died, and he didn't leave a will-- a common occurrence in the Ads; no one has much use for lawyers and the idea of planning for the future is antithetical to the modus vivendi of many of us -- and the place shut down and his heirs have been squabbling about who should get it for Jeezam at least fifteen years now. Mike said, “Hey Alex. We're gonna nuke us some sand niggers. Wanna join us ?” I thought it was really offensive. Even if my wife wasn't black, it was the most disgusting racist expression I had ever heard. But it turns out, like many isms in the Ads, to be in local use, but not of local origin. It actually originated in the ghetto. It was a term some homey invented that caught on for the Arabs and Indians and other “towelheads,” who were moving into the

'hood. From the ghetto it migrated to Wall Street, and some of the summer people were Wall Street brokers, who disseminated and added to the number of sand nigger jokes, and it was apparently from one of them that the local boys in the valley picked it up.

In 1996 Rosette's niece and nephew came over from Uganda and lived with us, and they went to Keene Central, the public school. The niece was a knock-out and very self-possessed and she did fine, but her brother was tall and skinny and gentle and less sure of himself, and the boys called him gay and taunted him and laughed at him, and he experienced severe culture shock and became increasingly psychotic and delusional and eventually a paranoid schizophrenic who has been in and out of institutions and prisons. One year my second son, whose mother is a dark-skinned *morena* Brazilian so he is like three-quarters white, also lived with us and went to Keene Central. One of his classmates was dumped by his girlfriend for Nick, and the boy called Nick a "nigger," and everybody in the class jumped on him. Several of the girls in the class ended up getting knocked up by black guys, deliberately it seems, as a fuck you statement to the redneck racism of their parents. One of them lives in Harlem. By 2008, half the town voted for Obama. In twenty years there has been a huge change in the openness of the local society. But within a year of his election, they were blaming Obama for everything that he was trying to fix, and many rural Americans, not just in the Ads, had reverted to type and entrenched racism resurfaced. So whatever change there's been in the local outlook is a sort of two steps forward and one back kind of thing. The biggest change has come from free-market capitalism, and

the people who got rich from it wanting a place in the mountains and driving up the real estate and property taxes, and eventually driving out the local people, as happened with Howland Adams in Westchester.

Bucky Smith died in what year exactly tk. By that time I had become friends with his son Steve, who is a couple of years older than me, and his wife Ada, who was a Torrance. The Torrances came up to North Elba after the Battle of Saratoga (1777) and homesteaded on the Plains of Abraham, where there was a short-lived colony of freed slaves. John Brown, the militant abolitionist, was from North Elba and is buried there along with his sons who were hanged with him at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. So Ada's roots in the Ads are as deep as any white Europeans'. Her cousin Pete is one of the top builders of high-end rustic "camps." I don't think he does much for under a million any more.

Steve and Ada lived down from North Elba, on the steep descent from the Cascade lakes to Keene. Their house was on the left, and it was surrounded by all kinds of derelict trucks and old refrigerators and thousands of pieces of machinery and other stuff that Steve had accumulated over the years and scavenged and refused to part with, amid which his thirty-some hunting dogs, most of them beagles were living. Eventually the APA, the Adirondack Park Agency, busted him for running an illegal junkyard, which was a bum rap. Steve was just a pack rat, like the hermit Weasel Burbank I had known in New Hampshire. He had everything he ever owned in his dooryard, as he called it (a

New England term). He had no interest in selling any of it, but if he had two of something, he could sometimes be persuaded to part with one of them if you had something he didn't have and could use.

Steve always wore a pork pie hat pushed back, and his forearms were as thick and strong as Popeye's; nobody had ever beaten him at arm-wrestling. But he had a bad back--he had fallen of a ladder years ago and never fully recovered, and walked hunched over. He and Ada had five kids, all of whose names began with M : Mitch, Mark, Matt, Melvin, and Mary (can we put them in the correct birth order ?) and he had another son, Mike, from a previous marriage, living in New Hampshire. Ada's kids had all grown up, and several were still living, in the house, which Steve had never finished siding and at this point it's probably safe to say he never will. Years later, he told me he was born in a log cabin fifty feet away that's no longer there. The neighborhood was known as Kerosene Heights and a number of other Smiths lived there, notably Steve's nephew Berton, who was in the trailer down the hill with one of the Coolidge girls. The Coolidges are one of the old native families of Ausable Forks, known local as the Forks or Ausable, as Steve called it.

Berton religiously put away a case of beer every day before noon so he didn't make it to sixty, and he was killingly funny on a regular basis. “Ya live until ya do, Alex and that's the only thing ya do do,” he told me one. The observation reminded of something the old Anglo descendants of the “empire loyalists” who moved up to the eastern townships of Quebec after the American colonies broke with the crown say when someone dies : “joke's up.”

Doy-- adding o to the long i-- is not unique to the Adirondacks. It's old New York. Howland Adams pronounced his long i's the same way. I don't know if it's originally Dutch or Scots-Irish, or Yankee or what. Cockneys do it, too. But you hardly ever hear it any more in the Adirondacks, and it appears to be extinct in Westchester. The old Adirondack mountain guides called themselves "goides." Berton would say, "I'm going to cut poine." Some years later I e-mailed a query about this pronunciation to William A. Kretzschmer, a professor at the University of Georgia who studies regional American dialects and is continuing Hans Kurath's linguistic atlas project. Here is his most interesting reply on January 8, 2009 :

"Alex, Greetings from Baltimore, where I'm at the Dialect society annual meeting.

That *die* vowel is very unstable, lots of variation. It is a diphthong, two sounds in one, and things can be different about both of the sounds. Southerners often leave off or greatly shorten the second vowel. What you report may be like what happens on NC outer banks, where high tide is hoy toyd. It may be similar to what you can hear in Canada, about halfway between "toy" and "tie". It doesn't actually come from anywhere, exactly, but is one of the historical possibilities found in many places for that pronunciation."

I was talking with my brother, who did some very interesting linguistic research in Westchester County

himself, where many of the names of the bedroom communities like Chappaqua and Katonah and Mount Kisco are from the Unami dialect of Delaware Lenape whose speakers who were all in the seventeenth century or massacred or moved out to Oklahoma, where my brother tracked down the few dozen last speakers, who made him a member of their Cheney River band and gave him an Unami name that means He Who Stands Firm, which he has had his driver's licensed changed to. My sister and I call him He Who. So He Who knows a lot about York state, as he calls, and he think the oi sound is Scots Irish, they were the ones who went up and settled the Adirondacks. Protestant Irish from Ulster. The other day I was watching a t.v. movie, and an old Irish grandmother in it says, "gimme da woin." So He Who is probably right on the money.

The old Yankee subsistence farming and woodcutting culture died out in Westchester and Southern New Hampshire, both being only an hour-hour and a half north of metropolises, New York and Boston. They were snuffed by homogenization and suburbanization, real estate values and property taxes going through the roof. Now if you want someone to bang a nail for you in Westchester, you have to bring him down from the next county to the north, Putnam, and he charges you \$60 a hour. The same thing was happening in the Adirondacks. My forty acres, which I picked up for \$38,000 in 1985, are now, since 2007, assessed at \$20,000 an acre. So Steve and Berton, I realized, were a vanishing breed. Steve was a jack of all

trades like his dad and whenever I needed something to be done up at the house, whenever there was plumbing or electric or carpentry or a stove pipe that had to be replaced, Steve generally came up and took care of it. Although his formal education had ended at sixth grade, he was smart and witty and well-informed on world events from watching the t.v. news, and he had an opinion about everything, and it was always interesting. He had his doubts about global warming because “there's all this oil in the Arctic. What does that tell you ? Trees were once there. And what does that tell you : it was a lot warmer than it is now, long before we ever had started to have an effect on the climate.” Last time I talked to him about global warmin' was in the winter of 2009-2010, the first real winter we've had in the Northeast in a long time. “You still believe in global warmin' ?” he asked me, and I said, “It's just taking a vacation. But it'll be back.”

Another time I was headed for Chihuahua to do a story about the world's largest extant prairie-dog colony (90,000-plus *perritos*, as the rodents are called in Mexico) and Steve asked where I was going to cross the border. I says El Paso/Juarez, and he says, “I was stationed in El Paso when I was in the Navy. I was nineteen and I liked it so much I would of stayed, but my mother got sick, and I had to come back. Over the border, in Juarez, it was nothin but bums and whores. The deeper into Mexico you got, the more beautiful the whores were, and the more expensive. I could give you a few numbers, but they'd probly be old.” His service was the only significant stretch of time Steve had spent out of the valley.

Six or seven years later I was writing a story about human sexuality and how it is being changed by the Internet, and Steve got going on gays. “When I was in Mexico, I walked into what I thought was a cat house and it turned out to be a queer bar. Five of the pecker-sucking sons a bitches attacked me and I flattened 'em by the Jesus.” By the Jesus, by Jesus, by Jizzam, Jizzam Crow, are Adirondack swears, like *sacrament*, *tabernacle*, *caulice*, and *hosti* in Quebec. I think they may be unique regional isms or bywords (as Pete Reid, another native of Keene, calls 'em), part of the dialect, although many Adirondack expressions turn out on closer inspection to have wider ranges.

Once Steve and I were standing on my deck, taking in the view of the high peaks framed by the tall white birches, and he I left when I was clearing out the view, which took two weeks, and Stev said “there's three of four kinds of white birch.” These ones were silver birch. “The black part,” he said, pointing to their black lenticels, “look like a goose comin in fur a landing.” And goddam if they didn't. I had never noticed this before, and it's not anything you're going to find in any tree book, of which I have dozens. Which is why this vanishing lore is so important to get. “Paper birch is flankier and thinner, more scraggly and shaggy looking and you can't peel it good,” Steve went on, whereas “silver comes off complete like cork.” It's used to bark furniture and walls, and Steve barked the beams in our basement with it some years later. “Down around Redford [which is way north, but downhill and downstream] they have clump birch. They don't grow single. They grow in clumps of 3-4-5. They grow on clay land.” There's a clump

of clump birch right in front of the town hall in Keene. Then there is yellow birch, the hardest and one of the main woods used by Adirondack rustic furniture makers.

Berton Smith also really knew the woods. I went out with him one time and, having written him off as a drunk, was astonished at his detailed knowledge of the flora and fauna and at his spiritual dimension, which only came out when he was out in nature and I had never suspected. After he got out of the Korean War, Berton had supported himself for a year by trapping pine martens. He lived in his father Bucky's hunting camp up on Walton Basin, which he took me up to one morning.

The actual way this hoik came about was one morning Berton called me up because the APA, the Adirondack Park Agency, was going to tear down the camp, which was on state land, on the back side of Cascade Mountain, up on Walton Brook. (I should point out that in the Adirondacks a brook is bigger than a stream. In Westchester County the opposite is the case. But does this make brooks being bigger a purely local usage? Not necessarily. I'd have to consult the linguistic atlases and with Dr. Kretzschmar tk). Berton was hoping I could give the APA some negative publicity or something and make it change its mind. Bucky and his brother what's his name tk Berton's father had built the camp in what year tk. when the land belonged to Finch Pruyn, the paper company. Finch Pruyn, which never cut it, sold it or gave it to the state, and gave Bucky a piece of paper that said he and his descendants could keep the camp and use it for 90 years, but Berton couldn't find the

document. The problem was that Berton and his buddies would bomb up to the camp in their four-wheelers, and the racket bothered the neighbors further down in Walton basin, and they had lodged a complaint with the APA. If Bert and his buddies had been more discreet about it, the problem would never have come up.

Berton's contempt for official paperwork was locally famous. One time Ronnie Purdy, whose father owned the Elm Tree, where Berton was to be found every day from five o'clock till closing time, was deer hunting in the woods and he found Berton's hunting license. He had taken a crap and wiped himself with it. That evening when he served Berton his first beer he tucked the license under the mug like a coaster and told him, "I think you forgot something."

I said I'd see what I could do, but the first thing was I had to see the camp. So one morning while the snow was still on the ground I drove down to Berton's trailer and he strapped on a 45 magnum and a hunting knife. Isn't that a bit of overkill, I asked him and he said, "I never go into the woods unarmed. You never know what's going to happen, what opportunity or danger might present itself." He whistled up his dog who jumped into the back of the pickup and we drove up Owl's Head and parked off the road and set off for Walton Basin on foot. See the account of our hoik to the camp my Snow Country piece, which is coming up in a few pages.

Steve and I became really tight, and we remain so to this day, even though I moved up to Montreal eleven years ago and still travel a lot and sometimes months pass before I can even get down to Keene. "I'm the best goddam friend

you ever had,” he told me one time. We figure we're going to go out together. I sometimes wonder what our attraction is. Basically, I think it's that we have both taken life on our own terms, and don't have much use for the petit bourgeoisie and are both very intellectually curious. Despite our differences, we have the same outlook and sense of humor. Plus I have great respect and affection for people from local cultures whose people have not been sucked into the modern mass consumer culture and are still close to nature. Plus I have empathy for the dispossessed and disenfranchised and marginalized, my people, who had lived in Russia for more than a thousand years, having lost their homeland in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. We were in the so-called nobility. My maternal grandfather, whom I never knew, was a cavalry officer in the Empress Alexandra, the last czarina's, Crimean Guard and he didn't do too well in the New World. His only skills were riding, shooting, gambling, and womanizing, and after a stint as the gamekeeper on the Guggenheim estate in Ort Washington, Long Island, he ended up living in a cabin deep in the New Hampshire woods, working on the roads and guiding bear hunters and becoming one of the locals. His fine penmanship was sought after for documents. Maybe a part of me takes after him, the part that thinks ending my days alone in a cabin in the woods wouldn't be so bad. Not that that seems in the cards any more, now that I've become a city boy.

Maybe the bond between Steve and me is related to the fact that we both have a part of us that nothing can get to and nobody can take away, except maybe death. So are both kind of curious to see how it is going to play out,

whether this essential us is going to live on or not. But both of us know deep down that it probably won't. Which is why we think organized religion is basically a racket.

