Birth of the Nation

The Canadian Civil War, #1

by William Wresch, 1947–

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Chapter 1

So Many Ways to Start the Story.

Many people have asked me to write a history of the Canadian Civil War. After all, I am a trained historian, I was there, and I was involved—far more than I wanted to be. At some point, maybe a decade from now, I will write a formal history that will make all my graduate professors proud. But now, in this first attempt, I think I want to begin with Elise. That means in some ways this will be a

love story rather than a war story. But I think if I tell you about her, you may actually have a better sense of what was really going on than any list of leaders and incidents and dates.

To make matters even a bit more confused, before I can tell you about her, I have to tell you about me. For instance, what was I doing in Green Bay in the first place? After all, I hate Canadians. Don't all Americans? So why go to live in the capital of the enemy?

The answer to that is George Washington. I met him in the Philadelphia Public Library. I was ten. He was dead. He had been for centuries, and his memory had disappeared practically to the point of invisibility. But then I happened along. By age ten, I was tired of the kid's section of the library, and was hitting the adult section, but of course I was still a boy, so I headed straight for the books on war. And what war was I drawn to? The French and Indian war, of course, because what boy could pass up a chance to read about Indians with wild raids and scalpings, and all the stuff that boys love.

It was in this section of books that I discovered Washington. I was drawn to him first, because his book was just 100 pages long. "Washington's War" was perfect for a precocious but lazy kid. I could take out an adult book, but I really didn't have to read that much, since, after all, the man's career was pretty short. He fought twice; he lost twice—end of career.

But after a few pages, I found a few things to like about the man. For one thing, he was really young when he was doing all these wild things. He was just twenty-one when he was enrolled as a major in the Virginia militia. And at twenty-one he was sent by the Virginia Governor to find a route over the Appalachians and begin the expansion of the Virginia colony into the Ohio River Valley. And that's exactly what he tried to do – over and over and over again.

This first time he was practically alone. He was accompanied by a fur trader who wanted to come along, a translator in case they found any French along the way, and four servants (he was, after all, a gentleman). So the seven of them load up their pack mules and horses and head out in the middle of November 1753. It's the dead of winter, but Washington wants to get over the mountains and have a good trail scouted out so he can bring a column of troops over in the spring. It's cold, there's snow drifts, the trail wanders through endless, trackless forest, and they have one mountain pass after another to climb. They spend a month on the trail, sleeping on the ground next to camp fires, always one man standing guard in case they are seen by Indians.

After four weeks of sleeping in the cold and riding into the wind, they cross their last pass and come down into the Ohio valley. The streams now run west, and there are more of them. Washington has mapped and measured every foot of their journey, and they know they have a good way west. And then they spot it—Fort LeBoeuf. The French are already here.

This was one of those brief periods where the French and the English were not at war, so Washington and his party rode right up to the fort. The French admitted his party to the fort, and spent four days talking with him through his translator. Why had the French fortified lands that belonged to the English King, Washington wanted to know. Why was Washington on lands that had been claimed by the French since the time of Jolliet, was the response from the French. This went on

for four days. Meanwhile Washington is counting French troops, examining the fortifications, and determining how many men it will take to get the French out of the fort in the spring. The French may have gotten there first, but there aren't that many of them, and wooden stockades don't stand up to cannon balls.

At this point I was sold on Washington. After all, how cool was it to just ride up to the other guy's fort and say "What are you guys doing here?" If you wanted to impress a ten-year old, that was the way.

But I was just ten, and I have to admit I really didn't understand all the implications of what Washington was doing. I saw him as brave, when a more mature man would have seen he was also brilliant. It would take me ten years to finally understand why Washington had made the trip. He actually had two enemies at the time. One was the French, and the other was the Pennsylvania colony. The Pennsylvanians wanted the head waters of the Ohio too, and even had crude maps showing the lands as part of Pennsylvania, with cities plotted where Fort LeBoeuf was. They always named the cities after their patron, William Pitt, sometimes calling the cities Pittsville, or Pittston, or Pittsburgh, but of course these cities were just imaginary ink blots on overly ambitious maps.

Why did the Virginians and the Pennsylvanians and the French all want this little fort in the middle of nowhere? Because the fort controlled the Ohio, and the Ohio led right through the interior of the continent, right into the middle of the French holdings on the Mississippi. Take the fort, and it was just a matter of time before you took the Ohio Valley. Who knew what might follow from that? Washington wanted to grow his colony to the west. The French wanted to stop him. Now do you see the attraction of the man? At twenty-one, he is trying to take an entire continent from the French. Here's a guy worth more than a few paragraphs in a history text.

Things didn't go so well for Washington on his way back from the French fort. He leaves the French and tries to ride back over the mountains. Rivers that should be frozen aren't, so he has to ride around them. Indians in the woods take shots at him. Finally he leaves the rest of the party at a farm and WALKS back to Williamsburg. Have you ever looked at a map of Virginia? This guy walked across the entire state in the dead of winter! He arrives in Williamsburg in the middle of January, meets with the Virginia governor, and things start moving pretty quickly toward war.

By February Washington was leading Virginians back to the west. He starts with 150 men on the eastern edge of the mountains and drills them, hoping to turn volunteers into soldiers. Meanwhile, the Virginia Governor sends forty men over the mountains to build a fort farther up the headwaters of the Ohio. The fort is only partly built when the French show up. They have 500 men and cannons. The boys from Virginia have 40 guys led by a lieutenant who is off visiting a lady friend. The sergeant in charge of the fort does the reasonable thing—they pack their bags and head back over the mountains.

The French like the site of the fort so much, they take it over and expand it, not the first or the last time the French will take American goods and claim them for their own. This fort they call Fort Duquesne, and of course it still remains, now part of the French city of Duquesne. It is garrisoned with hundreds of Frenchmen, who settle in and wait for Washington to attack. They don't have to wait long.

Washington at this point was in charge of half the Virginia militia—150 men. He was second in command to a Colonel Fry, but Fry was back in Williamsburg trying to convince 150 men to join the militia. He wasn't having much luck, so Washington's "half" of the militia was really all there was. The Governor orders Washington to go about halfway over the mountains, build a road so supplies and cannons could make the trip, and then wait for Fry to show up with the rest of the men. Washington's men cut their way through the forests, at one point going just twenty miles in twenty days. Fry never shows up. He has managed to recruit another one hundred fifty men, and even has a few dozen British regulars under his command, but he takes ill and dies along the trail. The troops under his command complete the journey on their own and join Washington. He is now the commanding officer for this expedition.

Washington has a decision to make. With the Colonel gone, he can decide to turn back to Virginia, or he can wait where he is for the governor to appoint another colonel, or he can proceed against the French. He doesn't even hesitate. He has just had his twenty-second birthday, he has three hundred men and four cannons, and he knows the way over the mountains. He heads west. By mid-May, they are at one of the tributaries of the Ohio, and build themselves some defenses.

Good thing. Men building a road in the forest are hardly invisible, so the French have had a month of advanced notice to the invasion. Rather than sit in Fort Duquesne and wait for Washington, they go out to meet him. Washington's Indian friends tell him the French were coming, and so a week goes by while each side sends out search parties, playing blind man's bluff in the virgin forests.

Washington gets lucky first. At the head of forty men, traveling through woods so thick seven men get lost and are left behind, Washington finds a party of thirty two French troops hiding in a hollow. The Virginians open fire immediately and kill ten French, including their commander, and capture all the rest. Thus, the French and Indian War is started. In Europe it will be known as the Seven Year's War, and will be fought all over the world, one more blow up between France and England. In America it is a simple battle—see the French, shoot the French. Unfortunately, this is the last fight Washington will ever win.

Should I tell you the rest? I have to warn you things go down hill pretty fast, but given even a vague awareness of our history, you probably already guessed that we would not fare very well.

Washington has his victory, and of course now he also has a war. He marches his men and his captives back to his encampment, and digs its defenses even deeper, since he now assumes—correctly—that the French will find him and attack. He has barely forty-eight hours to get ready.

In the French side, reinforcements have arrived, bringing their numbers to nearly a thousand. After many councils with local Indians, the French are able to get their help as well, and come at Washington in a pattern that has become so familiar whenever we have faced the French. They always have the numbers, and they always have the terrain. In this case, they arrive at, and surround Washington's defenses on July third. It rains the whole day and each side has trouble keeping their power dry. It's a nasty fight with shots coming out of the woods on all sides of Washington's men. For nine hours men shoot across distances of thirty or forty yards. The dead and the wounded pile up on both sides,

but the French not only have the numbers, they eventually get the high ground. They position a cannon to fire right down into Washington's fort, and the outcome is inevitable. The only decision left is whether any Virginians will leave alive. At midnight Washington signs a surrender. He spends July 4th, 1754, carrying wounded men back up the mountain trails, back to Virginia.

Of course you know what happened the next year. Washington comes back again, this time second in command to Braddock and his regiment of British regulars, but the result is the same—one more retreat among the wounded, and defeated, back to Virginia. Braddock's body is buried under the wagon road so the oxen and wagons can beat his bones into the ground and forever hide his burial place from Indian grave robbers. Washington is twenty three, and he is once again in command, and he is once again beaten by the French. Three times he has been over the mountains, looking to expand his colony, and ultimately his country, and three times he loses. What kind of burden is that for a twenty-three year old to bear?

Is that why I hate the Canadians? Hatred of the French is common among Americans, and I certainly share all the reasons my countrymen do. But to me, there is also Washington, and his dream for a larger America. That dream is largely dead now. We no longer look west. We eventually went south, beating the Spanish and taking Florida, and moving north and gradually wearing out the Iroquois so that we enlarged the colony of New York, and there were occasional efforts west again, but they were so soundly defeated that it became accepted that the mountains would be our western boundary. Instead, we turned east. The Atlantic became our pond. We were the seamen, the traders, the ship builders, the insurers who moved people and cargo across the Atlantic and eventually around the world. We became a different kind of people—merchants rather than farmers, seamen rather than trappers, and we forgot about the west.

But I didn't forget. Sitting in the Philadelphia library, reading about those old wars, something took hold of me. I became possessed about Washington, the Ohio, and the America that might have been. He climbed those mountains and fought those battles for a dream. I decided I would learn more about that dream. I might never be able to make that dream become real, but I could at least do what I do best—learn. And maybe someday I would have something useful to say about those days at the headwaters of the Ohio.

By the time I was seventeen I decided that I would leave my native Philadelphia and go to college at the University of Virginia – in the land of Washington. I learned a great deal there, including the fact that I wasn't the only one who understood the value of the Ohio. There was a professor—Bernard DeVoto—who had written books about the Ohio and its implications. Right up until his death, DeVoto was arguing that the U.S. could have extended clear to the Pacific. It needed the Ohio, just as Washington had seen, but with the Ohio in hand, the U.S. could have cut off the French in the north, taken the Mississippi Valley, then the Missouri, and ended up ruling all the way to California. It is true Harvard thought his theory too controversial and never gave him tenure, but he found a more welcome home in the heart of his country—the University of Virginia. There his books gave a shape to the kind of speculation some of us have had over a quiet evening. The United States could have been a continental country.

With DeVoto's death, historians moved on to other issues and his hypothesis lost much of its allure—except to me. I read all his books, and in the process came upon another name that would change my life—Louis Jolliet. Everyone knows that it was Jolliet who discovered the Mississippi, but I learned more. Jolliet had started a family—a family that ruled New France to this day. It was that family as much as anything else that blocked American ambitions. These people led their country, and on several occasions had saved their country. In time, my generalized hate for the French, resolved itself into a particular hatred for the Jolliets. This was a family I would learn about and somehow damage.

First came my preparation. I finished my degree (American History, of course) in three years and stayed on to earn a Ph.D. I chose my thesis advisors carefully—each had been a student of DeVoto. At age twenty six I felt like DeVoto reincarnated. I burned with a thirst for what might have been. But unlike DeVoto, I had two special advantages—I spoke fluent French, and my family ran an export business with an office in Green Bay. I could walk into the lion's den, and I would. I would travel to Canada on a personal quest to find the dark underbelly of the Jolliet family history, and set the historical record straight, embarrassing the French, and avenging my country's honor. Said another way, I was twenty-six, and driven.

Immediately upon graduation I made my parents proud by telling them I (finally) was interested in the family business. I asked for, and received, a job in the Green Bay office. I was on my way. Somehow, some way, I would strike a blow for Washington.

Chapter 2

The Bay of the Stenches.

I arrived in Green Bay in June, while the mosquitoes were in full bloom. Most of the winter snow had melted, and there were even leaves on some of the trees. Green Bay looked as good as it was ever going to look. I took an apartment on the edge of the Fox River, rented a noisy Renault with all the acceleration of a golf cart, and began going in to the office. My job? Well, I was the boss' son, so mostly it was to learn the business. I talked with people, went to lunch with managers, kept my mouth shut and tried to stay out of the way.

At the end of each day I went back to my apartment and tried to find something to do. Not an easy task. Green Bay might be a national capital, but its cultural scene seems to revolve around cheese tastings and lacrosse matches. How much cheese can you eat? I spent a lot of time walking the streets and dodging mosquitoes the size of pigeons. I was relieved to find the city didn't smell as bad as its reputation. The waters on the edge of town—Green Bay—tend to be pretty marshy, and various algae blooms lead to the historical Indian name for the place—"Bay of the Stenches." I wondered if the city should advertise its new-found lack of odors—"Green Bay—we don't smell as bad as people expect." I considered

sending the suggestion to the local newspaper, but given how little humor the French have, it struck me as a wasted effort.

What does this place look like? I agree with all other visitors that it is much different than we expect. For one thing, there are two halves. The Fox River runs through the middle of town, separating the town—and separating the classes. The eastern side of the river is where the aristocrats live, and where all the main national buildings and embassies are. And yes, I know that Canada, like France, is post-revolution and supposedly the home of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Sure it is. Except the homes on the east side look like they were built by the same architects who built the mansions of Versailles, and kids from the west side get a pretty good thumping if they are seen with east side girls.

But it is actually the west side that is the most surprising. While our lower classes are cramped into apartment towers, theirs have single-family homes on quarter acre lots. These homes are referred to as “ranch-style” after ranches of the west, and are a single-story in height, and while relatively small, they each have an attached garage and a small lawn. I once went for a drive to see what these neighborhoods looked like, and they went on forever—mile after mile after mile of little houses with little yards and late-model Renaults beside each. Canadians think they are showing off their wealth in their east-side mansions, but the nation’s real wealth is best seen in how much room they have for their working poor. Each man has his own quarter acre “ranch.” Until you see it, you really cannot appreciate it.

After a month of aimless wandering, I decided it was time to get focused. I was here to undermine the Jolliet clan. That could only happen if I actually met a Jolliet or two. So I started structuring my time. I would go to cheese tastings. I would use the family business to sponsor wine competitions. I would mix socially with the French. If Washington could cross mountains for his country, I could learn to distinguish between forty eight kinds of cheese, and recall the names of fifteen or sixteen lacrosse players. So I did, and eventually, it paid off. It took over a year of receptions, introductions, parties, and endless stupid lacrosse matches at Lambeau Field, before I met the people who could introduce me to the people who had links to other people… You get the idea. I spent a year talking to anyone who might be a Jolliet, or might know a Jolliet, or might have once met a Jolliet at a garage sale. My goal was a meeting with Claude Jolliet, ex-President of Canada and direct descendant of the Jolliet who had stolen North America from the Americans. I wanted a series of interviews that would give me a personal history of the early days of New France. My emphasis, of course, was on a personal history, since personal histories are always more interesting than official histories, and always more damaging.

After fourteen months of effort, I finally made the right connections, and Jolliet agreed to see me at his estate overlooking Lake Winnebago. His appointments secretary had allotted me thirty minutes. But I knew that was a ruse. In truth his political party had largely abandoned him two years earlier in a sectional split and now he spent most of his time writing memoirs and watching his vines grow. I knew that Jolliet had no real demands on his time, and he was trying to appear much more important than he was. Oh well. When you deal with the French…

Now my job was to have a good first meeting so that there might be a second meeting, and a third, eventually leading to some disclosure that I could use. I would charm him. I reread his biography so I could drop a few comments about his past successes (leaving out the time he was visiting Philadelphia and was almost shot), I read yet another book on wines (do the French ever publish anything *but* wine books?) since I knew he was the usual patrician wine snob, and I bought a new suit from a French tailor, hoping the seams would stay together for this first visit.

Thus armed, I arrived at his chateau. There is no need to describe this house. Like so many other homes of the elite in New France, it is just a copy of a Loire Valley chateau. There was a circle drive in front where I parked my irritating little Renault. The yard was wide, well-landscaped, and empty. Mine was the only car in the drive. It was obvious immediately that all the rumors had been right—he had been abandoned by his party and left in isolation. A liveried servant waited for me at the front door, as did two secret service men who checked me carefully with a handheld metal detector. Obviously they didn't understand that I intended to do far more damage with a pen than I could have done with a gun.

Finally the social secretary, a Mr. Picard, came forward to meet me. Before he could open his mouth and attempt any heavily accented English, I greeted him in French and began running on about a friend of his I had met at a Lacrosse match (sitting in a luxury box at Lambeau Field, drinking the local wine while the poor souls on the field beat each other with sticks). We searched briefly for other people we might have in common, found a few, and then he explained that he regretted the President's schedule was so busy that he could not possibly spare me more than thirty minutes. If his next appointment arrived a bit late, however, he would see if he could get me a few extra minutes with the President. At this point I knew I was right. There was no next appointment and I could stay as long as I behaved myself.

Then with proper solemnity we walked back through the house to the garden where the President took his leisure these days.

Things did not start well. I couldn't tell if the President had already been sampling his house wine, or if he was just in a mood, but he stretched himself to his full five foot eight inch height and immediately got arrogant. He stood waiting with his hand barely out from his side, making me walk to him and reach and bend to take his hand. Maybe he expected a bow. But Americans don't bow, and he knew that.

I addressed him clearly and slowly in French, having heard that his hearing was beginning to fade, but he immediately assumed that since I was speaking slowly, I was struggling with the language, and he answered in English. This was a bit of a shock since I had never heard him speak publicly in English, even when he visited Philadelphia and was addressing our Congress or press corps. His attitude seemed to be that English was too crude a language to use and that since all educated people spoke French, he could just address the world in that tongue. The fact that he was speaking to me in English now, could only mean one thing—he thought I was too stupid to speak French. I couldn't let that stand.

"Mr. President," I said in French, speaking more quickly this time, "Your English is superb, and I appreciate this gesture of welcome. But this is the heart of New

France and you are the leading statesman of our age. I would be deeply embarrassed to speak anything other than French in your presence." This mollified him substantially and he gestured for me to sit with him at his table.

"My secretary tells me that you are an historian, and that your family has business dealings in our capital. Are you visiting me today as an historian, or as a businessman?"

"Mr. President, it is my pleasure to visit you today as an historian. Your personal journey is enough to fill the efforts of numerous historians in its own right, but you are also a direct descendant of the Jolliet family which is known throughout the world for their exploits beginning with the discovery of the Mississippi. You embody the history of this nation." Yes, I know, I sound like a real toady, but at this point I was willing to say anything to get this man to talk.

'Yes, I am proud to be a Jolliet. It is rare that a family can maintain its lineage and its influence over three centuries. But it is also rare that an American would be interested in such a history. You have your own leading families, your heroes, your victories. Surely there is plenty of history for a young historian to explore in your own country."

"There are points in history, sir, when our two countries share events. Yes, those events include several wars. But they also include common experiences, especially as our nations took their initial steps across this continent. We share beginnings."

"I understood you to be a disciple of DeVoto." This shocked me. It hadn't occurred to me that his staff might take the time to research my background. But it made no sense to deny what he already knew. So I nodded. "Then you know our countries did not share beginnings. We shared possibilities, you from the east and us from the north, but it was my ancestor who turned the possibility into reality. He got to the Mississippi first, and that was *our* beginning."

"Yes, "I nodded, "that was an important beginning for you."

"No, if we are to talk, we must be honest with each other. You are a DeVoto student. You know it was not important—it was crucial. The fate of our two nations was sealed the instant his canoe rounded the bend at Prairie du Chien and entered the Mississippi. Is it not so?"

"Yes." I had to smile. He wanted to brag about his family. Marvelous. Let him talk. The more he went on about his family, the sooner he would say something I could use against the whole clan.

"I hear DeVoto is less popular than he used to be. That is too bad, because he was the one historian in your country who understood what my ancestor had accomplished. And even he underestimated the importance of that moment. Let me explain it to you. It was essential that we take the Mississippi. Think about how things might have turned out otherwise. We would have had a minor province in Quebec with some presence in the Great Lakes region, and then there would have been our outpost in New Orleans—really just a trading and shrimping station constantly under siege by malaria, hurricanes, and Spanish raiders. You English were already wandering west and were bound to cross your Alleghenies eventually. Once over the mountains you would have kept coming until you took the interior all the way to the Rockies. Who knows, you might even have linked up with the English-speaking countries of California and Oregon.

“The Mississippi changed everything. By joining Quebec to New Orleans, it strengthened both. Now suddenly we had our own highway through the interior. And like any highway, it was inevitable that towns would be built along the way, people would gather and civilization would grow. Once we had the Mississippi, it was inevitable that we would take the interior of the continent and New France would follow. DeVoto saw part of that. He saw what the US might have become. What he never paid attention to was what would have happened to France if we had *not* discovered the Mississippi.”

“Ah, Mr. President,” I smiled and nodded pleasantly, “you have found the problem already. We Americans see events from our side. Even DeVoto never looked past the impact of the discovery on the U.S. We know nothing about how these events were viewed from your side. Even something as fundamental as the discovery of the Mississippi is not seen in proper perspective.”

“And it is your goal to provide that perspective?” He stared directly at me as he asked the question. This was the moment of truth. Either I convinced him now, or the interview was over and I had spent a year shivering in Green Bay for nothing.

“Yes. That is why I am here. You are right, I am a disciple of DeVoto. I have studied all his works. I value what he alone was able to see in our history. But I also see that his vision was incomplete. He saw the American side of events. I want to be the historian who expands his vision to include both sides.” Enough of that was true that I was able to say it while meeting his gaze.

We sat quietly for a moment and then the President turned to me and said, “Do you know much about wine?” I mentioned that I had visited a few estates in the area around Green Bay, to which he replied, “Let me show you how we grow grapes here on the Winnebago.”

His chateau was on the ridge east of Lake Winnebago, and his vines descended the hill towards the lake in carefully managed terraces. He led me down one terrace after another as we slowly descended toward that huge lake. At seventy-six the President might be presumed to be too old to do more than drink his wine, but it soon became apparent he was still active in the family wine business.

“When Pere Marquette and my ancestor first canoed down the Fox, the Winnebagoes called this “stink lake.” Of course we paid them back by naming the lake after them.” He laughed at his own joke. “They pretended it wasn’t an insult, and so did we. But we both knew better. As it turned out, once we put in some dams and raised the water levels enough to improve navigation, the stink disappeared. It is still just a few meters deep, but that is enough”

“It took a century after that first visit for one of our ancestors to see the obvious. This side of the lake is gently elevated. Being on the east side of the lake, the cold west wind has to blow across the lake before it gets here and so is moderated enough to help protect the vines. Not that we can use the same vines as in Bordeaux or even Alsace, but our oenologists found varieties that could withstand the cold. The slope gave us the drainage we needed, and of course with the lake and the Fox so handy, early settlers knew it would be easy to transport their wines to population centers. But then what am I telling a Yankee about business for? Obviously you understood this immediately.”

“You are too kind in mentioning Yankee business skills.” I ignored the gentle slur about my background. “But I am interested in your vines. While the slope

helps with drainage, I had heard that the soils here are mostly clay and so various root rots are a problem. Could you tell me how you responded to this?"

"Oh, you do know your wine." He stopped and looked at me as if he was doing yet another reassessment of my abilities. Was he amazed that I had read one of about forty million French wine books? Yes, I could read, and yes, I had been to vineyards before. Rather than be insulted I decided things were going well if it took so little to impress him.

"Clay is a terrible soil for vines." He finally continued. "It holds water too well and leads to root rot. And it also gives the wines a subtle flavor that few like. Not that it mattered two centuries ago when the first vines were planted. Our ancestors were too grateful just to get any kind of wine. But through the generations each vintner worked to improve the soil. Luckily there is limestone under this ridge so various excavations brought more to the surface. And the land was terraced so that there is no flat area. Everything slopes to the lake. But the change in the soils took more than two centuries of work. Even now we cultivate carefully. When you look over these fields you should imagine ten generations of hand labor that may continue for another dozen generations."

We both stood and looked across his terraces and tried to imagine the history that had taken place where we stood.

"But you didn't come all this way to look at my vineyard." He suddenly announced, interrupting our reverie. "You wanted to talk about that little canoe trip that my more famous ancestor took in 1673. Let's go back up to my grape arbor and talk about those days."

Actually I didn't give a damn about "that little canoe trip." Yes, Jolliet had passed down this river and the lake right in front of me on his way to the Mississippi. So what? Maybe something interesting happened on that trip, but probably not. But I guess we had to start somewhere. He was determined to tell his tale his way. Luckily he was starting with Louis Jolliet and not going back to some prehistoric Jolliet who had first brought wine to France. So I followed him back up his little hill, back up to his little wine arbor over looking his little vineyard, and accepted the scrap he was prepared to throw me. We would talk about the Jolliett who had wandered around here in the back of a canoe. Oh well, it was a start.

"Maybe it would help," I said as we seated ourselves around a small glass-topped table. A servant must have seen us coming, since a bottle of the house wine and two glasses were already prepared for us, as was a cheese and cracker plate. "Maybe it would help if I began with what I know of those times." Yes, and maybe I could move this conversation along. What I didn't want was a school-book version of events.

"Yes, please do," Jolliet poured us each a glass of wine and settled back, looking westward over his fields and over the lake toward the industrial city of Oshkosh. I knew hundreds of thousands of people built trucks and made paper products over there, but we sat in complete silence under the shade of the grape arbor.

"First," I said, "I know that while our two countries have been constant competitors and sometimes combatants, New France had no concern for us in 1673. We were just small towns on the water's edge to your east. The real problem to your east was not us, but the Iroquois. So taking the Mississippi to cut off our

Westward expansion wasn't even a remote consideration. Your concern was the Spanish. They had Florida and Mexico and New Mexico. If the Mississippi flowed south into the Gulf, you divided their lands and weakened their hold. If it flowed southwest, it might give you a backdoor into the silver mines of New Mexico. If it flowed west, it gave you a route to Asia. Any of the three would be a major boon to your nation."

"Yes," he responded with a slight smile, as school master might to a student who had just shown some intelligence. "You remember the Spanish. It has been so many centuries since they had any power in the world, people today have forgotten they ever existed. In the end both our countries broke their power, but yes, as it turned out the termination of the Mississippi in the Gulf hurt them very badly. The day it was established, New Orleans made Florida a worthless swamp. It took two centuries for you Yankees to find anything useful to do with it once you took possession, and then all you could do with it was build golf courses and old people's homes. An ironic end to the Spanish efforts to find the Fountain of Youth there, don't you think?"

"Had the Spanish held Mexico, I suppose they could have used Florida as a transshipment point," I answered, careful not to grit my teeth. Was he trying to be irritating, or was French arrogance so imbued in him and his countrymen that insults just flowed from them like sweat from horses.—„but they also had Cuba and dozens of other islands, so why bother. And of course, with you entrenched in the Gulf, now all shipping to Mexico and New Mexico was vulnerable. New Orleans was much more than a thorn in Spain's side. You could say it was a bayonet."

"Yes, yes," the President mused, "The Mississippi did enter the Gulf at a very unfortunate place for them." I suspected I saw a slight smile under the President's mustache, but he restrained it very well. Years of diplomatic training will do that.

"Let me continue with what I know." I paused for effect and then continued. "I know that the esteemed Jolliet did far more than discover the Mississippi. He established four of the eight major cities of New France. You already had a settlement in Green Bay, but he was able to add Oshkosh and Prairie du Chien, then St Louis, and finally Chicago. It took another forty years for Louis the 15th to send a settlement to New Orleans, but Msr. Jolliet made that inevitable. Aside from the cities of Detroit, Duquesne and DeSmet, his choice of camping spots and negotiations with local tribes established the great cities of your nation."

"Thank you for that," the President responded and raised his wine glass as in a toast. "Many people recognize him as the discoverer of the mighty Mississippi, but few understand that he was responsible for much of how our country actually took shape."

"He was clearly a brilliant man as well as a brave leader," I hastened to add. "But he had one more trait. It appears to me he must have been the greatest politician of his age."

"Oh?" The president asked. Now he had turned in his chair not quite facing me, but certainly more towards me and less towards the lake than he had been before. I was finally getting him interested.

"He spent five months sharing a canoe with a Jesuit at a time when traders and priests had opposite views on almost everything. Nothing in all the official histories gives any indication of friction between the two men, but peace between the two is

highly unlikely. If it did exist, it must have been the result of incredible political skills exercised by Msr Jolliet." I was going much too far in our first meeting, but I couldn't help myself. Maybe I could get him to say something derogatory about the Jesuits. What a great start to my book!

"No, I must correct you" the President replied. "You have read that the Jesuits opposed French traders since the traders sometimes brought brandy with them and got the Indians drunk so they could take advantage of them in trade. Such things happened and the Jesuits were right to oppose them. And so there were times of friction with traders. But this is talk of generalities. You and I know that history is made by individuals. Louis and Jacques Marquette had much more in common than generalities might suggest. They became strong friends and useful allies. Had Marquette lived, they would have accomplished great things together."

"Could you describe them for me? I am afraid our history books tell us much about what they did, but little about who they were." This was true enough. And of course it was character flaws that I was looking for.

"The history of Louis Jolliet is well known, but possibly I can add a few original comments about him." He paused at this point so I could express deep gratitude for him upcoming, boring speech. I smiled at him and hated myself for doing so. But this is where I had struggled to be – sitting with Claude Jolliet, hoping enough time, and enough wine, might get him to tell me more than the sanitized version of the family history. So I sat quietly, ready to let him rattle on, and hoping to hear an interesting nugget somewhere in his speech.

And then Picard returned and mumbled something about the President's next appointment. Of course there was no next appointment, but I had been there nearly an hour already, and if they let me stay longer, it would appear that Jolliet had nothing better to do with his time, a fact that was true but inconvenient.

"Thank you so much for your time, Mr. President," I said while standing. "I hope I may visit you again sometime soon to hear your description of Louis Jolliet." God, I hated myself at that moment. I could even feel myself bowing slightly. What a complete toady. But it had taken me a year to get this visit, I wasn't about to spend another year stuck in Green Bay while I waited for my next interview. I needed to close the deal here and now.

"I would like that." He took my hand and smiled that politician smile you see on all the portraits. "We will put Picard to work on it and see if he can find a time." And with that, it was over. My first visit with Jolliet. Picard walked with me back to the house, chatting about lacrosse with more seriousness than any high school graduate should, but promising he would find me another time with the president. I left a happy man.

I also left with one visual image. As we hesitated at the back door of the chateau, I looked west across Lake Winnebago. The sun was about midway in its descent and was reflected on the water. It made a kind of line to the west, to Oshkosh, and to the Fox River. Three centuries earlier, that was where Louis had turned his canoes to the west. I suppose you have to be an historian to feel anything special about such a view, but I felt it. A singular moment in the history of mankind had occurred right where I was looking now. That little river had changed the destinies of two great nations.

Then the image was gone, and I was back at my shoddy little car, driving back to mosquitoville on Stench Bay. But I would have a chance to come back and view that body of water again. And for the first time since my arrival in New France, I actually had something to look forward to.

Chapter 3

The Usual Stories about Louis Jolliet as a boy.

Picard was as good as his word, and he called in a few days with another appointment to see the President in two weeks. He was pleasant on the phone, I was fittingly grateful for the old man's time, and the appointment was set.

Then odd things started happening. I was invited to parties. In the two weeks before my next appointment with the President, I was invited to three parties, none of them involving the sale of Tupperware. These were three more parties than I had been invited to during my entire first year in Stenchville. All the social life I had experienced so far had been at my expense—or more correctly, at the expense of my father's business. Now suddenly, I was being invited to homes of the great exalted French elite. Well, they weren't all that elite, but they were more elite than any French I had met in the past.

It didn't take me long to understand why I, a lowly American, was suddenly worthy to enter the faux chateaus of petty nobles. I had met with the President. I was a person of interest. They weren't sure what to do with me or say to me once I had arrived at their parties, but I got a few sentences in about the President's health, and astonished everyone by the fact that I knew some French. They were happy to have me at their party, I was pleased to get some free food, and the two weeks passed quickly.

Then it was back to the President's chateau. Once again I was the only car in the drive, and once again Picard walked me back to the President's grape arbor overlooking the lake. The President seemed in a better mood this time, and we sat quickly, sipped a bit of wine that a servant had poured for us, and got right back to a discussion of Louis. I was about to hear all about the marvels of the greatest explorer in the history of civilization, or so I was convinced he would be portrayed, but that was all right. I would shut up, listen, and hope that maybe a blemish or two might appear in the shadows of the tin god.

"Louis was born in Quebec in 1645," President Jolliet began, "so as you will see, he was actually eight years younger than Marquette, yet it was still Louis who was the official leader of the expedition. He was raised during hard times, and his family situation was so bad it was almost comical. During the days of his youth the Iroquois were constantly raiding the colony, causing so much fear that farmers were afraid to go out into their fields. As a result, the colony sat along rich farmland but would have starved if it had not been able to import food from France." I nodded in sympathy and sipped my wine. Poor Louis.

“Louis’ father had fairly large land holdings in France, but he apparently wasn’t much of a farmer so he and his wife emigrated to New France where he worked as a wheelwright. What is odd about that is New France had no horses, so of course it had no carriages. Imagine that. The Spanish were whipping horses all across the desert southwest, and in all of New France there wasn’t a single horse. The first dozen didn’t arrive until 1665. It is no wonder we stuck so close to rivers, is it?

“But I digress. Apparently Jean made wheels for handcarts, but we will never really know. He died when Louis was five, and fades from history. Rather than retreat back to France, Louis’ mother stayed in Quebec with her four children—a pretty daring move given the circumstances. She must have been quite a woman. She remarried fairly quickly, had three children by her second husband, who then drowned in a canoeing accident. So she married a third time to a man who already had six mixed-race children. In short, she raised thirteen children and survived three husbands. God grant Canada a million such women!

“Louis had the best education any man in New France could have had. His farm was near a settlement of Hurons and he learned to speak their language as a child. At nine he was sent off to the Jesuit college of Quebec to study. Meanwhile his older brother was taken captive by the Iroquois, learned their language and was released unharmed—a real rarity. That brother, Adrian, then accompanied missionaries on visits to the farthest ends of the realm, including being among the first to traverse Lake Superior as far as the Keweenaw Peninsula. This is to say, just by sitting at the dinner table with his brother, Louis was able to learn as much geography of New France as any man alive.

“And then there was his special gift. Now I do need to digress. So far I have just talked about Louis’s circumstances. Would you not agree that it is his character that matters more?”

“Yes, I would. My father says that character is fate. Usually he would say that after we neglected to do our homework or left a mess somewhere.” We both chuckled about that.

“We have a similar saying in French politics. But when we leave a mess it tends to be a large one.” I enjoyed his joke, but I also hoped he would lead me to just such a mess.

“Given his history, “ I ventured, “I would expect Louis to be a determined man, one who planned carefully and then acted with great resolution.”

“Yes, that is a common view. If you look at the portraits, he has a facial expression usually reserved for conquering generals. They would put him on a horse if we had any. But he was not that kind of man at all. He was an artist. He taught himself to play the organ, and led worship services for all the years he was at college. And he sang. He had the best tenor voice in North America. He was such a good musician that he attended the college at Quebec for free, and more importantly, he was able to personally meet all the more important personages of the colony through his music.” This was all news to me. A backwoods musician? I had seen no record of that in any of the histories I had read.

“Louis sang duets with Claude Dublon, who later became so famous among the explorers. He performed for Bishop Laval, whose high regard was essential two decades later when the future of the colony was at its turning point. Through his singing ability, he was known to every man in the colony. Imagine how much that

mattered years later when men were chosen to do the work of the crown and of the church. People loved him, and respected him, even when he had his time of crisis. Where other men would have been destroyed by his actions, Louis emerged even more respected.

"His crisis?" I asked. I know my pupils had just dilated, but I hoped no other signs of my interest were visible. A glass of wine and tern minutes of conversation might have just taken me to my ultimate destination. I just needed to prod ever so carefully at this admission of family weakness.

"In the summer of 1667, as Marquette was crossing the North Atlantic, Louis was twenty-two. He had graduated from the Jesuit college and decided to become a priest. His first year in the seminary had been very successful. One of the requirements of seminarians was that they become skilled in debate. In fact they had to demonstrate that skills in public by debating an issue before all citizens of Quebec. The debate was held in Latin, so you would imagine that few would attend, but even those who didn't understand the words would attend to enjoy the drama of the contest. Who was Louis assigned to debate? No other than Jean Talon, then the chief executive of New France. Louis did fine and made another important friend.

"But this was a young man in crisis. Was he truly called to be a priest? He was successful at everything he tried. He was known throughout the colony. With the Iroquois defeated, the colony was about to become much larger and more successful. There were opportunities everywhere for him. How to choose? He did what so many young men do in these circumstances. He decided to travel to clear his head. He respectfully quit the seminary, and sailed for France, ironically sailing back to France on the same fleet of ships that had just brought Marquette.

"Why France? Imagine all the stories he had heard during his youth. This was the nation constantly talked about, dreamed about, loved and hated by every colonist. This was the motherland. And he had never seen it. Now was the time to see what life was like there. His family still had land there. Why not go see it? Why not visit this land of dreams?

"He stayed a year. You will hear many stories about that year. Enemies of the family assert that he was a vagabond wandering the streets of Paris. Conspiracy theorists claim he was on a secret mission from the Bishop to pursue some project for Cardinal Richlieu, completely ignoring the fact that Richilieu was long since dead. What is the truth? He studied cartography at the Sorbonne. He was there too briefly to be enrolled as a student, so there are no records of his studies, but he found tutors and attended lectures and learned to make maps.

"And he had made up his mind about his future. He returned to Quebec just a year after he had left it, met with Bishop Laval and not only formally withdrew from the seminary in the Bishop's good graces, but was able to borrow enough money from Laval to start his first business – a trading company. His brother Adrien was already trading with Indians in the western region. Rather than work for his brother, Louis purchased his own trade goods, took his own risk, and headed west – sometimes with his brother, sometimes on his own.

"The trip to Paris intrigues me." I let those words out as carefully as I could, attempting to seem off-handed about a point that might be crucial. "While he was gone a year, if you allow for the time to sail to France and then the time to sail

back, he was in France little more than half a year. That is really such a short time. Was there family remaining in France that he could have visited during this time?"

"Yes, his sister had married a man who returned to France, and of course there were still cousins and such in villages south of Rheims. But we have no evidence that he met with any of them. No letters remain from this time, and there is no oral history of family reunions and such. The belief in the family is that he never saw any of his relatives during this visit."

"So there are no letters, enrollment documents, or other historical records from his visit? Then it makes for a good mystery, doesn't it?" I asked. "A twenty-two year-old seminarian goes to France for the first time in his life. What does he do there?"

"More than one French historian has tried to unravel that mystery. Given his later fame and the continued prominence of the family, many attempts have been made to account for all the events of his youth. But all have been unsuccessful. Maybe our enemies are correct and he was just a vagabond during those months. " Jolliet smiled at me, almost daring me to pursue that line further. "That would account for the total lack of records. But then, after more than three centuries, there are many reasons why records might not exist. After all, it is not like we could just track his credit card purchases, is it? Account books can be destroyed in fires, or lost to floods. Letters and diaries can be lost the same way."

"Yes, we historians like to see ourselves as detectives, but we can only use the clues that have survived the times." I made a mental bookmark to see what I could find about the "crisis" of young Louis. With luck, who knew what could be found. But there was no sense pursuing the point now. I sensed that Jolliet was getting uncomfortable—maybe from the topic, maybe from sitting so long. It was time to bring the interview to a conclusion.

"You have been a very gracious host," I began. "But I do not wish to outstay my welcome. Can we sum up the history to this point? It is the year 1668. Louis is back from France and has begun his trading business. Father Marquette has reached New France and has begun his missionary career. The players are on the stage, the processes have begun, and within five years these two will explore the Mississippi and establish the empire we see today."

"Yes, you are right that the players are moving swiftly now to the events of 1673 and the founding of our nation. But you are a professional historian so I must tell you there is more to the story than we tell our school children. Yes, 1673 was a great year—one we celebrate with proper fanfare on each centennial. But there are three years we must fully appreciate to understand the founding of our nation—1673, 1674, and 1676. In 1673 we found the Mississippi and gained the keys to empire. But in 1674 we lost it all. By the end of the year we had lost everything Louis and Marquette had risked their lives for. Their discovery might as well not have occurred. Rescue only came in 1676. It is a year we do not celebrate, but we in the family know the importance of that year, even if the school books never mention it."

"But you are right, " he said as he slowly stood. "Picard has signaled me that affairs of state need my attention. I wish you luck with your project and hope that we may meet again sometime." He held out his hand and I knew I was being

dismissed. But what a time to go! What happened in 1674 and 1676? I had read much of their history and neither year had seemed of great moment. How could they be so important?

"If I may be so bold, might I be able to visit you again soon to hear more of these events?"

"Oh course. I will tell Picard to schedule some time for you when my appointments will allow."

"Thank you so much." I shook his hand again and turned to begin the walk back to the chateau. As I turned I thought I saw him smile.

Chapter 4

Father Jacques Marquette, S.J.

Picard called me two days later to tell me he could fit me into the President's schedule in three weeks. This time the appointment was for two hours. Between his tone and the several minutes of chitchat we exchanged, I could tell things had gone well. If he was giving me two hours, I knew I could take four or more if the interview went well. As for waiting three weeks, I assumed that was to avoid looking overly eager and to show me he was a busy man.

What an unusual three weeks it turned out to be. While I had told no one about my meetings with President Jolliet, it seemed like all of Green Bay knew of it before I had driven the hour back to town. While there had been three parties after my first meeting with the President, now there were dozens – more than I could possibly attend. I had made, if not the A list, at least the B+ list for the local social circuit. The houses were bigger, the wine better, and I went three weeks without having to pay for a meal. Life was good.

When I arrived at these parties, the reasons for the invitations were never a secret. Within five minutes of my arrival I was always greeted with some variation of "So you are the Jolliet family biographer." Those aligned with his family and party then tried to fill me with a series of amusing and laudatory anecdotes, while those many in opposition waited until after the third cognac and then dropped their voices to ask, "I don't suppose he has told you about…" and then they would swiftly disparage the family.

I learned a great deal about the politics of Canada. We Americans are far more united than they are. I know you will say, "but we spent two centuries as just a collection of colonies that had independent interests and seldom if ever supported each other. Remember what happened when George Washington first attacked Fort Duquesne and tried to secure the Ohio Valley for Virginia? Pennsylvania wouldn't supply a man or a dollar. Neither would any other colony. We each fought separately and were defeated separately." Yes that is true, but we learned. We are slow learners and paid dearly for each lesson, but eventually we did learn. While we Americans may have our differences, we are totally united in our hatred for and fear of the French. This unifying principle underscores all our politics.

But New France is larger and more powerful than the US, so it has the luxury of a broader political spectrum. I had learned little of this while studying in the US, and even during my first year in Green Bay I had just gotten an inkling of the political mood. Besides, sitting in a Lacrosse match surrounded by thousands of frogs drunk of cheap chardonnay, how much political insight was I to garner from shouts of "Hit those damn Huguenots."

Now suddenly, everyone wanted to be my political tutor. The fact that I was an American mattered not. I was now a Jolliet biographer, and it was "essential" that I hear their views. I was educated on the various power blocks. There were the Huguenots who had settled Louisiana. Of course there were all the Indian tribes, those in political favor like the Illinois, and those out of favor for what their ancestors had done centuries before. There were western French who seemed to think the buffalo would be coming back any day now, and the Northern French who appeared to believe that the kayak was still man's greatest achievement. And there were the racial groups – the Haitians who spent about two years being grateful when first they arrived from that cursed rock, and then spent the rest of their lives bitter about their lives in New France, the northern Athabascans who had not assimilated at all, and the strangest group—the "Old French" group who lived around the old capital of Quebec and apparently had to prove that their families went back at least three centuries to Paris.

Some groups were aligned with the Jolliets, some opposed. All wanted to shape my views and direct my research. I received so many books in the mail the postman, a dour individual like all French civil servants (there's an oxymoron for you), was even more unpleasant each morning as he deposited the day's pile of letters and books.

Also during these three weeks I had the strangest encounter of my time in New France. I had been leasing a Renault through my family's business. It was a piece of trash like all French products, but it was inexpensive. My family's business is successful, but we do control costs, and I didn't want to create the impression that the sons of owners tend to create. So I drove a boxy, noisy Renault that would be laughed off any American highway.

Then the leasing agency called me. My year was about up, could I come down to look at some special cars they had? I refused, and told them just to renew the current contract. What was the point of looking at something in a different color with more cup holders—it was still going to be the usual disaster of French engineering. Not that I actually said that to the dealer; I make a real effort to be civil at all times. I told him I was happy with my current car, but he kept insisting that he could find me a much better car at a similar price. Finally the only way I could get him off the phone was to agree to meet him at an appointed time the next afternoon.

When I arrived, there waiting for me was the president of the leasing company and a representative of Citroen. Now we all laugh at Citroens in the States since they look like beetles with sergeant's stripes on the back, but they are taken very seriously in New France. They like to think of them as the equivalent of a Cadillac or a Lincoln, which is to say the French dream a lot. Immediately the head of the company introduced himself and explained that since I was visiting with the President these days, I should drive a car more appropriate to the occasion. The

Citroen representative was here to show me a well-appointed model that they would lease me at the same cost as my Renault! They walked me over to the car and held the door open so I could climb into this gaudy contraption of leather and wood paneling, which no doubt hid the fact that the usual noisy engine and weak suspension were under the hood.

I didn't know what to say. I would be embarrassed to park it in our company lot, and would live in constant fear that someone would take a picture of me in the car and show my friends back in Virginia that I had "gone native." Yet it would be rude to turn the car down, and they were right that the car would look much better in the President's drive than my sad little Renault. So I took the car. It was a weird little machine and the roof lines were such that I always had trouble seeing to back into a parking spot, but it did look good sitting in the President's driveway.

What else did I do during those three weeks besides go to parties, listen to political slurs, and collect a brand new car? I did my homework. I visited the national library in Green Bay and the National Archives. I hit the Internet and searched hundreds of web sites. I wanted to know more about the crisis of Louis Jolliet. Who know what might be hidden there? A tour of brothels in Paris? A time in a sanitarium? Secret church business? Even a sappy love affair with a kitchen maid?

I was also intrigued by Claude's references to 1674 and 1676. What disaster had befallen the colony in 1674? Father Marquette had gotten seriously ill that year and died in 1675. Was that the tragedy? Surely that was a loss to the colony, but he was just one of many players. What else had gone wrong? I had read absolutely nothing in the most popular historical accounts that would hint at a major crisis in that year. As for 1676, I was at a total loss. It was just an ordinary year as far as I knew. To mark that as the real beginning of the empire was completely bizarre. Was Jolliet throwing me curves? Was he playing with me in some way? His heavy emphasis on these years was totally out of step with conventional history.

What did I learn during my three weeks of research? I learned Canada is filled with crazy people. It turns out there are a hundred web sites with all kinds of conspiracy theories about the Jolliet family, and many begin with Louis and his trip to France. Any vile thing you could do or become was ascribed to young Louis by these people. And this left me with a problem. How could I embarrass the French by undermining their founder, when half the nitwits of Canada had already accused him of things I would never mention in public. It almost made me wish we had never invented the Internet. The scum of the earth had beaten me into print!

As I saw it now, I was going to have to pass by personal innuendos, at least as far as 1668 was concerned. Maybe what I wanted was in 1674 and the "disaster" Claude had mentioned. But I would need more direction from Jolliet. General histories of that year showed me nothing I could use.

So on a late September day with the oak and maple trees beginning to turn yellow and red, I drove my new Citroen, rattles, grinding gears and all, up the Fox River Valley to the chateau on Lake Winnebago. The security search went much more quickly this time, and Picard and I took several minutes to talk about both

the upcoming Opera season and recent La Crosse matches, proving to each other that we were both very cultured, but also real men.

The President was waiting for me near his grape arbor, but this time he was standing and supervising the grape harvest. He was involved in an animated discussion with a man who appeared to be his foreman as Picard and I walked back to him. We paused a few steps away while he completed his conversation, and then approached.

"Mr. President," Picard announced, "You will recall Mssr Murphy." Of course he recalled me, but protocol demanded that each visitor be formally introduced each time he approached the president.

"Mr. President, "I began. "I am pleased you were able to see me again. But I wonder if I have come at a poor time. It appears you are beginning the harvest." After waiting three weeks for this meeting, I wasn't about to leave, but it seemed sensible to at least appear courteous.

"Not at all." He motioned me back to the grape arbor where we had sat and talked last time. "As often happens, some of the older vines on the lower slopes have ripened a bit ahead of schedule, and the vintner needed my permission to harvest those rows. Now that he has my approval, he can do all that needs to be done. We can watch them work as we sit and talk about the old days." As we reached the table he motioned for me to sit. Picard meanwhile, had returned to the house, and I was alone with the President.

It was actually a very pleasant afternoon. Wisconsin falls can be very short, with hard frosts hitting in early October, and first snows coming in mid-November. So the real beauty of the fall tends to be concentrated into the month of September. As we sat on the top of our ridge we could see forests of trees turning yellow, orange, and red, and flocks of geese were visible following the Fox south. Claude paused a moment after we sat down, seemingly to let me appreciate the beauty of this setting. I did enjoy the setting, but having spent a winter in Green Bay, I also knew what this view would be like for the six months of winter—snow, wind, cold, and 4:30 sunsets. If we had further interviews, I doubted that they would be outdoors.

"Mr. President, you will recall we ended our last conversation with Louis Jolliet and the events of 1668. Louis had returned to Quebec after his brief sojourn in Paris."

"Yes, yes." Claude raised his hand to stop my introduction. "But first let me ask you about the more recent past. I hear you have become a popular man." I was uncertain how to interpret the expression on his face, so I took the comment as a joke.

"Yes, I have found a visit with you to do wonders for my social life. I have gone from being an ordinary American businessman, to a person of interest." I nodded in his direction with a modest smile. "I now bask in your reflected glory."

"And I suspect you have now become a magnet for a wide range of personality types." Now I knew where this conversation was going. He knew his political enemies were talking to me. He wanted to know what I was hearing and how I was responding. Having been in politics for over half a century I doubted he was at all vulnerable to slander, but he appeared curious as to how I was reacting to my new knowledge. I decided it I would quickly put him at his ease.

“I have not only met a wide range of personality types, I think I have encountered some personality types not yet registered in psychology tests.” I smiled broadly as I said this. “But I suspect they find me poor company. I am an historian, and my focus is on a few decades that passed three centuries ago. Other stories evaporate from my memory as quickly as the latest lacrosse scores.”

This was apparently the response he wanted. He was too proud to ask me exactly what slanders I was hearing, and too proud to want to respond to them, but like all politicians he was concerned about his place in the public eye. He had to know my respect for him had not changed.

“That is good. So why don’t we return to our discussion of those decades. Although I must warn you, there is less drama in the years before 1673 than your history might like.”

“Shall I begin with Marquette?” he asked. “The creation of a priest is a singular thing. You might be interested.” I nodded and Jolliet continued. “Jacques Marquette was the eldest son of one of the first families in Laon. His family had been there for centuries. These were no peasants. His line included the local sheriff—a huge post at the time. And the city treasurer. They always had one foot in the local power structure. The other foot was in business. They had interests in the town and an estate down the hill on the plains below Laon. They married carefully. Each generation did well in a city that was itself doing very well. As eldest son Jacque’s place among the leaders of the city was already waiting.

“What I am telling you is that this was not some poor boy who found solace and sustenance in the church. Jacques had a good life prepared for him over many generations. But he walked away from that life. His first step was common for a boy of his position—he was sent to boarding school at the Jesuit School in Rheims. I suspect this conjures up images of Dickens compounded by the fire and brimstone of the Jesuits of your imagination. But this was hardly the case. Yes, boys were to spend an hour each day praying, but they also spent hours each day playing. Actual classroom time was less than six hours a day and the boys were given plenty to eat. Besides, he had relatives in the city. Was it hard for a boy of nine to be away from his family? Certainly. But this was no workhouse. It was a school for the best families of the region. He was well cared for.

“What did boys do there? They studied at least three languages, mathematics, geography, and of course theology. And they played and went into town for treats. The historical record indicates young Jacques did just fine. But what do school reports tell you—nothing. The grades cannot tell us about his passions. Ultimately each person finds a passion and pursues it, is that not so?”

“Yes, it is.” Did he know what passion I was pursuing at that very moment?

“For Jacques the passion was ignited by the reports—the famous “Relations”. I know you think the whole history of France is the history of Jesuits manipulating the various civil authorities. But in fact the order had many trials and tribulations. In the 1650s, however, it was enjoying a series of triumphs. Jesuit missionaries had finally made it to Japan and China. The annual reports they sent back were more exciting than anything these young boys had ever heard. Frenchmen were actually talking with the emperor of China! They were teaching the heathen Chinese the blessings of Jesus Christ. It might be possible to baptize Chinese by the millions and save them from eternal damnation. What a thought! What a time!

“And it wasn’t just China. There were missionaries in the Indies and in Canada and in Viet Nam. The Jesuit teachers could teach a geography of the possible. Here is the world, boys. Here are all the countries and all their customs. And in so many of them Frenchmen just like you have taken the vows and traveled as missionaries to meet with kings and queens and potentates. Each geography lesson could be followed up with the reading of the annual report—the “Relations”—the missionary sent back to France, where it could be printed and distributed to each of the Jesuit schools, there to be heard in the evening by young boys imagining the deeds and destinations described in the words of their Jesuit brethren.”

“And the boys listened. In a day without television, or movies, or distractions of any sort, they listened and let their young imaginations take them around the world. For a Jesuit, all the world was available. For Jacques, there was only one goal in life—to be a Jesuit and walk the paths of the brothers whose words stirred him every day.

“How could he explain this to his family? There had been no priests in the family before and there have been none since. This is a practical, successful clan. His family was not driven by poverty to send the children into religious orders, nor was it driven by piety to send one child per generation into the clergy for the greater glory of God. They send Jacques off for an education, and he came back with a calling. But he stayed on good terms with his family.

“Let me tell you a story about the young Marquette. It is his third year at Rheims. He is fourteen and he has determined that he will become a missionary. He has prayed about this for over a year. He is sure it is his calling. It is time to tell his family. So on one of his vacations back at Laon he goes riding with his father.

His father takes him out of town down to the family estate. He explains how each of the crops was doing, and the price of grain and the ideas he has for expanding the acres under cultivation. He is teaching Jacques how to be a gentleman farmer. But the minute he pauses to take a breath, Jacques starts telling him stories about China and the Emperor and the works of the Jesuits. He describes country after country and where God’s Word is being shared.

“And the two spend the day that way. Father describes crops, son describes missionary work. They ride all day and then return home to the family. Midway through the family dinner, his father says, “I have good news. Jacques has committed himself to God.” And with that, Jacques has his father’s permission to be a priest.”

“There was a father who loved his son.” I replied. I was also thinking about the second son who must have enjoyed that meal immensely – he would now inherit the estate. I bet he remembered that meal for many years.

“If you can imagine that boy,” Jolliet told me, “you can imagine what a canoe trip would be like with him. You are paddling down rivers unseen by Europeans, and the man at your side is healthy, happy, and having the time of his life. While some might be afraid of what they would find around each bend in the river, Marquette strained to look around each corner in the hope of meeting new people—Indians he could learn from, Indians he could save from eternal damnation. You can bet he paddled the fastest of any of the seven.”

“Do you know why it took him so long to be accepted as a missionary?” I asked, feeling just a bit wicked about the direction I was taking the conversation. “As I understand it, he was thirty by the time he sailed to Quebec, and had been asking for a mission assignment for nearly a decade before finally being accepted.”

“Yes, he waited ten years. Can you imagine a child of our day waiting ten years for anything? But nothing happened quickly in those days. And for Jesuits, time moved to carefully measured beats. There was a process to be followed, and no matter what else was happening in the world, a priest became a priest only after each step in the dance was completed. There was no fast track or short cuts. Did you know one of his requirements was to live as a beggar for one month?”

“No, I wasn’t aware of that practice.”

“Yes, the order has a series of exercises designed to breed humility and to broaden perspectives. Loyola himself began the practice. In one exercise, pairs of seminarians had to walk two hundred miles to a shrine and back in one month, and to do it without a sou in their pocket. What makes the exercise particularly interesting is that many Frenchmen of the time didn’t like priests in general and Jesuits in particular. They were taxed by the church to support schools and churches, and peasants had a very hard life anyway. Then to be asked to give food to wandering priests, they had to ask, I work hard for my food, why should I give it away to these lazy priests? Many peasants refused. So young Marquette spent his month often sleeping outdoors, and often hungry. Worse yet, he learned that many of his countrymen had no respect for his vocation. Quite a challenge for a young man, isn’t it? To be hungry and humiliated? Any arrogance among the seminarians disappeared during that month.”

“But that was just one exercise. They also spent a month cleaning the sick in hospitals, and many months tending the garden and cleaning the pots in the college kitchen. There were so many exercises designed to teach humility. Humility is not a natural state for twenty year olds, don’t you agree?”

I had to laugh. “No, humility and twenty year olds are not natural partners.” He paused in his story, and we each sipped a bit of wine and smiled at our own thoughts and behaviors at that age.

“But he spent much of this decade as a teacher. When he left Rheims at seventeen, he had the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts degree. This was the manner of the times. During the next decade he spent most years teaching at Jesuit “colleges” usually getting the boys of ten, eleven, or twelve. Like all new teachers, no doubt he remembered himself as always obedient, always attentive, and always eager to learn (and maybe he actually was), but now he had to teach real boys who rarely possess any of the traits teachers expect. What great experience. If you can get the attention of a twelve-year old boy, you can get the attention of any person in the world, including Indians along the Mississippi.”

“I can believe that,” I replied. “so he spent the decade teaching and waiting.”

“Well, there was a bit more to it than that. While he was teaching, he was also studying theology, earning a masters degree, and being ordained as a Jesuit father. And, he kept writing letters. When France sent a group of Jesuits to Viet Nam, he asked to go. He was told he wasn’t ready yet. When he learned about the missions in New France, he asked to be included. He told every Jesuit he met that he wished to be a missionary, and followed up with letters of request. He was

always pleasant in his requests, but he was also insistent. His had a dream that had been born in his childhood listening to the stories of the missionaries. Each year he was more attracted to the dream. He had one goal in his life and his attention on that goal was total."

"After ten years, his dream was realized. French troops had finally beaten the Iroquois and the greatest danger to New France was at least temporarily subdued. It was time to expand the colony and the missions. Without Iroquois war parties to fear, who knew where the missionaries could now go? A call went out for Jesuits willing to serve in Canada, and Marquette was asked for by name. They knew his talents and his interests. He sailed from New Rochelle in June of 1667, just days after turning thirty. Twenty years after first hearing the stories of Jesuit missionaries, he was one."

This seemed a natural place to end the interview. We exchanged small talk for a few minutes while I gathered up my notes and tape recorder. Outside I was surprised to see two other cars in the drive. So the President really did have other appointments. I found it pleasant, somehow, that he hadn't been totally abandoned.

Chapter 5

I meet Elise.

The French are an incredibly social people, so they hold numerous parties. After all, they have the grand homes, the leisure, and the income to entertain. I didn't mind—the food was free and good. So I occupied my evenings going to parties and listening to more gossip about the Jolliets. It was so good to be their biographer. I was hearing lots of things no one had told me in the past. I almost felt it was my duty to drink the wine, eat great food, and listen to juicy tidbits. I loved that fall.