But also the old mountain clans like the Smiths had a live-and-let-live attitude and were the most open-minded and least prejudiced people in the valley. The Ashes were another venerable clan. Warren Ash put in my septic system and delivered our cooking gas, throwing the heavy metal tanks on and off his pickup till he retired last year at the age of 85. He had a wonderful wild, free laugh that took nothing to set off and was exactly like that of an old Swiss innkeeper and mountain guide Hermann Kunzi, whom I knew in when I was a teenager in the early sixties.

People born and raised in the Adirondacks are known as “woodchucks” and “natives.” A few of them could be described as “hillbillies,” but that's more Appalachian, plus it is loaded and pejorative, and most natives would bristle at the term. The only hillbillies in the Adirondacks, if you ask me, are the ones who still call Afro-Americans “niggers.” A better term is “mountain people.” But most of them, whether they live down in the hamlets or out in the woods, are not very different from country people anywhere in America. They watch the same t.v. shows everybody in the country does, shop in the Big Box stores and malls and supermarkets in Plattsburgh which are found everywhere, buy the same food, clothes, and home supplies. The ism “ahsum” (awesome) entered the Adirondack dialect in the seventies. It came from a sitcom that everybody was watching. During the long winter months a lot of t.v. is watched in the north country.

I remember a few years after I joined the New Yorker-- it was at the end of my profile of the Genealogical Society of Utah (the Mormons go around collecting the names of everybody who ever lived that they can get their hands on, so they can posthumously induct them into their church, if you can believe it), I used the word awesome, which I had picked up from my two oldest boys, who were then in elementary school.

Miss Gould, the ancient custodian of the English language, who had the last word on punctuation and word usage in the magazine and was marvellous in her own way (that was the New Yorker style : marvellous and traveller had two l's, and you could never say gotten, it always had to be got), was so out of touch with the popular culture that she had never heard of awesome, which had been out there for several years, and queried it with the word “awe-inspiring,” followed by a question mark. She did the same thing with the word “joint,” as in marijuana cigarette, when it first appeared in the magazine in the Sixties. “Joint of ham ?” she queried. Languages are always in a state of dynamic evolution. Words are constantly going extinct and new ones are coming into being. I have a 50-volume dictionary of natural history compiled by one of the French encyclopedists in 1812-32. Most of the words in it don't exist any more.

Some natives of the Ads are so local they have never even been to Plattsburgh. These were the ones I was really interested in. People with a deep, perhaps even genetically imprinted sense of place, whose entire lives were lived in

a specific, circumscribed landscape, which nurtured them spiritually whether or not they knew it or would ever have admitted it, in a social arena consisting of the same few dozen or most a hundred people, to whom they were multiply related. I had spent some time with Navajos way out in the Arizona desert who had shown me their deep spiritual connection with their universe, Dinétah, the Land of the Navajo. Berton Smith also had this connection. My hoik in the woods with him was a real eye-opener. It was as good as walking with an Indian in the Amazon, or a pygmy in the Ituri Forest, or a bushman in the Kalahari Desert, all of which I have done. He had it, to my complete amazement. How many more were there like him ? I wondered. Probly a lot, but getting them to open up about their private world, to define the borders and content their universe, which they had never done even to themselves, was another thing. And I wasn't sure I wanted to do it. Butting into each other's lives, being nosey and snoopy and gossipy, is not in the local playbook, and I like it that way just as much as everybody.

In 1997 I made my first attempt to describe the dialect and culture of the Adirondack Mountain People. It was published in Snow Country magazine, which no longer exists, and later reproduced in an anthology of new Adirondack writing that Syracuse University Press put out called Rooted in Rock. You can also find in in the Past

Dispatches/Adirondacks section of my Web site, DispatchesFromTheVanishingWorld.com. Here it is, in full : “The Real Adirondacks,” as I called it, with some commentary and corrections in brackets. As opposed to the ersatz tourist Adirondacks and the lavish rustic camps where the old blueblood families of the East had been summering for generations (about which I had just done a piece for Vanity Fair). I tried to write it in the local vernacular, the way a proud, ornery mountain man like Steve would have done it, but it was surprisingly controversial. A lot of locals, of the few who read it, didn't get it and were pissed. The publication of the piece actually taught me more about the culture, so here it is in toto :

The black flies will eat you alive, the natives are hostile, the mountains are low and boring, the trails are muddy and slippery, and the fishing sucks thanks to acid rain. So if I were looking for a place to hike or camp and have a wilderness experience, the last place I'd head for is the Adirondacks. And as a place to live, forget it. The winters are cold and long, the schools are terrible, and about the only place you can get work is in one of our many prisons. The only reason I've been living here for the last ten years is because I can't sell my house. Every morning when I get up I ask myself, what am I doing in this godforsaken forest? So I've made it my personal mission to warn all you downstaters, flatlanders, suburban yuppies, and aging boomers who are thinking of moving up to the country: Don't come to the Adirondacks. Vermont is the place for you. Keep the hell out of here. [to which I would add the local term of contempt, Jerseyites, as most of the

people who come up here seem to be from the Garden State, space to put in a garden being in increasingly short supply down there.]

As one of my neighbors puts it, Vermont is like Austria, while this side of Lake Champlain is more like Bulgaria. In Vermont everybody is an ex-hippie or a Democrat, and they all drive around in Volvos listening to NPR and shopping at the winery, the cheesery, and the bootery, and it's so quaint and politically correct that you want to barf. Over here, Democrats and ex-hippies are about as common as mountain lions. (There's actually supposed to be a couple of them-cougars, that is-over the mountain from our house.) [This has changed, as almost everybody in our town at least voted for Obama in the last election, but this could have been a blip.] The native Adirondackers--the mountain people who have been here for generations-- are extremely laid-back and would never pass muster in Vermont. They have their old cars and refrigerators and everything else they ever owned in their dooryard, and they haven't finished putting up the siding on their house and probably never will. They're a dying breed; there are only a few families left in our town. I recently asked one of them [this was Steve] what his attitude about life was, and he said, "I more or less live day to day and try to figure out how to get the things I want without going into debt or asking anybody for anything."

There's an updated type of native who drives around in a brand new pickup that he keeps spitshined. He has a dish that gets a hundred channels and a lawn that he mows

religiously and an American flag that he runs up each morning. He's usually the next generation of the laid-back type and picked up his neatness in the service, or he's got a profession and an image that he has to present [keep up]. But all of these guys have pretty much the same outlook. Some of them have great senses of humor; others seem to have none at all until you get to know them and discover a wit that's "drier than a popcorn fire," as one man described it. [Actually many natives of the Ads do have zero sense of humor, as I learned from the reaction to this piece. They're what I would call irony-deficient.] They're sturdy people whose values were forged in a harsh environment and reach back to pioneer days. If one of them dies or burns himself out of his house, the neighbors will pitch in and help. Otherwise, everyone respects each other's space. No one cottons to being told what to do, especially if their property is concerned.

So it comes as no surprise that the zoning restrictions imposed by the Adirondack Park Agency haven't gone over too well with the local population. "The goddam APA," as one man called it, has jurisdiction over what happens within the Blue Line that encloses the Park's six million acres. It controls everything from lakeshore development to the way property can be passed down to your kids. In 1975, someone dumped a truckload of cow manure on the porch of the APA's headquarters in Ray Brook. And in the 1990s, when a commission appointed by then-governor Mario Cuomo proposed even tighter restrictions, a group of protesters blockaded the Northway (the interstate that runs from Albany to Montreal), three APA agents making a site

inspection at Black Brook were shot at, and a woman on the APA's board who almost always nixed subdivision proposals had her barn torched in Wadhams. One of our local gas stations put up in its front window a portrait of Cuomo with a toothbrush moustache and labeled it "Adolf Cuomo." But violence is a rare, and I would even say uncharacteristic, response up here. This said, there are pockets of it, like the bleak pass between Keene and Elizabethtown where in the last few years two crusty oldtimers have been murdered. The first was killed by a drifter who saw him flashing a bankroll in a nearby bar, the second in mid-January by his twenty-five-year-old grandson who, according to local speculation, may have been suffering from "a very nasty case of cabin fever."

Forty-two percent of the land within the Blue Line is state-owned and "forever wild." You can't even cut a tree without a special act of the state legislature. The rest of the Park is a patchwork of private property. It's the biggest park east of the Mississippi, bigger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Glacier national parks combined, and it's the country's longest-standing experiment in letting people live in a wilderness preserve (the original legislation dates to 1885), which is what makes it so interesting. Not that there is any reason to come here.

"The whole point about this place is to keep it secret," a resident of Upper St. Regis Lake, the snootiest and most exclusive of the Adirondacks summer communities, told me recently. There are class tensions between the summer people (some of whom have been coming up for five generations) and the locals who have to work for them ("pissing in the soup" as a friend describes it), but the one

thing everyone agrees on is that we want to keep the place for ourselves. If the Adirondacks are underappreciated, that's just great.

Our property, at the foot of Crane Mountain, backs up on 14,000 acres of state land. [it's actually Big Crow Mountain. Another writer, Bill McKibben, has a place at the foot of Crane Mountain, around Garnet Lake in the lower Ads, but for some reason-- maybe just to peeve me (he had been to our place)-- he said it was Crow in his book *The Age of Missing Information*, which compares what you get out of watching t.v. for hours with spending the same time out in the woods. So here I was just returning the favor. Writers are assholes, which is why I prefer the company of guys like Steve.] We have bears, coyotes, ermines, peregrine falcons, ravens, luna moths, five kinds of delicious Boletus mushrooms, [a small chanterelle called the blue trumpet that I've never found anywhere else], a rare fern, tiny birds called kinglets, practically invisible butterflies called ringlets, and minute trace amounts of gold all within a hundred yards of the house; and 90 million people live within a day's drive. Every few months an impressive act of nature will happen to put us in our place, reminding us that its forces are still in control up here. Three Februaries back, a blizzard drifted over our second-story deck, and we were trapped for three days until Ray Manley came up with his bulldozer and dug us out. But this was nothing compared to the blowdown of July 15th, 1995, when a derecho, a rare straight-line windstorm with gales of 100 miles an hour and more, knocked down in less than half an hour the trees in a swatch of nearly 100,000 acres, mostly in the remote northwestern Oswegatchie basin.

Towns like Star Lake were cut off for days. There ensued a bitter debate about whether the felled timber should be salvaged or left to return to the ecology. The environmental groups favored the latter course of action, or inaction, and found an unexpected ally in the pulp and paper industry, which was concerned that the timber would flood the market, and they prevailed.

The Oswegatchie basin includes 50,000 acres of old-growth pine and spruce that were hit hard; long considered one of the wildest and gloomiest parts of the Adirondacks, it is now even more so. You can canoe for days back in there without running into anything human.

Dead wood is a big part of the forest landscape. Maybe a third of the balsams on my land have been knocked over by wind storms or snapped by ice storms over the years. But that just opens space for seedlings. At Christmastime, you look for double-needle balsams (most are single-needle). They make the best Christmas trees.

Then there are the smaller acts of nature, which can wreak serious havoc on your career and your appliances. One morning I was clattering away on my lap-top on deadline for a slick New York City magazine when suddenly the power failed and I lost the whole story. A beaver, it turned out, had dropped a poplar tree over a power line down in the valley, plunging us back into the pre-Edison era for a couple of hours. Poplars, by the way, are known locally as "popples." There are four species in these parts. One is known as "Bommagilia" (for Balm of Gilead, a reference to its nice-smelling buds). I'm always

on the lookout for local lingo, of which there isn't a whole lot left at this point. The Adirondack twang is subtler than the grating ones of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, and it takes a while to develop an ear for it. A lot of men have this deep, gruff way of talking so you can hardly make out what they're saying. Sometimes you'll catch an old-timer saying "eaves-trough" instead of gutter, or "I be" for "I am." "Jeezam Crow" is the big North Country swear word; the name of the Lord isn't taken in vain up here the way it is downstate. We're too smart for that. Clyde Rabideau, the mayor of Plattsburgh, our biggest town, has a Jeezam Crow award that he gives every week to an Adirondacker who did something positive for a change. The winner is announced over the radio and can stop by Rabideau's convenience store and pick up his or her prize, a free T-shirt or a tuque, which is French-Canadian-Northern-Adirondack for a woolen ski-hat. Everyone perfects his own personal slant to his tuque.

Not long ago I called the mayor's office and Rabideau himself answered. I like a mayor who answers his own phone. He told me a lot of locals around Plattsburgh and over to Tupper Lake are of FrenchCanadian descent, and though they don't speak French anymore they still use French reflexive grammar, as in, "Hey, I remember dat, me," or "You got any more wine, you?" Then he faxed me a hilarious memoir he had written about his grandpere, Medor Rabideau, a trapper who used to brew his own dandelion wine. Farther south, by the time you get to Elizabethtown or Keene, the French component is vestigial. It only survives in local surnames like Jacques, LeClair,

and Gagnon, and some of the people who bear them look kind of French. The best French-Canadian Adirondack fiddler, by the way, Donnie Perkins, works at Wendy's in Plattsburgh.

Back to the subject of acts of nature (that's another thing that happens if you live in the North Country long enough: you start to digress): Last summer, lightning struck a pole halfway up the hill, traveled up my phone line, and fried my computer. I'd just gotten on the Internet, and so far that's the only significant thing I've gotten from it. I should have learned my lesson, because the summer before I'd lost a TV and two phones the same way, but I didn't.

Probably our most characteristic and awesome natural phenomenon, however, are the slides. A lot of the High Peaks-Dix, Gothics, Giant, Whiteface, and, of course, Big Slide-have them. There's a new slide on Kilbourne, a foothill of the Sentinel Range outside of Lake Placid. To get there (not that I'm suggesting anything!) you take the Lake Placid-Wilmington road, park at the plaque commemorating the founding of the Forest Preserve, pick up a herdpath across the road that will soon take you to an old lumber road on which you hang a left, and walk for fifteen minutes through bug- and nettle-infested jungle until you get to a streambed choked with an avalanche of tree trunks, boulders, root systems, and soil. It's a scene of incredible devastation, believe me. Then you make your way up the streambed to a thousand feet of sheer naked bedrock where the stuff used to be growing, until it was loosened by pounding rain and came crashing down. The

bedrock is billion-year-old anorthosite, a form of granite unique to the Adirondacks but one of the major components of the moon and some of the oldest rock on earth. About five million years ago, it erupted through the Appalachians in a dome about 160 miles in diameter roughly centered on Blue Mountain Lake. From the streambed, you can bushwhack over to Copperas Pond, which is a nice place to swim. This takes about half an hour unless you get lost or run into a pack of wild dogs, which you probably will.

I'll tell you two more beautiful hikes, if hike you must, and that's all you're going to get out of me. For the first one, you need two cars and some partners. One group parks at Newcomb and the other at Adirondack Loj, and you both make for Indian Pass. You can meet for lunch and swap keys at Scott's Clearing, a big old clearing left when a beaver dam went out a while ago. Or you might want to go up to Avalanche Pass, which offers some of the most dramatic mountain scenery this side of Yosemite, and climb Colden Dike up to the top of Colden. This is one of the most spectacular climbs in the Adirondacks, but it's a bit hairy in a few places, and if you fall to your death, don't blame me.

The Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake is one of the finest regional museums in the country. It has some of the most beautiful guideboats, old wooden motor launches, Rushton canoes, and Adirondack chairs ever made. There's Sunset Cottage, a masterpiece of mosaic twigwork from Whitney Park, the private 55,000-acre

compound now run by the flamboyant heiress Marylou Whitney (who said at the cottage's dedication that it was where everybody changed into their bathing suits and that she was sure her late husband Sonny had made love to a lot of women in it before she got involved with him). The museum also has the private railroad car of one of the robber barons, among them J. P. Morgan and various Vanderbilts, who built palatial rustic camps on remote lakes in the forest and entertained in black tie.

If the museum is the center of scholarship on the Adirondacks, Burdick's Chain Saws in Jay is where I'd go to get a blast of the local culture. Dale Burdick, who runs the place with his wife, Joy, blows away Leno and Letterman as a stand-up comic in my and a lot of other people's opinions. Bernie Rosio sharpens the chains and has one of those deep, gruff deliveries you can barely understand. I asked him one time where he was from and he answered with two bullfrog croaks. Finally it sank in that he had said "Black Brook."

There's always a lively scene at Burdick's. Two gents with their tuques slanted just so stop in for coffee most mornings. One time I met two guys from deep in the northern Catskills who had come up to roast a pig for a wedding. Another time a Lenape Delaware Indian came down from Port Kent with an old beat-up Stihl.

"I need a new blade," he told Bernie.

"You need a new saw, that's what you need," Bernie told him after looking at it.

"I need money, that's what I need," the Indian said.

"Can't help ya with that," Bernie said.

It took several visits before I heard a joke from Dale that was printable, and it wasn't even a joke, it was something that happened: the day Ralph [I have deleted his last name, for reasons that will soon be apparent], who is no longer with us, God rest his soul, lost his favorite dog and his wife asked him for a divorce. Ralph picked up the dog, which was a beagle and had been hit by a truck, off the road, and when he got into the house, his wife had coincidentally just happened to decide that she'd had it with their fifty-some-year marriage and wanted out. "Look, I just lost the best dog I ever had," Ralph told her when she informed him of her decision. "Quit trying to cheer me up."

When deer season comes, "I let all my men out and they all try to kill something with fur," Dale told me. Getting your deer is the defining ritual of the Adirondacks. Between the 24th of October and the first Sunday in December half the work force goes on unemployment, and if you have a problem with your plumbing or electric, you have to fix jt yourself, because pretty near every able-bodied local tradesman is in his hunting camp. Until a few years back, the high schools used to let out every boy over fourteen so he could get his deer.

"It's what you looked forward to all year," one of the many Smiths in our valley, who took me into his camp, told me [this was Berton]. "Just being back in camp and going hunting." The Smiths were Scots-Irish and [came up the Hudson valley to Lake Champlain then up the Ausable River and took the east branch to Keene Valley with the

first settlers in 1816]. Bucky, as I'll call him, has a full beard and speaks real old-timey: He drinks "woine," goes for a "hoike," and abhors "voiolence."

"Long as I can remember, there was the tradition of going into camp," he told me. "You're jess born into it. My dad had me hunting partridge, rabbits, and squirrels when I was eight year old." Bucky's sons are still in town, but they don't go into the woods much, "because they're too busy doing other things." But the ritual of getting your deer is still going strong, even if it has undergone some recent modifications. The modern hunter rides into camp like Rambo, in a four-wheeler with a plastic scabbard for his gun. Some camps have TV. If you don't get your deer, it isn't the end of the world. You play poker and drink with your buddies. "Getting drunk is the true meaning of deer season," says Dale Burdick. And as anyone can tell you, more deer get shot in the bars than out in the woods.

Bucky's dad and his uncle built the camp in the 1940s on land they had leased for ninety years from Finch, Pruyn, the paper company, which sold the land to the state. The state is still honoring the lease, which has forty years to go, so this is a legal camp on state land. [actually, it wasn't, and the camp has since been torn down.] There are others that aren't legal. They're known as "outlaw camps." As we bushwhacked up to the camp, we kept passing deer runways with fresh prints, some of them big. Bucky said he'd never seen so many deer as there were this year. "If you know the runs, there's not much of a trick to killing 'em. It's just being there at the right time. I don't shoot any thing under ten point. I seen three that were presentable this

fall." Bucky doesn't shoot black bear any more either, and he doesn't trap fisher cats and pine martens, which is how he supported himself when he came home from Korea in 1959, because the money you get for their skins isn't worth killing them, and there are so few of them now that it doesn't feel right. Bucky still spends several hours a day wandering in the woods, as I do, collecting useless bits of information like the location of seasonal springs. He knows his trees and shrubs cold-- hardhack (ironwood), the preferred wood for ax handles, and the three kinds of "shumack."

The camp, named Hedgehog Den, was a gem, ten by fifteen feet, with six bunks and a woodstove. It had nearly been washed away by the floods a month earlier. That was last year's exciting act of nature-- the worst floods in the Adirondacks' recorded history. It started raining buckets on Friday, November 11, and when it finally let up the next morning, bridges had been swept away, roads were gone, and places like Peasleeville and Black Brook were completely cut off. The damage in Essex County alone was estimated in the millions. "The flooding raised hell with the hunting," Bucky told me. "Everybody had to come out and see if his house was still there."

We walked down the brook and an hour later we were drinking beers in Bucky's brother Ronnie's living room. Ronnie had just retired from the Air Force, and he was devoting his retirement to golf. You wouldn't think the Ads (as some of us call them; others call them the Dacks) would be a golfer's paradise, but they boast some of the oldest and

most scenic courses in the country. I've played most of them (there are more than forty open to the public) and these are my favorites: the East Course of Malone, Saranac Inn, Whiteface Inn, the Lake Placid Lower, Craig Wood, Westport, Sagamore, and Thendara, and in the nine-hole category, the Ausable Club, the Barracks and Top O' the World. Some of the courses have resident red foxes that follow you around and take an interest in the game, curling up below the tee and almost seeming to roll their eyes when you slice into the woods. A few years ago I smacked a career drive on the sixth hole at Craig Wood, and a fox pup ran out on the fairway and took off with my ball.

The drive from Keene to Lake Placid through the Cascades Lakes is one of the most scenic stretches of highway in the Ads. Rock climbers this July morning are clinging to the cliffs of Pitchoff, off to the right. (Chapel Pond Slab and Poke-O-Moonshine are the other climbing meccas.) The hiking trail up Pitchoff takes forty-five minutes. Two huge erratics, or boulders deposited by a long-gone glacier, are poised on the summit. The flumes--cuts of water through tilted, fractured strata-- are another of our natural wonders. Krumrnholz-- the stunted, impenetrably dense balsam-fir forest near the summits of the forty-three "High Peaks" over 4,000 feet-- are our most singular vegetation type. There was an old Indian named Henry Nolat who lived in a one-room shanty at the foot of Pitchoff [actually Brown Mountain, the next peak on the ridge] until he died a few years ago. Nolat had long streaming hair and knew the mushrooms, and he used to go up on Pitchoff and cut the inner bark of black ashes into

strips of bast that he wove into pack baskets, which is one of our indigenous Adirondack crafts.

I pass a neighbor in his pickup, and we greet each other by raising the first fingers of our right hand off our steering wheels, in keeping with the local etiquette. Half an hour later, I am driving through Saranac Lake, which is very funky and has seen better days like a number of our bigger towns (Port Henry and Malone also come to mind) and is a good example of the habitat a friend calls "deep dark New York." During Prohibition, Saranac Lake was a thriving center for Canadian bootleggers, and it is still full of bars. The liveliest one, the Water Hole, has live music on weekends. Last Saturday, a black woman who had come up from Virginia with her bass player and her drummer played electric guitar and belted out the blues in a style between Lightnin' Hopkins and B. B. King, while several derelict long-haired mountain men types whirled around on the dance floor like dervishes.

I stop at Chuck Jessie's studio to check out his latest collection of chandeliers, lamps, chairs, and coffee tables, which he makes from tree burls and the antlers of deer and elk. Chuck is Adirondack born and raised, and is a retired Navy Seal. He built his chalet, on a little lake; completely from scavenged wood, but you wouldn't know it because the craftsmanship is so superb. Chuck built his dream camp in his head as he lay awake on long, dark nights in Vietnam. He embodies the Adirondacks' self-sufficient ethos and self-taught creativity as well as anyone I know;

and if you want to see his stuff and meet the real deal, give him a call.

I pass a house that had just burned to the ground. The impact of fire, accidental and otherwise, on the North Country's real estate has been horrendous. Most of the grand old hotels and the finest rustic great camps have gone up in smoke, their existence documented only in photographs. Someone, perhaps a disgruntled former employee, has been torching the buildings of the old Lake Placid Club one by one over the last few years, and the local police haven't been able to nail him. I know of one man who burned himself and his wife and their thirteen children out of five houses before he died a few years ago; he kept heating them with green wood that gunked up the chimneys with creosote.

Continuing up to Gabriels, I take the road to a remote outpost in the hinterland called Onchiota, "where the men are men and the sheep are scared," as Dale Burdick jokes. The center of Onchiota consists of little more than an establishment nicknamed Blood, Sweat and Beers, Inc., which used to be a grocery store until Hayden "Bing" Tormey, the guy who owned it, retired. He keeps his tools there now and uses the place as a workshop, and locals still come in to gossip and pass the time.

On the way out of town a sign says "Leaving 67 of the Friendliest People in the Adirondacks (Plus a Couple of Soreheads)." This is a little more hospitable than a sign in the equally remote and tiny Hawkeye (down the road a

piece from Swastika) that says "We Shoot Every Third Visitor and the Second One Just Left."

If you take a left at Onchiota, there is a nineteen-mile loop my son and I took on bicycles one time through backwoods with lots of lakes that are drained by the Saranac River. Just as you are about to cross a bridge over the river, there is a spring off to the right where you can stop and drink some famously pure and refreshing water gushing out of a pipe. The halfway point of the loop is Loon Lake (not the one in E. L. Doctorow's novel, which is a composite of several different lakes in the central Ads), a once-exclusive summer colony with a golf course that has fallen on hard times. Some of the buildings were designed by Stanford White and are in various states of dilapidation and restoration. On the way back, you pick up Route 3 at Merrill Corners, and after a mile or so you hang a right, which will take you back to Onchiota. While you're there, you want to stop at the Six Nations Museum, created and run by an Iroquois family who care deeply about their heritage and offer one of the most authentic Native American experiences available to the casual tourist that I've ever encountered in my travels. The Iroquois called the Algonquins, who hunted in the Ads in the summer, the Anaducksue, which means Bark Eaters and was not complimentary (the implication being that they were lousy hunters). A great battle between the two nations was fought at the mouth of the Oswego River, as told in a seventy-five-foot-long band of pictographs circling the walls in the museum that is the longest piece of beadwork in the world.

No one lived full-time in the Ads until the white man came. It was a zone of peace, and even after the white man came people were basically supportive of each other because they never knew when they might need each other's help. My theory is that the harsh environment, where the temperature can swing eighty degrees in twenty-four hours, has had an equalizing and harmonizing effect on the people, and this is where the live-and-let-live attitude that is the essence of the local culture came from. But I don't feel like I really have a handle on this place. Maybe my grandchildren will, if they choose to live here, and I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

You wouldn't believe all the flak I took for that article, especially from the merchants in Lake Placid, who thought I was trashing the Ads and thus negatively impacting their business. Months after the story came out, I took a roll of film to be developed in Placid and the woman looked at the credit card and said, "You !" Anybody who is semiliterate and has even a moderate sense of humor should have been able to pick up by the end of the first paragraph that this was a lovesong to the Ads and its people and natural beauty, I would have thought, but that just shows you how much I know.

A year or two later, Berton Smith got cancer and died. I went to see him on his deathbed in his trailer and several of his female relatives were there, maybe a sister and an aunt. Berton was positively radiant and at peace with the fact that he was going out and as funny as he was always was, so it wasn't at all the grim scene I thought it was going

to be. Except the women were grim, and when I asked Berton about the outcome of his fight with the APA over his right to use the camp, and he said, “they tore it down,” the women realized I was the one who wrote the infamous article and became even grimmer. It was then that I realized some natives of the Ads-- not a few of them in fact-- are irony-deficient.

Burdick's got shut down by the IRS cuz he never paid his taxes, and that was the end of that quintessentially Adirondack scene. Here are two of Dale's jokes. The first one he told me. Warning, it is disgustingly misogynistic, like many Ads jokes.

A guy gets married and takes his wife to a motel for their honeymoon. Behind the motel is a trout stream, and the next morning the guy goes out to try his luck and he meets another fishermen and they get talking and the other guy, hearing he is on his honeymoon, says what are you doing out here ? How come you aren't fucking you're brains out with your new bride ? And he says, the problem is, she's got gonorrhhea, and the other guy says why don't you just take her in the ass then and he says the problem there is, she's got diarrhea, so the other guy says, well you can still do orally but he says, not really, cuz she has pyorrhhea. But then he adds, but she's also got worms, so the fishing is great.