It was in the midst of this string of parties that I met Elise. Or maybe I should say she met me. I never thought for a moment that our meeting was accidental or genuine. The truth is the French are snobs, and French women especially regard Americans as lesser creatures. We are the drudges who work fifty hours a week and live in little houses choked with smog. They are great ladies who live the sensual life of plenty on their estates. What would they want with an American other than to have him negotiate a contract or fix a computer?

French women had been courteous to me, as had the men, especially since my connection to the President had become known. But there had never been anything in word, deed, or posture to hint at any interest in me other than the platonic. Until Elise. Her intentions had been so clear so fast, I assumed she was very drunk and had confused me for a compatriot. After all, I knew these women tallied up their sexual conquests as easy entertainment. Basically, the French have the same sexual mores as rabbits. Or as they say around here, the nights may be long and dark, but they aren't lonely.

So I talked politely to Elise, assuming she would hear from my accent that I was not one more French boy to take to one more bed. But as we talked, it became clear she was not that drunk and she knew who I was. She claimed to be a graduate student at the national university, but that told me little. Since the French do not charge tuition for college, these places are often the home to those too lazy to work even the meager French thirty-five hour work week. They are also a place the rich put their children until they are marriageable age. In short, telling me she was a student was the same as telling me nothing.

What she wanted, though, was communicated clearly enough by the way she stood. The place was crowded, but not enough to force her as close to me as she stood. She wanted me, and short of wearing a neon sign, she did everything she could to let me know. I certainly enjoyed her looks. She was taller than average, but there was something about the way she stood that made her seem even taller. Can you stand tall? She was wearing a yellow satin, floor-length gown that was pleasantly low in the front and somehow matched her brown skin perfectly. She was obviously part Indian. I could see it in her slightly rounded face, her deep brown eyes, her cascading brown hair. I half wondered if there was a portrait of her mother or grandmother somewhere in the house. She looked like so many of those Indian princesses shown greeting the French. She was in many ways the archetypal Indian mother of the nation. She had the height, the figure, the famous eyes, and the brown skin that the leaders of New France had been marrying for centuries. For some reason I was being greeted by royalty.

Now I had to figure out what to do. I could imagine others at the party even had a pool going. Some would bet I'd jump right into bed with her, grateful for any attention by a French woman. Others would bet my Puritan cultural background would keep me from her. For the moment I decided to keep both groups off balance and just talk with her.

"Do you have much of an interest in history?" I asked.

"Some. My family goes back pretty far. And yours?"

"No, we are relative newcomers to the continent. My family arrived in the 1800s looking for potatoes."

"So you are Irish? How does it feel to be a minority?" A minority? What a stupid thing to say. Her remark was so crude and so damn French that I was immediately angered. She just one more drunk French woman, believing as they all do, that we Americans can be divided up. But I wasn't having it.

"Please excuse me. I think it is time for me to leave." I turned pretty abruptly and took a couple steps toward the door.

"I am sorry." She immediately jumped in front of me and took my hand. "I have never traveled in the U.S. and so do not understand your country. I am sorry I insulted you in some way." It was late and I was thinking of leaving, but there she was, so close. And there was something in the way she held my hand. I was reluctant to move. Had she been trained to take a hand that way, or did it come natural to French women?

"Have you ever been to Portage?" I asked. I have no idea where the idea came from. It was like someone else had taken over my body. Portage? Why the hell would I want to go there? It must have been the wine, but it certainly was also her.

“Oh yes. I love the way the old buildings have been renovated. It is like a picture post card from the last century.”

“I am planning to drive down there on Wednesday. Would you like to come with me?” Who was making my mouth say such words? Wednesday in Portage? I would rather spend the day getting hit by lacrosse sticks, and here I was not only deciding to go, but asking her!

“I would love to go.”

The whole idea was insane, but I did have one moment of lucidity. I told her I would pick her up at her dormitory. It was an evil request. If she were not really a student, she would now have to find some way to secure temporary lodgings. Good. Let her struggle with her lie. She gave me a campus address, and I told her I would be by at ten on Wednesday, weather permitting. Given the ugly weather here, it might well give me an excuse to back out of this trip when I sobered up and realized how crazy this whole plan was.

But Wednesday dawned with weather that was outstanding for Green Bay. The sun was out, a small miracle in itself, and the temperature was above freezing—something of a surprise in October. Maybe I could make this trip to Portage and not catch pneumonia.

The National University is on the eastern edge of Green Bay. It is a huge campus overlooking the waters of Green Bay. The campus is so large it has its own golf course plus endless walking paths. To protect the children of the elite, all the building are connected by tunnels so that students need not be exposed to the elements while they walked from class to class. I reminded myself that all the golf courses on campus wouldn’t enable this poor institution to equal the University of Virginia. All the French millions would never outdo Thomas Jefferson.

Elise’s residence was on the eastern end of campus. Graduate students had small apartments of their own, and she permitted me to look over her shoulder when I arrived so that I could see that it really was her apartment. Then we got into the car and headed down the highway. As you can imagine, there is a major highway joining Green Bay and all the cities along the Mississippi route, but Elise directed me onto a smaller road so we could see more of the countryside. She was going to be an energetic guide.

“We will bypass Oshkosh,” she said, “unless there is something special you want to see there. It is just an industrial city, probably not much different from your cities.” Actually I had been to Oshkosh several times on behalf of my father’s business and I knew the way industry worked here was nothing like industry back in Philadelphia. We had to be careful about anything we had made locally. The French couldn’t put a nut on a bolt without doing it wrong and taking two coffee breaks during the process.

“We will follow the Fox,” she continued. “If it were warmer, we could stop along the river for a picnic, but there is still much we can see from the car.” She went on that way chattering as I drove. I liked it. She had that way some women do of turning and looking directly at you while she spoke. I could feel her eyes on me as she described the sights and told stories about the area. Her talk filled the car. So did her skirts. She had worn long full skirts in what the women call “prairie style.” They flowed past her seat and over the center console so that whenever I reached to change gears I brushed her dress. Then there was her perfume in the air. I

began to wonder if I would remember anything of Portage, or think only of her sitting beside me in the car.

We had barely driven west past Oshkosh when I spotted a sign for the Mascoutin Country Club. “Is that what the Mascoutin do now? Run a country club?” I asked.

“Oh, they do many things. They are quite the entrepreneurs. If you would like to see where the Mascoutin used to live, we can take that right turn up ahead.” I turned up a small road and as soon as we passed a small rise I could see Lake Butte des Morts. Elise directed me along a series of small roads on the south edge of the lake. Eventually we came to the point where the Fox flowed into the lake.

“The Mascoutin lived along this stretch of the Fox. Their main village was about ten miles up river,” Elise said. ”In those days we hadn’t built the dams on the lower Fox so the water level on the Butte des Morts was lower. This was mostly swamp with a small river coming in. The Fox is so large when it enters Green Bay that it probably seemed impossible that this small stream to our left was the Fox. But it is. Most of the water in this lake and Lake Winnebago comes not from the Fox, but from the Wolf River. The main currents in this part of the lake come from the Wolf, entering the lake from the northwest.”

“Since the Wolf is the larger river, I suppose most explorers would have stayed with the main stream and gone up the Wolf, ignoring the Fox.”

“Yes,” she answered, “The Mascoutins were among the few peoples who knew the value of the little Fox.” We sat from a few minutes and looked out across the lake. It is not a very impressive spot. The south side of the lake is all marsh and this particular point of land seems to be about two feet above water. The Fox is maybe forty or fifty feet across as it enters the lake. The opposite shore is just a jumble of reeds. There was nothing scenic here, just reeds and water. I couldn’t imagine Americans trading their condos on the banks of the Chesapeake for frontage on this marsh.

The French elite didn’t seem to want this area either. The shore line was so unattractive it had been left to the working class. We could see a dozen or so fishing shacks just to our left. They were tiny places built on top of each other. The object of each place seemed to be to have thirty or forty feet of shore line so they could launch small boats. I hoped they were used solely in the summer, but the smoke coming from several chimneys indicated that some poor souls lived in this wasteland year round.

Elise had nothing to say about the houses. She let me sit there for a few minutes, and then started directing me back onto the road to Omreau. We passed Omreau and several other small towns, all of them nondescript burgs surrounded by alternating farm fields and wood lots. Wisconsin is a flat place and this part is flat even by Wisconsin standards. I was getting bored pretty fast. Elise must have noticed, for she suddenly changed topics.

“Let’s stop in Princeton for lunch.”

“Princeton? You have a town named Princeton? Isn’t that a bit English?”

‘Yes, I suppose it is, but that’s its name. And it has lots of good restaurants and antique stores. You’ll like it.” In truth I loathe antique stores. As an historian I have a mild interest in the furniture of history, but most stores know less history than school children, and others cheat, calling half of the furniture in the place

“Louis XIV” when it was no doubt made by drunken farmers in the next county. But Elise did a have a way with her. We were quickly in the town and parked, and I found I did like antique stores as long as she was at my side. She had this old fashioned way of taking my arm with both of hers as we strolled through the stores. She had something to say about everything we saw, and a light tone, as if she was about to burst out laughing at each new item we encountered. Suddenly it was fun to stare at a chest of drawers.

The most interesting moment came as we decided to get lunch. It was nearing one now and the restaurants were crowded, but apparently not for us. We walked into a nicer place and instantly the maitre d’ noticed her. He suddenly stood straighter and appeared about to bow. Elise smiled pleasantly and simply asked for a table, and we were instantly at a beautiful table by the windows. Did he know her? No, there was no conversation between them that indicated friendship. It was all respect. The French are the most class-conscious people left on Earth. For all their babble about “liberty, fraternity, equality,” the nobility do very well here, and he had spotted her as nobility. She was gracious in accepting the table, and in attending to the waiter who instantly appeared to discuss our order. But nothing was said about it between us. She just went back to talking about a table set we had seen and the style of the carvings on the legs. I was rendered speechless. I had nothing to say about the carvings, and what does one say about a French waiter who is actually prompt?

We had the usual drowsy French lunch, complete with wine, and then finally set off again for Portage. It was nearly four by the time we reached there, and the sun was already getting low. Here again I was surprised by how flat the area was. It seemed to me if the Fox were to be separated from The Wisconsin River, there must be a range of hills to divide the two. There wasn’t. If there was six feet of difference in elevation between the two, it was six more feet than I could see.

The meeting of the two rivers is easy to find. The old portage path has long since been converted into a two-mile channel with a small lock at the end joining the two rivers. We followed the channel along Edgewater Street to Lock Street and we were there. I have to admit I was pretty excited. Much had happened at this junction. I was pleased to see it for myself.

Elise, for her part, was suddenly like a little girl. She jumped out of the car the second I was parked, and grabbed my hand to pull me over to the lock. “This is so exciting. Come, let me show you.” And off we went to look at the lock. The French are pretty good with their public history. They had established a small park adjacent to the lock, and had park benches, shade trees, and large displays sheltered from the rain. One display covered the history of the place, with a map showing the original portage route as a dotted line next to the straighter channel that had been constructed. There were drawings of the channel being built, and then photographs of the lock being put in. Various phases of the channel and lock had taken over a century, not surprising given the French work ethic.

We walked around the lock to the very edge where the Fox meets the Wisconsin. There an odd idea hit me. From where I was standing, if a raindrop had fallen on my left shoulder, it would have rolled down into the Fox and then begun the long route through the Great Lakes and ultimately to the North Atlantic. A raindrop rolling down my right shoulder would have hit the Wisconsin, flowed into the

Mississippi, and thence to the Gulf of Mexico. What was the distance? Maybe five thousand miles at the end, but just a couple feet here at the beginning. Maybe a poet could have used that as a metaphor for something profound, but just then the wind caught Elise's skirts and my thoughts turned to the more immediate.

She took my arm and led me around town. On the north side of the channel, Edgewater Street, lay the stores and restaurants and great hotels. This is where travelers had passed the time while their boats had waited to go through the lock, or their luggage was transferred to the larger boats of the Wisconsin. It was a place for fun. Most of the real work of the lock had ended nearly a century ago—the Fox was just too small and the railroads so much faster—but now pleasure boats used the channel to take families on weekend adventures. So the old saloons had been restored and the great hotels had been redecorated and there were shops everywhere. Elise led me from one to another, never letting go of my arm, and never ceasing her running description of anything and everything.

By seven neither of us could walk any further, and we stepped into the restaurant of one of the old hotels. Once again we were seated immediately. I liked the place. It had high ceilings, old wooden features, and it had Elise, who sat beside me and held my hand between courses. I vaguely remember the food and wine were very good and that time seemed to leap ahead. Suddenly it was well past nine and I had enough wine in me to ask what seemed to be the most important question in the world.

"It's getting late, Elise. Ah, should we get a room?"

"Oh, that would be lovely. But my dissertation advisor is out of the country and I promised to lead his seminar tomorrow morning. I am afraid I must ask you to take me home." I have been turned down by women before. I just wish the others had done it as nicely. We had a quick cup of coffee and dashed back into the very cold car. She showed me how to get onto the Mississippi Highway, and we made much better time getting back to Green Bay. I had Elise back to her apartment before midnight. My reward was a long, lingering kiss, and a request that I call her again soon. I did.

We had dinner again later that week, and then started going to parties together. Suddenly I appeared on yet another set of invitation lists. Not a single, but part of a couple, we were invited to more formal dinner parties, where Elise was adored and I was treated with reasonable respect. Evenings were marvelous.

Meanwhile, the interviews continued. Picard arranged for me to visit the president in mid-October. Leaves were falling fast and the wind was cold. It was clear we would not be meeting outside that day. And in fact Picard led me into the President's study, introduced me yet again, and then left me to sit with the President in a pair of wingbacked chairs.

"Should we begin with the Indians?" I asked. "During these years Marquette was learning their language and Louis was beginning to trade with them. What kind of experience were they both having?"

"That is helpful suggestion," he agreed. "So much has been written about the way Europeans viewed the Indians, let's turn the tables a bit and review how Europeans must have looked to the Indians, shall we? Here in New France we had several hundred people in Montreal, a somewhat larger population in Quebec, and then dozens of trading posts that might have had one to five Frenchmen in each.

My point is that our numbers were so small, we had very limited impact. The country was so vast, we were visible in just a small corner of it. And even when we were present, we often had little influence. When the Iroquois slaughtered the Hurons, for example, there were several Jesuit priests present. The priests were burned with the rest of the tribe.

"The French did some modest farming, and of course hunted for food, so we competed with the Indians for resources, but our environmental impact was rather small. I don't think any Indians starved because we happened to be in the neighborhood.

"The biggest impact we had was on trade goods. We could weave cloth and manufacture metal tools. The Indians could make simple stone weapons, and they did some farming, but they had no ability to create metal tools. So that is what we were to the Indians—a source of hatchets and knives and cloth. A metal knife was easier to use than a stone knife, so it had much greater value. Once an Indian had used a metal tool he never wanted to go back to stone tools. He became dependent upon us as the source.

"What we often don't talk about is the elaborate trade system Indians had among themselves. Whatever goods local Indians got from us, they quickly traded to more distant Indians at a great profit. It was valuable to have access to the French, and it was even more valuable if your enemies or your trading partners did not have access to the French. By the way, this created a constant problem on the trip down the Mississippi. Every tribe Louis met wanted him to stop and go no further. If they were the last point of trade with the French, then they could profit from bartering goods down the river. If Louis kept going, then they had no advantage over the next tribe the French encountered. The result was every tribe warned Louis about terrible dangers from bad Indians or bad water or some other horror. Having traded with tribes for years, Louis understood what the Indians were doing. A novice group would have been terrified around every bend.

"The other thing we don't talk about is trade and the economics of empire. If you think about the Spanish, who beat us all to the New World, their economic policy was theft and slavery. By the time they were done they had killed every single Indian in the Caribbean and thousands more in Mexico and Peru while they stole gold and silver. The result was not only the death of the Indian empires, but the death of Spain. The gold created an incredible leisure class of prancing dons who spent two centuries dueling and dancing until the gold was used up. Then the Spanish disappear from history.

"We French earned our money through trading. This created thousands of small manufacturers to make the metal tools we sold in New France, and thousands of apparel companies to turn the beaver pelts into hats and coats and the rest. The result was that there was an entire middle class in France that benefited from the empire. The New World helped us industrialize, while it held back industrialization in Spain until it was too late for them to catch up.

"I would say that the English model was similar to the French," I interjected. "Would you not agree?"

"Yes, you also traded. In the end that made you much more serious competition than the Spanish." There was a bit of a smile on his face, but I wasn't sure whether that meant he was enjoying the conversation, or enjoying the comparison

to the English, where he knew the French had emerged victorious. I decided to move the conversation along.

"So we have traders like Louis who are the middle men between a long manufacturing and shipping system in France, and an elaborate trading network among the Indians. Where do the Jesuits fit in? If my histories are correct, they were the only order in New France. What was the system they and Marquette fit into?"

"Ah, here is where the world has some great conspiracy theories. Most are some variation of DeFoe's Three Musketeers and the battle with the evil Cardinal Richelieu. In these theories the cardinal is the real king and the Jesuits are his soldiers, doing his political will around the world. They even point to the creation of the Hospital in Quebec by Richelieu as part of his master plan to conquer the planet. Thank God for that hospital and the good sisters who ran it. Many received care there, including most of my ancestors.

"I thought Mazarin was Cardinal under Louis the 14th." My grasp of French politics may not be perfect, but I could read history and recall dates. This was also a chance for me to show I was not a complete fool.

"Yes, Richelieu died just before Louis the 13th did. Too bad. Since Louis the 14th was just five at the time, Richelieu could have really run France, and he would have done a fine job. But Mazarin ran France adequately for a decade until Louis 14th came of age. Then Mazarin conveniently died and Louis was able to take command of his country. This man would rule France with an iron hand for more than half a century. And he would rule the church too. Did you know he appointed all Bishops in France, not the Pope? He controlled all church property and all church publications. He used to say "I am the state." He was actually being modest. He could have said, "I am the state and the church and the empire."

"So the Jesuits worked for him." I interjected.

"No," the President replied, "that is too simple. Louis was the absolute ruler of the largest empire on earth, but his power was enhanced by three groups. First, he had a large standing army. This intimidated any nobles who might care to object to his policies, and kept neighboring countries on their best behavior. Then he had the middle class. As long as he could guarantee markets for their products, he could guarantee profits, which meant happy subjects and lots of tax revenue. But he also needed the church. If he was king by divine right, his power flowed from God, as mediated by the church. So he needed to control the church, but the church also had power over him. Whenever he sent Jesuits over seas, he was doing his job as head of the church, spreading the world of God and saving souls from eternal damnation, and he was also currying favor with the church by supporting the church in its greatest goals.

"So when Father Marquette is appointed to join the explorers of the Mississippi, " I offered, "he was going both as representative of the church, and as representative of the King."

"That is one way to explain it, " Claude seemed to like my interpretation. "You could say he was doing the work of the church and the work of the King. After all, as God's leader on Earth, it was Louis 14th's job to spread the word of Christ."

"Thank you," I was talking with a politician so I knew Claude was enjoying this analysis of the King's role. And I found it helpful. But I wanted to move the

conversation back to specific events in 1668. “This is very helpful background. Should we now discuss the actions of Marquette and Louis Jolliet as they began their careers?”

“Yes, but you know these were dark years for both of them. Shall we start with Louis or Father Marquette?”

“Let’s start with Louis. I am fascinated with how a man barely over twenty would launch himself out into the wilderness.”

Jolliet.

“Ah, that’s easy,” Claude laughed. “He did it with borrowed money and borrowed experience. We know from shop records of the time that he took forty pounds of tobacco, hatchets, metal bells (Indian women loved them), canvas, and lots of cloth. That was all pretty standard. History tells you that Bishop Laval loaned him the money, but if you dig a bit deeper you find that his mother had to co-sign the note. There was real risk Louis would disappear into the interior and never be seen again, and Laval wanted to protect church funds.

But the biggest protection was Adrien. Louis’ older brother had been in the business for years and was the most able explorer in the colony. He led Louis up to Sault St. Marie and established the trading post there. It was there Louis spent most of the time until he was called to explore the southern reaches of the empire.

The Sault was a major trading point for the Indians. They had been meeting there for centuries. You have all of Lake Superior to the west, and the waters of Lake Huron to the east. It was a natural junction for the waterways in either direction. What none of the French knew yet, was that there was a third lake, Lake Michigan, just southwest, so even more traffic was in the vicinity. All traders knew was that whenever they set up in the Sault, there was plenty of business.

But getting there was hard. From Quebec to the Sault was a thousand miles of open water, roaring rapids, and sweltering portages. Whatever they were going to make on furs, they earned every sou just getting to the Sault. The first hundred miles up the Saint Lawrence was hard enough fighting the current and portaging the rapids, but at least at the end of that stretch they would arrive at the island city of Montreal, and could find friends and a little wine when they arrived.

Once past Montreal, they were on their own. They might join up temporarily with a group of Indians that was traveling west, or they might just make the trip alone. There were many water routes to take west, but all were up stream, and all had rapids that could not be traversed in birch bark canoes. By this time the colonists had a couple generations of experience in building or buying birchbark canoes, so they were getting pretty good with them, but it is no surprise you only see aluminum canoes on the water today. They had to repitch the seams every night and any rock could puncture the canoe in an instant and swamp the entire load of trade goods.

So for much of the journey they actually walked, carrying over a hundred pounds of goods on their backs as they pushed through the forest to yet another body of water. We think of these people as paddling canoes. It would be more

appropriate to say these men spent their time loading and unloading and carrying and patching canoes. When they did paddle, it was against the current, and half the time they were not sure which way to go. There were standard Indian trails, but you can't assume the Indians knew all the best trails. Some tribes would go one way, some another. Adrien was shown an Iroquois route on the Huron that saved two weeks of travel. The Huron Indians had no idea you could go that way. Later Louis would be famous for his maps and would teach map making. I doubt it took him more than two days on the trail to realize how crucial good maps were.

What always surprises me about these journeys is the weight they put in the canoes. Did you know on his last trip to Sault St. Marie Louis actually brought along a forge? Think of the strain on the canoe, and then the strain on the men as they carried it over dozens of portages or fought to keep the canoe balanced as waves crashed against the hull. And they had weight going both ways. They portaged trade goods west (usually put in oak barrels to keep dry, but then you added the weight of the barrel), and pelts going east. A typical pelt bundle was eighty pounds and some of these men would take three at a time as they portaged their loads! No wonder they were all so short."

"Then add storms. Much of the route they hugged the shoreline of the great lakes, but even along the edge, these lakes have three and four foot waves that can swamp a canoe in an instant. A major storm could double the size of the waves and add a hellish wind that soaked them all to the skin and poured rain into the canoes. It is astonishing that any of them made it to the Sault alive. Eventually, of course, storms killed all of them, but they managed to survive the first few trips.

"When they arrived at the Sault, they moved into a small stockade that had been built in past years. It wouldn't hold out the Iroquois, but it did keep petty thefts down and provided a little security. The log huts inside were mostly dry, and of course incredibly hot once July rolled around. The Indians trickled in all summer bringing the pelts they had gathered over the winter. They came to the settlement for days to see the men, and bargain for goods, and maybe have some drinks.

"Here we usually have arguments over whether the traders bargained fairly, or whether they just got the Indians drunk and then stole their pelts when they were too drunk to understand. Personally, I think it is silly to claim that no trader ever got an Indian drunk. I am sure many did, and many profited from the Indian's state. But I would also point out that any alcohol would also have to be carried all the way from Quebec, so it is unlikely that there were huge amounts available to debauch the Indians. Brandy is just too heavy.

"But let's move on. Adrien took Louis with him in 1668 for the usual summer trading. They gathered pelts all summer, and then in early September they bailed the pelts, loaded the canoes, and headed back east. The eight hundred miles took them over a month of back-breaking effort, but now they could sell their furs, pay back their loans, and have enough left over to support their families. Actually it was just Adrien who had a wife and children. That was still a few years off for Louis.

"In 1969 Adrien and Louis traveled as far as the Sault together again, but then Adrien paddled on. He had been given a royal commission by Jean Talon to determine if there was copper in the Keewenaw Peninsula of Lake Superior. As it

turned out there was, and Adrien brought back a chunk of it along with a map of the southern shore of the Lake. The empire was ready now to spread west. But Adrien never saw the west again. As he took one of the final rapids of the Saint Lawrence, almost within sight of his home, his canoe swamped and he drowned. Louis shared what profits there were from the summer's trading with Adrien's widow, reported to Talon what he could remember of Adrien's journey to the Keewenaw, and settled in for another winter in Quebec. He was now the oldest surviving brother, and the most knowledgeable man in New France about the lands to the west. He turned twenty four that fall.

For the next three years he traded in the west each summer, usually in or around Sault St. Marie. He ventured west into Lake Superior and south into the upper reaches of Lake Michigan. He returned alive each fall, not a small accomplishment in itself. By late 1672 when Talon was forming up a group to explore this great river that might extend the empire to the south, the choice of leader was easy.

Marquette.

"During this time Marquette was also learning about the regions to the west, and in fact even went farther west that Jolliett. He was saving souls and learning languages, and more importantly, learning how to explain Jesus Christ to Indians. This was not an easy task. Many missionaries were frustrated by what they saw as mercurial conversions. It would appear a whole tribe believed one day, and the next it was as if they had never heard the word of God.

"The missionaries suffered greatly so that their "flocks" might be saved. They lived in the same simple bark huts, ate the same food as the Indians, drank the same water, shivered in the same cold, and caught the same diseases. And they grew old before their time. They only had their faith to sustain them, and their faith was challenged every day by the Indians.

"Father Marquette very quickly moved up river about fifty miles to Three Rivers. This gave him a taste of life in a trading village, and a chance to learn Algonquin. This was his first Indian language and he not only had to learn it, but he had to learn *how* to learn. There was no formal grammar book that he could use as he had in school. He needed to sit and listen to Indians—men, women, and children—and struggle to use their words and understand their meaning. Even some of the smartest Jesuits could never master the strategies necessary. It hurt their pride—to look stupid in front of children where in France they had argued brilliantly in Latin with leading scholars. Now they could point to a tool, try to say its name, and be laughed at by small children amused by their accent. To suddenly be so helpless was more humbling than the formal Jesuit exercises they had endured when first joining the order. At least when they walked penniless across France, they could speak with their countrymen and understand what people were saying around them.

"He also learned how difficult conversion would be. There had been a Jesuit mission in Three Rivers for over thirty years when he arrived, but the small village

of Indian converts was hardly grounds for celebration. Too many of the men had joined the French traders in their love of wine, and the consequences were ugly indeed. As for religious dogma, their grasp was slight despite all the patient instruction of a series of missionaries.

"Marquette spent two years in Three Rivers, learning to paddle a canoe, walk in snow shoes, and deliver the catechism in Algonquin. It turned out he had the necessary virtues for missionary work—he was very strong, and he could learn native languages. While he assisted an older priest in the first months, he was gradually able to work more independently as his knowledge of Indian customs and Indian language improved.

"Three Rivers was also a good place for him to talk with missionaries heading back to Quebec from journeys into the unknown interior. They stopped at the Jesuit house for days, and described months or even years of travels out into the countryside. The most dramatic arrival was that of Father Allouez in 1667. He had been traveling in the west for two years and many had already given him up for dead. Numerous times they had nearly been right. In his time he had paddled a canoe all the way to Chequamegon Bay on the southwest shore of Lake Superior. This was farther west than any Frenchman had gone before—almost to the land of the Sioux.

"What he found was a town of a thousand Ottawa—a great new audience for his preaching. Unfortunately they had no interest in his religion and stole his things. Soon he had to resettle with a nearby tribe of Hurons, some of the last survivors of a major settlement that had been massacred by the Iroquois. They treated him with more respect and helped him return from Chequamegon after two years. Now back with his Jesuit brethren, he was startlingly thin, but excited about all he had seen and done.

"It was Allouez who learned of the Mississippi. In his travels in the west he found three new tribes and evaluated their receptivity to the gospel. The Potawatomie and the Sac were idolatrous and no more willing to listen than the Ottawa. But to their south he learned there was a tribe called the Illinois. They were numerous and appeared open to this new religion. He also learned that they lived near a huge river that might flow all the way to Virginia. Allouez said it was called the "Mesippi" by the Indians. It would take Marquette six more years to see the river for himself.

"Will you permit a minor digression about Allouez? You would think that after two years on the verge of starvation, he would get back to Quebec and spend at least one long winter eating everything he could find. He arrived back in August and surely had earned some time to rest and refill his lanky frame. But no. He reported all his activities to his superiors and explained that he needed to return immediately so that he could reach Lake Superior before the cold began. His total time in Quebec? Two days! This after being absent for two years! What a man.

"Marquette, meanwhile was hoping to be sent to the Iroquois. This is where the excitement was for missionaries. After having been threatened by the Iroquois for generations, the new peace treaty meant that the Iroquois would accept a few missionaries. Here were thousands of souls to be saved! And would it not be marvelous to convert these heathens who had been so destructive in the past – to

forgive their transgressions and treacheries—and help them find everlasting life? All the missionaries vied to be sent on this mission.

"But Marquette wasn't selected. He met with them when they passed through Three Rivers on their trip to the Iroquois lands, but once again he stayed behind while other missionaries went on into the wilderness. It must have seemed to him like his time in France—always requesting a mission and always having to wait. Here he was in New France, and he was still waiting.

"It was another year before his call came. Father Allouez returned the next summer with hundreds of Indians bound for Quebec and the summer's trading. Once in Quebec he persuaded his superiors that additional missionaries should be sent west—there were so many opportunities, so many souls to save. Marquette was assigned to join Allouez. He would finally get his chance.

"His first voyage was to Sault Ste. Marie. He and three other missionaries made the thousand-mile trek in canoes loaded with all the goods they would need for the new mission. Every bit of their baggage had to be portaged time and again over portages up to six miles long. They endured the rapids and the storms and the fear of roving Iroquois, and the exhaustion of so many miles of paddling and portaging. They reached the Sault in mid August.

"Louis Jolliet wasn't at the Sault yet, but thirty or forty French traders were. The missionaries spent the fall and winter building a house, a chapel, barns, and a twelve-foot high stockade fence. They even began clearing land to grow vegetables. This was going to be an important mission. With this as a foundation of their efforts, they knew they could not only Christianize the local Chippewas, but reach many more adjacent tribes. So they built large structures meant to last.