The second joke Dale told to a woman I know who is something of a feminist, which he probly didn't know, or he wouldn't have told it to her :

*Why do the men in the Adirondack all have such big guts ?
If you got a big tool, you need a big shed.*

The demise of Burdick's left a big hole in the cultural life of the eastern north-central Ads. Some of the guys who hung out at Burdick's started to hang out at Tim Devlin's garage, but it wasn't the same. Tim was a good guy and he told me there were a couple of old families up in the hills who had hardly ever been out of Jay, which I already knew. And that the natives of Ausable Chasm call it the chasm, hard ch like church, which I didn't. At some point I heard from the widow of Ralph Lastnamedeleted, who didn't appreciate my airing their dirty laundry. They didn't end up divorcing, she told me, and Ralph was dead, and that was one of the few write-ups he ever got, and not the way he would have wanted to be remembered. I felt terrible. Which raises the question whether we want to use anybody's real names in this manuscript. Anybody who doesn't want their name to be in this Dispatch, just let me know. There's still time to take out. In fact, it can be taken out any time. That's the beauty of the Internet.

Our place was all the way at the top of East Hill, and halfway down it Pete Reid lived with his sister Jane in the house they had been born in. As Linda Rosco, our assistant postmistress, put it, how many people today can that be said of. One of their brothers, Jim, was an undertaker in Long Island, and their sister Donna was the town tax collector. Pete was one of the neat types, the opposite of Steve Smith, to whom he was related. But not one of the new neat types,

he was as traditional Adirondack they come. He described himself as a “full native.” The place was in its own quiet way an impeccable showcase. Pete had a little sawmill in back, and there were stacks of thick, rough-cut planks he had cut up, and a raised log shed where he stored stuff. “My father Howard lived here all his life, and so have I, because I haven't found anywhere else I'd rather be,” he explained. “I've never been anywhere because I never felt the need to. In the course of a lifetime I've seen pretty much everything that people are capable of right here in this valley.

“The Adirondacks people had bywords, slang of their own. Just listening to my dad made you laugh. But you're a generation too late. You should have talked to Myrtle and Lee Marble. Both of them were born here on the hill and stayed, but they're gone now. And Tangway.”

I had talked to Tangway. He was an Indian, what tribe I don't know. When I was building the cabin in 1986 the truck that brought the logs, pre-cut on two sides, couldn't make it around the last bend on O'Toole Road up to our house, so Tangway, noticing our problem, let it put them in his dooryard, and we took them up in my pick-up, a dozen at a time, and that way I got to know Tangway, who had this beautiful huge 1964 Chevvie station wagon with fake wood paneling that he kept spitshined. One morning I found him shining up the chrome front fender, not that it needed it, and he told me he was going on a big fishing trip and outlined a journey that would have taken at least two years to complete. First he was going down South and catch him some bigmouth bass and a few of them six foot long river catfish, then he was going down to Mexico and

catch a few marlin and other big billfish then he was going up to the Rockies for the trout and finally he was going to end up in Alaska for the salmon, and there were dozen other stops along the way that I don't remember. A few days after we got the last logs off his lawn he packed up his stationwagon and took off. "I took him milk that morning," Pete recalled, "He got as far as New Hampshire and had an aneurism." I said he knew he was going on a big journey, but he didn't know it was to the other side. It was a very Indian way to go.

"My father's sister Lisle Smith was Steve's grandmother," Pete continued, reviewing the family tree. "Buck [Napoleon, Steve's father] was his first cousin, so Steve is my second cousin. [technically, his first cousin once-removed]. "My dad's brother Virgil lived in the place below Steve [where Berton had his trailer]. One night he got home and the place was on fire. They had another brother, Harry. Buck's brothers were Winifred, Stanley, Raleigh, and Orville. Orville was quite a woodsman."

Pete suggested I talk to the Cornwrights "over to" E'town. That was Elizabethtown, the Essex county seat, a five-mile drive over Spruce Hill, which has a nice little rustic golf course that we play often. There used to be a lot more to E'town than there is today. It had a movie theater and a big hotel. But after the war, people stopped coming up to the Ads for the whole summer, and the hotel was hit by "Jewish lightning," as insurance fires are anti-semitically called in these parts, and burned to the ground, like all the big old wood hotels in the Ads. There were a couple of smaller cases of Jewish lightning right in the valley while

we were living there, only they looked more like native lightning to me.

There was a plaque on E'town commemorating the men in the county who were killed in Vietnam. It said, "Lest We Not Forget," which I didn't notice myself, for all my highfalutin education, was a double negative until somebody pointed it out. And in a gorge on the road up to Hurricane there was an old rusted roadster tangled up in the trees that someone had drove off into it in the forties. Some day I was going to do an illustrated coffee table book called *Creepy Ruins of the Adirondacks*, and that was going to be one of them.

I told Pete that I knew about the Pulsivers in E'town but not the Cornwrights, and Pete said "the Pulsivers have spread their genes around. Some of them are lawyers and judges, and others are still living in the woods." The other old clan in E'town are the Mitchell. Most of em live on Mitchell Road, up on what used to be called Nigger Hill. During the ice storm in January, 1998, the only natural disaster I have ever experienced, most of the Ads, including our house, were without power, and the roads were so slick and treacherous that the Grand Union trucks couldn't make it to the supermarket in E'town for a week and by the time I got there, there was almost nothing on the shelves, and the aisles were full of backwoods people with checked shirts and long hair wandering around in a sort of post-apocalyptic daze. So there are a lot more natives in the Ads than anybody probly realizes, I observed to Pete and he said I was probly right about that. We talked about others

who might still know the old lingo and lore, and I mentioned Brett Lawrence, who was a “goide” for the rich summer people who belonged to the Ausable Club in Keene Valley and had camps on Upper Ausable Lake. Pete didn't think much of the Ausable Club. “People born with a gold spoon up their ass,” as he put it. “If they think they're better than anyone else they got trouble with me, cuz nobody's better than anybody else.” And he didn't think much of this guide, who played the old-time Adirondack role a little too flamboyantly, in his opinion, and was this little ultra-macho guy with long silver hair and a beard who had been in the Marines and boasted that he had wasted a lot of gooks in Nam. “[This guide, said Pete] has small man syndrome. One time he came in swearing to get attention, and my mom said after he left, 'he's a small man who just made himself smaller.'" Everybody in the valley was a known quantity. Everybody had each other pegged, and I found it a little claustrophobic. But that's the way it is in most of the world, and this guy was both a kitsch mountain man and the real deal, and his son turned out to be gay, so maybe he was compensating for something else.

One time-- I see from my notes that it was on November 17, 2005-- I dropped in on Pete, and he was fixing one of his gutters, only he called it an “eavestroth.” I had heard eavestrough, of course. This is what gutters are called in England and Australia, But eavesTROTH as in I plight me my troth-- this was a new one, and I was sure, a local Ads ism, or byword as Pete called them. Then I remembered the linguistic atlas that George Trowe showed me years ago. As I recalled it was a linguistic atlas of New England, but it had maps of words in New York like where

people stopped saying porch and started saying stoop or veranda or piazza, which I was interested in because at the time I was writing my cultural and natural history of Westchester County. I starting thinking how interesting it would be to do a linguistic map of “eavestroth.” Do they say it in Jay ? How about over to Wilmin'ton (as Wilmington is pronounced). How many people even in Keene valley say it ? Donna Reid Austin, Pete's sister, says gutter, like most Americans today, but she's more modern. Same as the oi diphthong for die or hike or pine or wine. Families in Keene are split over who uses it. Berton Smith did, but his uncle Steve didn't.

Somebody has to get this stuff down, nobody cares that it's disappearing, nobody cares about these people, and in another generation it will be all gone, I realized. I had seen it happen in many parts of the world : local cultures are being snuffed by homogenization, by t.v. and the mass consumer culture, every day. One language a day, I read somewhere, is going extinct as its last handful of speakers die. There are about 6000 left. Most of them are in New Guinea. But here's a dialect right in my backyard whose existence hasn't even been recognized, and it has to be collected, fast. And if I don't do it, who will ? Noah Rondeau, the most famous hermit of the Ads, lived in a “a gore,” a place that didn't exist on any map, because the survey lines were misshot and his camp way back in the woods lay between them. Well the entire Adirondack region could be seen as a sort of cultural and linguistic gore, I was starting to think. It had elements of New England, Quebec, and the rest of the New York, but it was different, something of its own. And thus, from the

mistaken supposition that eavestroth was a unique ism of the Ads whose range was probly restricted to a few towns or hamlets, or maybe just to East Hill, or maybe only to Peter Reid-- I couldn't imagine such an archaic word having much currency any more-- I embarked on an odyssey that continues to this day.

Envisaging a linguistic atlas of the Adirondacks, I went down to the New York State Museum in Albany and spent two days poring through Hans Kurath's monumental Linguistic Atlas of New England and writing down the words and phrases that would be interesting to run by Pete and Steve and other Ads natives.

LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF NEW ENGLAND

Hans Kurath, Brown University, 1939

734 maps in 3 volumes consisting of 2 separate folio books each. Known as LANE, it was the first and only region to be done of a projected nationwide linguistic atlas. Then came the second World War and funds ran out, so the next region, the Middle and South Atlantic States, was never finished. This region was spread thin anyway. It was a longitudinal strip that ran from the Quebec border through the Ads and all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico and had little bearing on the actual linguistic realities or the distribution of local dialects. For instance we have seen, there is an important horizontal line through the central Ads delineating the end of French influence, and New England

speech extends vertically to at least the central Ads, and Yankee farmer and Scots Irish and Dutch expressions come up from the south, so it's really more like there are overlapping linguistic areas, plus the indigenous expressions that arose. There is a Handbook for the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States edited, by William A. Kretzschmer jr., University of Chicago Press, 1994, which was a continuation of LAMSAS, started by Hans Kurath, Guy Lowman, and Raven I. McDavid jr. and “dedicated to the art and science of dialectology and the Empirical study of American culture.” Most of interviews were conducted before World War II and there there had been subsequent social changes and migrations. Several communities in and around the Ads were sampled : Champlain, Chazy, Plattsburgh, Brainardsville, Malone, Fort Jackson, Hopkinton, South Colton, Big Moose, Old Forge, Weverton, Warrensburg, Ticonderoga. But there were no maps in the handbook, and the heart of the Ads, our sub-region, was uninvestigated. There were no maps or list of the words and expression used in the surveys. I was a little confused, because I was sure that the atlas Trowe had showed me had maps of New York State and it was one volume not six so it wasn't LANE or the handbook of LAMSAS that I had seen. In fact, as I later discovered, it was Hans Kurath's *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, University of Michigan Press, 1949, which I now have, but it only includes the lower Ads. Upstate New York was only recently settled compared to the rest of the Northeast, the central Ads not till the end of the 19th century, by Scots and Protestant Irish from Ulster, so its

accent and dialect, Kurath maintains, is less distinctive than say Maine's, Massachusetts's, New Hampshire's or Vermonts.

Here are the words and phrases from LANE, with my own remarks and commentary from Ads natives I have run them by in brackets. They were mapped, remember in New England. But by 1949 Kurath is lumping western Vermont and upstate New York, minus the upper Ads, in the same speech area.

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Worcester is wusta

York State for New York

[Steve Smith : in Massachusetts they call it York]

river, brook, creek, stream, branch, rivulets, small watercourses of brook called drains, drindles, or runs [and what about freshets ? which was prevalent in Westchester] [brook is greater than a stream up here, downstate it's the opposite. in the old Dutch area downstate, it's kill, down south it's a run, branch, or creek pr. crik. Steve's taxonomy of running water, going from smallest to largest : spring, ditch, stream, brook, river.]

Eavestroth as opposed to gutter or eavestrough. [I started asking around and finding out that the range of eavestroth is much larger than I suspected. Danny Sheldon, a builder in Keene Valley, told me we used to say eavestroth where I

was growing up, west of the park, toward Watertown, and an old-timer in downstate Wassaucott, where my sister lives, said it, and when I hooked up with Kretzschmer, he told me the usage extends all the way out to Wisconsin. Kurath's 1949 maps show that eave (s) troughs (or troths) is much more common upstate than gutters. Further south and east you got troughs or water troughs, spouting, spouts, water spouts, rain spouts, and eave(s) spouts. Steve : eavestroth comes from leaves dropping to my thinking. My father couldn't say leaf or linoleum, he couldn't pronounce l, and some of his brothers couldn't either. I call it eavesdrop. While we're on Steve's particular isms, here's another cluster not in LANE : I asked Steve if he said height or heighth, and he said, "I say heights for mountains, height of a building, but heighth of a ceiling." Heighth is not unique to the Ads.

Back to LANE :

Lowland, interval, intervale, bottom land, river flat, bottom, Interval land [so interval comes from intervale, the valley between two mountain ridges], meadow flats. field flat, low ground. swale, lea (not as low as a meadow) run (with a brook flowing through it), bog. [Steve says : lowlanders live along a river and down in a valley. They're anybody that lives down off a mountain. People who live up on a mountains are mountain men. An alder swamp is so thick you can't walk through it. When there's only ferns you can. A swale is hard to walk through, too.] [I will defer "tag alder," a big discussion, till after I get done with this atlas.

Flats is used in our valley. The flats between Keene Valley and Keene, where there is a grass strip that some of the summer people used for the planes, and there's a farmer's market in the summertime, and kids and their dads fly remote-controlled model airplanes and the occasional golfer, myself included, practices their shots, is known as Marcy Flats.]

meadow “covers a multitude of sins,” says Kurath. Its pr. meda in Vt., meder elsewhere in NE, and meade is also in use.

Swamp, bog, slough [what they say in Manitoba]. If it's full of niggerhead bogs it's a bog swamp [niggerheads must be the clumps of cespitose sedge that would be found in what in Westchester would be called a marsh, as opposed to a swamp which has trees in it like red or swamp maple and alder.] marsh, fen, heath, alder swamp, elder swamp.

Put the jelly to [meaning drain]

the jig is up, the gig is up.