"It was here that Marquette first heard personally about a major river running to the "South Sea." Unfortunately, what he learned was more about Indian wars than about geography, but the story goes something like this: Forty Iroquois are out raiding hundreds of miles from home. They pillage a Shawnee band and take captives. One is still alive as they head home, only to be captured by Ottawas who take them all to the Sault where they intend to kill all the Iroquois. This would be madness since the Iroquois were still the strongest tribe in the eastern area of the continent, and they would retaliate. The missionaries understand this, the Ottawas are slow to get the idea. They have captives and want to do what they have always done to captives. Claude Allouez shows up in the nick of time and spends three days talking to the council of chiefs. He gets them to release the Iroquois.

"The Shawnee is freed, given food, and sent on his way, but first he describes his lands to the missionaries. This is the first Indian that the missionaries have found from that far south, so they are eager to learn. They use sign language, they use translators, they draw pictures, all to learn more. How far away is this "South Sea?" Where does the river come from? Is this the river other Indians call the Mesippi? You can imagine all the hand waving and dust drawing going on as they try to figure out where the Indian is from. It could be he is telling them about an important geographic feature, or it could be he is telling them about a river and "sea" that are big to him, but hardly important. As for how his geography fits into the other geographies they have other from other tribes, who's to know?

“In any event, what he tells them is enough for Allouez to pass the word on to the authorities when he travels on to Quebec. They have learned about a new tribe and there is additional talk about a big river. This one flows to the sea. You can imagine the reaction of the Governor who listens to one more story about one more river that flows to one more sea. The Governor does nothing. He doesn’t have the men or the time to follow up every tale he hears.

“In August Allouez returned from Quebec with another missionary and with a plan of his own. Claude Dablon was going to take over the mission at the Sault. Allouez was going to explore south to see where further missions might be established, and Marquette was to head west to the mission at Saint Esprit—almost to the far end of Lake Superior. They were going to save souls, but they were also going to learn much more about this region of New France. Learning geography would help them save souls.

“As it turned out, Marquette fared the worst of the three of them. No doubt Allouez warned him since he had already spent three years at Saint Esprit—what we now call Chequamegon Bay. The Indians there were impossible. At one point they paid so little attention to his message that Allouez had threatened to leave them and never come back. Maybe they didn’t want to lose him or maybe they didn’t want to lose trade with the French, but in either case they treated him marginally better—but it was a small margin.

“Why send Marquette there? Because many tribes traveled through the area, including the Sioux. The Sioux were the power of the West just as the Iroquois were the power of the East. A treaty and missions with them would open up countless miles of the continent. It was worth the chance to send Marquette up there to give the mission one more try. As it turned out it was Marquette’s one failure in life.

“I know you think Green Bay is cold, and you call it the Frozen Tundra, but we know it is really just a moderate climate. Truly. It gets just cold enough in the winter to kill off the mosquitoes, and to freeze the lakes for what God truly intended them for—ice hockey. If you want cold, go up to Lake Superior. On the north shore you have the wind out of the arctic. On the south shore you have the wind out of the arctic after it has passed over ice water. Even with natural gas to warm our homes, there are probably fewer people living around Lake Superior today than there were three centuries ago. It is a very tough place to live.

“Marquette didn’t leave the Sault until late August. By the time they had paddled any distance, it was September, and the winds were howling. Picture their little line of birch bark canoes hugging the south shore of this great inland sea. They are always halfway between getting swamped in eight-foot waves, or being dashed up against the rocky shore. At night the wind blows their fires out and they huddle together in the rain. They make so little progress against the wind that it takes them a month to cover the five hundred miles of the trip, and by that time the snow is everywhere. We still lose ships on that lake as you know. To be out there in a canoe is madness. A lesser man would have never made it. Even with all his strength, Marquette just barely got there alive.

“His reward was a winter of disappointment. Of the three Ottawa tribes there, only one had any interest in Christ. The other two treated him badly. Even the tribe that would listen required constant encouragement to keep the new

Christians from backsliding. Marquette had a winter of constant, small frustrations. Meanwhile, the tribes were fooling with the Sioux. Talk about twisting the lion's tail. This was insanity. But the young braves would look for any excuse to travel by the Sioux villages and insult every person they could find. Where this was leading was obvious to any person with basic intelligence, but we are talking about teenagers here, and foresight tends not to be one of their strong points. Marquette knew he was being insulted by people who were just months away from being corpses.

"The one blessing for him was the presence of a young Illinois brave who had been taken captive and brought to Saint Esprit years earlier. The boy's owner loaned him to Marquette so Marquette was able to learn a bit of his language, some of his customs, and some sense of his geography. Ultimately the Jesuits knew that the Illinois would be an important part to the puzzle. They seemed to occupy an important location between the Iroquois and the Sioux, they seemed to be peaceful and stable, and if there really was an important river leading to the sea, everyone said they were located along it. So Marquette spent as much time as he could with the boy and learned language and customs. This was the one part of the winter that paid off for him. All the rest was frustration."

"When the winter finally ended, Marquette paddled the five hundred miles back to the Sault and reported in. Yes, one tribe had some interest in Christ, no the other two could not be approached. He had baptized some children and tried to preach and teach. He also explained the impending Sioux problem."

"He needn't have bothered. Within weeks, hundreds of Ottawa came running to the Sault looking for protection. They had committed the unforgivable. A Sioux chief and some of his braves had come to camp to try to make peace between the tribes. The Ottawas had welcomed him and then killed his entire party. Only after they had killed the chief did it suddenly dawn on these folks that they had just committed suicide. As soon as word got back to the other Sioux, any Ottawa within range of a Sioux raiding party was dead. Their only chance at life was to run faster than the Sioux, and that is what they were doing. Some paddled night and day for the Sault, while others headed north to stay out of sight. They had to hope the Sioux would never find them."

"There was not a lot of sympathy for the Ottawa at Sault St. Marie. After all, these folks were murderers. And they were fools. And since the French had some ties to them, there was a real possibility that the Sioux would now war on the French as well. While the Ottawa now cringed and begged at the Sault, most traders (and probably most missionaries) would be happy to see them sent back to their fate. On the other hand, one of the three tribes had at least professed to be Christian, and the missionaries felt they needed to demonstrate that they would side with fellow Christians."

"But they didn't want them around the Sault. That would be inviting a powder keg into the trading post. They needed to get this bunch out of here, but to some place safe. Allouez had the answer. He had spent the last year in Wisconsin, exploring Green Bay and going up the Fox River to a place almost exactly twenty miles due west of where we sit today. On his way back north, he happened to see several islands, including Mackinac. His guides told him Indians tribes had lived

there in the past as they tried to escape the Iroquois. If the island could protect a tribe from the Iroquois, it might also protect a tribe from the Sioux."

"Marquette was to accompany the tribe there and start a mission on the island. So he joined the flotilla of men, women, and children, who slowly paddled south out of the Sault to the island. Once they finally got to the island, they were all happy for about three months. It turned out the island made a great fortress, with a high hill that would let them see miles out into Lake Huron, but the soil was too poor to grow corn. By the time they learned that, the fall harvest had failed, and the hunters in the tribe had killed off all the game on the island. In short, they would be safe on the island, but they would starve to death."

"Moving again was hard on everyone, but they had no choice. They found fertile land just opposite the island at what is now St. Ignace, and rebuilt their village—complete with a very strong stockade just in case the Sioux had learned of their new location. Marquette built a small chapel there and served as the village parson for three years—until Louis came by in 1673 with three canoes and an order to paddle to the sea."

Claude stopped speaking at that point and it was clear we were done for the day. He changed his posture and began the preliminary moves people do to indicate he was about to stand. Before he could push back his chair, however, I decided to get in one more question for the day.

"Why Marquette?" I asked. "Allouez had already been up the Fox. He had already met the Mascoutens who would be their most useful guides. Why not take Allouez?"

"That, my friend, is an excellent question. But it will have to wait until our next conversation." He stood and extended his hand and I knew there was no more delaying my departure. "Picard will find a time for us to meet again."

I expressed my thanks, spoke briefly with Picard, and then got back into my shiny new Citroen. Only then did I look at my watch and realize how many hours we had been sitting and talking. It had been a long afternoon.

Chapter 6

La Salle.

It was late October before I could meet with the President again, but I didn't mind the delay. I had a problem. I looked back at my notes and listened to the tapes over and over, and I just could not find a smoking gun to point at my adversaries, the French. What had I learned that was useful so far? Jolliet had made some disparaging remarks about the Ottawas, but even if I used direct quotes, I wouldn't cause him much damage. There weren't enough Ottawas left to vote against him. They had scrapped with so many tribes, and done it so badly over so many centuries, the entire tribe could fit into a funeral parlor, a place where they seemed to spend most of their time these days, as the old died of infirmities and the young died of stupidity.

What I wanted was a way to tarnish the founders. I didn't expect that Jolliet would tell me directly that Marquette spent his days sleeping in the back of the canoe while the others did all the work, or that Louis Jolliet was drunk all day, or got chased up the Mississippi by a jealous husband, but I had hoped that some hesitation, some side comment, some odd glance would tip me that I would find gold if I did additional digging. So far, there was nothing. Both men spent year after year along the Western frontier, suffering in silence. That didn't help me one bit.

Then I got called home. I don't know what kind of reports my parents were getting from the local manager, but in early October I got a polite—but firm—request from my father to come home to Philadelphia for a few days. The excuse was a wedding anniversary of my brother, and the usual comments about my mother missing me, but I knew there was more to the story. I didn't like the ruse, but I could think of no reason not to go. After all, why spend an extra day in Green Bay? So I flew back that weekend.

Our family home is a three-story brownstone just off Rittenhouse Square. It has been in the family for over a century and we are very proud of it. The US is so overcrowded, most families live in apartments, so it was a point of pride for us that we had a whole house to ourselves. It felt odd, though, as I rode the company limo in from the airport. I had been in New France for over a year, and I was already getting used to all the space they have. I will always be unimpressed by the chateaus along the Fox River. After all, the rich will always find space. But the average worker in Wisconsin had a small home on a quarter-acre lot, or even a half-acre lot. Why not? With all that endless prairie, land was cheap. Land in the U.S. is not. Our family home might be thought a mansion to some, including me, but now I saw how tightly wedged it was against its fellows. We were a country without space.

My family greeted me at the door and there were hugs all around. They let me take my bags up to my boyhood room, and then waited for me in the old paneled library. This was my favorite room of the house, but today I entered a bit nervously. What did my father want? I quickly saw he was going to play me like he did his subordinates at work. He sat quietly and reviewed his strategy, while my big brother occupied the conversation.

"So do you have a title now? Biographer to the President?" He was laughing and presenting this as light conversation, but it was clear this was to be the focus of my visit home. I was grateful. Now I knew what this trip was about.

"I have had several conversations with President Jolliet, and I am scheduled for another next month. I am gathering information for a biography, but it would be about what his ancestors were doing three centuries ago. I hope that doesn't create problems for the company?" I asked, and looked directly at my father. I was determined to take the conversation to him, and not let him sit through half an hour of bantering with my brother before he finally stated his intentions.

"We can't tell." All eyes turned to him. Now that he chose to speak, we knew we would get direct answers. Even when he and I had had our most serious disagreements (what can the head of a family business say when one of his sons becomes an historian?), I knew any statement he made was heart-felt and sincere. He hid nothing from us.

“The local manager thinks our sales may be up some out of curiosity, but he also fears the President’s enemies may now be more reluctant to buy from us. Their politics are wilder than ours and the French take their loyalties seriously.”

“So, “ I asked, “do you want me to stop my interviews?”

“You misunderstand,” he said. “Actually I am proud that my son is someone who can have private conversations with a head of state. As for the business, I was running the company when we and the French were shooting each other. If I could rebuild business then, I can rebuild it if necessary, should the politics of this get out of hand. I was more curious about why you are choosing to write a biography about that family. There are so many great Americans who deserve a book.”

Now I understood. This was about national pride. He did business with the French and had learned to hate them less than most Americans did, but he was still an American first. Was my biography project a sign that I no longer put Americans first? How did I answer that? The obvious answer was that I was gathering information to use in an attack on the Jolliet family and the very foundations of their state. But if I said that, how long before my brother had one too many beers, or was provoked by a snide remark about me, and revealed to the world what I was trying to do. No, I needed to reassure my father, but also to protect my current efforts.

“I am confident that my book will ultimately be about Americans. I want to see the world through Jolliet’s eyes, and learn how he sees past events between our countries. But I haven’t forgotten where I was born.” And with that, the conversation ended. At least the serious conversation was over. We had more than a few beers, and sampled some of my father’s more recent scotch purchases, and gabbed about football, business, and traffic. Maybe the high point of the evening was me trying to explain lacrosse after I had had too much scotch. I am not sure I could explain the rules sober, and after we had been drinking, we somehow thought it was a good idea to go out into the back yard and try some moves. Nobody was killed, but we ended up falling all over the lawn and laughing about the insane rules for that silly game.

I woke up the next morning in my boyhood room. My father and brother had gone off to the office, and the women were out shopping, so I had a quiet house to myself. Good thing. My head was still buzzing from the scotch. I lay in bed for nearly an hour after I awoke, and looked around the room with my eyes mostly unfocused. Finally I found myself staring at my old books. These were the history books I had loved as a child, but was too embarrassed to have in my library these days.

Somehow my eyes settled on that silly old book, “California Trail,” by Francis Parkman. How many children had read that stupid book? How old did you have to be before you realized the book was never really about the California Trail? It would be better titled, “How I spent a summer riding as far as Santa Fe before my butt hurt, so I spent a few days talking to Indians, went out once to chase buffalo, and then came home before it got cold.” What an old fraud. No wonder he couldn’t get tenure anywhere but Harvard.

But then I noticed another of Parkman’s books. I guess I left it here because I didn’t want anyone to think I took the man seriously. But later in his career he wrote a few reasonable books, mostly about Indians. I began to wonder if he would

have anything useful to say about the Ottawas and their flight from the Sioux and the role of Marquette. I got up, got the book, and then climbed back under the covers to read much as I had back in my childhood.

I was too hung over to be very patient with the man's deadly prose style, and his irritating habit of listing the exact day of every event, while never stating the year. To him it was important that something happened May 17th. The year that May happened to be located in was completely trivial. Very quickly my head started reacting to the writing and to the stale scotch flowing through my system. I started thumbing through the book pretty roughly when a name hit me—La Salle. Here was somebody I hadn't given much thought to recently. His was one of the hard-luck stories of French pioneering.

But it reminded me that he was a contemporary of Jolliet and Marquette as the two prepared for sainthood and eternal adoration. I slowed down and read a few paragraphs when it hit me—they had met.

Here was an interesting story that the President had somehow forgotten to mention. In 1671 Louis Jolliet was sent to find out more about the copper Adrien had found lying around in the Keeweenaw Peninsula along the south shore of Lake Superior. Louis did a bit of prospecting and a bit of mapping and started to paddle home. On the way, one of his guides took him down through Lake Huron to Lake Ontario. Here he ran into none other than Mssr. LaSalle. LaSalle was leading a group of ten explorers to find the Ohio River, and with it the passage to California and the route to China.

Here, if Parkman is to be believed, Jolliet stops the expedition, and convinces nine of the ten to forget Ohio and go north to look around Lake Superior. Who can't he convince? LaSalle. La Salle sees he can't change the minds of the fools in his group, so he gives some odd excuse like he hears his mother calling or something, and starts heading back east. He travels one day until he is out of sight of Jolliet, and then strikes due south as he had originally intended. He almost immediately finds the Ohio, rides it west to the Mississippi, then comes north along the Illinois River, and finishes his trip by paddling the length of Lake Michigan alone. In short, he does everything Marquette and Jolliett will soon be famous for, and does it two years ahead of them.

Now this was getting interesting. Here I am looking for a smoking gun to use on the French, and I find the weapon in my childhood bedroom. Why hadn't I thought of LaSalle before? He may have been the best explorer the French were capable of producing. I should have checked on his travels before. But Claude had been oddly silent about him. Why not tell me Louis had met LaSalle? This was an odd omission. Was he admitting that the whole family history was a tissue of lies, hoping that if he kept silent, I would not notice LaSalle's absence? Sadly, that had almost been the case. I was almost one more stupid American, too ignorant of history to know when I was being lied to.

I laid my head back, closed my eyes, and tried to think through a strategy. What would I say to President Jolliet? How could I bring up La Salle? And when I did, what would he say? I smiled at the thought of the look on his face. He was a professional politician, but he was about to be presented with the central lie of his family. What would he say about the man who had bested Louis all those centuries ago?

It was three weeks before I could find out. Our next appointment was for late October. This is not a beautiful time in Wisconsin. The oaks and maples have lost their leaves and the sky above the Fox tends to be leaden. Fall rains are cold, and the only blessing is that the snows are still a month off. My Citroen was already developing rattles as I turned off the Interstate to pass among the chateaus of the rich and famous. My mood was bad. No matter how much I thought of various strategies, I couldn't picture myself uttering the one word I most wanted to say to the President—La Salle. Did I let him continue with his story and bring up La Salle later? If I pursued it now, would it end up with a short argument and no further visits? I was a chess player without a lead move. Lord, give me a pawn to play.

We made no attempt to go outside during this interview. Picard escorted me to the president's study, and there we sat in wing-backed leather chairs surrounded by endless bound volumes and dark oak paneling. The room was meant to show the president was a serious man – even a scholar. I understood from friends that he had even read some of the books in the room. I hoped the book I was writing would sell well enough so that I could have a room like it some day.

"How was your trip to Philadelphia?" The President asked as I took the seat he pointed to. I could see it amused him to show off his access to such information. Was he still getting general intelligence reports from his government? Or did he just have a few people watched? I would have been annoyed, but of course I expected nothing less from the French.

"It was great time to visit. My brother and sister-in-law were celebrating their tenth anniversary, and all the family was gathered. There are special joys in family, aren't there?" I hoped my last question would turn the conversation back to him and we could resume the history of Louis.

"Yes," he agreed, "What is a man without family?"

"Shall we talk some more about yours? When last we spoke, you were explaining the activities of Louis Jolliet in the years before his discovery of the Mississippi."

"Yes, those were busy times for Louis. He paddled all over the Great lakes." He paused and mused about where to pick up his story. I felt my heart race as I debated whether to bring up LaSalle. Finally I decided to dare it. I was an American. We bow to no one.

"Since our last meeting, I have been doing some additional reading, and discovered a curious event. Were you aware that in 1671 there was a chance meeting between Louis and Robert LaSalle along Lake Ontario?"

"Ha," he immediately laughed. "Was there anyone who did *not* meet with La Salle? The man was everywhere. He covered so many miles in those years. What a tragedy that he accomplished so little."

"So little? He discovered the Ohio River, paddled the Mississippi all the way to the gulf, built a series of forts along the Mississippi, and brought settlers to Texas."

"I suspect you found all that information in American books, correct? Did you do any reading here in Green Bay?" There was no accusation in his voice, but he was unfortunately correct. As a foreigner there were some limits to my access to materials in the National Library, but much of the collection was open to me, and I had searched none of it for background on LaSalle.

"No, you are right. I have not researched him in the National Library."

"You should, if only to see how little you find. I think you will see we French have real problems with LaSalle. We find him both confusing and embarrassing. And I must say I am among the number that is both confused and embarrassed."

"How could you be embarrassed by a man who explored so much of your country?"

"Mssr. Murphy, maybe I should delay my description of Louis' explorations and explain why every third grammar school in this country is named Jolliet, yet you will travel forever and not find even a bus terminal named for LaSalle. It will give you a sense of the times, and maybe more respect for the work of my ancestor."

"Please do." I did not know where the conversation was heading, but if it involved embarrassment for the French, I was ready to listen.

"In 1671 the colony was engaged in exploration in all directions. The colony was strong enough to spare the men, and rich enough to bear the costs of their travels. It needed to know where Indian tribes might be brought to Christ, and where resources might be found to support trade. And, if there really was an easy route to the West and China, it would be to our advantage to find it before competing nations.

"Louis was sent to the west, to look for copper. Other explorers were sent north to locate what the English were calling Hudson's Bay, and to determine what manner of creature might be trapped and traded there. La Salle went south. He had friends at Court, he was a successful businessman, and he could be very persuasive. Unfortunately his abilities did not include any knowledge of cartography or geography. He was also impossible to get along with.

"So he headed west along Lake Ontario, preparing to venture south to tributaries of the Ohio that Indians had told him about. But after only three weeks with him, all nine of his crew were on the verge of mutiny. As it turned out, many lives might have been saved if they had killed him there and then, but Louis happened along. He explained where they were (one of the constant sources of fear among LaSalle's fellow travelers was that he was always lost), and explained how they could travel to various outposts of the realm. The nine mutineers immediately began to plan for a new exploration along routes Louis gave them. LaSalle threatened them and even challenged Louis, but withdrew his challenge the minute he saw he could not browbeat Louis. Seeking to avoid more trouble with his men and with Louis, LaSalle left in the middle of the night and struck off due south.

"LaSalle never knew where he was, and was incapable of drawing anything approaching an accurate map. But he had a good knack for story telling. At the end of four months he was back in Quebec having—according to him—discovered the Ohio, the Illinois, the Mississippi, and Lake Michigan. Since he had traveled alone there were no witnesses to his adventure, and he had gathered no evidence from tribes. He did have a map, but it was so crudely drawn there was no telling where he had really been. In truth, the man had great energy, and he might have gone all the places he said he had gone, but without a map, nothing useful had been discovered. He might as well have spent the summer sampling wines.

"Back in Quebec he began plotting to extend the empire south and west—to the lands he had *discovered*, and he was able to get enough support to build a fort on

the south shore of Lake Ontario. This was to be the first of a string of forts that would follow the water routes and unite the nation from Quebec to the end of the Mississippi. It wasn't a bad concept, and many of his ideas were used decades later, but it was clear he was not the man to make any of these ideas become reality. Every fort he built had a cemetery nearby, and every cemetery filled quickly. Either he couldn't supply the forts, or he put them in the midst of malarial swamps, or he just moved on and left the people there to fend for themselves while he attempted his next adventure.

"In 1682, nine years after Louis and Marquette had traversed much of the Mississippi, LaSalle finally had enough forts that he felt comfortable descending the river. He had a large party and made it all the way to the Gulf—the first person to make it all the way. And this time he had witnesses to prove he had actually been there. But, he did not have a map maker. He had enough knowledge to determine the latitude where the river met the gulf, but he could not calculate the longitude. Two hundred men, women and children, later died because of this lapse in his education.

"When he got back to Quebec he had another scheme all planned. This time he needed the help of the King, so he sailed back to France and had an audience with Louis XIV. Since he had proven that the Mississippi flowed into the Gulf of Mexico, he now had a way for France to invade Mexico – or so he convinced the King. All that was needed was a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, and from there armies of Frenchmen could march the few short miles into the gold and silver mines of New Mexico. Better at speeches than at geography, LaSalle won the day. Two hundred lost souls sailed in three boats for the Gulf the next spring. They survived the Atlantic crossing and the storms of the Gulf, only to discover that La Salle had lost the Mississippi.

"He knew the latitude, but unfortunately, the gulf coast is largely all the same latitude. What he needed was longitude. Since he didn't have it, they sailed along the coast looking for the river. But there are so many rivers flowing into the gulf from the north, finding the tight one was impossible. As the passengers and crews got more impatient, LaSalle got more desperate to announce he had found it. Finally, near Galveston, Texas, he announced with great certainty that the river they saw flowing into the gulf was the great Mississippi.

"He unloaded two hundred men, women, and children, and did his usual—he built a fort. The cemetery would follow. One of the ships dropped off all the passengers and supplies, and having done its work, sailed back for France. A second ship sailed up the river too far and tore out its bottom. It sank in minutes, costing the settlers many of their supplies. LaSalle quickly knew that he had landed the settlers in the wrong place, so he quietly sent the third ship back up the coast to find where the river really was. The ship was never heard from again.

"It didn't take long for the settlers to realize that they were marooned. And LaSalle being LaSalle, he had put their fort in the middle of a malarial swamp. The cemetery filled and the fort emptied and LaSalle finally admitted he didn't know where he was. But he had a plan. He would lead those still able to walk back to the east where they would find the Mississippi, canoe its entire length, and return to Quebec. He may have said they would send food back from Quebec to anyone

still alive in the fort, but those in the fort knew they were being left to die. And they died to the last man, woman, and child.

"The men who left with LaSalle spent a year wandering through the swamps along the coast, never reaching the Mississippi. Finally they shot LaSalle. They left his body out to be eaten by wild animals, but I always thought it would have been more just to create yet another cemetery for this man who had already created so many cemeteries in our country. But now you see why you may not find much written about him in our libraries. A man whose reach so greatly exceeds his grasp is tragic. A man whose reach leads to the deaths of so many good people is more terrible than tragic."

"Yet his concept of an empire along the Mississippi was the central concept of your country." I replied. I am not sure why I wanted to defend LaSalle, maybe because I was the one who had mentioned his name.

"But concepts don't make great men. While LaSalle was getting rich through his friends at Court, Louis had gone to Paris to study cartography at the Sorbonne. The state of the art in those years was limited, but the skills were certainly worth the six months Louis gave them. As a result, it is through Louis that we have the first useful maps of the Mississippi. It is Louis who is the real founder of the nation."

"I am sorry now I distracted you from telling his story."

"Not at all. There were many explorers in those days, and many deaths. LaSalle is more tragic than most, and irksome because of his arrogance and ignorance, but he was not alone in his errors. Maybe his story helps us better understand Louis' story. Louis took six men on a two thousand mile canoe trip into lands never seen before by Europeans, and brought all six back alive. I think our family would be proud of that fact even if he hadn't discovered the Mississippi or hadn't gone on to found the cities that became our greatest strength."

"What do you think Louis and LaSalle said that day they met in 1671?" I asked.

"LaSalle was nobility and Louis was not just a commoner, he was a commoner born outside of France. LaSalle should have said, where the Hell am I, and can you show me how to use this sextant? But he lectured Louis on his appearance, and then berated him as it became apparent all the men in camp had turned to Louis for leadership. It was an ugly meeting. But it probably saved the lives of those nine men, and it taught Louis enough about LaSalle that he was never tempted to join any of his expeditions."

"Is there anything else I should know about Louis before we start the discussion of his trip down the Mississippi?" I asked.

"There is much we could discuss about the intrigues of court, and the various political parties of the time, but only one fact is really important. For all the aristocrats and generals sitting in Quebec, it was Louis who was chosen to lead the expedition. Maybe that was the ultimate contribution of LaSalle. They had seen the results of his work in 1671 and knew a different kind of man would be required to make this discovery."

"Now you will have to excuse me. I hate to cut our meeting short, but a number of things require my attention today. Pecard will find you another appointment in the next few weeks." He must have pressed a button on his chair, or there was a microphone in the room, for Pecard immediately appeared and escorted me out of

the house. I was unsure whether I had insulted the President through my questions, and whether the meetings would now be over. So I purposely stood extra long at the entrance to the house and talked with Picard. He had a minor ownership stake in a lacrosse team and I spoke at length about that. He was pleasant enough, but I was feeling desperate. Were the interviews now over? I almost asked him outright, but controlled myself. It was frustrating to get this close to the story of the Mississippi exploration and then lose it. But finally I walked off with my head held high and a fake smile on my lips. If it was all ending, at least I would be out of Green Bay before winter struck.

Chapter 7

Preparations for the Voyage. 1672

Picard kept me waiting two weeks before he called and scheduled the next appointment for me. I spent the two weeks wondering if the biography was now dead. If there were no more interviews, what did I have? Maybe enough material for an article, but there just wasn't enough for a book. I needed more time with Jolliet.

While I waited in suspense, I went over to the National Library to see if the president was right about books on LaSalle. Like all national buildings, it is built on the east side of Green Bay, up the side of a gradual hill to make all the buildings look more imposing. Not that they had much choice. The west side of the Fox River is flat and marshy. Buildings tend not to look too imposing if they are gradually sliding into the ground.

The National Library looked like a smallish version of the Louvre. But then every public building in New France looked like a small version of the Louvre. Architecture seems to be a lost art among them. My passport and local address got me access to the main reading room and I spent three days scanning books on LaSalle. It appeared that Jolliet was right about people being embarrassed about the man, since there were many books of apology or accusation. Three centuries after his disaster in Texas, there were still family members who had recollections to publish, mostly recalling what an arrogant imbecile LaSalle was.

But Jolliet was apparently alone in being confused by the man. All the authors I found had definite ideas about him. Many of the books concerned various conspiracy theories. Because LaSalle always traveled with Dominican friars, it was the Jesuits who sabotaged his efforts out of jealousy. Because he was nobility, it was the king who sabotaged him as a way to keep his nobles in their place. Or it was the governor who undercut him. Or it was the Americans. Nothing yet had been published about extra-terrestrials, but it looked like just a matter of time before that theory hit print too.

None of this did me any good. Whatever happened between Louis Jolliet and Robert La Salle on the banks of Lake Ontario, there was nothing I could use to

discredit the French. Jolliet could have been in league with the Jesuits if in fact there was a Jesuit conspiracy, but no American would care. We do have a good number of Irish Catholics in the US, and some Italians, but the vast majority of Americans is Protestant, and couldn't tell a Jesuit from a Dominican if their life depended upon it. For me to claim that the current administration is illegitimate because of something like that would simply put every American reader to sleep before the third paragraph. I mentally filed LaSalle away as a dead end (no pun intended).

By the second week of waiting I was so restless and bored that I actually went to the office and worked. The network folks were having trouble building a series of web pages to handle customer orders. Having been accessing libraries online for a decade, I showed the techies how to write the proper Java scripts. I don't know if they were more surprised that I knew Java or that I was willing to work. I know I am the spoiled son of a wealthy man, but I try not to be a useless spoiled son of a wealthy man.

Evenings I spent with Elise. We attended at least three parties a week, and we would have a quiet dinner together once every week or two as well. I liked being with her, but in some ways she made my situation worse. If my interviews with the President were over, there was no longer any reason for me to stay in Green Bay. I would not miss the cold, but I would miss Elise. Some nights I was so frustrated over my situation I just wanted to scream.

Then the call came. Listening to every inflection in Picard's voice, it didn't appear that anything was out of the ordinary. This was just one more meeting in the series. I hoped that was the truth. We talked about lacrosse, set a time for the next meeting, and ended pleasantly. I felt like I could breathe again.