Ditching, trenching, diking

Loam : black, red, yellow, dark, light, sandy, heavy, clayey [how is yellow pr., yella or yellor ? daughter is datter]

Rich, fertile, muck, muck loam (is wetter than say clayey loam), black soil, earth, dirt, ground, top soil, garden soil, humus, composter [compost today ?], mould, humus leaf.

woods earth, loam prevails on the Vt. border. Fertile range is “too modernistic” or “you hardly hear that nowadays,” Kurath is told by his informants

Stone, rock

Ravine, notch, gap, cut, draw, gulch, gulf, flume, gut (which is deep and narrow), glen (small and thickly wooded), hollow [There's a flume and a glen within a few miles of where we live. The flume is a narrow, deep cut in the rock where a brook is spilling through, the glen is a large upland flat open area surrounded by mountains]

Gully, washout, run, gutter, drain, channel, gully out. The road was gullied out by the rain

Hill, hillock, knoll, sand hills, cradle knoll, hummock mound, knob, nubble, rise or rising swell [in our valley there's a sub-peak of Giant Mountain called Nippletop, and and two lesser mountains called Owls Head.]

Mountain, mount

Turnpike, pike, turn, cement road, concrete road, state (aid) road, macadized road, tarvia road, tar or tarred [pr. Todd in Maine] road, Telford road, gravel road, hard [surfaced] road stone road, asphalt road [how about highway ?]

side road, lane, cross road, branch road, roadway, dirt road, country road, back road, neighboring road, wood (s) road,

wooded road, hill road, meadow road, cart road, cart path,
tote

road (for hauling lumber and supplies) [logging road]

Byroad, bypath, byway, lane road, lane, laneway, pent
road, pentway, driftway, mile road

How far, not far off [fer], out (of) the way,
a way, a way off, a great ways from it

Nearly right, pretty right, pretty near right, very near right,
pretty close

Not quite right, a little off, just a little bit off [off the mark,
from the mark] .

The farthest, furthest, furtherest, farther, further, furtherer

A little way (s), a short way (s), a little piece, a long way
(s) a good (long) way (s), a great way (s), quite a way (s)
It's only a little way over, just a mite, it's a long ways
down there

At once, to once, we usta keep 4 horses to once.

A gudun, a good one.

Idea, idear

Fricative or frictionless pr. of seven, forty, eleven, four, thirteen, thirty, first, second, fifth or fith, sixth or sisks or sixt

The months days of week [toozdy in Westchester], wenzdi.

Sunrise, sunup, daybreak

Sundown sunset dusk

The shank or edge of evening

Good morning, hello [how be ye], good day, goodby

are you, be you

What time is it, have you (got) the time, has it got to be, is it getting to be ?

He's going on four years old

Just a minute, wait (just) a minute, just a moment, a second, a jiffy

A fine day, a nice day, good day, pleasant day, lovely, beautiful

Pretty, wonderful, glorious, perfect splendid, elegant, charming, extraordinary, handsome, hand-made, great,

dandy, slick, and corking [and since the 70s, awesome, pr. ahsum]

Cloudy, overcast, gloomy, lowering, glowering, gray, dull, dark, dismal, dreary, dingy, smurry, smudgy, smutty, dirty

Clearing up, off, away, fair; fairing up, off, away; breaking up, out, away; brightening, lighting up, off, lightening up, lowering (down), moderating (down), letting up, easing up, slackening (up), flattening out, fattening out, flattening out, petering out, blowing off, dropping (off), slacking, fattening, subsiding, lessening, bating, abating, decreasing, diminishing, declining, receding, growing less.

Shower, heavy rain, hard rain storm, rainstorm, downfall, downpour, pourdown, deluge, torrent, cloudburst, thunderstorm [One time I called Steve from Montreal and he said it was raining “something fierce,” which he also said another time about his garden. I wonder what the parameters of “something fierce” are. Much broader than the Ads, I should think. Maybe the whole country. Another time Steve told me “it's sposta rain on and off all weekend.”]

Electric(al), crasher, pealer, smasher

Drizzling, springling, misting, spitting
Fog, mist, burning off, lifting

Drought [pr drouth ?], dry spell

Frost, white frost, hoar [hoare ?] frost, black frost, killing frost, freeze, regular freeze, freeze up, cold snap [no term for verglas, covering your windshield and turning the roads and fields into a sheet of ice?]

A snappy morning, keen, sharp, searching, piercing, cutting, biting, bity, marchy, frosty, chilly, chizzly, nippy, snappy, stingy, zippy, crisp, brisk, bracing, fresh, airy, breezy, peppy, and fallish

Come cooler weather (we'll butcher the pig, go hunting, etc)

Barn, hay barn, grain barn, cow barn, horse barn, sheep barn

Loft, scaffold, mow, bay (where hay is stored), hay bay.

Stack, haycock [shaped to shed rain and may have a center pole], windrow, bunches, bundles, heaps, tumbles

Granary, grain room, grain bin

Corn crib, house, shed, barn, storehouse, corn pot, corn chamber

Dairy, farm and plant, herd or cows, barn or room, creamery, buttery, buttery room,

cow stable, barn, shed, stalls, shelter, hovel, lean to or

Lintel, cow tie or byre, stalls, stanchion.

Horse stable etc.

pig pen, hog pen, pigsty, hog pound pig, yard
Swinery piggery (a large modern establishment)

Hen house, chicken house, poultry house, roost, coop,
hennery, hen pen, yard, brooder

Barnyard, farmyard, pightle

A suitcase farmer [who resides a great distances from his
land but tends it a few weeks annually at planting and
harvesting time].

Picket fence, peaked fence, picked fence, pick fence

Barbed wire, [bobbed], peaked wire, spur wire, wire fence,
rail, fence post and rail, Virginia rail, varieties of : crooked,
rain, worm, snake, zigzag, jigjab, rick-rack, horse, ripgut
fence

slat fence [picket fence consists of posts],
stringers, and upright pickets,

Stake and rail var stake and rider, crotch rail, pole pitch,
Pole gun, stake and cap, cap bunk herringbone, shed-back
Shad pike, back-bone, hog-back, hog-bristle, nigger-chaser,

Slash fence, lopped fence, live fence (of live trees or brush)

Stone wall, fence, rock wall

[dooryard, yard, front yard]

[glinning, a glin, glinning off, shaft of sunlight breaking through

Clouds. Glin, glint, Delaware Indians have word for shadow shafts that go up like an escalator to the spirit world. I have found no one in the Ads who has heard of a glin, though they are a common feature of the sky]

[term for the lenticular clouds that hang over the high peaks like lozenges or flying saucers ?]

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Vegetable garden, kitchen garden, truck, garden patch, plot, spot, sauce yard/hole, market garden

Cleared the land/up/out/off; cleaned, scrubbed (up) grabbed (up) rooted out of underbrush stumps trees brush, swamped (out) bushed out, brushed slashed (out)

Crop, yield, harvest

Second crop, rowen, aftermath, aftergrass, lattermath

Sheaf, shock, bundle, bunch, gavel

Pail (metal), swill pail (garbage can), bucket (wood), sap bucket, cannikin

Camipail, firkin, lunkhead, piggin

[I am starting to wonder, how many of these farm words are still in existence in the Ads, or anywhere ? The best place to try them out is in the farm country around Wadhams. Along the road from Elizabethtown to Essex there are some funky semi-derelict old farms that look like they've been in the same family for a long time and still are. That's where I'd start.]

Kettle, pot, frying, pan, skillet, spider

Cup, dipper, mug, dipper gourd, goad.

Sieve, sifter, screen

China, porcelain, crockery

Artificial egg china/nest/dummy/ setting egg

Wash/do/do up/the dishes

Rinse/rinse off/scald

Dish cloth/rag/towel/wash cloth/mop/swab

Wash cloth/rag/face cloth/ rag

Bath towel/hand, linen, crash, Turkish

Faucet/cock/tap/spigot/spicket

Cork, stopper, stopple

Funnel, tunnel

Keg, barrel, cask

Coal hod, skuttle, kettle, pail, bucket

Bag, sack : burlap, gunny, paper, canvas, hemp, cotton

Repair mend fix (up), tinker (up) cooper up, toggle (up),
Contoggle, coggle, cobble (up), coddle up/ with up

Go, bring, go get, go fetch

Crowbar, bar, iron bar, steel bar, pinch bar, clawbar,
wrecking bar, prybar, prying bar, pry, lever. Verb : pry or
prize

Broom, brush

Strop, razor, strap, strope, to strop or strab

Watch, timepiece, wristwatch, turnip

Stone, whetstone, scythe stone, emory stone, rifle stone, stone rifle,

Grindstone, grind rock, grinding stone, sharpening stone, grinder

Sawhorse, horse, woodhorse, wooden horse, buck, sawbuck, sawing buck

Wheelbarrow, barrow

Bug, haul, heave, tote, tug, shoulder, back, sack, carry [I lugged that suitcase all the way to the station]

Stone boat, drag, droog, drogue, drug, dray, stone board, drag board,

Sled, slip, sledge, scow, skid. If wheeled : jigger, boey, cart

Shaft, shiv, thills, fills, arms

Whiffletree, whipple tree, single tree, evener

Rear, nigh

Whip, goat, withe, lash, rod, switch

Cow, gentleman cow, top cow

Calf, bull, heifer

The cow is going to calve, have a calf, drop a calf drop her calf, throw her calf

Moo (mew), low (loo), boo, moan, hum, bawl, blare, bellow

Blat of calf (when weaned), blate, blaas, blart, bleat, blare, blaas

Bawl, bellow, baa, cry, holler, whine, mourn

Whinny, whinner, whinnow, whinter, whimper, whimmer whicker, whinker, nicker, snicker, neigh

Horseshoes, quoits

Ram, buck

Pet lamb, cosset, cosset lamb, cade, cade lamb, cade sheep

Hogs, swine, pigs, pig, shote (a pig fit to kill), boar, gimlet pig

Castrate, sterilize, alter, cut, fix (over), change (over) trim, geld

Steer, operate on, doctor

Dog, mongrel, cur, hound, mutt, tyke

Poultry, fowl, birds, flock, hens, chickens

Setting/brood, hens, setter

Wishbone, lucky bone, witchbone, pulling-bone, mercy
though

Calls to cows in pasture like Suki

To horse, get up, go along, go one, come on. [giddy up]

He ran like a house [or fox] afire

Kinds of squirrel : red, gray, brown, yellow, black, fox,
flying

Screech owl, screecher, squinch owl, hoot owl, hooter, cat
owl, whinnering or whickering owl, whoop owl

Bullfrog, paddock or paddy hyla, peeper, peeing frog or
toad, march peeper,

Frog green, tree, or toad, peewink, peepwink, pinkwink,
pinkletink

Toad, hoptoad, hippitoad, hopper, hopping, wart toad,
warty, ground, land, garden, house, speckled, striped, bull,
tree

Minnow, shiner, mummy, chug

Earthworm, dirtworm, mudworm, ground, angle, angling, worm, angler, angledog fishworm, fishing worm, easworm, eelworm, rainworm, redworm

Night walker, crawler, prowler, crawlers

Moth, miller, or moth miller (imago stage)

Lightning bug, firefly, firebug, light bug, glow worm

Wasp, yellow jacket, hornet, mud or house hornet

White face, jack, Spaniard (thin waisted wasp) trailed-arsed hornet

Spiderweb, cobweb, dust or dew web

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Elm/elum

sycamore/buttonball

Sugar maple orchard, grove

pr of poison

pumpkin, pumkin, punkin [upstate it's pumpkin, down it's punkin]

Mountain laurel, high laurel, ivy, calico bush, spoonwood,
spoonhunt, spoonhunch bush

Sumach, shumack

Pick, pluck, gather, pull, cut, cull, flowers, posens [posies],
wildflowers, May flowers.

Sweet corn, sugar, green, eating, yellow, bantam, early
golden

Corn, tassel, tossel, spindle top

potato, tomato pr

clingstone, freestone peach, clingfast

peach pit, stone, seed, kernel, peth, cherry pip

give me an apple (another chance)

strawberries, raspberries, thimbleberries

hull, husk, stem, shuck or burr of strawberry

kinds of hickory oak maple birch and popple

mushroom toadstool, hopttoad stool, toad's stool,
umbrella frog stool and stool

[nutrition and exercise habits and obesity with the active rural woodsman and farming life being on its last legs]

Boughten bread, store bread

cornbread, johnnycake, corn meal, mush/hasty pudding

pancakes, griddlecakes, fritters, flannel, spider cake

flapjacks, slapjacks, flap-over flipper

salt and pepper or pepper and salt

poached, dropped, poached eggs

yolk, yelk

sour milk, curdled, clotted, clabber, clapper, bonny-clabbered, lobberfed, labberfed, clabbered

sausage, Frankfurt, wiener, baloney, blood pudding

head cheese, souse

spoiled, (a little) off, turned, hurt, stale, over-ripe, tainted, windy, gone wrong (gone), bad, mouldy, musty, sour, high, strong, rank, browy, decayed, rancid, foul, rotten, putrid

syrup, maple syrup, honey

make some coffee, boil, steep, brew, percolate, perk

put on the coffee, a pot of etc.

glass of water, tumbler

switchel (water molasses and ginger)

pop, tonic, soda

sarsaparilla, birch beer, root beer, spruce beer

booze, swill, slosh, liquor

warmed over/up het hotted rewarmed

a bite, nibble, snack, baiting lunch/luncheon

chew, chaw, sit, set down, pull up a chair, come and get it,
those that can reach help themselves,
all of you that have clean faces, step right in and
take your places, help yourself

I don't care for any

Parlor, sitting room, livingroom

Armchair, easy chair

Rocking chair, rocker, spring rocker

Sofa, couch, lounge, settee, divan, davenport, tete a tete, settle

Shades (window), roller, roll, curtains, blinds

Mantel, mantel shelf, fireplace chimney, chimley, chimbley flue [chimbley is in use around North Creek)

Soot, smut, crock, creosote

Clean up, tidy up, straighten up

Bedroom, sleep, bed chamber

Clothes closet, cupboard, room, press

Bureau, dresser, dressing table, commode

Chest of drawers, high boy, lowboy, linen chest, clothes chest

Bedspread, quilt, coverlet

Counterpane, comforter, puff

Kitchen, cook room, cook house, ell, porch, pantry, cupboard, scullery

Buttery, milk room

Attic, garret

Rubbish, rubbidge, trash, truck, junk, gulch, sculch, stuff, rummage, trumpery, crom, collateral, debris, refuse, refuge clutter, waste

Shut, close the door

Were you brought up in a barn, sawmill etc

Pr. roof or ruff, gambel roof

Gutter, trough (eaves) rain/water leder, eaves spout, eavespout

Water, drain, gutter spout [what's a guttersnipe ?]