The day of our meeting was in late November. This is the worst time of the year in Wisconsin. The snow has not fallen yet, and all the trees are bare. The wind has a bite in it and the sky is an endless series of dirty gray clouds. I barely noticed all that as I raced up the Fox freeway to the meeting. My project was on again. Maybe today would be the day I got the clue I needed, maybe it would be a future meeting, but at least the meetings were started again.

Our meeting was in Jolliet's study again, and again he began by showing me he knew what I was doing.

"Was I right about LaSalle?" He asked.

"Yes, there is less said about him here than one would expect, and I have to say that what is written about him either accuses him of great crimes, or proposes vast conspiracies that border on lunacy. Your authors definitely have a different view of him than American historians do."

"Unfortunately, we will have to come back to him later in this story. He and Louis were never rivals, but they did have very different approaches to the creation of our current state.

"Can we talk about 1672?" I asked. "Father Marquette has been promised an opportunity to evangelize amongst the Illinois, but has been told to wait while he reestablishes the Hurons and Ottawas at St. Ignace. There he sits. Louis has been exploring for copper and trading goods at Sault St. Marie. Both are perfectly positioned for the journey they will take. But how is the journey launched? How do they get permission to do what I presume both men wanted to do?"

“The order to start comes from Jean Talon. He is the representative of the King—the *intendant*. Under an organizational approach started by Richilieu and maintained by Mazarin, New France is ruled by a governor, but it also has an *intendant*, or representative of the king. It if appears this would confuse people and weaken the authority of the governor, that is exactly the point. For half a century, the King had been trying to increase his authority over all aspects of French life. He did not want governors or other nobles exercising complete control over their fifes. The *intendant* system was one way to keep governors under control.“

“So it was not the governor who sent Louis on his way?”

“It appears this was one case where Frontenac and Talon were in general agreement, but it was actually Talon who gave the order. Louis was summoned back to Quebec in the summer of 1672 and asked by Talon if he would attempt the trip. There would be no pay for the trip, but Talon gave him a trading license that entitled him to trade along the way and thus cover the costs of the trip. Louis agreed and spent the rest of the summer and fall outfitting his team.

“His first actions were legal. He needed business partners to cover the costs of the trade goods and provisions for the trip. Given his successful history, he had no trouble finding them. In the tradition of the time, they wrote up a description of the shares that each would receive from the profits and had it notarized October 2. He picked the five men who would accompany him, gathered his provisions, loaded his canoes, and left before the winter locked them in. Do you mind if I add one minor story here that is not really relevant?” he asked.

“Of course.”

“One of the canoes he used was his mother’s. Marie was at this time married to her third husband, and raising another set of kids. I told you this was a tough woman. When he got back from one of the great discoveries of the age, she charged him rent. When he didn’t pay, she sued him! Now there is a woman tough enough to live on the frontier.”

We laughed about this bit of historical trivia, and then the President paused and began to move towards the coffee pot in a side table. I of course jumped up and poured for both of us.

“Can we assume there was a big send-off for him?” I asked when we were both settled again.

“In the fall of the year there was a send-off for everyone. This was when all the trappers and traders filled their canoes and headed west. Hundreds of Indians were also along the route headed back to their tribe and their families. It was a seasonal migration. Louis and his companions would have had plenty of company on the first leg of his trip.”

“And what of Marquette?”

“Louis was told that he would be taking a priest with him, and of course he expected that. Talon left it to the Jesuit superior, Claude Dablon, to pick the priest, although I am sure he was happy with the choice. Dablon gave Louis a written directive to give to Marquette when he arrived in St. Ignace. That day was December 8, 1672.

“So it was a complete surprise to Marquette?”

“Yes. He had hoped that he would be able to do missionary work among the Illinois, and had prepared for that, but he had no idea when he would be permitted to go to them, and he certainly had no idea that he would accompany a major expedition to the ends of the known world. For a man who had been isolated first in Saint Esprit, and now at Saint Ignace, it must have seemed like a miracle.” I was expecting the President to continue with the story, but he stopped and looked at me directly. He appeared to be waiting for something.

“Yes?” I asked.

“I thought you would have a question for me about this meeting.” I looked at him and then at my coffee and tried to think of what I should be asking. But nothing came to mind.

“I’m sorry. I am obviously missing an important point,” I finally said.

“The date. Louis paddled to St Ignace in December. By leaving Quebec in early October, he was able to paddle most of the distance in relative warmth, and he arrived in Sault St. Marie in early November. He had his trading post there, he had friends, he had a wooden hut to protect him from the cold, and he was surrounded by a twelve-foot high stockade fence. This was the place for him to spend the winter. It was the sensible thing to do. But he talked with the priests at the mission there, and they were convinced that Marquette should be told the news immediately. So, rather than send a messenger, or write a note to be passed along with an Indian who happened to be traveling in that direction, Louis and Claude DuPry climbed back into a canoe and paddled sixty miles across the Great Lakes in December. Have you traveled around that area yet?” he asked.

“No, business has kept me in Green Bay.” This was a lie and I regretted it the minute I said it, not because I was lying to a Frenchman, but because he would obviously know I was lying. Clearly he had the intelligence resources to know I had just been to Portage. But he did not pursue the lie.

“You should visit. You can drive there in a day from Green Bay. I am afraid the area is little changed over the last three centuries. The shoreline is heavily wooded. The water’s edge is rocky. Winds pick up the waves and throw them on shore. A strong team could do the trip in several days in the summer. In December, only a madman would try.

“Why did he try?”

“He went personally because that is the kind of man he was. He spent a week in the cold and ice and wind so he could explain the voyage to Marquette and help him prepare for the trip. Then, once Marquette was told, he spent another week paddling back to the Sault. Marquette needed to spend the winter readying the local Hurons and Ottawas for his departure – there were Christenings and Catechism classes and too many Final Rites. Louis drew up the best maps he could make, listed the trade goods he would need and the provisions, and began the packing.”

“I should talk about the packing. Louis was maybe five feet four. So was almost all his crew. People were smaller then, and these men were small even by the standards of the day. But they had to portage large packs great distances. If packs were too small, then more would be needed and the men would have to make more trips at each portage. So they took large packs – one hundred pounds. They used harnesses to spread the weight over both their shoulders and their neck, but by

any measure, these men were carrying large loads. It was Louis' job to determine what went into each pack and to make sure each pack had the same weight. It was important enough for him to spend weeks in the process."

"Among the things he packed was writing utensils and navigation instruments. He was not an amateur like LaSalle. He knew his job was to carefully record where they had been, not just so that others could follow in his path, but because this was a voyage of discovery. As he found new lands, he would claim them for the King. The logs he kept were as close to legal documents as they had at the time. He had to be able to prove where he had been and what he had seen. He would keep a log, and so would Marquette. That not only gave them better evidence of their discoveries, but provided a second source of the materials in case one of the logs was lost through an accident. As it turned out that was an excellent precaution, but one that still did not solve the whole problem. But we can talk about that later."

"Louis had his men with him in the Sault and they spent the winter discussing the trip and staring at maps. You know their names – all of them are famous now. Jacques Largillier (aka the Beaver), Pierre Moreau (aka the Mole), Jean Tiberge, Jean Plattier, and Claude duPry. And yes, given what Claude duPry was later to do for Louis and the family, we have named one child Claude in each generation. I am named for him."

"It was a long and cold winter, but the men stayed busy while they waited. Finally in the first week of May Indians began arriving to trade and they knew the rivers were open again. Loading all their goods into two canoes, the six men left Sault St. Marie on May 11 and began the most important voyage of their generation. They arrived in Saint Ignace May 16 and spent a day helping Father Jacques repack his goods. When the sun rose on May 17, 1673 they climbed into their canoes and set off."

"How much do you think they knew about what they were getting into?" I asked. "They had talked with Illinois tribesmen, and Allouez had gone a little bit up the Fox. Do you think they had any sense for the distances they would be covering?"

"The biggest problem they faced was that almost everything they "knew" was wrong. I told you about that once. Every Indian tribe had the same strategy. They tried to scare the French from venturing further so that a trading post would be set up by their tribe and their tribe could then have easier access to French guns and trade goods. It was a clever strategy to gain advantage over competing tribes. But it meant talking to Indians about the trip was useless. Every tribe said the same thing—don't go further, it is too dangerous. The danger took different forms—hostile Indians, roaring rapids, whirlpools that suck in all canoes—but the message was always the same—everything ahead will kill you, don't go on."

"But they went on."

"Yes. Thirty miles a day over open water. Seven men in two birchbark canoes loaded to the gunnels with hundred-pound packs.

A this point Picard knocked softly at the door and then entered. "Your next appointment is here," he announced. I thanked the President for his time and then waited in the outer hallway while Picard escorted a pair of politicians in to see the President. I thought I recognized them but wasn't sure. They also looked at me carefully, whether it was from the habit of all politicians to check for competition

and gauge the direction of the wind, or whether they really did know who I was and why I was there. I saw no smiles for me, but noticed how quickly their faces became jovial when they turned to the President. So be it, I thought. I am not here to make friends. I am here to make very permanent enemies. I pulled on my fur coat and walked out to my Citroen.

Chapter 8

Crossing Lake Michigan to the Green Bay Settlement. 1673

I called Picard the next day and was able to arrange another meeting with the President for early December. Apparently there was some thrashing about in his political party that was taking more of his time, but he was still interested in my project and willing to make time for it. I was relieved to hear all of that. I still wondered if I had crossed some line in my conversations with him about LaSalle, but apparently things were back on track.

During my wait, there was lacrosse. The social scene in Green Bay is built around the lacrosse season, with big parties before and after each game, and status awarded based on which luxury box one used at Lambeau Field. I knew it was important for me to be seen at these matches, so I used our corporate box and tailgated before and after the game like the locals. The combination of buffalo jerky and cheap Bordeaux wine is the official food at these affairs so I had loathed them in the past, but things were different this year with Elise at the matches. For one thing, she dragged me out of the company box. December is cold in Green Bay, and the boxes are warm, but she didn't care.

"There is no sense going to a match if you are going to sit in a box," she claimed. "You might as well watch it on TV" (which, by the way, seemed like an excellent idea to me.) We hadn't been in our nice warm luxury box ten minutes when she grabbed my arm and led me down a thousand stairs to the playing field. Somehow she knew someone who let us onto the field so we could stand down near the goals. There were cameramen running around us and balls flying through the air, and it was cold! But Elise grabbed my arm in both of hers and wouldn't let go. So I stood on the field for over three hours while my subordinates at the company ate our corporate buffet and kept their feet near the electric heaters. The expression "she's got a hold on me" took on a whole new meaning that afternoon.

But lacrosse matches only provided some entertainment on Sundays. In between matches I decided to take the President's advice and drive up to Sault St. Marie and St. Ignace. I invited Elise. I liked the idea of us being alone for a couple days in the wilds of the frozen north, but she had a seminar to cover. She seemed to take her college work more seriously than I had thought French students did. So I decided to go alone. Roads in New France all lead to Green Bay. Highway 1 takes the route down the Wisconsin River and thence down the Mississippi. Highway 2 leads north to the Sault and then along the top of the Great lakes east

to Montreal and Quebec. Highway 3 leads along the bottom of the Great Lakes to Chicago and Detroit and Duquesne. The exception are the war roads (the French call them “defense” roads) that run along the western edge of the Appalachians and the eastern edge of the Rockies, so they can move troops against us wherever they choose.

I had never taken Highway 2 out of Green Bay. Until the president mentioned it, no one had ever suggested that I should. This is an area empty of population and empty of aesthetic value. At least that is what I had always heard. But I had the time, so why not see where the Jolliet voyage had begun? I left after breakfast one day and started north.

The drive is simple enough. The western shore of Green Bay is flat. The first hour is mostly working class suburbs. The nobility like to live to the east and south of Green Bay where there are plenty of hills to place their chateaus. Why have a chateau if it can’t dominate the landscape? To the north is peasant country. After an hour even the poor houses disappear. From then on it is all trees. The big pines have long been taken for building. What are left are plantations of pine in long rows, or masses of poplars. Both are apparently taken for paper pulp. I passed a few log trucks on the way. There were houses along the way, but they rapidly decreased in quantity, and I soon felt pretty alone on the highway.

The day was pretty typical for early December. The sky was leaden gray, and the wind pushed the trees around. Periodically the road ventured alongside the Bay, where I saw one and two foot waves crashing endlessly on small stones. I had checked the forecast and they said no snow for the next couple days, but the feeling in the air was that snow could begin at any minute. I kept the Citroen’s heater pushed to high, and hoped the car wouldn’t leave me stranded out here in the middle of nothing.

Periodically I would find a small town and feel some relief at being near civilization again. Marinette, Escanaba, Manistique… I drove past rows of small houses and small cafes and was back out of town within minutes. I had lunch in Manistique. My map showed that there was nothing much ahead, so I better eat while I could. There were several cafes set up near the highway, each with a view of Lake Michigan. They looked like they were built to enable outdoor dining during the summer, but not even the French were crazy enough to eat outside on a day like this. I found a table inside, ordered a sandwich, and stared out at the water.

It seemed to go on forever. I knew that from where I was sitting, I was essentially at the top end of Lake Michigan. Chicago was due south of me some hundreds of miles. Between us were an infinite number of choppy gray waves. I was glad to be off the water, huddled in this silly café in this sad little town.

Two older men at the next table tried to strike up a conversation, something about their boat and going out fishing. I had a bit of trouble understanding them, and thought maybe there was a problem with my French, when I began to realize that my French was better than theirs. I commented upon the waves and the wind and once we had agreed that it would be a tough day for fishing, they left me to my thoughts. Small town people making small talk with strangers. I wondered what kept them up here in such an empty place, but didn’t ask. I ate my sandwich and got back into my car.

I decided to go to Sault St. Marie first. It was late afternoon by the time I got there. By then I had seen every acre of jack pines I hoped to ever see again. Given that this is a major link between Green Bay and Quebec, you would think there would be more traffic and more people, but they must all take the southern route. I can't blame them. I was pleased to see my first traffic light in hours, seeing the red, amber, and green as a "welcome home" sign. I was back among people. I pulled into the first hotel I could find on Portage Avenue across from St. Marie's River. Some day I will count all the Portage Streets and St Marie's this and that's in Canada, and astound the world with the number.

I had this idea that I would get up the next morning and try to drive along the shore as close as I could to the route that Jolliet took down to see Marquette in St. Ignace. It was about sixty miles or so, and I thought I could do it. I found a café near the locks and huddled over my maps. Periodically I looked up and saw huge ore ships drop outside my window. They were dropping from Lake Superior which was up river slightly to my left, to Lake Huron, down river slightly to my right. It looked to me like the locks were taking them down about twenty feet.

The wine was pretty good and I had a few while eating a good veal dish. Maybe it was the wine, but I began to get interested in the number of boats dropping in front of me. The process was slow—almost an hour to get the boat in, dropped, and out—but it seemed like there was an endless stream of them. Finally I asked the waiter if the locks were always so busy. It was just the opening the boy had been waiting for. Of course they were busy, he pointed out, loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear. With the shipping season due to end in ten days, the ore was needed in plants to the south. I gave him a polite "thank you" and went back to my wine. Life must be very simple when one can achieve social status in a community by knowing the date the shipping season ends.

So this was the current state of Sault St. Marie. From trading post and mission to locks for ships. The resources of the west continued to pass through the town, but now they just paused for an hour before moving on. I went back to my maps.

The river connecting the two lakes ran southeast out of town through a series of small passages. For some reason St. Marie River became Nicollet River, but it didn't look like the water could tell the difference. It just kept flowing southeast around a point of land until it opened into Lake Huron. There were some roads along the way but none followed the shore the entire distance. Instead, I found a larger road, Caribou Lake Road. It went east out to De Tour Point and De Tour village. How could I pass up a chance to visit De Tour? Once there, I saw a road that ran southwest along the upper shore of Lake Huron, directly to St. Ignace. I folded up my maps and left the café. Another ore boat was leaving the lock. No doubt they were hurrying to beat the ten-day deadline. If the captain didn't know when that day was, he could just stop in and ask the waiters in the café—all experts in lake shipping.

The weather was worse the next day – more cold, more wind, darker skies. I made sure the gas tank was full before I left town. I amused myself thinking that I was driving *to* a De Tour and not *around* a detour. Or at least I amused myself that way for a few minutes. Once I turned off onto local roads and found myself once again surrounded by endless forests, the joke seemed much less amusing. I knew a major highway was just a few dozen miles behind me, but it felt much

farther. We don't have many empty places like this in the U.S. I drove down the road, probably much too slowly, but there was little traffic around and I wasn't taking any chances on missing a turn.

Finally (it was really much less than an hour), I found De Tour. The village was just a few houses in rows, and I drove past them to the edge of the water. It was too cold and windy to get out of the car. I sat along their main street and looked up and down the river. A large ferry boat sat on shore ready to take cars across the river to a large island. No one seemed to be getting on board. Why would they? That side of the river looked just as desolate as this side. An ore boat was making the turn just a hundred yards from my car, turning west to continue through to Lake Huron and points south. If it noticed the village along the way, it was probably just to check the lighthouse and other electronic navigation devices as it made its way out into the great lake. I didn't stay very long either.

The road east to St. Ignace stays along the lake nearly the whole way. This is a scenic route, just two lanes of blacktop, with places to pull out and look at the lake, or park and go down to the beach. But on a blustery, cold day like this the road was empty. I drove slowly and paid little attention to my driving. Instead, I watched the water along the shore and tried to imagine two men in a birchbark canoe paddling along on a day like this. How many miles would they make in a day? Five? Ten? Coming south down St. Marie's River, they at least had some shelter from a west wind if they hugged the shore, but out here paddling along the edge of Lake Huron, they were exposed to the full force of the wind and waves. They arrived in St. Ignace on December 8. When did they leave? Five days before? Six? Eight? Two men paddling through the wind and icy water for about a week.

Why? Jolliet wanted to tell Marquette that they would be going south in May. And he wanted to tell him personally. So he and a friend spent a week going to St. Ignace and a week going back, just to personally deliver a message. When he arrived in St. Ignace what he would get for his efforts would be a few nights in an Indian village and some conversation with the Father. Was that acceptable to Jolliet? He was a young man, just twenty seven. Maybe he burned with excitement about the trip and wanted to share it. Maybe he felt the weight of his first command and wanted to make sure it got off to a good start. After three centuries, who could tell? The one certainty was the cold water, the icy wind, and the strain on his knees and back.

I took about two hours getting to St. Ignace. I just followed the water. St. Ignace occupies a bend in the shoreline by the Straits of Mackinac. Just through the straits to the west is Lake Michigan. The town is three streets wide, all parallel to the shore. What was once an Indian village is now a tourist village. Every second business either sells fudge or sells ferry rides out to Mackinac Island. The island that couldn't raise corn does a better job raising summer tourists.

I parked by one of the ferry docks and tried to decide what to do next. I knew that the bark chapel of Marquette was long gone, and even the wooden chapel built years after his demise was gone as well. There was a museum in his honor, but I knew it would contain no original artifacts of the day. There would just be colorful dioramas designed to explain the period to an endless sequence of grade school kids on class tours.

Could I get out to the island? Tourist season was long over, so I wasn't sure if the ferries even ran, but I decided I would at least find out. I pulled my coat tight around my throat and walked to the ferry office. Given the waves I could see piling up against the shore, I was half hoping the ferry was closed for the season. But I found out it still ran a few times a day to get workers on and off the island. I bought a ticket for the next run and was out on the island by 2.

The island is actually quite attractive. They have a quaint rule – no cars, so everything is done with horses. Even with the tourists off the island the workmen hauled their tools and building supplies around on horse-drawn carts. Basically there is one street that wraps around the island's eight mile circumference, and the place is easy to explore.

I started with the fort. Near the harbor and back up the side of a hill is an old fort the French built to protect the entrance to Lake Michigan (and Green Bay) from evil Americans. The fact that we had never come near the place did not prevent them from preserving the fort as a reminder of their past vigilance. They had a few old cannons about the place and had whitewashed the stone walls. I had no real interest in a fort that had never been used in battle, but the climb up to the top of the front steps gave me an excellent view of the harbor. I thought the wind was going to blow me off the hill, and my eyes quickly teared from the cold, but it was worth the effort just to look. Who knew if the old cannon in the fort really would have been useful against us Americans. For the French stationed there, it would have been heaven just to wake up each morning to such a view.

When I couldn't stand the cold any more, I carefully climbed back down the hundreds of steps to the street and explored the town. The shops here also had an odd affinity for fudge, with one store bragging it had over twenty flavors of it. Fortunately, all these places were closed for the winter. So were the souvenir stores with the Indian artifacts made in China. What saved the place was the hotels. All were made of wood, all were nearly a century old, and all had huge porches. They were so attractive they almost looked American. On an impulse I decided to check if any were open and spend the night if it was possible.

The biggest hotel on the island is the Grand (named with typical French modesty), and I started to walk towards it when I saw another hotel along the beach—the Iroquois. I loved the irony of naming a French hotel after the Indians who had hounded them for over a century. I immediately made for the hotel, determined to stay there if it was possible. And I was lucky. Not only were they still open for a few more days, but they had one of the few restaurants still functioning on the island. As for the name, when I asked about the source, the hotel clerk informed me that "it had always been called Iroquois" as if that explained anything. From the look on his face I could see I wasn't going to get anything more from him on the subject.

Since ninety percent of the hotel was empty, I had no trouble getting a large room with windows facing south across Lake Huron. To my right were the Straits leading to Lake Michigan and the huge bridge crossing over them. I had barely put my coat down when the first ore boat lumbered past. It had better hurry, I thought, just nine more days until shipping season ends.

How do you spend a December evening on a deserted island? It turned out the hotel restaurant had a huge fireplace and very good wine. Four or five hours

passed beautifully. Periodically I glanced out the window to see the lights of ships going past, but mostly I watched the fire dance. It was more than enough for me that night.

By the time I got up the next morning, the few workmen who were staying in the hotel had already gone off to various building and remodeling projects, and I had the hotel to myself. The clerk at the front desk told me I had already missed the one ferry of the morning. It would be noon before I could get back to St. Ignace. The clerk was a slightly older man, and I took a chance to ask him about Marquette.

"I don't suppose there are any items on the island from when Father Marquette lived here, are there?"

"Ah, you do know your history," he replied. "Most people want to know the history of the fort or of the Grand Hotel. It is surprising how few know that Father Marquette lived here for nearly a year. But I am afraid we have nothing to show for that period. Indian camps in those days were pretty basic – just trees and bark and campfires. And then they weren't here very long. In the years afterward there were lots of Indians who camped out here while hunting or fishing, so who is to know which camp is which? Not that it matters. When the fort was built, the town was built right where the old Indian camps were."

"And nothing ever turns up, say during construction?"

"More of the island is being built up now that the nobility have decided this is the place for their trophy chateaus, and periodically something will turn up. Green Bay is pretty good about sending archeologists up to look, but nothing very significant has been found yet."

"Yes, " I said, "It has been a very long time." I had two hours to wander around the town, but there really wasn't anything else that held my attention. I sat and drank a cup of espresso, and eventually the ferry arrived.

The ride back turned out to be more memorable than I would have liked. The waves were several feet high and while the ferry was a catamaran—two hulls spaced for stability—the waves knocked it about pretty good. I was almost thrown to the floor at one point. The French were never noted for their boat designs, but I suspected this particular ride was the result of the wind and the currents coming out of the Straits of Machinac. Massive volumes of water moved out of Lake Michigan and into Lake Huron through a five-mile gouge in the land. Vessels of all sizes felt the forces below. Fortunately, after fifteen or twenty minutes we came into the lee of the harbor and the boat settled down.

As I got into my car and started the four-hour drive back to Green Bay, I had this odd thought about the island. Marquette had moved a tribe of Indians there because the place was too remote to be attacked by either the Iroquois or the Sioux. Its isolation was its safety. A hundred years later the French were fortifying the island because it was at the entrance to their empire on the Mississippi. From empty spot on the map to lynchpin of the empire in one century—that's quite a change for any piece of ground.

How much of my trip did I share with the President when I saw him the next week? Nothing. He knew where I had been, and I knew he knew where I had been. Why bring it up? We met in his study again. This time before we even sat down, I

took on the role of dutiful servant and brought him a cup of coffee before pouring one for myself and sitting across from him.

"When last we met," I began, "You described the initial preparations for the trip. Louis had gotten his instruction in Quebec, had gathered his men at Sault St. Marie, and then had taken a short trip down to St Ignace to tell Father Marquette that he would be the seventh member of the expedition. Did anything else happen that winter before they left?"

"No, it was a typical winter camp. They talked, they hunted, they chopped wood. The sun sets up there soon after four, and stays down for over sixteen hours. It is a good time to rest. By April the days were longer, and by May the ice was off St. Marie's river. They could start."

"Father Marquette had all winter to prepare," I noted. "So I assume there was no delay expected in St. Ignace."

"You are right. The Hurons were very sorry to see Marquette leave, but he told them one of his Jesuit brothers would be coming to be their priest. Oddly, he did not promise that he would be returning to them. For of course, he didn't."

"His belongings were a bit odd, but the Jesuits had traveled over so much of the country that they knew how to pack all his spiritual necessities so that they would both stay dry and be easy to portage. Marquette put most of what he needed in a metal box. There used to be jokes about sacramental wine, but it was so heavy the priests carried barely more than thimble-fulls when they traveled. They needed a bible, a cassock, candles, communion cup and bread, and a few yards of cloth that Marquette used very effectively as a dramatic backdrop when he told the story of Christ. That was it. They carefully stored his box and a few clothes in one of the canoes, and then he got in. And yes, they gave him a paddle and expected him to paddle just as much as the other men. He would have been insulted if they hadn't let him help."

"How good is your imagination?" He suddenly asked.

"I think it's fine. Why do you ask?"

"Well there is much we know, and much we don't know. For instance, May 17, 1673 is one of the most important days in our history, but we don't know many basic things about their day. Did it rain? Was it cold? Their first hours of paddling took them through the Straits of Machinac. Were the currents rough? They were paddling roughly west into the wind. How much wind did they face that day and subsequent days? You would love to go back in time, even for a few hours just to sense what they were feeling that morning. These men were traders, not poets, but you have to believe they started that morning with a particular sense of the moment. It was the start of an adventure for them, and an historic turning point for their nation."

"Had any of them paddled to Green Bay before?" I asked.

"No. There had been a trading post and mission at Green Bay for several years now, and while it was much smaller than the one at the Sault, some dozen or so traders had been down there and back. But it turned out none of this group had been among them. No doubt they had talked with these traders when they stopped at the Sault, and so they had some idea of the route as far as Green Bay, but none of Louis' partners had made the trip themselves."

“The route itself is more complicated than it might appear. The simple thing to do would be to just follow the northern shore of Lake Michigan, and it will eventually lead right down Green Bay. But Bay de Noc is along the shore line, and it would take several days to paddle around it. Or you can paddle across the mouth of it, but the entrance is dozens of miles across, a pretty long distance for small canoes to be out of the sight of land. Have you ever paddled a canoe?”

“Like most kids, I did some canoeing in summer camp” I replied, “But I have never done any real canoe trips.”

“You should some time. There is an area just west of Lake Superior that has hundreds of interlocking lakes. We have kept the area natural and don’t allow any motors on the lakes. You can paddle for a hundred miles and the lakes look like they did in the time of Louis and Marquette. It is a great experience. Many young French men consider it a rite of passage to paddle from one end to the other. It takes about two weeks.”

“Yes, I am sure it is very interesting.” Actually I was beginning to worry that the President was going to wander into some unrelated topic.

“What you learn if you ever take a longer canoe trip is how difficult it is to see. Your eyes may just be three feet off the water, so your range of vision is not very great. If you go more than a few hundred yards from shoreline, the shore can disappear quickly. All it takes is a little fog, or damp air, and there is nothing left to see. You try to keep your canoes straight, but it is easy to get off course. You also have to worry about a sudden wind coming up with you so far from possible shelter, and then too, birchbark canoes leak. Should you suddenly lean too far to one side and tear a seam, dry land is a long way off.

“I think I get the idea,” I said. “You want to stay close to shore, and in an ideal world, the shore would cooperate by being nice and straight.”

“Nicely put. Yes, the northern shore of Lake Michigan doesn’t cooperate.” He laughed as he emphasized “cooperate.” “So Louis had been given what he no doubt thought was pretty strange advice from traders who had made the trip before. He could hug he western shore, but that meant a long, uncomfortable paddle past the mouth of Bay De Noc. Or he could essentially island-hop over to the eastern shore of Green bay and come down what is now called Door County.”

“The Doorway to our Nation’s Capital” I quoted the advertising slogan for the Door Peninsula.

“That’s better than calling it Death’s Doorway as the ship captains referred to it for centuries. Given the currents and winds, lots of ships never made it through there. But of course Death’s Doorway isn’t likely to catch on as an advertising slogan. In any event, we know the first week or so was pretty straightforward—they just needed to follow the shoreline. They were headed west, so they were almost always directly into the wind, but that also meant that they had fewer worries about waves coming from the side and swamping them. Canoeists like to face the wind. They stayed far enough off shore so that they would not be surprised by Indians who might be in the area, but they were close enough so that if the weather turned, they could get onto shore pretty fast.”

“I drove along that shore a week or so ago. It is mostly rocks,” I said.

“Yes, rocks and birchbark don’t go well together, but at least it is a low shore. They could jump off their canoes a few feet from shore, and drag or carry the

canoe up over the rocks and onto the shore. The more dangerous shoreline is along the western edge of Lake Michigan, where cliffs make it almost impossible to beach a boat in a storm. Of course they wouldn't know about that for a few months. For the first week of their trip, they had pretty good shoreline to follow.

"The more complicated part of the expedition came when they got a little west of where Manistique is currently located. By the way, Manistique is a little odd in that no Indian village was there. Lots of the little towns north of Green Bay are built where old Indian villages were. Traders came in, other businesses followed, and a town grew up. Not Manistique. Louis and his band never saw an Indian that first week. They would paddle most of the day, pull their canoes up on shore, and hunt for an hour or so before settling down for the night. On their third day out they got a moose that lasted them for nearly a week."

"About two days west of Manistique they got to the point that the other traders had tried to explain to Louis and the rest. Suddenly the shoreline fell away to the west. They had come to Big Bay de Noc. Years later Louis would come back and map the area, but for now he saw that following the shore line would take them back east around the bay. Paddling directly across the Bay, well, he had no idea how far that would be (it turns out to be over fifteen miles), but he couldn't risk paddling that far across open water. They would be helpless in a storm."

"What the traders had told him to do instead, was to steer southwest and island hop. The islands were two to five miles apart, so it was still a pretty risky venture for men in small canoes, but they could see from island to island and could beach on them if they had to. They beached their canoes at what is now called Point Jolliett, and talked over the alternative routes."

"They had immediate agreement on a couple points. The first was that this was not a place to rush ahead. They would camp for the night and watch the weather. This was May and so they had already encountered some rain earlier in the week, but had so far faced no storms. If the morning dawned quiet, they would begin one of the routes. If there was any threat of bad weather, they would stay in this camp for as many days as seemed prudent."

"They also agreed that this area needed to be mapped carefully. The situation they faced was unique. They had all canoed for thousands of miles around the Great lakes, but they had never been faced with this much open water before. This was a dangerous place. Even if Green Bay remained nothing more than a small trading post, others would come this way and face this decision. And if Green Bay turned out to be the entrance to a major water route to China, then thousands would pass this point. They didn't have the time now to map all of what would later be called Big and Little Bay de Noc, but they would paddle at least a little ways around the point to get a general idea of the geography."

"I think, by the way, that most historians give Louis and his party too little credit for decisions like that. He didn't just discover the Mississippi. He created maps that would allow others to safely get to the Mississippi and back. It meant they traveled more slowly, but I think it greatly increased the value of his accomplishments." The President looked intently at me at that movement, and I could see what he intended for me to remember. Louis not only paddled canoes—he made maps. Here was the most over-rated explorer in the history of birchbark, and Claude was worried that he didn't get enough credit for actually making a

map of where he had been! Wow! My hero. I scribbled some notes to indicate I was capturing this incredible insight. Claude seemed satisfied and continued his story.

"The next morning was wet, but not stormy. So they paddled around the point and into Big Bay de Noc. They would not attempt to paddle all the way around the Bay, but they would go half a day to look for major land features, make their maps, and then return to Jolliet Point. The rain increased slowly all day, and I am sure they were miserable out on the water, but they followed their plan and mapped the first twelve miles of Big Bay de Noc, as far as Fayette harbor, which would later become an iron-making center. Then they turned around and headed back to where they had camped the night before."

"Did all seven of them go?" I asked. "It would seem more efficient for them to send just one canoe around the point while the rest of them stayed at camp."

"Yes, all of them went. I am sure all of them would have liked a quiet day in camp rather than another day of paddling in the rain, but it just wasn't safe to divide the group. There was a reason why Louis always came back with every man he left with. If he had left two or three men in camp, they would have been vulnerable to any hunting party that might have come along. Similarly, two or three men in a canoe would have been vulnerable to any hunting camp they might have happened upon. LaSalle divided his force and left cemeteries all over our country. Louis never left a man behind."

"That night they checked and rechecked their canoes, and watched the weather. They had determined to take the route recommended by other traders, and island hop over to the western shore of Door County. Father Marquette heard all their confessions and they held a short service. I am sure all of them went to sleep with some apprehension."

"The next day fortune smiled on them. The day dawned bright with not a cloud in the sky and barely a breath of wind. For men who would be facing at least two days out in open water, it was a great sign. They quickly ate a breakfast of grilled moose and loaded their canoes."

"Their plan was to paddle southwest as they had been told, and when they came near an island, to go around on the eastern, or leeward shore. They had rudimentary ways of measuring distance, but they thought what would be most useful would be to gauge the time it took to get from island to island, since the time out in open water is what would cause the greatest danger."

"The first stretch was not very reassuring. The distance to the first island was a bit over two miles, and paddling across relatively flat water, they needed a significant part of the morning to cover the distance. Part of the problem was the current. Waters flow north and east out of Green Bay. The wide end that they were crossing does not have the currents of some other places on the Great Lakes, but there is enough of a current to force them east of where they wanted to go. They were grateful for smooth water.

"The first island is more than two miles long. Once there, they stopped briefly in the lee of the island and Louis made his notes and did a quick sketch. Rather than continue south, they actually paddled north along the island while Louis did his mapping, and then returned south to the tip of the island. It was a pretty spring day, and I suspect the men enjoyed being out in the sun. They certainly didn't complain about the extra paddling they were doing in order to map their route."

“Then it was off to the next island, a much smaller rock about one mile south. This was much less attractive, and worse, it was apparent that the next hop was going to be much longer. South of the second island was mostly open water. There were smaller islands intermittently, but they were barely more than rocks—no place to put in during a storm. The distance to the third significant island in the chain is almost five miles. They spent most of the afternoon paddlng the distance and fighting the currents, but fortunately, not having to fight much of a wind.”

“We call the third island Gull Island. That’s because only gulls would want to ever go there. No, that’s not fair. I have no idea why we call the island Gull Island. Maybe some Indians called it that, maybe some map makers were running short of more attractive names. It’s a pretty big island – over a mile long and nearly as wide, but no one goes there so it sits empty with a name no one gives much thought to. For Louis and his party, it was a welcome stop. They put in and had a late lunch. Louis climbed to a crest on the island and mapped it. Ultimately the rest of the party joined him at the crest. Everywhere they looked was open water. They were now halfway across the mouth of Green Bay, but they had no way of knowing that. All they saw was the miles of open water they had crossed and the miles they had left before they reached the next island. No doubt they looked carefully at the sky to see if trouble was brewing in the west. So far, the sky remained clear.”

“The next hop was the longest. It is roughly five miles from Gull Island to Rock Island. The current is strongest here, and the seas are always the highest. Even on a calm day like this one, their canoes bobbed in the water as the men struggled against their paddles. Working with all their strength and with total concentration, they crossed the water by the end of the afternoon. I don’t know of any Olympic athletes who could have done better. Of course for that matter, I don’t know anyone silly enough to take a canoe out through that passage.”

“They arrived at Rock Island hot and tired. The north end of the island is pretty forbidding, so they paddled around toward the south, looking for a place to beach and rest. Once they approached the south end of the island they saw that they were really just a half mile from a much larger island. Should they rest on Rock Island, or paddle on? I am sure their bodies were telling them to stop on Rock Island, but their experience told them that storms can come up without warning, and the larger the island they were on, the safer they would be.”

“So they paddled another half mile to what is now called Jolliet Island. They found a good harbor almost immediately upon getting to the island, and they gratefully beached their canoes. There are sixteen hours of daylight in this latitude in the spring, so they still had several more hours of sun, but their day was done. I challenge any man to make the same voyage they did. A few try it each year, but very few.”

“Jolliet Island is just a couple miles off the tip of Door County, so they had essentially completed their crossing, but of course they didn’t know that. They just knew they were safely ashore on an island that would protect them in a storm. They set up camp and then Claude and Andre went out to see if there was anything on the island to hunt. It was only after an hour or so of walking around that they began to realize the size of the island. In fact, it was so big they wondered if they had already completed the crossing to the main land. It was a

happy camp that night as they considered their success in crossing the open water and hoped that their crossings were over. Father Marquette held a service after dinner and all seemed especially devout."

"The next morning Louis let the men get a somewhat later start. It was another beautiful spring day and their situation seemed ideal. The waters were still calm, and they were either on the mainland, or on an island large enough to maintain them for a reasonable amount of time. They felt safe here. They also felt that pride that comes from knowing you have accomplished something significant. So Louis let them sleep and putter around the camp until the sun was well above the treetops."

"At last they reloaded their canoes and pushed into the water again. As was their habit, they paddled along the lee side of the island, with Louis making notes for his map. The island is nearly five miles across, so it took them much of the morning before they rounded a point on the southeastern edge of the island and discovered that they were on an island. I am sure they were all somewhat disappointed. But then, they could also see that the next land mass was just two or three miles out. They didn't know how many more crossings they would have to make, but at least this next crossing would not be a long one."

"Rather than make the crossing though, Louis decided that they would completely circle the island while he mapped it. The island is roughly the size of Mackinac island, so maybe Father Marquette influenced him, but in any case, they paddled the entire perimeter of the island. It was reassuring. As opposed to Gull and Rock Island, Jolliett Island was not only larger, but it was wooded and seemed to have a variety of wildlife on it. Within a century in fact, the island would be home to farmers. But for now, Jolliett could safely tell other voyaguers that the island would offer sanctuary if needed."

"They camped that night near the southern end of the island so they could begin the crossing to the next land mass at dawn. They were reassured that the distance to the next land mass appeared short, troubled that there was yet more open water to cross. How many more islands would they have to paddle around before they came to solid shoreline? Claude saved the day. He was only out of camp for ten minutes when he shot a huge bull moose. It took all seven of them to drag it back to camp. They ate their fill that night. They went to sleep with greasy fingers and greasy clothes and the smell of meat over all the camp. It seemed God continued to smile on them."

"Dawn brought a cold, wet fog. They built up the fire and ate another huge helping of moose meat. The land mass to the south that had been so clear to them yesterday, was now invisible as they sat hunched over their meat. Should they wait for the fog to clear? Try to cross now before the weather got worse? They would need to be in their canoes for over an hour. The weather could change a great deal in that time. In this fog they could see nothing of the sky that might warn them of weather conditions."

"Louis let them sit and wait. They had food, they had shelter, there was no reason to move on to greater risk. They stayed in camp until nearly noon. Finally the air cleared and they could see their destination, and they could see the sky. Once again the sky was clear. They could make the trip in safety. That was Louis

for you. He was a patient man, and he didn't put his men at unnecessary risk. They had lost half a day, but they hadn't lost a man or a canoe."

"The trip over to Door County was so simple it is hardly worth mentioning. The only problem they faced is an ironic one. They always paddled along the lee side of an island. It gave them protection from the wind, and enabled them to beach their canoes if necessary, without fear of having the waves throw them against rocks. They had now reached Door County, but of course they didn't know that. The tip of the peninsula could just as easily have been an island, so they started paddling along the lee shore. That took them along the Lake Michigan shore, not the Green Bay shore. After an hour of paddling, they became pretty confident that they had now reached the mainland, so they backtracked and started down the western shore of the peninsula. They had arrived at the waters of Green Bay."

"Traders had told them that once they reached this point they could be at the Green Bay trading post at the mouth of the Fox in just two or three days. No doubt Louis could have made that distance in that time or less, but he was here to map. So they took their time. That afternoon they paddled for just a few more hours before beaching for the night. Louis needed to carefully draw out the shorelines he had just seen. He knew that many others would need to know what to look for when they had arrived at the Door Peninsula. He was also confident now that the passage through the islands was the right way to go, so he rechecked his notes and made all the observations he could about that route, writing well past sun down. His party had already documented a safe path to Green Bay."

The President paused here, which was almost my undoing. I was having a terrible time staying awake, and as long as he spoke, I could just fiddle with my pen. Now he had stopped for some reason, and I was required to focus my attention enough to make eye contact. I tried to think of something he had said about the voyage that was at least reasonably interesting. So far, seven grown men had taken two days to paddle from one island to another in perfect weather. I hoped he wasn't hoping to sell the movie rights to this yarn. All he had at the moment was bedtime reading.

"So," I said, scrambling desperately to show some interest. "They must have felt pretty good, having made it across all that open water."

"I am sure they did, as did the thousands who later followed in their path. I told you a few people try to emulate their passage every summer. Maybe it is a gesture of respect, maybe it is just bravado. Either way, I have never seen a group of canoeists try to make the trip without a larger boat nearby in case they get into trouble."

"That would seem wise." I nodded and hoped he would go on. Americans and British have been sailing through the Straits of Magellan for centuries, facing eighty foot seas and hundred mile an hour winds. How long did he expect me to sit here in awe of seven men who had paddled a few miles between islands? What more did he want from me? Whatever it was, he wasn't going to get it. Finally he decided to continue.

"The rest of the trip to Green Bay was uneventful except for one side-trip. They followed the western shore of the Door Peninsula the first day. The water is relatively quiet and the beaches are mostly sand. It took one day to get down to what is now called Sturgeon Bay, and then they did something that might have

been thought silly. They decided to paddle across the Bay to the Menominee River. This is a significant river and there was an Indian tribe with a permanent settlement just a few miles up river from the bay. It was a risk to paddle the fifteen or so miles, but the weather was still good, and they wanted to save some souls for Christ."

"So early the next morning, they paddled northwest across Green Bay. The trip was uneventful, but took most of the day. And then once they landed, they didn't know whether the river would be up or down the shore from their location. They decided to paddle north a few hours, and finally saw the river as the sun was getting pretty low. It would be a terrible idea to paddle into the Indian camp in the dark, so they made camp for the night. With Indians so near, they decided to not make a campfire and to post guards. As a result they were cold and tired when they launched their canoes the next morning to reach the Indian camp."

"It took them less than an hour to reach the camp and to have their first surprise of the journey. There waiting for them was a Frenchman—Louis Auberville. They all knew Louis as a fellow trader who had come to the Sault several times in the past three years. He had gone off last year with two other traders and they hadn't seen him since. Here he was in a Menominee Indian village, and there behind him was a young woman and a baby. The scene told them most of what they needed to know before they even reached shore. The scene also told them they were about to have trouble with Father Marquette."

"Fornication is a grave sin, my son," Marquette shouted as he leapt from the canoe still two yards from shore. The current was strong here and he was almost swept away, but he caught himself and dragged himself up the muddy bank. "What have you done here?" he asked when he reached the place where Auberville was standing.

"Father, I ask your blessing." He replied, and instantly Marquette regained his composure.

"Let us together ask the forgiveness of Christ," was Marquette's response, and he led Auberville and his woman off to Auberville's hut where they could talk and pray with some privacy. Auberville went with him back into the cluster of huts, but he also cast his eyes back at Louis and the others to see who they all were. You see Auberville had two very large problems. Marquette instantly saw the first problem—the life of sin with an unmarried woman. This was a problem for which Auberville might well pay in the life-hereafter. But he had another problem for which he might pay in the here and now. He had never been granted a license to trade in this region. Louis and his men had a legal right to trade—it was the payment they would receive for undertaking this voyage of exploration. Auberville had done like many others and just filled his canoe with trade goods in the hope of coming back to Quebec some day with a canoe filled with beaver pelts. Now he had been caught. Louis and his crew had every right to strip Auberville of all his goods on the spot and punish him in any way they wished. Auberville had lots of praying to do."

While Auberville went to his hut with Marquette, Louis and his men beached their canoes and pulled a bundle of gifts from one of their packs. The people of the village gathered around the party and stood waiting for their chief to make his formal entrance."

“Greetings, French brothers,” the chief said as he slowly walked through the crowd. He appeared to be in his early forties and was dressed in deer skins. His hair had been hastily rubbed in grease for the occasion. His greeting was in a variation of Algonquin that all the Frenchmen knew.”

“We are pleased to see you so well and to see the wealth of your village,” Louis replied. This began a series of formal greetings that ended with the chief inviting everyone to his hut for food. There is no need for me to go into detail about their conversation. Suffice it to say the chief and his tribe were happy to see these French visitors, they were pleased with the gifts, and they were happy to trade many of the beaver pelts they had expected to carry all the way to the Sault.

“The real concern of everyone was Marquette and Auberville who were still ensconced in Auberville’s hut. The village had never been visited by a priest before, but many of the tribe had traveled to other locations and listened to the priests there. They had expected a lecture on God, but had instead seen the priest accuse a Frenchman. This was all very confusing.”

“Hours passed. Louis and his men ate, traded, and waited. Finally Auberville, Marquette, and Auberville’s woman and baby came out of their hut, all of them headed for the river. Most of the village followed along to see what would happen. It was a confusing scene to all of them. The two Aubervilles kneeled at the edge of the water and stayed kneeling while Marquette found and blessed some water, and brought his holy water and Bible to the river. There he baptized the child, and blessed the man and woman. The French wondered if he was going to marry them on the spot, but he did not. Nevertheless his blessing made both of the Aubervilles very happy, and also brought the smile back to Marquette’s face. For his friends who had never seen him angry, this had been a very unexpected morning. Now things seemed to be right with the world.”

“What had gone on in that hut? Auberville had told his story. Auberville and two companions had gone off to trade last spring. They had heard there was beaver in the area and that a large tribe was in these parts. They found the Menominees at this spot and had traded goods for over a week. During that time Auberville had met the woman he now called Annette. She was a young widow. Indian villages were filled with young widows. Life was hard for braves. If they didn’t get killed while hunting, they got killed in raids on other villages. Most tribes had half again as many women as men. There was no sin in sex for the Indians, so other men came to these women. Sometimes they ended up as second wives, sometimes they stayed in the orbit of their parents. “

“Auberville and his friends spent time with several young women and no doubt enjoyed their visit to the village. For the other two, the nights were just fun. For Auberville, something happened when he met Annette. She was about his age, taller than average and well built, and she met his stare. While other girls would look at the ground when men walked by, Annette returned his look. He saw in her eyes strength, calm, purpose, and intelligence. They talked the first night, adjusting to each other’s twists in the common Algonquin dialect. The next day he skipped trading and went for a walk with her. By the third day he knew he would never leave her.”

“After five days the trading was all done and the other two men wanted to leave. Auberville decided to stay. Why not take her back to Quebec, they asked? Maybe

some day he would, he replied, but for now he wanted to stay here—with her. So they left and he stayed. He had hunted and fished with the tribe, but never strayed far from the village. Two months ago their child had been born—a son. Young Jacques was healthy and happy and so were his parents. They asked Father Marquette to baptize their child and to marry them in the church. He instantly agreed to the baptism but would not marry them since she was not a Christian. But he did agree to ask Christ's blessing on them and on their family. He would teach her as much as time permitted and help her learn to be a Christian. When she was fully converted, he would perform their marriage. All that had been worked out in the hours they spent on their knees in the hut, talking, listening, and praying."

"As it turned out, it would be seven more years before their marriage would be consecrated. Louis and Marquette left the village after two days, and we know that Father Marquette was never able to return. So her religious training waited for years until the mission at Green Bay grew and she was able to go there and take her vows as a Christian and her vows as a wife. In the meantime she and Auberville had four more children. As it turned out, the most famous of the children was the youngest daughter—Marie. She seemed to have inherited some of her father's trading blood, and set up the first permanent trading post in the village, earning a permanent place for her name on the trading post and later on the city—Marinette."

"While the party was only in Marinette for two days, some have argued that much of Louis' future directions were based on what he saw there and on the relationship he discovered between Auberville and Annette."

"Surely his mother's situation also contributed," I said. "After all she was also married to a man who had been married to an Indian woman, and she was raising the children of that marriage."

"Yes, that may have contributed as well," he agreed. There was a slight smile on his face that indicated he was pleased with my comment. I had apparently said the right thing.

"And they left Marinette after two days?" I hoped I could nudge him along. We had been talking for two hours and had yet to get the explorers to the settlement at Green Bay.

"Yes, they continued down the western shore of the Bay. They spent two days paddling along a shore line that is virtually the same three centuries later. The first night they camped near the present city of Oconto, and the second evening they pulled into the Fox River and the mission there. But, maybe that is a good place for us to adjourn our narrative. I am sure Picard will be coming for me any minute. He is a stern task master."

"Well, I thank you once again for your time. This has helped me a great deal in understanding Louis' voyage. I hope we can pick up the narrative again soon." And then Picard did appear. I hadn't seen the President move his hand, but I assumed he had some signal he could give to get Picard in. I was just as glad. I had been sitting a long time and wanted to review my notes.

As I left, I noticed the hallway and waiting areas were even more crowded than they had been for my last visit. I am no expert in French politics, but I recognized

enough faces as I exited the house to wonder if the President was as retired now as he had been last summer. But then who can understand the French?

Chapter 9

Discovery of the Wisconsin River.

It was mid-December before Picard could schedule a couple more hours for me. It was apparent that the president was involved in some major undertaking. It was also a busy season for all of Canada. As I had learned the previous winter, most of the Green Bay elite have the good sense to get out of Green Bay once winter sets in. Their favorite place to go is New Orleans from January to March. They have even managed to get the poor Huguenots down there to stage something called Mardi Gras, a very Catholic celebration being hosted by the very Protestant Huguenots as a way of getting money from the tourists.

So Green Bay has an endless series of parties in December since people can celebrate both the arrival of Christmas and their imminent departure from this godforsaken ice berg. Elise and I had invitations to at least one party a night and so got to see every possible way the French could decorate a faux chateau. No doubt whole forests of evergreens were disappearing from artic lands to bring temporary pine scents to lacquered parlors. On the other hand, the French can cook, and their red wines still warm a cold December night. So we attended most of the parties we were invited to. Spending nearly every evening with Elise was a very good thing to do, and I have to admit there were a few days when I didn't even grumble about the snow storms, sub-zero temperatures, and icy roads. Elise made up for lots of Green Bay's shortcomings.

My next appointment with the President finally arrived on a snowy mid-December day. I wondered what the President would do for the Holidays. Would he abandon Green Bay like everyone else after the first of the year? He didn't seem like the Mardi Gras type, but then who knew what the elite really did in New Orleans in January. I would be glad to take a break for a while and visit my family in Philadelphia. But I would miss Elise. She filled my thoughts most hours of the day.

As I pulled into the President's driveway, I wondered if I had come on the wrong day. The circle drive was filled with cars, some even parked out on the street. And a dozen security men stood watchful. Who was visiting? I wondered. Had Picard given me the wrong day? Or had something suddenly come up? I parked as best I could and then trudged through the snow to the front door. Three security men were waiting for me outside the door, none of whom seemed to care that I had an appointment. Fortunately, Picard must have been watching from inside, and he interceded on my behalf.

"As you can tell," Picard whispered as he led me down a small hallway, "The president is receiving a number of important guests."

"Does he have time to see me today?"

“I asked him that early this morning, and he specifically said I was to keep this appointment with you. But I have to warn you, he may be a bit late.” Picard led me into a very small room near the kitchen. It almost looked like a small office the kitchen staff might use. I assured Picard I would be happy to wait, and I settled in to a small wooden chair in the corner. I was prepared to wait a long while, but I had just gotten my tape recorder and note pad out when the door opened and the President appeared.

“I apologize for putting you in such a small room,” The President began, “But as you could tell, the rest of the house is full.”

“Would you like me to return at another time?

“Oh no, this is the perfect time.” He took the padded chair I had left for him, smiling like a man who was very proud of himself. “You see, I need you as a reason to leave another meeting. Since it is an affair of state I cannot tell you the nature of the meeting, but I can tell you a little secret about negotiations. With me out of the room, my seconds will struggle with the other side. They will reach some agreement within the hour. Then I will return. Since I have not been a party to the negotiations, I can then choose to accept what my assistants have done, or I can determine if a better offer is possible. In this case, I am free to restart negotiations.”

I had to admit that was pretty clever. “So we have an hour to talk about the Green Bay settlement and the first stages up the Fox?”

“Yes. I understand you have seen a bit of the river during your stay here.” He paused for effect, then continued before I could respond. “That is both good and bad. It is good that you have seen the general geography, but bad in that it could be misleading. The Fox you see today bears little resemblance to the Fox explored by Louis and Father Marquette. You see we never leave rivers alone. If they flow through a city, we wall them in, making them more narrow and much faster. I once presided at a ceremony outside St. Louis where they tried to re-enact poling a flat boat up the Missouri River. They were lucky they weren’t all drowned. The current is far faster now than it was a century ago, because we force it through a concrete narrows called the City of Saint Louis.”

“In the case of the Fox, we did just the opposite. It has been maintained at a minimum thirty-five feet in width for the last century – at great expense. But the Fox doesn’t want to be thirty five feet wide. It wants to be six or eight feet wide up above Lake Butte des Morts. That’s how it was when Louis found it—barely big enough to be more than a drainage ditch.

“But I get ahead of myself. Let’s begin back at Green Bay, or as it was called then—The Bay. But I must warn you, Picard may come at any time, and then I must leave.”

“I understand. I welcome as much time as you can give me today.”

“The Bay consisted of barely a dozen rough huts plus a mission building that was really just a hut itself. It would be generations before any real church construction began. And the traders lived just as simply. Poles would be pulled together into an arch and bark would cover the poles. That summarized every building within a thousand miles.

“The importance of The Bay could be seen in the fact that there had been at least one Jesuit stationed here permanently for the last three years, and there

currently were two priests – Claude Allouez and Louis Andre. There weren't a lot of priests in New France, so seeing two in one place was significant. There were also several traders, most of whom happened to be out of town when Louis arrived. Of course most of them were trading illegally and had taken off when they saw an official party arriving. They would return to the settlement as soon as Louis left. As for Indians, there were several tribes that passed through, often staying for days or even weeks before moving on. The fishing and hunting were good and life was pleasant here. The missionaries always tried to get Indians to settle in one place so that they could be instructed in the ways of the Lord, but that was never easy. How many had settled more or less permanently in The Bay in 1673? Who could know? Maybe a few dozen.

"Father Andre was on a short visit to another Indian tribe, so it was Claude Allouez who greeted them when they landed. This was the man they needed to see anyway. Allouez had already been up the Fox as far as the Mascoutin. He had done that three years earlier, and had just come back from doing it again. He could give them complete instructions on how to find the village and how to make their way through the lakes and marshes they would see first. But first he and Father Marquette went off by themselves for private prayers. And no doubt they also caught up about friends they had encountered over the past months.

"The site of Allouez' mission, which he called Saint-Francois-Xavier, was really very attractive. It is located about five miles farther up the Fox than the current downtown area of Green Bay. The Fox is 170 feet higher on Lake Winnebago than it is here in Green Bay, and it drops over several small falls and rapids. The mission was located at the bottom of the last falls. There was the sound of falling water in the background, trees on every side, a few small fields that had been planted in corn. I am sure all the men were happy to spend the night.

"The relationship between Allouez and Marquette was an interesting one. Allouez was sixty at the time of this meeting, an incredible age given the difficulty of the life he lived. Marquette was little more than half that. Allouez was the first to Green Bay, the first up the Fox, the first to talk with the Mascoutin and learn the value of the upper Fox. It would have been so easy for him to just get in a canoe with a few Indians and make the voyage Marquette was about to make. But he didn't. At his age he must have known he wouldn't have many more chances, but he stayed at his post, disciplined to the end. There appears to have been no jealousy or friction between the men. Instead, Allouez explained everything about the Fox to Marquette, and then told the same stories to Louis and the others after dinner. Essentially he handed the route to the Wisconsin River to the group and wished them well. He truly was a holy man.

"The two priests said a mass that night and led prayers again the next morning. Allouez even heard confessions from several of the men as the party loaded up the packs and set off on the first portage of the morning. It took them several trips to get all their goods up to the top of the falls and to the end of the first portage. Then they all exchanged lengthy farewells as Louis and Marquette parted from Allouez.

"If you drive down to Oshkosh from Green Bay it takes about an hour, right? It took Louis and his party over a week. They were paddling up current so it went slowly, but the real problem with the first leg was all the rapids and portages. In the first thirty miles they had five major rapids to portage around. They not only

had their provisions and camp goods, but all their trading goods and gifts as well. Add in the guns that they needed to carry both ways as they brought their first load up a portage only to turn right around to get the next load, and you can see why they would need a week in this first section. Fortunately, the land they were passing through was all relatively level (remember they were just ascending 170 feet over thirty miles), so they weren't climbing major hills or balancing precariously on the edge of cliffs. It was just a matter of carrying one load after another over one portage after another.

"Each evening they would camp, and while some of the party went out to hunt and to scout the area, Louis would bring out his map. Remember he had many responsibilities. If this turned out to be an important waterway, he had to map it. He also had to give a good appraisal of effort it would require to move men and material over this route. What he saw so far was that work would be required, but there were no major barriers. The portages they had made seemed little different than the portages required to get between Montreal and Three Rivers. Sometimes Father Marquette would sit with Louis and they would compare maps. Marquette also had a report to make, only his would go to a different master. Other evenings Marquette would busy himself with his ecclesiastical duties.

"And the men? So far they were in a great mood. They knew where they were, they had a good sense of where they would be going – at least for the next couple weeks, and while the burdens were heavy, they were no heavier than normal. As long as each man had tobacco in his pipe and food in his belly, these voyageurs would carry a hundred-pound pack for hours without complaint. And the hunting was good. There were deer here, and huge geese following the river north.

"After a week, they reached Lake Winnebago. They could smell it for more than a day before they actually climbed the last portage to reach it. The lake was at least four feet lower than it is now. Parts of it were just a few feet deep. It was just a large bowl – forty miles long and ten miles wide – where water and marsh grass intermingled. It was early June now, and the days were warm enough to begin the decay of all the nutrients that had washed into the lake in the spring floods and now turned yellow and brown in the sun. They probably wished to hurry through the lake—it was just twenty more miles to where the upper Fox entered the lake—but Louis needed to make his maps, so the men paddled carefully down the western shore while Louis mapped the shoreline.

"In two days they found where the upper Fox enters the lake in the midst of what is now Oshkosh. It must have seemed like a relief to them – to see the rush of water coming down the Fox. This was obviously a significant river. They paddled against the current and in less than an hour came to Lake Butte des Morts."

"I'm sorry to interrupt, but why Lake of the Dead?" I asked.

"There are Indian graves along the northern shore. I have heard many different stories about which tribes, which times, which locations. Our archeologists are still working to learn more about that site."

"So it wasn't the site of a great battle or great tragedy."

"Not that we know of, but as I said, there are many stories. Various tribes had been using the Fox River route for centuries. Who will ever know all that history? In any case, the lake is also pretty marshy, but the flow of water is sufficient to

maintain a significant channel down the middle. Louis and his men camped on the edge of Oshkosh, ready to cross Lake Butte des Morts in the morning.

"It is well they stopped. Lake Butte des Morts is a long thin lake, about fifteen miles long and just three miles wide. It angles west and connects with another large lake, Like Winneconne, which is almost the same size. The problem is that Lake Winneconne is fed by the Wolf River. So if they take the main channel and move from the first lake into the second, they miss the Fox entirely. The channel is misleading. Allouez had warned them about this, so they got a fresh start in the morning and slowly paddled along the south shore of the lake looking for the Fox. They had one false start as they came to another tributary, but after half an hour they could see the river shrinking rapidly. They backed out, went around another point, and came to the Fox."