Clapboard, clapboarding, siding, novelty or matched siding boards or stuff, weather boards, loose boards

Porch, piazza, veranda, stoop, portico

[mudroom. every Adirondack home has one]

Ell, ell part, wing, annex, extension, porch, lean-to, linter, lean

Shed, storehouse, outhouse, outbuilding, shop

Privy, backhouse, outhouse, little house, cribby, closet, water closet, w.c., dry earth toilet, shithouse, craphouse, dumphouse

tenement, apartment, flat, rent

rented, hired, engaged, took, got

here are your clothes, here's your clothes

dress up, primp, doll (herself) up, dolly up, spruce up,
flounce up, finify, dandify, red up, slick up

laundry, wash

suspenders, (shoulder) braces, galluses

apron : house, maid, mother hubbard, pinafore, tyer

shoes : low shoes, low cut shoes, low cuts, lace shoes, ties,
ankle ties, oxford ties, Newport ties, oxford, brogans
luskins, walking shoes, slippers, gaiters

umbrella, bumershoot, sunshade, parasol

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father, dad, daddy, pa, paw, pop, pap, pup, poppa, papa,
papah, poppy, puppy, pappy, sir

mother, ma, mama, maw, mom, mommy, mahm, mammy,
mum, mumma, mummy, mumsy, mumpsy, mompsy,
[pops popsie mopsy]

My husband, my man, the man, my old man, the man of the house, the mister, the boss, HIM

My (the) wife, my (the) woman, the old woman or lady, my or the missus, the boss, my better half, the missis

Pr daughter

Girl, gal, girlfriend

Kid, kiddy, kidlet, kiddo, tot, totty, tad, tod, tyke, young one, youngster, younker, midget, mite, shaver, sheesicks, urchin, cub, chick, chicken

Grampa, gramps

Grandma, nan, nana, nanny

Aunt, auntie ant pr

Brought up, brung, raised (up) reared (up), fetched up, she raised the bread with the yeast

Take care (of the baby), mind, tend, look after, out, for, see to, after

A whipping, beating, trimming, spanking, slapping, boxing, cuffing, thrashing, licking, trouncing, lacing, basting, lambasting, whacking, batting, belting, drugging, warming, walloping, whaling, scalping, skelping, tanning, hiding, lashing, flogging, switching, browsing, withing,

caning, paddling, shingling, peeling, strapping

Switch, stick, limb with browse, birch, hickory, willow, gad, rattan, sprouts. Strap, slipper, hair brush, ruler, ferule shingle, paddle [boy they sure laid into their kids in those days !]

Sweetheart, sweetie, beau, steady, lover, flame

Darling, doxy, dony

Courting, keeping company with, sparking, buzzing, waiting up on, her shining up to you [your pitching woo]

Fond of her, sweet, very much interested in, taken with her, gone on her

Stuck on her struck on her, smitten

Gave him the mitten, mitt, gate, sack, the air, cold shoulder go-by, the slip, the shake, the bounce (grand bounce, the jolt, the shirt, the congee, the dump [dumped on him, dumped on her], the hook, the gaff, the boot, his walking papers, tickets, she mittened him, he got the mitten [she dumped him, showed him the door], she refused him, denied, turned down, bounced [in Ugandan English, bounce means going to somebody's place and he isn't there : you "bounce." Now that more people have cellphones and ground lines, bouncing is becoming less a part of life.], flopped, jilted him, threw him over, canned him, soured on him, jolted him, bilked him [I thought that meant to cheat or defraud somebody out of their money]

Serenade, horning, shivaree, callithrump, jamboree, jubilee,
horning bee

Dance, junke, kitceh, dance, jig, dig, spree, frolic,
breakdown, shakedown [fandango in the Southwest],
Hoe down, cottilion, barn dance, brawl, bush-whack
quadrille, shin bat, shindig, ball devil's, dream fore and
after, squaredance, social, sociable.

Harmonia, mouth organ, mouth piece, accordion

Crowd, gang, mob, tribe, clique, posse, crew, push, outfit,
bunch, lot, kit and caboodle, kettle and boiling., all the
loafers and hoodlums came to the dance.

A lot of, lots, loads, a heap, heaps, a pile, piles, stacks, a
barrel, barrels, a bushel, bushels, slews, gobs, scads, oodles,
oceans, scallops

A little bit, a mite, a little doit [a tad, a smidgeon]

Chat, gab, chin, jaw [jawjack], clack, blab, glab, gam, gas,
buzz, yap, gossip, chew (the rag the fat), chatter, gabble,
jabber, cackle, gibber

I ran into, met across [accrost], in, with, again, upon,
bumped into

Pr. of recognize

How are you, how be you, how be ye

Mighty glad, pleased

Goodbye [toodle oo so long, keep it in your sneaker]

A tourist gads about

A rustic, rustica, (back) countryman, farmer, backwoodsman, wayback waybacker, bushwacker, swamp yankee, hayback, hayseed, (country) hick, rube, bumpkins pumpkin chaser, buckwheat, mossback, (country) doob, jay, jake, reuben, jonathan, hillbilly, (country) greenhorn, gawky or gawk.

[woodchuck, mountain man, redneck, hillbilly, native, full native]

[the sticks, the boonies, the backwoods, the outback, the hinterland]

Negro : non derogatory non-jocular : negro, colored man/person/fellow, gentleman, gent, individual, black man, African nigger and darky can be neutral or jocular or derogatory. Coon, moke, smoke, sambo

“we don’t call em niggers much on account of it might hurt their feelings.” [words no longer in fashion that are not missed. it's okay for a black person to call another black person a nigger, in a spirit of solidarity, making fun of their

oppression. and now we have sand niggers, so nigger is still with us.]

Italian, wop, dago, guinea, pr aytalian ?

Irishman, pat, patsy, paddy, paddywhack [knick nack], mick, mickey, minkey, mike, harp tad, mucker, muck Bogtrotter, flannelmouth, flannelface, greenhorn

Jew, sheeny, kike, yid, jew-man, jewie, heeny, Christ killer ikey, zikey, ike, Isaac, jakey, abie, moses, shylock [hebe, Hebrew], “a kike is a jew who won’t keep his word,” a sheeny is a Russian Jew [lotsa antisemitism before the war, eh ? The Holocaust reduced some of it, but it's still there. racism will never cease, I'm afraid]

Stout, portly, fleshy, plump, chunky, chubby, paunchy, thickset, pot-bellied,

A paunch, a corporation, a bay window
A woman is plump

Emaciated, peaked, puny, scrawny, skinny, weewar, wamble-cropped, scrawny, rawny

Strong, powerful, muscular, stout, rugged, cordy, brawny, strapping, burly able-bodied [sturdy]

Lively, spry, nimble, chipper, gimpy, peppy, spruce, full of pep

Handy

Clumsy, lummoxy, blunderer, gawky, fumbler,
hobbledehoy, butterfingers, blunderhead, stumbleheels,
boob, blunderbuss

Dunce, simp, samp, chump, nummy, nut, boob, dub,
bubber, goose, ass, jackass, halfwit, humbskull
[shit for brains, pissass in New Hampshire]

Touchy, techy or tichy [testy], hot-headed [crotchedy,
cantankerous, grouchy, crabby]

Obstinate, pigheaded, set in his ways

Angry, het up, hopping mad, riled up, madder than a wet
hen
As hell

Tired [worn out], tuckered out, fagged, beat, played out,
petered out

Miser, tightwad, skinflint

Pr idea idear

I returned to Keene with this cornucopia of words and phrases in use in New England before the war, many of them obsolete today. Now I had something to work with. I

could see that it was going to be a huge task, going to all the communities in the Ads and identifying the natives and running these words by them, plus the isms and pronunciations I had collected, and was still collecting. I was already spread thin with other books and stories all over the world that I was constantly taking off to get the goods on. Maybe I should get some help. Maybe the anthropology students at SUNY Plattsburgh would be interested in taking part in the surveys and linguistic mapping. There was a lot of administrative work that I wasn't really interested in taking on and didn't have the time for. I talked to an anthropology professor at SUNY and he said it was a great idea, but not his bag, and said he would see if anybody in the department was interested, and I said I could maybe teach it as a course myself, but nothing ever came of it. So I decided to continue as best as I could on my own. Clearly, a lot had already been lost. How much was left, and how much of what was no longer in use retrievable ?

To get anywhere with this massive project, I needed some money, and raised twelve thousand dollars from the Winslow Foundation, which had given me a grant to start my Web site, [DispatchesFromTheVanishingWorld](#), and two individuals who summered in Keene and had a deep love of the Adirondacks, Bob Worth and Ann McCrory. They needed to give the money to a 501 C3, which I wasn't, so I flowed the grants through the Wildlife Conservation Society, which runs an Adirondack Communities and Conservation program out of Saranac Lake. Its manager gave me a list of questions to ask my informants that would be useful to the program :

-- Is there an Adirondack land ethic ? [I doubt most of my informants would have any idea what she was talking about]

-- How do they think the shift in industry (resource extraction vs tourism, etc.) has affected the culture in the Adirondacks. What cultural changes do they see in their children's generation ? Their grandchildren's ?

-- Do they see changes in how their children's and grandchildren's generation's generations experience the woods ? (hunting/fishing/camping/etc etc) What implications might these changes have ? [most of the kids in our valley have never even been up any of the surrounding peaks. Obesity is a growing problem. But there is a huge surge of people coming from elsewhere to hike and camp, a big fitness and outdoors industry that produces and sells billions of dollars of gear that didn't exist when I was a boy and climbed Mt. Marcy and Algonquin in 1956. And a lot of people who are into hiking, rock-climbing, snowshowing, back-country skiing, and mountainbiking have moved to our valley, and they have become an important element of the local population.]

-- What has changed in the last X years in the physical Adirondack landscape ? (perhaps further questions about changes in weather characteristics/tree species, composition/forest characteristics etc.) How has development changed the Adirondack landscape ? How has it changed Adirondack culture ?

-- Have they seen moose ? What other wildlife have they seen that are the same or different from what they remember seeing ?

-- Have people's attitudes about wildlife changed over time ? How ? [Well the local boys are still religiously getting their deer every year and blasting away at bear and partridge and hare and pretty much every else that moves and is edible. I don't see much change at all, I'm afraid.]

-- How do they perceive the tensions between environmentalists and long-time residents ? How do they see these two “sides” coming together ? What do they think needs to be done to achieve conservation here ?

A different agenda from mine, which was a non-partisan attempt to get the local lingo and lore. But I was very interested in the local knowledge of the fauna and flora, and the deep sense of place that families who had been living in the same community for generations have. What are the exact boundaries of their local universe ? What are its special features and landmarks ? Keene, for instance, starts below the Cascade Lakes to the west and ends half way to Keene Valley to the south and halfway to Upper Jay to the north, and to the east it goes up Spruce Hill toward E'town as far as Baxter's, a restaurant. As child growing up in Bedford Village, I was very aware of the boundaries of my universe. The other side of Mount Kisco, to the edge of the Saw Mill River Parkway, which was still being built, was terra incognita.

I pitched a story on the undescribed and never before even recognized Adirondack dialect to the National Geographic Magazine :

Since I moved up to the Adirondack Mountains twenty years ago, I've become close friends with some of the "natives" in our mountain valley, people whose roots here are two centuries deep. Some of them are living in the same house they were born in sixty or seventy years ago. They have a dialect which has never been recorded. A gutter, for instance, is an "eavestroth." You can find "eavestrough" in rural pockets of the New England, but "eavestroth" is a unique Adirondack variant [no true, as I subsequently found out]. The Adirondacks are a cultural gore. Its old mountain clans belong to a sub-culture as distinctive as that of the Ozarks or the Appalachians that has never been properly described and is rapidly disappearing.

I've been out in the woods with some of these old mountain men, and they can show you things that aren't in any book, like the four kinds of white birch. (The one that's best for papering furniture and interiors has black lenticels that look "like a goose coming in for landing," one of my informants explained.) A lot of them have never been anywhere. Maybe they'll go to Plattsburgh once a year, and that's it. They have a sense of place, a deep, if unconscious, spiritual identification a specific landscape that is hard to find in America anymore. Some of them have a wry take on things. "You live until you die, and that's the only thing you do," another informant observed not long ago. Others are totally irony-deficient. "They wouldn't be happy if you hung them with a new rope," as another man put it.

I've been gathering information for a baseline ethnography of this sub-culture, collecting the stories, jokes, and woods lore of these mountain people, for more than a decade. Last summer I compiled a list of some three hundred regional expressions and started to run them by the old-timers in our hamlet and neighboring communities. Certain myth motifs and behavioral patterns began to emerge. In two communities across the mountains from each other, there was an old Indian who live on the edge of town and made bullets from a local seam of lead. It is not uncommon for these people to not leave a will, leaving their descendants squabbling for years.

This summer and into the fall, I will be doing a lot more research, and I'm starting to think about who might be interested in publishing the fruit of my conversations and walks in the woods with these wonderful people who embody much of what is great about America. National Geographic is an obvious choice, particularly since [on of the magazine's photographers] and I have just collaborated on a fascinating piece from India for Vanity Fair, and [he] says he'd love to take the pictures. It could be like "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men."