"I drove out to that point in October," I added. "I could see where the river might be hard to find. Of course it is impossible to know what it looked like three hundred years ago, but now even with all the navigation lights and such, it does not look like a major river."

"That is the mystery of the Fox. It is hardly worth noticing, except it happens to go one hundred miles in exactly the right direction at exactly the right depth so that small craft can navigate it easily. It is like a gift from God."

"Where did they meet the Mascoutin?"

"They were up the Fox another ten miles. Louis and his men paddled all day before they got to the village. It was a very large village—maybe three thousand people. And they were happy to see Louis and Marquette. They had loved Allouez, and were excited that another priest had come to them.

"Family legend has it that Louis met Angelique the moment they landed at the village. As the story goes, Father Marquette stood up in his canoe and made the sign of the cross as his canoe approached, and several of the villagers replied with the same sign – Angelique among them. That's how Louis noticed her. She was taller than average, more modestly dressed, and she stood making the sign of the cross as the canoes landed. Did she notice Louis? That depends upon who you ask. According to her, she stood waiting for Marquette to step ashore, and then she and several others went with him to the hut that Allouez had used as a chapel. She never once looked at Louis. He claims she looked at him for just an instant before she went into the chapel. Both would banter back and forth about that moment for the rest of their lives. The one thing they would agree on was that it would be years before they met again.

"They stayed in the village three days, and it was a good three days. Louis and his men were there to trade and to hire guides. The Mascoutin were happy to trade. They seemed to need everything and they had plenty of beaver pelts to exchange. Louis also had gifts to give to all the village leaders, and spared no expense. Allouez had said good things about this tribe, and Louis wanted to cement that relationship.

"He probably did not need to be as free with his gifts as he was. The Mascoutin were pretty bright. While every other tribe Louis would meet on the voyage would tell the same story—don't go on, terrible things will happen—the Mascoutin were much more mature in their business acumen. The other tribes wanted to be the termination point for the French traders, the last stop, so the tribe could trade

farther down stream and reap the profits. The Mascoutin saw they were in better position to be middlemen. If the Fox turned out to be important, then much traffic would travel its length. They sat astride the river, ready to supply parties going both ways. They wanted Louis to go on, to discover that the Fox was an important waterway.

"They had some convincing to do. Louis was already concerned about the river. They were just ten miles from its mouth and it seemed already to be disappearing. Barely fifteen feet wide at this point, there was so little current that it did not seem believable that such a small river could continue the four or five days paddling that the tribe said would take them to a larger river. He said later that he was half a mind to back paddle and try the Wolf River which seemed much more significant.

"But the chiefs supplied two men who would paddle ahead of them and show them the way up the river, and everyone in the village was so decent to them and so convincing in their description of the river system they would take to the Mississippi, that Louis decided to continue up the Fox at least a little farther.

"The other thing that happened in the village is that they learned to appreciate Father Marquette. The six voyageurs were all devout, so they respected Marquette, and as men who had traveled the inland seas they appreciated his willingness to travel and share the dangers of the trip. But there were hidden tensions between them. For his part, Marquette had seen what traders so often did in Indian villages. They got drunk, they got rough, and they bedded as many women as they could. They sinned. He had to worry what these men would do on this voyage. Would they sin before God and before him? For their part, they had to wonder how helpful Marquette would be on the trip. Sure he did his share of the paddling and the portaging, and it always helped to have a man of God around, but how good would he be with the Indians?

"Both sides were pleasantly surprised. Louis had brought some spirits along, but he and the men were very judicious in its use. And they were polite with the women. The village had its usual number of widows, many of whom were plainly available, but none of the men took advantage of the situation. If anything, they were such models of decorum, they left the tribe unprepared for some of the traders who would follow.

"Meanwhile they saw a side of Marquette that made them surprised and excited. It turned out Marquette was a natural actor. Now the actor was revealed. He had even brought his own props. He had had years on Lake Superior and at St. Ignace to learn how to explain the catechism in ways that excited the Indian mind. Now each night they were with the Mascoutins he repeated the life and trials of Jesus Christ. Somewhere in his bag was a white cloth that he used for a backdrop. The crown of thorns and large cross were easily constructed with local materials, while the cup and the bread of the last supper came from his bag.

"He was a huge hit. There was modest attention when he began the first night. There was a big campfire and Louis gave out his gifts and told his story. Then the chiefs told their stories of battles won and voyages taken to distant lands. Then Marquette began. The cloth backdrop was something they had never seen a story teller use before, and that interested them, and then he began with the story, acting out each of the stage of Christ's life, screaming at the Pharisees in the

Temple, and spreading the loaves and fishes, and then dying in agony on the cross. They were mesmerized.

"By the next night the entire village was present at the campfire, along with anyone who had been passing through the village. No other story tellers dared compete. They simply set the stage and let Marquette tell the story of Christ. If anything, they were more excited the second night as they began to understand the story. The third night was the same. Every soul in the village gathered early and sat in rapt silence, shedding real tears as Christ dies, and screaming with joy when he rose from the dead. They celebrated his resurrection more happily than they would have celebrated a good harvest or a successful hunt. Christ was risen!

"It was hard to leave the next morning. The Mascoutins wanted Marquette to stay on, but of course now that they had seen how good he could be with Indians, the voyageurs were unanimous that he should accompany them all the way. Farewells took much of the morning, but finally, they pushed their canoes into the sluggish current and began paddling up the tiny river once more.

"If Louis was unimpressed with the Fox earlier in his voyage, he certainly saw nothing in the river that changed his mind. It was narrow, slow, and wound around seemingly insignificant bumps in the landscape. It seemed that around every curve they would come to the end. But on the river went.

"I had a geography professor who told us that rivers are sticks or snakes. Rivers are sticks when there is significant elevation. They rush down in a straight line. Rivers are snakes when there is little drop over their course and when the volume of the water is not great. The Lower Fox is a stick; the Upper Fox is an incredibly long snake. Even in June the current barely moved, so the men made good time as they paddled up stream, but there was little happiness in the group since they could all see the river was barely moving. They expected that this was a dead end and that they would just have to turn around and paddle back down the river to find a more significant river heading west.

"For five days they paddled, certain that they were paddling in vain. The river flowed into small, stagnant lakes on two occasions and met up with other small rivers other times, but the only real change was that the river narrowed a little at each bend. By the fifth day the river was barely six feet wide and had only a few inches of depth. It didn't seem possible that a river so small could continue for such a distance. But somehow it continued.

"Frequently it was the two Indians who kept their spirits up and kept them entertained. They were in their early twenties, said they had paddled up this river many times to hunt, and loved to tell stories about their trips. To hear them tell it, they had killed a hundred moose at this location, or just over here, or maybe it was around the next bend. They always had something to say, all of it entertaining. It was enough. It gave the men something else to think about as they paddled across one more slime-covered pool, or slept one more night just barely above the water level. Meanwhile, the river that seemed ready to end at any moment, continued on and on.

"Finally, late on the fifth day, the Indians told the men to stop. The Fox at this point looks no different than it does for miles in either direction, but the Indians had spotted the portage. It clearly hadn't been used much, for while a small trail was visible now that the men knew where to look, it was impossible to tell from

any of a hundred game trails they had passed along the way. They beached their canoes and the Indians led the group along the one mile trail to the great river. And there it was—the river we now call the Wisconsin.

"It is hard to think of a greater contrast than the Upper Fox and the Wisconsin. It was June 12 and the Wisconsin was full to its banks with the muddy water that signals a powerful river pulling dirt from upstream. It was hundreds of yards across and flowing with obvious speed. There was just one problem. The river was flowing east. They had been told the Mississippi went west. This river was going in the wrong direction! The two Indian guides told them one more time that this river flowed into a larger river, the Mississippi, but what they could see from standing on shore was not reassuring.

"They spent the rest of the day portaging their canoes and goods to the banks of the Wisconsin. Louis and two of the men also built markers on both ends of the portage so that they would be able to find it again on their own. The markers were pretty crude—just tree trunks stripped of bark and aligned in a way to attract notice—but they were fairly confident they could remember them on the return trip.

"The two Indians were remarkably helpful. They portaged much of the supplies to the Wisconsin, helped carry canoes, and then spent the night with the party. Louis had significant gifts for both of them the next day, and Marquette included them in his prayers. All nine of them spent many minutes on their knees that morning saying their devotions in unison under Marquette's guidance. This was a major embarkation for them. Whether the river continued east, or turned some other direction, this was a river that had never been visited by the French. Every moment from now on would be an original discovery.

"Here, by the way, is Marquette's prayer. French school children memorize it in grammar school. If you stand in an airport long enough, you can hear adults mumbling it before they get on a plane to distant lands. *Let us kneel together in this vast wilderness and commend ourselves to the Mother of God. We ask her today, and every day, to intercede with her Son to protect us and guide us safely through this perilous journey.*

"The Indians guides returned back down the portage to their canoe, while Marquette and Louis made entries in their journals and updated their maps. It was Marquette who made the more poignant entry in his journal. He noted that so far, every river they had been on flowed back to Quebec – to home. The Wisconsin flowed off in a new direction – away from home. I think we can assume the men silently asked for divine guidance long after the formal prayers were over.

"If they thought the Wisconsin flowed in the wrong direction, at least it flowed. They must have been pretty excited to get back on a river with some life to it. No sooner had they launched their canoes, than they were moving with very pleasing speed. Also, for the first time in their journey, they were paddling down stream! They had to be wary of floating debris – whole trees accompanied them for parts of the trip -- but they made great speed and enjoyed the occasion to use their muscles again and bite into the river. They even raced each other for short stretches. They must have looked like kids just let out of school.

“Best yet, the river turned—first south, then southwest. It might take them where they needed to go after all. That first day on the Wisconsin was one of the most enjoyable of their entire trip.”

“Excuse me.” Picard knocked and then entered. “Negotiations are now completed, Mister President.”

“That was fast. I hope my friends negotiated a good deal.” He winked at me as he stood. “I guess I shall have to go find out. By the way, I will be traveling to New Orleans after the Holidays. We could adjourn these talks until after I return in March, but why don’t you visit me there? You will enjoy New Orleans, and it will be good for you to see this Mississippi you are writing about.”

“I would be happy to visit you there. Thank you for giving me time during your vacation.”

“Good. Picard will contact you about the best time for a visit.”

The President left, with Picard on his heels. I took a minute to gather up my things, and then I found my way back out of the house. The security men looked at me with a scowl, but let me leave. I tried my best to look unsuspicious, but I couldn’t help looking around some as I walked back to my car. If anything, there were even more cars and limousines parked up and down the street. The retired President was definitely unretired at the moment. Whatever he was negotiating seemed to involve half the government officials of the country.

Chapter 10

Discovery of the Mississippi. 1673

The remainder of the time before Christmas sped by for me. I made arrangements to fly back to Philadelphia on Christmas Eve. The rest of my time was divided between the company and Elise. The fact that I was spending so much time at the company was a surprise to me and to everyone else. When I had first arrived over a year ago, I was tolerated as the owner’s son, but there was no attempt made by anyone to get to know me, and no one asked me to do any work. Over time I had helped with some projects, especially anything involving e-commerce. The French have no computer skills, so it is impossible to hire local talent, and flying in Americans is expensive. So I built several systems using as a model the note database I had created while writing my dissertation. Take out “title” and “author” and put in “product name” and “sku” and you pretty much have an e-commerce system.

Then in November, the sales reps started asking my help with contacts they were trying to make. Many of the people they were trying to call on during the day, I was sharing drinks with in the evening. I gave them some advice and steered a couple in useful directions. By December, the sales manager was taking me along on major sales calls. I just sat in the back of the room during the sales pitch, but

before and after it I would talk with the people who mattered most. Companies that wouldn't let us in the door before, suddenly had time to see us.

Oddly enough, it was on the ride back from one of these sales calls, that I learned something important about Elise. Martin (absolutely the worst first name for a salesman in a Catholic country) got on the topic of weekends, and wanted to know what I had planned. Elise had invited me to mass this Sunday, and I mentioned that as the big event of the weekend. I was actually looking forward to it. First, I wanted to be anywhere she was, and second, she attended mass at the National Cathedral. I had not gone to mass there yet and was interested in what it would look like.

"Which mass will you go to?" He asked. It seemed like an odd question, but maybe he and his family also attended that church.

"Ten o'clock. Is that when you go?" I thought he was going to drive the car into a tree.

"You are attending the ten o'clock mass?" He asked. From the way he asked the question, you would think I had just said I was going to sprout a second head. It turned out there was a pecking order for mass. He had no idea how it was done, but that mass was special. Just attending any mass at the National Cathedral was special, but the ten o'clock mass was for the national leadership. You didn't just go there on your own volition. The mass was strictly by invitation.

So Elise was among the elite, and was making sure I knew it. That was interesting. Sunday looked to be even more special than I had expected. Actually the whole week was exceptional. Elise and I attended parties almost every night, and Wednesday night, when I drove her back to her apartment, she asked me to come up with her. That was a night I won't forget. I went into work the next day and fell asleep at my desk. My co-workers claim I was smiling in my sleep. It could even be true. I surely smiled enough in my waking hours.

Sunday arrived and I wasn't sure what to wear to church. French masses are pretty casual, mostly sweaters and such, but this was the National Cathedral. I finally decided to wear a dark suit. When I went to pick up Elise, she was fine with my suit, but made me take off my shirt and tie. She had bought me a shirt—the kind with ruffles down the front and lace at the cuffs that we always used to call a "French pimp" shirt. I hesitated when I saw the shirt she had for me, but before I could start to object, she stood close to me and started unbuttoning my old shirt. Thus ended my resistance. I put on the pimp shirt, she told I looked sexy, gave me a kiss, and off we went to church.

It turned out to be the right shirt. The National Cathedral is on the east side of Green Bay, which is to say, the moneyed side. It sits astride a hill on Claude Allouez Boulevard so it is visible for miles. It is a very pleasant sight. It is similar in many respects to Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris, down to gargoyles on the roof line. I liked that. What can I say—I am an historian. I like old things.

Unlike the Notre Dame of Paris, there is plenty of parking near the church, all designed so that one left their car slightly below the church and walked up a gradual rise to the front entrance. Even before we parked, I could see I was wearing the right shirt. It was like there was a dress code, and everyone was adhering to it. But it was like a dress code from centuries past. Without exception, the women wore long, full skirts, on gowns that might have been handed down for

centuries. Elise liked to wear that style, so I was not surprised when I had seen her that morning, but I had never been in a public place before where every woman was so attired. Even the little girls wore long skirts. As for the men, they all had dark suits and pimp shirts. You would have thought a river boat had just arrived in town and let all the card sharps off to church to pray for their sins.

The effect inside the church was dramatic. Elise led me toward a particular pew where several members of her family waited. I couldn't see any signs, but the way people went to particular places, I got the impression seats were practically assigned. I spoke briefly to her mother and father, both of whom I had met in passing on other occasions, and to her younger sisters, both attractive teenagers preening in their Sunday finest. Around us the pews filled with people I had met, or people who I had seen on television. Several generations of Jolliets sat in four pews near the front, Claude Jolliet among them. There was no doubt this was the service for the nobility of Canada.

Why the traditional clothes? To show a connection to their history? To assert their national heritage? To distinguish themselves from the fashions of New York, and Los Angeles and Paris? I can only guess, but I can tell you sitting in that church I had the feeling Claude Allouez was going to descend from the sky and deliver the homily. The French do love their history, and of course given their history, who can blame them?

The details of the service are unimportant, except when we walked forward for communion I can tell you that was the best wafer and the best wine I had ever had in church. And the priest was good looking and in shape. He looked like he played racquet ball with half the men in the parish, and probably beat a good many. As we walked up the aisle I wanted to look around the cathedral but didn't want to appear the tourist. But I snuck in a few glances at the windows and the individual shrines. I also exchanged nods with a number of parishioners I knew. And I have to say I liked it there. I liked the service, I liked the church, and I liked the people with whom I shared that hour.

After the service Elise and I stood and spoke with her parents, and there was a polite invitation to join them for dinner, but there was no real pressure, and Elise and I begged off. We went back to her place and had the best afternoon of my life. Late in the evening we emerged from her bedroom long enough to jointly make a quiche lorraine and talk through the Holidays. She and her family would also be spending the months of January and February in their home outside New Orleans, and we could get together when I was down to visit the President. At the moment, I would have flown to a distant planet to be with her. New Orleans would be perfect.

Philadelphia was less than perfect. I flew in Christmas Eve and managed to get into an argument with my father before we even got in from the airport. My father is a fair man. He hates the French like all Americans do, but he also respects them for what they have accomplished. As a businessman he has had dealings with them for decades, and he knows them well. As my father would tell you, there are just two principles in business: know what your customer needs and wants, and know how to meet that need at a lower cost than the competition. My father knows his customers. But he doesn't like them.

I never fly sober—one too many thunderstorms at thirty-thousand feet—so I arrived a bit too loose and was in trouble before I fully understood what was going

on. My father is a practicing Catholic, so when he asked me if I was going to mass regularly, I thought he was checking on my religious observances and was halfway through a glowing account of Sunday's mass before I knew I was saying all the wrong things about all the wrong people. Obviously his people in Green Bay had told him about Elise and he wanted to know how far I had strayed. My big mouth told him too much, too fast.

I quickly moved the conversation to sales calls I had been on and the people the company could now see, but it was too late. The damage was done. I had changed in the last months, and he could tell. He never shouted. He just explained how easy it was to get fooled by some people, especially politicians. His whole lecture probably didn't exceed three sentences, but it was enough. I sobered up fast.

The rest of my visit was pleasant, but I stayed on my guard. Had I crossed a line? The nice thing about being a Ph.D. is that people expect you to be the quiet sort, and for these days I was as I tried to puzzle out my recent actions in Green Bay. I needed to be cautious. I had gone there with a rage and a plot that may have been unprofessional, but I needed to be careful I wasn't swayed too far the other direction either. One more fawning biography of the Jolliet clan did no one any good. I needed help.

The day after Christmas I called my old dissertation adviser at the University of Virginia. He invited me down for a visit. I felt myself relax the minute I got my trusty old Ford across the Potomac, and by the time I got to campus I felt like smiling again. Harry and I had lunch at the Faculty Club and I laid out the book project over crab cakes and English ale. He listened and then moved immediately to ultimate objectives: where would I publish it, and where would I start my teaching career? His answer to the first was the University of Virginia Press—he was on the editorial board and could guarantee acceptance. His answer to the second was the University of Pennsylvania.

Why? Harry instantly had a strategy. To Harry, Louis Jolliet didn't matter—never had and never would. It was his grandsons who mattered, especially Philippe. It was Philippe who reinforced Fort Duquesne and defeated George Washington. Give Washington victory at Fort Duquesne, and the Ohio Valley goes to Virginia, with Pennsylvania getting everything north along the eastern Great Lakes. With Virginia in the Ohio Valley, and Pennsylvania controlling the Great Lakes, the Mississippi is still a barrier to expansion, but a barrier with a dagger aimed at its heart.

So his strategy was simple. Let Claude Jolliet talk about Louis, follow the discovery of the Mississippi, but then keep pressing to know more about the Jolliet family. Stay with Louis through his marriage, his children, his grandchildren, his old age. That research would be published by UV Press in a heartbeat, and would guarantee a teaching post at Penn.

The strategy made perfect sense to me. I was elated. I felt so good I left Harry at the club and decided to take the long way back to my car. My destination was the same place I had always gone when I felt good—Pavilion Garden III. This is the largest of the university gardens and I loved sitting under the ash trees there. It was too cold to sit today, but I wandered slowly around the oval flower beds, enjoying the quiet and the peace that dated back to Jefferson. I felt perfect. Harry's plan had everything. If I found something significant about Louis's travels along

the Mississippi, that would be great. If I didn't, no matter. I would just keep listening until we got to the 1750s. Harry was right. Americans didn't care much for the Mississippi. It was too distant. It might as well be the Nile. But the Ohio, that was another matter. Besides, I had to admit, the more interviews I had with the President, the longer I could see Elise.

A week later the New Year's football games reached their climax and the Holiday season reached its end. I called Picard and found that I had been granted an appointment to see the President on January 20, and that he had invited me and a guest to a grand ball the following weekend. This was interesting. He had never invited me to any social occasions before, and in fact had never seen me at a social function before. As for the guest, Picard said nothing about Elise, but did tell me I would have to phone in a name a week before the event for security purposes.

Our company does not have an office in New Orleans, but we do have an agent there. I met with my father and described my visit with Professor Hopkins and my plan. He seemed comfortable with that. Whatever concerns he might have had about me, he was my father and would support me where he could. He called our New Orleans agent and set up my visit.

By January tenth I felt like I had spent enough time shopping with my mother, seeing Disney movies with nieces and nephews, and getting drunk with my brothers. It was time to leave. I made final arrangements and flew to New Orleans. Everything went fine. I had a good flight, customs passed me right through, and there to meet me was our business agent. He helped with my bags and drove me into town, assuring me that I would be very happy with my rooms.

What an understatement. My one concern about traveling to New Orleans in January was the crowds. I knew that all of the northern cities of Canada had emptied into New Orleans. Where was I going to find a room? My father had assigned our agent to get me something, and he had outdone himself. He had found me a suite on Lafayette Square. The rooms were beautiful, with high ceilings and wood inlays everywhere, but the best feature was the balcony facing the square. Two huge French doors led to the balcony and wrought-iron chairs and tables awaited me if I chose to sit out in the afternoon sun.

"Jean- Paul, you have outdone yourself. These rooms are beautiful. How did you do it?"

"I wish I could take credit, but I had help. Two weeks ago I got a call from President Jolliet's secretary. He told me you would be coming down and gave me a name and a number to call."

"Picard called?"

"Yes, that was the man. I called the number he gave me and the owner came right over to show me these rooms. I was amazed. It is good to be a friend of the ex-President, isn't it?"

It certainly was. I unpacked and then called Elise. She sounded as excited as always, and promised to be over first thing in the morning to give me a tour of New Orleans. She arrived the next morning about ten, looking more beautiful than ever. I realized I had never seen her in a warm climate. She still wore the long full skirts she favored, but now her blouse was much lower cut. I was very pleased. She took my arm in both her hands and we were off.

For the first two hours I felt like we were running a marathon. She had so much to say about the holidays and her family and the various sites we were seeing as we walked. I was lost almost instantly. I recognized Bourbon Street but she hurried me past to better streets and prettier gardens. She seemed to love being outdoors and she exclaimed at practically every flower and shrub.

Finally, sometime after noon we both needed a rest, so we stopped in a sidewalk café near the river. She had a great time describing the local treats and ordered for both of us. Then she was back again to family and friends and parties. I just sat and smiled. The sun was out, the sky was blue, and a beautiful woman was holding my hand. I didn't understand all she was saying, but it didn't matter. Mostly she was just saying that she was happy and excited to see me.

And then she stopped. Our food had arrived and at first I took her silence to be driven by her concentration on that, but I noticed her looking around, and realized the food was not the problem. Over the last ten or fifteen minutes the tables around us had filled up. The people at them looked a bit strange. They didn't seem to be connected—the people at one table didn't speak with people at the other tables—but all of them were similarly dressed. The men wore long-sleeve white shirts and broad-rim panama hats, and the women wore long white skirts, long-sleeve white blouses that buttoned to the neck, white cotton gloves, and wide straw hats. They struck me as somehow resembling a religious sect. Maybe it was the modesty of their attire. I thought of the Amish or Quakers or Puritans back home.

"Puritans?" I asked quietly, leaning even closer to Elise.

"Huguenots." She relied, mouthing the word as if it disgusted her.

"I thought maybe the clothes had some religious significance."

"No, this isn't about religion, it's about wanting to stay *white*." She said "white" much louder than necessary, and I could see several people at adjacent tables had heard her. I took her hand in both of mine and began to think of a graceful way to exit the café. Our waiter must have seen trouble brewing too, for he immediately came with our bill and then walked us out to the street.

Elise was furious, and absolutely silent. We walked quickly down the street and to a park along the river. Finally I found an empty park bench and practically pulled her down next to me. "Please, Elise. Tell me what is going on."

"In 1720 the King made us take the Huguenots. They were heretics, but he didn't have the heart to attack his own people. So he sent them to New France—to New Orleans where they might do some good. Even though they were heretics, you had to be sympathetic about all they endured for decades down here. Malaria killed thousands, and it took generations for the fields to be pried out of swamps and forests so they could feed themselves. Claude Jolliet saved them from starvation many times, but they did much on their own and eventually prospered. They also guarded this end of our country from the Spanish, and… from you."

"Yes, all Americans know about the Battle of New Orleans. But you aren't telling me why you are angry."

"There has always been friction between us. They are followers of Jean Calvin, we are followers of Saint Peter. Then about fifty years ago they decided there would be another division between us—race. They were white. The rest of New France was not."

"I'm sorry. I don't understand."

"For three centuries the French and the Indians intermarried. It was a necessity. There were a few white women in Quebec, but they were either the wives of lords, or petty criminals exiled from France. In Green Bay, Detroit, Chicago, Duquesne or Saint Louis, there were no white women for a century. So French men married Indian women. Their children married other Indians or other French men, and the races mixed for centuries. The result was peace between the two groups, and strength."

"And beautiful women," I added. Elise smiled briefly but was not going to be distracted.

"The Huguenots never intermarried. They had plenty of women when they arrived, and there are fewer tribes in this part of the country. So they married within their group. It allowed them to keep their religious traditions alive in a Catholic country, but now it allows them to think of themselves as a separate race.

"And their clothing?"

"It serves a double purpose. They wear white to declare their race. They wear long sleeves and hats to keep the sun from darkening their skins. The women even wear gloves in this climate to protect their hands."

"I have another theory. They cover their bodies because they know they aren't as beautiful as you are." That got me a kiss. I held her and we sat looking at the huge river flowing past. "I hear a tradition in this climate is the siesta."

"That is Mexico, you fool." I had her smiling again.

"Maybe, but a nap does sound good. Shall we go back to my place?"

"You know I will give you no rest."

"That is my dream." The rest of the afternoon *was* a dream, as were the days that followed.

Picard called me on the 18th to give me directions to the President's winter residence and to ask me if I would be bringing a guest to the President's Ball. He didn't seem surprised when I gave him Elise's name.

The homes of the elite are along the highway from New Orleans to Biloxi. This seemed an odd choice to me as I drove east along the Lake Pontchartrain causeway and then through what appeared to be endless swamps. If there was dry land around here, I couldn't find it. Finally, as I got closer to Biloxi, there seemed to be enough elevation to support life. Horse farms appeared, and cotton fields. Then the chateaus became visible down dark forested lanes. As the stone entrance gates to the chateaus got grander, I knew I was getting closer to the Jolliet residence.

It was the security people that let me know I had arrived. The turn off the highway was simply marked Boulevard 57, but the guard shack at the exit told me this was not just one more boulevard leading to winter homes. I explained who I was, showed a photo ID, and waited while they checked their guest list and called the main security team. A guard then got into my car and rode with me the last two miles to the residence. I was shocked when he got into my car, and I didn't know what to say to him. This was just as well, since he made no attempt at conversation himself, but sat perfectly still while watching my every move. I was sweating so badly I thought my hands would slip off the steering wheel.

He directed me to park some distance from the house, behind a concrete bomb barrier. I couldn't believe the precautions they were taking. None of this was required back in Wisconsin. What was different here? They made me walk through a metal detector and even took my tape recorder apart before I could be admitted to the residence. When I finally made it through the front door I stood there stunned. Thank God for Picard. He came up, took my hand, and tried to soothe my nerves.

"I should have warned you about the security," he said.

"It's so different than Wisconsin. I was shocked when the guard got into the car with me."

"Yes, things are different down here. I wish it weren't so. But you are in now, and the President will be able to see you in a few minutes. I have you set up in the garden. I think you'll like that." He led me through the house and out into the gardens.

"Yes, this is much better," I said as we got outside. "By the way, I was so distracted I forgot my manners. Thank you for your help with the apartment. It is beautiful."

"I am glad I could help. I assumed it might be difficult to find a place this time of year. Just sit here," he pointed to a small table under a sycamore tree, "and I will send someone out with some lemonade."

I sat down and made an effort to control my breathing. Bomb barriers outside the home of a retired President? It all seemed crazy. And the guard in my car staring at me as I drove, as if he might shoot me if I took a wrong turn. I hadn't expected any of that. When the lemonade arrived I was embarrassed to see that my hand shook as I picked up the glass.

The President, however, was unchanged. He arrived with a smile and shook my hand. "We have time to talk this morning. First, let me show you my garden." And we were off on a stroll around the grounds.

"I am sure you have noticed that we show our loyalty to France with our architecture. But with our gardens we still fight the Revolution. The greatest gardens in the world of course are at Versailles. Imagine so many fountains that they can only be turned on one day a week or they would drain the river Seine. What an achievement. Here we have so much water we could fill those fountains every day and still not drain all the swamps, but we cannot rebuild Versailles—it is Royalist. What gardens can we build since the liberation of the Bastille? Luxemburg Gardens. They are politically safe since they are on the Left Bank, and they are beautiful. Have you seen them?"

"Yes, I visited Paris after college graduation and spent a week on the Left Bank. I do remember the Luxemburg Gardens. They seemed impossibly spacious in the heart of the city. It was real joy to sit there."

"Yes, they are beautiful. And since they are so near the Sorbonne, they are well known to generations of Frenchmen and women who have traveled there for schooling. So what you see here, and in dozens of other homes, is a partial reproduction of those gardens." And, now that he had pointed out the design of the gardens, I could see that he was right. At least as near as I could remember six years after my last visit, his garden did appear very similar to the Luxemburg Garden. We walked around the perimeter pathway, and he pointed out particular

flowers a few of which were even in bloom at this time of year. Gradually we completed the circuit and returned to the chairs under the sycamores.

"So how is your visit the Louisiana going?" He asked as he motioned to a steward who stood just out of sight. The man gathered up the lemonade as Claude told him to bring out a white Bordeaux wine. "I am afraid Picard is spending too much time with the Huguenots. Lemonade is a good drink for children, but no drink for adults."

"This is a beautiful area, but I have felt tension here that I never felt in Green Bay. I understand the Huguenots have some odd beliefs, and then the security at this complex… I did not expect this."