The editor called back and said we want to do it and it's scheduled for July. But the all-powerful foto editor ended up putting the cabosh on our collaboration because he

didn't see how there would be enough good pictures in a piece about a dialect. They could have made some great linguistic maps, but I guess that wasn't sexy enough. They sent a photographer up on a reconnoitering trip in the middle of mud season, the most dismal and depressing couple of weeks in the year. She pulled up into Steve's dooryard and made her way past all the trucks and the Scout which Steve insisted were not wrecks, he knew exactly what each one of them needed to get them going again, past old refrigerators and other pieces of rusting machinery too numerous to enumerate. She walked bravely past the couple of dozen beagles that came dashing out from under the vehicles and other places they had made their lairs, barking their heads off, to the door. More beagles inside rushed to the door barking even more ferociously, but Steve didn't come to the door even though he was there. He generally isn't home to people he has never seen before, because they could be bill collectors. But I had told him a woman who was taking pictures for the article would be coming by at some point, so that was not the reason this time. It was, he later explained, because the local guy who brought her to his place, he considered to be a "loiyn pervit." i.e. a lying pervert, because he was crooked in his business dealings and went after underage girls. This guy had led the photographer in his pickup to Steve's driveway, and knowing that Steve was not a fan of his, not gone in, but Steve saw him turning around through the window.

I guess the woman's pictures did not win over the foto editor. So that was the end of that.

I discovered on the Internet that there was an outfit affiliated with the National Geographic, called the Living Tongues Institute of Endangered Languages. Every fourteen days, according to its site, another language somewhere in the world dies. While I was writing this, in fact, in January, 2010, the last speaker of Bo, a language on the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, died. She was in her eighties, and Bo had been around for 65,000 years or so, since pre-neolithic times. On the intro page of my Web site, DispatchesFromTheVanishingWorld.com, I used another source that said in 2001 that one language a day was going extinct, and there were 6,000 left. If that is accurate, there would be about 4,000 left. Most of them apparently are in Papua New Guinea, which has a huge number of languages in many small language families, and one of the densest clusters of native languages is in Bolivia. I contacted Greg Anderson, one of the Living Tongues Institute's founders, to see if he had any interest in the Adirondack dialect, and he didn't.

Another setback. I started to lose interest. By this time we had moved up to Montreal, and I went to the Adirondacks only occasionally and became a summer person again. If you live in a place for five years ago, it starts to become your world, and our world became

Montreal. It's kind of like a dog switching its master. After a while the dog forgets its master. For instance, we gave our springer spaniel Brandy to Steve when we lived in Albuquerque for a year, and when we got back Brandy hardly even gave us the time of day. He had become one of the dogs in Steve's pack. Other books, my Web site, global reportage mostly for Vanity Fair and mostly environmental, a cd of my songs, took up my attention. But every time I went down I usually came back with a few new isms.

I had a real odyssey over “tag alder.” The first time I heard this ism was in 2004, when I biked door-to-door from our apartment in Montreal to Ravencroft, as we called our mountaintop home in Keene, a distance of some 100 miles. I set out at five in the morning, biked to Nun's Island and cross the St. Lawrence on the bike bridge just upstream from the Champlain Bridge with sunup shining on the water then took the bike path along the thin strip of terra firme separating the river from the inland waterway for eight miles, and from there headed due south to the New York border, passing through flat farm country. I crossed as a little border crossing called Cannon Corners, where the agent who looked at my passport told me, bootleggers with tommyguns used to run trucks full of whiskey down to Saranac Lake during Prohibition. That is how the Bronfmans, today among Montreal's most upstanding and richest citizens, apparently made a lot of their dough.

On the Quebec side of the border, nobody spoke English, and on the New York side, nobody spoke French, but they were all cousins and looked the same. I chatted with one family who were sitting on their porch as I was pushing the bike up a steep hill, the man marvelous looking

with gray hair over his shoulders and checked work shirt. Their faces were very French but they were woodchucks. Further on, I asked a boy standing in front of a trailer if the next turn 500 yards up the road went to Ellenburg Center, and he said, I think so. He obviously had a very small universe. Maybe he was a little retarded. I noted in my notebook : there's another ism to map : half-wit, REEtard, nutcase, loony, tetched, loonybin. Wonder if loony was suggested by the mad cackling of loons ? Need to collect the genealogies of the old native people from whom I'm getting these isms.

I sleep in a farm field a couple of miles below Ellenburg Center and in the morning tackle the very wild stretch, fourteen or so miles-- no houses or power lines, only hunting clubs in woods cut over by paper companies-- down to Iron Mountain, whose high school is now a prison. My butt is really starting to feel it, and at the convenience store I ask a guy who is crippled for life by a car accident if he can give me a ride to Standish. I throw my bike into the back of his pickup and we drive to his parents' place. They are some of the last people living in Standish. Most of the houses are abandoned and falling down. A couple of wasted looking local boys are working on a car in one dooryard. Probably living on welfare and smoking a lot of wacky, or wacky tabacky, i.e. cannabis, which entered the mountain man culture in the seventies. Every so often somebody gets busted for cultivating, their crop spotted by choppers with infrared sensors that pick up the shade of the green leaves, which is different from the native vegetation. Coupla years ago there was a big bust in Peru, which I should be reaching in a few hours. The best place to score

some wacky is said to be Wilmington, pronounced Wilmington. The Ads dialect drops a lot of consonant. Clinton County is Clin'on County, a kitten is a ki'en. The Quebecois also drop a lot of consonants in their French, so I wonder if this is where they get it from, whether dropping consonants goes back to when most of the white population was French Canadian loggers. One time my wife and I had to see one of our boy's French teacher in Montreal, and she told us, "your son is developing some ba' 'abits," and I said to myself, Bingo. But now I'm not so sure, because I was in Bloomington, Indiana, visiting the Kinsey Institute of Sex and Gender Research, and the locals pronounced it Bloominton. A dealer in Wilmington, disconsolate because his girlfriend gave him the gate, reportedly put a gun to his head and blew off half his face but lived.

While we're on the subject of the ethnobotany of the Ads mountain culture, a few mountain men still dig up wild ginseng roots, which Asians believe is like Viagra. The plant is not abundant, but there are some clumps here and there, but you hafta (there's another probably not exclusively Ads pronunciation) know where they are. Once a month a Korean ginseng buyer comes up to Vermont so the diggers take their roots over there.

The guy who gave me the ride's parents gave me a sandwich and some coffee and we sat and talked. His name was French but of course he didn't know a word. His calves were swollen and scabby and he could hardly get up any more. He had spent his working years as a prison guard at Dannemora, the maximum security prison fifteen miles south, and taking care of people's camps on Chateaugay Lake. He had never taken a penny of welfare in his life, he

told me proudly, unlike those wastrels across the street, the guys his son's age who were working on the car. I asked what land goes for an acre around here, and he said “there isn't any, just what's in town, because the goddam APA bought it all from the paper companies.” Then he started in on the APA. “The goddam APA defines a wetland as something that has tag alder growing in it. But I can show you places where tag alder is growing and it's bone dry.”

My ears pricked up : tag alder, eh ? a new ism. A local name for what most people call alder, of which there are two species in the Northeast : *Alnus incana rugosa*, speckled or swamp alder (also in western North America from Arizona to Alaska), and smooth or hazel alder, *A. serrulata*. Both are called tag alder. Tag refers to the birch-like male catkins (the alders are in the birch family), which hang down from the branches like tags. Next time I saw Steve Smith I asked him what he called it and he said tag alder, of course, and he took me to a little tag alder swamp right in back of his house and told me that when he was a boy he used to make tag alder whistles and sell 'em at school for five cents apiece. What you do is you slit the bark from one end to the other on the section of branch that you want to make into a whistle, and carefully slip off the bark so it comes off in a cylinder, then you ream out the inner part of the wood on one side and bore a hole in the wood that connects to it, and slip the bark back on to the wood and by moving the bark and your fingers over the hole you get different notes. The Indians were the ones who figured out how to make tag alder whistles, and they got it from the hearing the wind whistling in the holes that woodpeckers

pecked into the wood. No kidding, I said. Now there was a piece of great local lore, I thought.

But some time later I was in New Hampshire and a woman told me that the Abenake Indians over there have a legend about a young brave who was courting a maiden and he had a terrible voice so he made a flute out of a tag alder branch and won her heart with the beautiful music he made with it. So this wasn't local Ads lore at all. And some time after that I was in San Francisco where I met a guy who told me that when he was a kid, there used to be information from the Boy Scouts Handbook on the back of shredded wheat boxes, and one of the things was how to make a tag alder whistle. So this lore was local but not endemic, i.e. it had not originated in the Ads and was widely dispersed around the country. It was all over the place, as a lot of the local Ads lore and isms I was collecting were turning out to be.

Then there were what could be described as myth motifs. For instance, there are three separate communities in upstate-- Saranac, here, and Schenectady where an old Indian lived in the hills and made bullets from a local seam of lead. Our Indian bullet-maker lived on Brown Mountain, behind Steve Smith's house, where the lead was. According to Pete Reid, tag alder is used to make gunpowder, so that was probably one of his ingredients.

Up from Steve, on the cliffs across the Cascade Lakes, I read somewhere there are supposed to be rubies, but I've gone up there a couple of times and haven't found any.

Ausable Forks, known as the Forks, is a goldmine for isms and lore. This is where the West Branch of the Ausable River, pronounced AwSAYbul, a famous trout stream, meets the East Branch, which rises in the Ausable Lakes in Keene Valley and for some reason is lousy fishing except in its upper reaches, which are in the private Ausable Club, which stocks it. The Forks is north of Keene, the East Branch runs north, but Steve Smiths goes “down to” the Forks because it is downstream and downhill, and he goes “up to” Keene Valley and “over to” [Lake] Placid, which is over a kind of pass. “A lot of 'em says over to the Forks or over to the valley, but that's not right. The rivers run down to Ausable [another term for the Forks] and on down to Plattsburgh [which is another thirty miles north]

There are a lots of wizened old woodchucks, a major hillbilly enclave, right in town. Quite a few of them ride around on bikes because they lost their driving licenses due to DWI's. The Forks is right on the way from Montreal to Keene, so we sometimes stop at the Stewart's convenience store for gas, which is cheaper in the U.S. and michigans, as chile dogs are known in the Ads. Once time I was coming out of Stewart's and my nostrils were greeted by the powerful odor of skunk. Must be a skunk around here, I said to local guy coming in from his pickup, and he said so deep and gruff I could barely understand him, “dog got

sprayed,” and walked past me through into the store. Outside, tied to a fence on the right side of the store, there was indeed a mastiff that had just got sprayed and was rolling around like crazy.

There's another question : got or gotten ? You hear got quite a lot. Whereas gotten is standard American English, but across the pond, in Britain, the past tense of get is got, and this English usage is standard at the New Yorker magazine, which always drove me up the wall, because it sounded prissy and pretentious. But up here got is perfectly normal and natural. Only it sounds more like gat. Again Scot-Irish maybe.

Another pronunciation which I picked up at the M & M Diner, across the street from Stewart's, is yass, for yes. That's an big one, although some eeYU (T). as I'll be getting to in a minute

And there's a whole slew of raunchy jokes from and about the Forks, most of them having to do with incest and inbreeding. What did the girl from the Forks say after sex ? Okay dad, you can get off now. You're crushing my smokes.

Or : A girl from the Forks goes to her dad and says dad I need you to buy me a prom dress so he says well you're gonna to have to blow me, so she starts to do it, and she stops and says jeezam dad your dick tastes like shit and the dad says well that's because her brother came in here today and wanted me to buy him a car.

I thought this one was real Forks, but in 2007 I was in a pub in County Meath, an hour out of Dublin, and a local man told me basically the same joke, except the daughter

wanted to borrow the van and the dad had let her brother use it that morning.

Similar joke, but with homophobic twist, picked up at Aubuchon's hardware store in the Forks : how do you know when yer at a gay barbecue ? Hot dogs taste like shit.

Even more disgusting, from an APA employee who came to look at our property, which we were thinking of subdividing : whad'the leper say to the whore ? Keep the tip.

I don't want to give the impression that everybody in the Ads goes around telling dirty jokes all the time, but I am including them because they are part of the folk culture, as it were, they tell you what the people, or the guys that like dirty jokes at least, think is funny. Moreover these types of jokes are hardly confined to the Ads. One time we drove over to South Royalton, Vermont to pick up a Vermont Castings wood stove, and one of the guys who was loading it into the back of my pickup asked me, "What's an overlap ? Answer : when yer eatin out a cunt and you get a little bit of shit on yer tongue.

Since it doesn't look like I'm gonna ever get around to doing a full study of the vanishing Ads dialect and lore, but somebody really should, and sooner rather than later, I had a great idea. Instead of the college kids at SUNY Plattsburgh, most of whom aren't local anyway, why not get the kids in the local high school kids to do it ? There are sixty-one school districts within the Blue Line, which describes the six-million-acre park. Not all of them have high schools, but most of them do. You could have the

English or history teacher teach a course, in which the kids would interview the old timers get their stories and lore, but maybe not their jokes, because there would obviously be objections to that, and run by them the list of isms and pronunciations, and try to get some new ones, then everyone would pool their information and do a linguistic map of their community at the end of the year, and it could all be put up on the Internet, as an ongoing project. It would be great for the kids, instill a sense of pride in their cultural identity, and respect for their elders, and maybe get them out into the woods more. A lot of them have never even climbed any of the 46 peaks that are 4000 feet high or more, or even gone up any of the lower ones. Like rural kids all over the world, they watch southern California sitcoms and soaps like Fresh Prince From Belair or Orange County and this gives them an inferiority complex. A lot of people in the Ads think they're dumb and are never going to make it in the outside world and they're too scared to try so they just stay put. The only time they ever get anywhere is in the service. As one guy puts it, "there's a glass ceiling over Keene Valley." A program like this would bolster their self-esteem and maybe make them a little more inquisitive and adventurous. You drive through a hamlet and see these teens walking along with their heads down like they're defeated, trapped, like they're never gonna get out of here and they given up. I've seen the same thing on the back roads of Manitoba and in the old coal towns of South Wales, where there was an epidemic of teen suicides that I was writing about.

If these kids' eyes could be opened to the beauty and magic and endless fascination of where they are, which is

true of everywhere, that could be a major contribution to their education, and lots of fun. In 1973-5 I taught middle school science at the private school in Bedford, New York, that I had gone to in the 1950s. I was supposed to teach a canned chemistry course but instead I taught them the trees and the birds and the geology and the local history, and each of them had to do a fifty page report on their property (most of them were rich and lived on at least four acres), identifying the flora and fauna and interviewing old timers to get the history of their place and house and environs. By the end of the year, the kids could identify 39 species of tree, and during the spring bird migration my classes had competitions to see how many species they could chalk up in 45 minutes of walking around the school. 35 years later, I still hear from former students telling me how much that course meant to them.

You'd probably want to start with a pilot program one school district. The Keene Central school district gets the least amount of state aid in the Ads, the local property taxes being so high, so it would be a logical place to go to, especially with state aid having almost dried up in the recession, this is not a good time to be introducing new programs. I've talked to a number of people about this, but so far nothing has fallen into place. My role would be to go into each school and introduce the kids to the program, and to collate their findings at the end of the year and put them up on the Dispatches. It would also be a way of keeping the dialect alive. This would be a much more socially useful process than if I went around and did it all just by myself. And I think I've got the ball rolling. It's time for younger legs to run with it.

Not that my ears aren't constantly on the lookout (oops, mixed metaphor, maybe I should say open) for new isms and aphorisms and inflections. One of my favorite sources is Linda Rosco, the assistant postmistress at the Keene post office. Linda is a lovely person with a cheerful disposition and a great sense of humor and she loves that someone is interested in the local dialect and culture. She's originally from Ellenburg and is as Ads as they come. She's the one who told me people started to say ahsum, awesome, in the seventies, after a sitcom everybody was watching. This is what is known as a borrow. "I know what you mean about the people who don't have any sense of humor," she said one time. "My dad useta say, there are some people who wouldn't be happy if you hung them with a new rope." Last time I saw her was a freezing Saturday morning in December, and she said, "This is the kind of day my dad useta say you wouldn't want to be caught under a ladder with only a necktie on in."

In Canada, the Anglos punctuate their sentences with eh ? the French speakers with *hein*? while in the Ads a lot of them say hah ? This is known as an intensive postpositive (i.e. it can't be the first word in the sentence) particle of inference. Every language pretty much has at least one. In ancient Greek it was *ge*, while Rwandans and Congolese let out a sort of juicy, choric *hmmm*, kind of the amen in black Baptist churches . Linda Rosco says, "O yah ?" She also offers : "We say I be there for I will be there, and I also say how be ye, or how ye be ? The whole nine yards is anuther one. And everybody calls a chile dog a michigan. I

think you only hear that in the North Country. Comin down to town for supplies is 'doin' some tradin' or 'go(i)n' tradin.'”

Linda observed that, “a lot of Adirondackers are happy where they are. They've never been anywhere and see no reason for going anywhere else. Look at Pete and Jane Reid. They've spent their whole life in the house they were born in. How many people can you say that of today. The natives here are generally good citizens, like most people that still have their local character. They have a pretty good outlook, except they're scared of the outside world.”

One time I asked Linda why nobody around here seems to make out a will. Bucky Smith didn't, and Monty Purdy didn't, and their relatives are still squabbling over the inheritance years later. Was it because they don't like to give lawyers the business ? Linda didn't think it was that, but “because we don't like to think about the future.” Valerie McDonough, whose family owns and operates the hardware store in Keene and is full native, suggests it's “cuz we're lax about such matters.”

Like everyone who knew Berton Smith, Linda had fond memories of him. “Bert was a very capable fellow, but he was his own worst enemy,” she recalled. “You couldn't help but love the guy.” Bert could tell you jokes for 24 hours straight and you'd almost die laughing. He had all kinds of sayings that he had made up himself, like “I'm Bert and I hurt and if I ain't drunk then I wasted my money.” He was a damn good carpenter, and one time, when he was building the Mountaineer, the high-end

outdoor equipment store in Keene Valley, he hit himself on the thumb with his hammer and immediately burst into a howling falsetto version of a then popular country western song, "I found three ways to ease the pain, that's croi, croi, croi." Last time I saw him, on his deathbed in his trailer, he greeted me, "If I'd a known I'd live this long, Ida taken better care of myself. The dacta tol me I got 4 months to live, and that was 4 months ago. I'm waiting it out." The cancer had spread from his lungs to other organs so Bert was done for. I was struck by the radiance and nobility and beauty of his face, even though it was covered with a scraggly beard. After he died, his son Berton jr., who was livin in Wilminton, moved into the trailer. In the winter of 2008-09 the first moose that had been seen in the valley in fifty years showed up on Owl's Head, and wouldn't you know it, Bert jr. shot it within fifteen minutes of its arrival, for which he did three months in the Essex County Jail in E'town. The other three moose that came with it were torn apart by local dogs on the Cascade cross country course. Some welcome, hah ?

Bruce Reid, the supervisor of roads for the town of Keene, a very important position because the guys that maintain the roads take great pride in their work and do a bang-up job, offered sammich for sandwich, and "I was stung by a bee in the rectum" instead of retina. Which could be described as a malapropism. There's lot of them.

Bill Washburn, who is one of the town's tax assessors, once went down to New York City, which he told me is "too fur from Keene to amount to anything." He was looking for a guy named Bob that he had a job moving a

piano with and went around asking people on the street, “anybody seen Bob,” and nobody had, so they never hooked up. Most of the New Yorkers he stopped thought he was some kind of a crazy and didn't even give him the time of day.

One time my pickup broke down in Plattsburgh, and I had it towed to a garage, and told the mechanic I'd be back for it later in the week, and he said, “better not be lallygagging.” Shillyshallying would also have worked.

What about naked : buck naked, in the buff, in the altogether, stark naked, nude, in (his) birthday suit ?

Ed Kanze, a nature writer in Saranac, gave me partridge instead of grouse, and carry for portage, used both as a verb and a noun. Ponds are lake-sized, American marten is pine marten. From Warren Ashe : I heard it.

What's a feller-buncher ? Something to do with logging. I got that from Gerry Jenkins' *Atlas of the Adirondacks*, page 107. Jenkin's lives down in White Creek and would be a good brain to pick for this dialect project. Steve Smith had never heard of the term, but thought that maybe it was something like a cherry-picker, which he said was “a self-loading truck,” which I'm not sure what exactly that is. I thought a cherry-picker was one of them things you sit up in when you're topping branches off a tree or fixing a power line.

Every time I talk to Steve he comes out with something new. I call him from Montreal and he greets me with something like, “Still on yer hind legs ?” and I'll say, “last time I looked.” As for farewells, Brett Lawrence, a professional mountain man who takes care of the Weld camp on the Upper Lake of the Ausable Club once came

out with a great one : “Keep it in yer sneaker.” I wonder what the parameters of that are.

One time Steve told me a real old-timey joke that not many people in Ads would even get, because not many of them are engaged in the natural world around them any more, which is true of Americans in general. “A guy is fishing in a brook and another guy comes up on horse and asks him where the most shallow place to cross is and the guy who is fishing says, go up to that three-foot ledge and jump off. So the guy on the horse does and the water is so clear he didn't see that it is 20 feet deep and he jumps in on the horse and almost drowns [another ismic pronunciation]. You goddam liar, you said it was shallow, the guy on the horse says. And the fisherman says, I just saw ducks walking acrost [another one] it and their feet were only three inches in the water.” These would be mergansers, which pick themselves up and dash across the surface of brooks and rivers and ponds [lakes] in short bursts of 50-100 feet or so.

This shows you how humor has changed since most of the people in the country were living in rural, local universes, like the terms Kurath picked up in the thirties. Many of them are obsolete or extinct.

Another time Steve said as I was backing out of his dooryard, “watch out you don't runned over the cat.” Here the d is added to break up two vowels. So the dialect doesn't only drop consonants, it adds them. This was after we had been commiserating with each other about how broke we both were, and Steve said, “when you're living like us day by day, paycheck by paycheck, by yer wits, it's feast or famine.”

One year I fell so far behind on my taxes that my case was referred to an IRS collector in Plattsburgh, and this turned out to have an unexpected silver lining, because I picked up some great new isms from Wadhams, a cozy little hamlet on the Bouquet River between E'town and Essex in the stretch between the high peaks and Lake Champlain where the most extensive farming is. My collector was a woman about my age called Norma Arsenault. Of course she didn't speak a word of French, but she was part of that vestigial continuum that goes from Montreal to about halfway down into the Ads, and I could tell within the first few sentences of talking with her that she was native. She had grown up in Wadhams, which has a great rural flavor and is a place I have often thought I wouldn't moving to in my final years. There's an old power-generating plant below the dam that a young couple from outside has revived and is supplying the whole hamlet's electricity with, and in this part of the river there are huge suckers that sit in the water like logs.

Norma told me that some of the locals called the Bouquet the Bokwet and said that from Wadhams she would go “over to E'town,” but if she was going to Essex, she would say she was “goanta Essex.”

“You know, you got me thinking about things I never thought about before,” she told me after several conversations about the dialect. We got into the whole droppin consonans business. I told her a Quebecois friend in Montreal I was talking to about how Canadian French drops a lot of consonants suggested, “maybe cuz it's get so cold we can't wrap our mouths around all the consonants.”

Norma didn't think that was it. "The leaving out of consonants I always thought was sheer laziness. I was brought up to respect the English language but livin here I've just kinda fallen into it. Like leaving the g off of going. I find myself doing it, and it makes me mad."

What about yes, I asked her. Do you say yass ? "Yass," she said, sounding a little embarrassed. "But older people like my Dad said ey-YUT. But the t was silent." so how do you know it was there ? I asked. "The way it's cut off kind of implies a silent t in my mind, at least," she said.

We spent half the time talking about the dialect, and the other half about how I was going to get caught on my taxes, and when we had done with when I was going to get her the next how much, she would say, "oky doky." There's another one. In one of our conversations-- we never met face to face, but got real friendly just over the phone-- I was saying how I wanted to talk to the ice fishermen who put shanties out on Lake Champlain and sit in them all day long drinking whiskey and telling stories. And she said, "Every year a truck goes through the ice. The last one was from Crown Point. He shoulda known better." The fishermen haul the shanties out onto the ice with their pickups and the lazier ones later drive right out to their shanty. When there's too many trucks on the ice, and/or it is getting too thin because of a thaw, this is when one of them can fall through. And the thaws are getting more frequent and hotter, probly due to global warming.

Another time Norma told me there were two brothers with serious speech impediments in one of the local fire departments, and one time they got going on their walkie-

talkies, and everybody in the fire house cracked up because you couldn't understand a word they were saying.

Norma had heard of “Jewish lightning,” a local term for a fire that is accidentally set on purpose, so you can collect the insurance. I said there had been half a dozen house fires in our valley in the last couple of years, but none of them was Jewish lightning. They were more like native lightning. She laughed. One of em, it was rumored, was the house that belonged to the director of emergency preparedness for the county (this was before 9/11, before Homeland Security came into existence. Now we have all to put out signs with numbers in front of our driveways even when you're way out in the middle of nowhere, like us). Whenever there was a fire, his job was to determine what caused it. One fire he said was caused by “spontaneous human combustion.” Then his own house burnt down, and the cause of that was “a short in the water bed.”

How can a person who hasn't smoked in 20 years, which was apparently the case, just spontaneously combust? I asked Norma. Can a person who is running a high fever, say, spontaneously burst into flame like a pile of gas-soaked rags in a hot unventilated garage? I got my doubts about this, and Norma said, “ya gotta keep an open mind.”

Norma had never heard the term glinning or glinning up, for clearing or clearing up, i.e. when shafts of sunlight, or glins, break through the clouds, even though her grandparents came to Wadhams from Vermont, where Kurath picked it up. “My mother was a schoolteacher, and my dad was a dairy farmer. He delivered his milk all over Essex County. My grandmother would say, when there's a

patch of sky big enough to make your grandfather's pants, it's going to clear up.”

Sadly, Norma had only six months to go before she retired, and now I'm dealing with someone down in Queensbury who is also really nice, but we've been too busy trying to figure out how to keep the IRS happy for me to even broach the subject of the local dialect. I asked Norma what she was going to do after she retired and she said I'm going to work part-time for Bell. I asked her if she would be interested in helping out with the dialect project, going around to the natives and collecting isms, and getting the high schools involved. She sounded very nervous and said, gosh I don't think I could do that, just going up to the houses knocking on doors or cold-calling people. And I realized that like a true native, she was very shy and reluctant to bother anybody about anything or butt into their lives, except of course when they were behind on their taxes, then she had to because that was her job.

So that's where it all stands at this point. I'm looking for somebody to partner with on getting a course on the local dialect and culture into the high schools, and anybody who has an ism, or maybe I should say an adism, to contribute, don't be shy, you know how to get ahold of me.

APPENDIX

Here's some miscellaneous material, loose ends, and leads to follow, in no particular order :

Adrian Edmonds of Keene Valley used to say of a bumptious woman, according to his daughter Martha Lee Owen, “you wouldn't have to shake the sheets to find her.”

I got “too close apart” and “raise her down,” from Ron Konowicz, a teacher at Keene Central, who says “too close apart” actually comes from Archie Campbell in *Hee Haw*, a country music and humor television variety show that aired on CBS from 1969–1971 and enjoyed 20-year of reruns in local syndication.

What was the lingo of the ADS in 1882 ? My brother read me a few paragraphs the memoirs of a goide from back then called Bill Bazbeck. He talks about going “a-fishing” and “a-gumming.” There was a market for spruce gum back then. He brews wintergreen and alder beer. The memoirs are excerpted in a book called *Cranberry Lake : From Wilderness to Adirondack Park*, edited by Albert Vann Fowler. And there were other goides and mountain men in the nineteenth century who had columns or write-ups in the local papers : Nessmuk, Barney Burns, Warren Guinup, Willard Howland, Riley Bishop and the Keiler family, Cornelius “Old Man” Carter. Best place to find out what they had to say and how they said it is probly the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake.

More from Steve Smith : I ask him, “What's the weather supposed to be like this weekend?” and he says, “It's sposta to rain on and off all weekend.”

On spiders: “you don't want spiders, them sons o' bitchin' things by the Jesus.”

His garden is growing “somethin fierce.” The parameters of that are probly much wider than the Ads, maybe the whole country, and he's finally up siding on his house after 30 years of there just being sheets of particleboard that have turned gray with the elements.

“Don't do that, Steve,” I tell him. “You're gonna ruin it.”