"Yes, this is an odd time for Louisiana. I sometimes think that we politicians are trained wrong. We all study political science and history. Maybe we should study medicine. We expect that for safety, and for general human needs, people would look for similarities between themselves, and seek greater connections to each other. Instead, every century or so some odd gene fires off a rogue protein and suddenly some group searches for ways to be distinct and disconnected. I wonder if God ran out of time in creating us – seven days isn't much time for all he had to do—or if he put in that destructive gene just to see if we were up to the challenge."

"How great is this challenge?"

"We are still learning that. It may be some time before we know." The steward brought the wine and glasses and a plate of cheese. "We have to bring down our own wine and cheese," the President continued. "The Huguenots are abysmal at both, but I do enjoy both of them more when I can sit outside like this. To your health." We each sipped our wine and took a bit of cheese. Whatever tension I had felt from the security procedures quickly dissipated.

"Shall we continue with the voyage of Louis?" I asked.

"Yes, let's do that. I think I have nearly half an hour before I must leave you, but let's use the time wisely and continue that story. Remind me of how far we had gotten."

"They had made it to the Wisconsin River and were just starting their voyage down that river."

"Yes, the Wisconsin. That river is another gift from God. It is navigable its whole way, and goes in exactly the right direction. In June it flows with great speed, and of course in June Wisconsin gets fifteen hours of daylight. They probably felt like they could cover fifty miles a day, going downstream as they were. And who knows, maybe they could have. But of course their object was not just to travel fast, it was to explore and map. So at every major bend in the river they had to pull ashore while Louis updated his map. They also looked for Indian sign. They were looking for the Illinois, but who knew what other tribes might be in the vicinity? All the Indians here were important. We were always fighting the Iroquois in the East, and we assumed we would have to fight the Sioux in the west. It would be great luck if we could find friendlier Indians in the middle.

"But during their five days on the Wisconsin, they found no Indians. They did find an interesting region. The farther west they went the more often they found the river cutting through sandstone banks and creating interesting designs in the walls along the river. When they stopped at night they found plenty of game, and no shortage of wood for their fires. They kept up their guard, of course, they were

just seven men in unknown territory, but the land appeared to be ideal for travelers like themselves.

"They did twenty five miles a day, an easy amount for experienced men like themselves going with the current, and at night they beached their canoes, shot their game, and speculated about where they were. Were they already on the Mississippi? The river was large, and it seemed to be flowing in the direction everyone said the Mississippi flowed. If so, they had made a great discovery already. Whatever river it was, it would clearly be important in the future. Each day it took them farther south and farther west. If it continued this way for another month, they would be in New Mexico, with a back way into the silver mines there. You can imagine how excited they were.

"On the fifth day, June 17th, they saw that a much larger river was ahead of them. They had found the Mississippi. The juncture of the Wisconsin and the Mississippi isn't as tumultuous as other junctures they would find, but it was serious enough to require their attention. The Wisconsin splits in two at this junction, going around an island that is now part of Prairie du Chien, and they cautiously navigated around the southern end of the island and out into the Mississippi. They had done it. Now their job was to record it.

"Louis immediately called the canoes over to the eastern shore and began an extensive investigation. Where was this place? He pulled out his sextant and calculated that they were at 42 and a half degrees latitude. How deep was the river? Sixty feet. Which direction did it flow? Due south. This clearly was a significant discovery. The only river in their experience to compare with this was the St. Lawrence, and this looked to be larger.

"They wrote careful descriptions of the land around the river. On the west was a mountain range (or at least it appeared to be a mountain range from where they sat on the river. It is actually a range of bluffs that have been carved out over the millennia by the river.). On the eastern shore the land was rolling hills, more prairie than forest. The river itself was full of fish, some of them huge—sturgeon, catfish, big enough to threaten their canoes. They saw ducks by the thousand and huge geese. This was the land of plenty.

"They spent a full day measuring and cataloging and writing careful descriptions. You can imagine how anxious they were to start down this huge river, to see where it went, but they maintained their discipline and logged everything. That night Marquette led a special mass and they all prayed with special intensity. They were filled with joy. God had given them a river of huge size and great resources in food. What a gift! The Mississippi was more than they could possibly have hoped for. Now, to see where it led them – east back toward Virginia, south to the Gulf of Mexico, southwest to New Mexico, or west to the South Sea?. A mighty river like this one would surely take them great distances—maybe all the way across the continent.

"But I see we will have to wait a few more days for our mystery to be solved," he said pointing to Picard who was approaching us from the house. "You will be staying a few more weeks? It is very pleasant here, and I am sure Picard will find a time for you soon. I know I find it soothing to talk of simpler times."

"It will be my great pleasure to stay through February. Among other things, I am looking forward to your ball. Thank you again for including me."

“It is my pleasure.” Picard led us both back into the house, and then walked me to the front door.

“Do not let the security people frighten you,” he said. “They are very serious men, but they are *our* serious men. I will see you next week at the ball.” Then he left me in the hands of the security men who walked me to my car. One of them again drove with me to the main gate. The expression “the silence was deafening” understates how quiet the car was and how deafened I was by the presence of this huge man sitting next to me. Had he said a word to me I think my heart would have stopped. Fortunately the ride to the gate was a short one and I was able to get him out of my car before my hands started shaking any worse.

The drive back to New Orleans was so much more pleasant now that I had my car empty of gunmen. But I kept the radio off and kept my windows closed, traveling in complete silence as I tried to understand what was happening here. I had just promised to stay on five more weeks, but in truth, the frozen wastes of Green Bay were far more appealing to me right now.

Chapter 11

Down the Mississippi to St. Louis. 1673

Elise and I saw each other nearly every day. Sometimes we went out for walks, many times we attended parties, and then there was the library. She was doing her dissertation research, and of course I was doing my background reading, so we both had cause to use the local libraries. Given the size of the community, it had both a national and a provincial library. I was interested in the Jolliet family and discovered that the provincial library largely ignored the family, so I used the national library. Elise was tracking migration patterns in Louisiana, so she used the provincial library. But the libraries were just two blocks apart and we usually met for lunch at a great sidewalk café near the Mississippi to compare our data gathering successes.

I was having good luck. I had even found an original receipt for one of the food barges Claude Jolliet had brought down from Illinois in 1721. But Elise was getting the most from her time. She was filling notebooks with numbers. Her major was social policy, one of the those majors only the French would have. Where the American motto is, the best government governs least, the French believe the best government governs best. They take their administration seriously and good people work for the government unembarrassed. Elise ascribed the difference to Napoleon. “Think about it,” she once told me. “We had royal government, which to say government by birth and favor, then we had revolutionary government, which is to say government by mob, and then we had Napoleon who took the time to rewrite all our laws while invading the rest of Europe. He proved an effective government was possible. At least that is the way we French see it.”

Her dissertation topic was migration. She explained her interest to me this way: “most government is easy. We deal with people. People are predictable in all important ways. Give me the number born in any year, and I will tell you the number of kindergarten teachers we will need in five years, the number of professors we will need in twenty, and the number of nurses we will need in seventy. If you can’t prepare to meet people’s needs with that amount of advanced warning, you should be replaced by someone competent. Where are people unpredictable? In migration. You build a kindergarten for their kids and then they move. We need to predict that.”

Each day we met for lunch she opened her binder and spread out pages and pages of numbers. She found more each day. Some days she was excited at what she had learned, some days she was more somber. Late in January she was in one of her more somber moods as we ordered lunch and enjoyed the view of boats passing on the river.

“So, “I asked, “did you not find the data you needed?”

“I think I may have found the last data set I need for my thesis. But I am not sure I like what the numbers say.”

“You aren’t responsible for what the numbers say, right? You just have to summarize them and explain where they lead. By the way, where do they lead? Are you ready to talk about that?”

“Sure. In one sense the answer is simple. The numbers lead here. The arctic area has been emptying for generations. The northern provinces are moving out of Quebec, Montreal, and Toronto, to Duquesne, Detroit, Chicago, and Green Bay. The people in Duquesne, Detroit, Chicago and Green Bay are moving to St Louis. And the people of St. Louis are moving to New Orleans, Texas, and New Mexico. It is like the maps we put on a wall were real, and people were just flowing downhill.

“I suppose the cause is warm weather.”

“I have ignored all causes. Past research on that has gotten nowhere. Human motives are too complicated. You do a survey and ask if people are moving to get a job. Sure, but they also pick a place based on where grandma lives, what the neighbors say, the kind of restaurant service they got there on vacation, and the last movie they saw. So I ignore causes. My whole methodology is about rates. Do they change? How many years do they persist? Once people start moving to an area, do they stop? Slow down? Speed up?”

“So do they?”

“No. All the numbers point to a steady flow. Once migration starts, it doesn’t speed up, it doesn’t slow down, it just keeps coming.

“So the Huguenots better get used to seeing northerners all year round.” I said that with a smile, trying to brighten her mood, but it had no effect.

“In six point four years Huguenots will be a minority in Louisiana.”

“Well, given what you say about administration, now is the time to start planning for more schools, more hospitals, more parks… The administration should welcome your research.

“More cathedrals.” She let those two words hang in the air and I began to understand what the problem was. If and when she published her research, the Huguenots would be given a schedule for minority status. Her research would be taken as a death sentence by many of those wearing white. Her responsibilities

were immense. Neither of us ate much of our lunch that day, nor did we return to our places in the library. I held her hand and we walked for many miles along the river.

Two days later she seemed to have come to terms with her responsibilities, and was her old bubbly self again. She rang me up early and told me I was to meet her at a men's wear store at eleven. She had an appointment for me with a tailor. I don't know enough about fashions to know which were the better men's stores, but I could tell from the neighborhood and the store entrance that this was going to be an expensive morning. When I arrived she was already waiting for me and was already talking to Pierre, who happened to be her father's tailor. I was going to the President's Ball, and he was to dress me appropriately. Therein followed an hour where I was measured a thousand times and put on dozens of coats while Elise and Pierre talked about me like I was a store dummy. I felt like a Ken doll being dressed by Barbie, but I had no alternative since I have never worn formal attire before in my life, and I certainly had no idea what one wore to a President's Ball in New Orleans.

In reward for my patience, Elise accompanied me back to my apartment where we had a light lunch and a beautiful afternoon. By sunset I had long forgotten what the tux was going to cost me. As she left though, Elise informed me that there would be one more bill—*everyone* arrived in a limousine. With just one week left before the ball, I knew I was in trouble. The President's Ball was always scheduled for the last Saturday in January. But so was every other party in Louisiana. Every limo in Louisiana had to have been reserved months ago. I called our business agent, Jean-Paul, and asked for help. I could tell from the sound of his voice that I had just asked for the impossible.

Later the next day he called me back to tell me he had done the impossible, but at a heavy price. The closest limo he could find was in Baton Rouge, and I would have to pay for every mile here and back. I said yes, of course, and then calculated how I could at least deduct the cost from my taxes. Since it was President Jolliet's party, I could claim it as a research expense and take it against my book advance. Now I just had to hope I actually got a book advance.

Elise gave me complete instructions for the night of the Ball. Her family's winter home was west of New Orleans. I was to arrive at five for a light supper. We would leave at eight, and arrive at the Ball around nine. I told the limo to get me at four so I would have plenty of time to find her house.

The timing of our movements turned out to be the last simple aspect of that evening. The limo was the first problem. He arrived late, complaining about the traffic. Since it was Saturday and there was no traffic, I was not amused. I was also uncomfortable. It had taken me over an hour to get into my tux with the belt and the buttons and all the rest, and then I was afraid of sitting down for fear I would wrinkle something, or worse yet, tear a seam. Elise's directions to her winter place were clear in the main, but she had forgotten to explain that every house out there looked identical. The basic motif was white-fenced corral, horse barns, house hidden under huge trees. Some corrals were bigger, some were smaller, but all looked pretty much the same from the road. The driver took the road first at eighty miles an hour, and then when the white blur made it impossible for us to see any house numbers, he returned back down the road

doing about ten miles an hour. I was paying him by the mile and his math was pretty good.

When I got to the house I discovered that the light supper was for me and the family, not for Elise. She was still getting dressed and would be down around eight. In the meantime, I was to socialize with her mother and younger sisters. Her father was like many men who spent the winter in Green Bay but commuted down on weekends to be with his family, but he was a physician, and this weekend he was on call. That left me with Elise's mother, and her two sisters, Marie and Estelle.

In an effort at a cultural education for her children, Elise's mother had decided to serve a formal English tea. The girls seemed particularly amused by the bread and marmalade (God only knows where they found it), and questioned me endlessly about each aspect of the service, from the china to the tea to the correct way to hold various utensils. They were obviously having a great time. Marie was still in high school and was no doubt preparing already to tell stories about this weird tea service when she got back to school. Estelle was a college sophomore who assumed she was already too sophisticated to learn from this silly meal. I also assumed both of them were also giving me a good looking-over to decide how well their sister was doing. Given the competition between siblings, they were trying to determine whether they could tease Elise about me tomorrow, or whether she had done well for herself.

I was in favor of saving Elise from teasing, but I was at a huge disadvantage. First, I couldn't move without feeling like I was breaking or tearing something in my tux. And second, I have only attended one formal tea before in my life, when, just like this tea, my mother had set out a formal tea for a man who was visiting from England. Now that I look back at it, he seemed as uncomfortable as I did now.

After lots of fits and starts to find some topic of conversation other than proper teaspoons, we happened on horses. The girls were smitten. They rode every day. They explained that many of the roads in the area were closed to cars so that people on horseback could take long rides, even going into a local village to shop or to dine. Horses ruled here. Fortunately I had ridden in Virginia while in college, and we were able to compare horses, saddles, and bridal trails. They even led me outside to look at their horses. I was relieved to have a chance to go out for some air, but I was also petrified about where I might step while visiting the horse barns.

Three or four ices ages came and went, empires rose and fell, and finally it was eight o'clock and I was permitted to see Elise. I was led back into the house and positioned at the bottom of the stairs. We waited a few seconds for added drama, and then Elise appeared on the landing above us. I thought my heart would stop. I had seen her at many parties and at more formal dinner parties, but she had never looked like this. Her hair was done up on the top of her head in rings and curls, she was wearing diamonds at her throat and on her ears, and then there was a long expanse of just her. She was wearing a strapless satin gown, very low cut, and very well fitted. I was hoping my jaw had not just dropped. She smiled at me and slowly descended the stairs, her gown becoming a train behind her on the higher stairs. If her mother and sisters hadn't been standing right there we never

would have made it to the Ball. But they were, so I waited patiently while she came down to me step by step. If I could stop time, that is when I would stop it—as the most beautiful woman in the world slowly descended those stairs.

Elise spoke briefly with her mother and sisters, but did not keep me waiting long. We were into the limo and on our way in a few minutes. What a ride. She held my hand in both of hers, put it in her lap, and talked to me about her day, about the ball, and about how good I looked in a tux. I just stared at her for the full hour, my throat so dry I wasn't sure I could talk.

Our arrival at the Ball was first complicated, and then marvelous. I directed the driver to the right exit from the highway, but I could see right away that parking had been changed. We were directed about a quarter mile up a side road where we parked amidst a mass of limos. A guard tent had been set up and we had to present identification, be checked off a list, and then walk through a metal detector. It was pleasantly done, but it was thorough and there were no exceptions.

On the other side of the tent was a row of horse carriages we were to ride to the residence. Elise was wonderful. Despite her long gown, she climbed straight up into the carriage is if she rode in one every day. I sat next to her and we were off—one couple per carriage. Once again she held my hand in her lap and we talked quietly as the carriage slowly rolled through the night. We alternated between looking at the stars which were visible through the trees around us, and at the entrance to the residence which was emblazoned with lights. Once again I wished the ride had been longer or time moved more slowly. We arrived far too soon. I exited first and was bold enough to help her down, not by taking her hand, but by putting both hands around her waist and lifting her to the ground.

What was the president's Ball like? I remember it in bits and pieces. Of course I remember the reception line. Here was four generations of Jolliet's lined up in order of age. As each couple entered, a secretary announced our names so that others at the ball and those in the reception line might know who we were. There were also secretaries stationed discreetly behind the reception line. I assumed they were there to answer the question, "Who's he?" when people like me were introduced. Elise and I worked our way down the line. The youngest Jolliet was still in college, possibly standing in his first reception line, but this was part of his leadership education. Older Jolliets were ministers, corporate heads, future presidents. They were each polite, if brief, with me. Elise got a much warmer reception from all, and many compliments from the women. Periodically I caught a man looking from her to me, no doubt wondering "What the hell is she doing with him?" Good question, for which I had no good answer.

When we got to Claude, he held both our hands and talked to us for a long time. We had been instructed to move quickly down the line since many more guests had to be introduced, but Claude would have none of it. Nothing he said to us was significant, yet still he talked on about minor events. It slowly dawned on me that the topic was not important; it was the duration that mattered. By spending extra time with us, he was indicating to all present that we mattered. I think I will always be grateful for that thoughtfulness.

Once through the line there were more introductions as we worked our way through the crowd to the ballroom. Here a band was playing waltzes and Elise and

I danced. Thank God for childhood lessons. I am a miserable dancer, but good enough to manage a waltz, and therefore earn the right to hold Elise in my arms. We would dance for a while, and then we would get overheated so we would take short walks in the garden. It was a cold evening, but that was fine, for it caused Elise to huddle against me while I held her. God, what a great evening!

We waltzed and walked in the garden, talked with friends and waltzed, drank lots of champagne from fluted crystal glasses, snacked at one of several buffets, and danced some more. I still smile just to think about those hours.

But there was one odd moment. Sometime after twelve we set up to do the Presidential Promenade. Elise had walked me through the steps many times, so I knew the general direction of the dance, but I was still surprised by the majesty of the promenade when I saw it. We began in a long column of couples. There was an order to the column and we were placed near the end, back with the other foreigners and low ranking guests. I was sorry to have Elise back there with me, since I was sure she would be much closer to the front had she come with someone more important. But before I could think much about that, the promenade began. It was basically a march, from one end of the ballroom to the other, but as the column approached the far end, each couple turned left or right in turn, bringing a new column down on the left and right of the original column. By the time the last of the original couples had reached the far end of the ballroom, the lead couples, now in a row of four, reached the first wall of the ballroom and wheeled left or right to form two new columns, now each four people wide. These marched back alongside the middle column so we were now twelve people wide, four in the middle going one way, and four on either side going the other. It was fascinating to watch, and exciting to be in, because we knew what would come next. When the fours approached the other wall and joined together to form a group of eight, they then wheeled left or right (with the women running and laughing as they rushed around at the outside of the group), and came back on each side of the column in the middle. We were now twenty four people wide and a real spectacle to see. I wondered if we would try reversing one more to form an even greater column, but we stopped after everyone had completed the turn. The music stopped and we all applauded our success.

It was a bit martial, standing there in formation, having marched in growing columns, but it was also an exciting event to share. While we stood there in formation, stewards brought around more champagne and we began the toasts. Claude was first, and gave a very warm toast to his friends with best wishes for another fine year. Then other Jolliets took their turns, followed by designated individuals. A Californian gave a toast on behalf of the foreigners at the ball, and the French ambassador toasted the gathering on behalf of their “many good friends in Paris.”

The only odd toast came from the Louisiana Governor. Part of it went this way: “On behalf of Louisiana I welcome all of you to this beautiful province. I hope you enjoy your visit and think well of us when you return to your homes up north.” It was an appropriate toast for a group of tourists, but most of the people in the room owned homes in the area and had lived here at least part of each year for generations. Many would not be going back to homes up north since they now

lived here. It was just an odd thing to say, and annoyed a number of people in the room as I could see by the expressions on their faces.

Claude took back the microphone at that point to answer. “Having been *guests* in Louisiana for three centuries now, some of us feel like this our home—a home we are proud to enjoy and proud to protect. Ladies and Gentlemen, a toast to Canada. One country, indivisible.” A cheer went up for that, and the band began another waltz. We broke formation and I got to hold Elise one more time, but as we made one large turn around the floor I saw the back of the Louisiana governor as he exited the room. Several other couples dressed all in white left with him.

Eventually we also had to leave. We took the carriage ride back out to the limo with Elise huddled against me from the cold. I have never been so grateful for low temperatures. I had the limo driver take us back to my apartment, and I gave him the biggest tip I have ever given in my life. Elise stayed with me that night and most of the next day. Finally, the next evening she put on her ball gown again and I drove her back to her family. I wasn’t sure I would be able to let her out of the car, but her sisters came bounding out of the house when we approached, all full of questions about the ball. Elise ran into the house with them, and I drove alone back to New Orleans.

The next week was a rough one for me. Elise had to go back to Green Bay. The spring semester started the first week in February. Besides finishing up her dissertation research, she was assigned to teach an undergraduate course in statistics. I was sorry to think of her back in Green Bay, bundled up whenever she left campus, entombed in the basement walkways of the National University, trying to teach statistics to students who would rather go without wine for a month than study math. But I was also sorry for myself. I would be in New Orleans for at least several more weeks – weeks without Elise. The balcony of my apartment became the place where I would sit each evening, drink wine, and feel sorry for myself. I had never missed a person, or needed a person, so much before. I was miserable.

I filled part of my time with my research. The national library down here was a treasure trove. I found all kinds of original paperwork that had been archived. It was soon clear that the Huguenots would have starved to death if the first Claude Jolliet hadn’t brought down boatloads of food from 1721 to 1730. You’d think there would be a statue to him on every corner. Instead, I found a number of lawsuits pitting New Orleans against St. Louis as the two towns grew and fought over trading rights. The increased traffic on the Mississippi brought commercial success to both towns, and so brought competition. It was a struggle that had gone on for centuries.

And I had my visits with the President. The next one came ten days after the President’s Ball. I was prepared for the security this time, but still unnerved as the guard got into my car. I decided not to try to make conversation, but to just get to the parking area as quickly as I could, and make it into the residence with minimal annoyance. I was at least partially successful and met with Picard less flustered than I had been the first time. He led me into the sun room since the weather outside was too cool and wet for us to sit out there.

“Good morning, my young friend, “the President said as he entered the room several minutes later. He was obviously in a very good mood

“Good morning. And thank you again for inviting me to your Ball. I have never experienced anything like it. I had a great time.”

“I was pleased that you could come. I trust you are still enjoying your visit to Louisiana?”

“Yes sir. I am learning a great deal.”

“I thought you might. Somehow it seemed appropriate that if you were going to write about the discovery of the Mississippi, you should spend some time on its banks. Speaking of which, as time permits, you may want to follow its path a bit farther south.

“I shall, sir.” This was pretty obvious hint for me, and I did intend to follow up on it.

“Now, if I remember correctly, we had gotten my famous ancestor as far as Prairie du Chien.”

“Yes sir. He had gotten there and the team was making measurements of the river.”

“Yes, can you imagine his excitement? He left St. Ignace May 17th, and just one month to the day later, he finds the river they had been hearing about for years. Everything is perfect. The route to the Mississippi is now clear, and it turns out to be amazingly easy. There are a few rapids above Green Bay, but no real physical barriers to men like themselves, and no Indian barriers exist either. No tribes threaten the route; in fact the one tribe they have met seems determined to help make the river a major trade route. Only one month enroute, and they have already achieved all their goals.

“Only three objectives remain. They need to know where this river goes, they need to know if the Illinois Indians will be allies to the French, and they need to return to Quebec alive so they can tell their story. This last objective might actually be the most important, for not only can they offer their countrymen an important trade route, but if they don’t come back, the assumption will be that this route is dangerous, and so this easy path south will be avoided for years.

“But curiosity drives them south. They continue to travel about thirty five miles a day, easy going with this gentle current. Louis updates his map at each bend in the river, but little work is needed—the river goes south about as straight as any river can. They see that they are surrounded by prairie. The land is flat, appears to be good for agriculture, and supports an interesting beast—the buffalo. They land and try to shoot one. Each of them fails on their first attempt as they try to determine where a kill shot must enter the body of this huge beast. By the second day they are more successful, and they not only have a huge source of meat, but they are able now to examine the beast up close.

“They skin the buffalo and try to take the hide into the canoes so they can display it for the people back in Quebec, but the hide is so heavy it is clear it will swamp either of their canoes. They settle for careful drawings of the buffalo, and daily counts of the number they see along the river. One thing is clear—this river will support life. There is game aplenty and good farm land for corn. No one trading on this river will ever go hungry.

“In eight days they cover three hundred miles driven by the excitement and the current. The river always flows south. If the direction continues, they will reach the Gulf of Mexico, an interesting outcome. It is not as valuable obviously as a

route to the west, but it does give them a foothold in the Spanish Gulf. They measure their latitude carefully each day to see how close they might be getting to Spanish possessions and Spanish troops.

"Their one disappointment is the lack of Indians. Given the supply of food, they expect to see many Indian tribes, but so far they have seen none, even though they are looking carefully. Finally on the eighth day, their diligence pays off. They see footprints on the western shore. They beach their canoes and discuss what to do. There are no Indians in sight, and it might be a distance to their village. Once there, who knows what they will find? The Indians might be hostile and kill them instantly, or torture them to death as captives. The risks were great. But they had been ordered to make contact with the Indians, to learn about their numbers and dispositions. And, these men were traders. Here was an opportunity to trade.

"For the first time in their trip, Louis divided his force. He and Marquette would look for the Indians. Marquette straightened his clerical cassock and waited while Louis gave orders to the remaining five. These men were to stay on constant alert. Should any danger befall them, or Louis and Marquette not return, they were to return to Quebec on their own to ensure that the French leadership knew of this great river. Claude DuPry was put in charge and he immediately positioned his men to guard high points along the shore.

"Louis took his musket and some gifts and then he and Marquette followed the trail west. They traveled for two hours without seeing any Indians, until they finally came to a large village. It was suicide to just enter a village unannounced, so they stood about fifty yards from the village and began shouting at the top of their lungs. A horde of Indians instantly scrambled out of their huts and came running, only to stop a few yards from Louis and Marquette. There they stood, staring at the two Frenchmen, trying to determine what to do next. Finally four elders pushed their way trough the crowd. Each carried a calumet, a long, decorated pipe often called a "peace pipe." They raised them to the sky to indicate their wish for peace. They then offered them to Louis and Marquette who raised them similarly and then smoked the pipes to indicate that they too came in peace.

"After the signs came some words, both groups trying to determine what languages they might have in common. Marquette tried some of the Illinois he had learned years before at Saint Esprit. They understood! These Indians were from a tribe called Peoria, and were closely aligned to the Illinois on the eastern shore of the great river.

"I brought with me a few pages from Louis' log." The President pulled the pages from his coat pocket. "Shall I read them?"

"Yes, please do."

"The Indians had this to say: *How beautiful is the Sun, O Frenchmen, when thou comest to visit us. All our village awaits thee and thou shall enter all our cabins in peace*. You have to assume there is some liberty taken with that translation, but I do like the line, *How beautiful is the Sun, O Frenchmen, when thou comest to visit us*. You can bet that makes it into the grammar school history texts.

"As for Marquette, his answer was a good deal longer, or at least Louis remembered more of it: 'I bring you four presents. First, we are journeying peacefully to visit the nations dwelling on the river as far as the sea. Second, God has pity on them and wishes himself to be known to them through me. Third, the

great captain of the French wishes them to know that he has subdued the Iroquois to bring peace everywhere. Fourth, we ask you to tell us all about the river and the nations we shall meet as we travel to the sea.'"

"He is using the term "gift" in a pretty abstract sense, here, but Louis was there to give many gifts of a more traditional nature. The Indians led the two of them to their head lodge, and there they smoked the pipe again while Louis distributed gifts and Marquette translated and proselytized.

"In matching their gifts, the Peoria leaders gave three in return. The first was a slave boy, the second a calumet (thank God for that gift—it would soon save their lives), and the third was a piece of advice—don't go farther down the river, it is too dangerous. Marquette explained that it meant nothing to him to lose his life for the greater glory of God. Louis was probably wondering if he should have kept count of all the Indians who had told them not to venture farther. The number was getting pretty large.

"They spent the night in the lodges of the Peoria. They ate buffalo, declined a dog that had been freshly killed for their benefit, and talked about the region and the river. They learned the region was rich in food, with tribes growing corn, beans, melons, and squash. The abundance they saw was overwhelming. Houses were simple, woven mats hung over wooden frames, and there was little jewelry or other signs of stored wealth, but the people were healthy and had much to eat.

"The next morning the two men returned to the river followed by six hundred men of the village. It must have been quite a sight to the five Frenchmen left on the river. No doubt they had gotten little sleep as they wondered what had happened to their leader. Now they saw a huge party of Indians approaching with Louis and Marquette in their midst. Claude DuPry stood up from his defensive position so that Louis could see he and the men were all right, and the two shouted reassurances back and forth as the groups merged. They had made their first contact on the Mississippi, and it had gone well.

"The next several days they continued without incident. They passed the Illinois River without knowing it was later to be so important to them. Louis mapped the river, of course, as he mapped all the rivers they were passing, but there were so many, they had no idea this one was to become special. The Mississippi was often so calm they hoisted small sails to aid their passage, enjoying effortless passage for hours each day. At night they camped, hunted, prayed under the leadership of Marquette, and talked about the rich land they were discovering. All were impressed by what they were seeing. They had never experienced prairie lands before so they were amazed by the open vistas. They all talked about returning, to trade and to farm.

"A day after passing the Illinois, they encountered their first real danger on the river. Their attention was first drawn to a painting on a limestone cliff. There were two figures up there, painted in three colors—green, red, and black. The pictures were huge, and done with great skill, but they depicted creatures unknown to this world. Each figure had a huge head with horns like a deer, red eyes, a beard, a face like a man, and then a body that was covered with scales and ended in a long fish tale that curled around the body. They couldn't believe Indians had the skills to make such drawings, or the means to scale the sheer cliffs while creating them, but who else could have made these demons?

“As they floated past these drawings, they began to hear a roar like waterfall. Were the drawings a warning of a huge falls? They pulled closer to shore and watched carefully ahead. The noises got louder, but came from the west. There they could see another huge river entering the Mississippi. If was almost of equal size to the Mississippi and came with great speed. The noise they were hearing was not a waterfall, but the crash of waters and the noise of a huge whirlpool that was formed at their juncture. The whirlpool was easily large enough to suck in their canoes if they had come anywhere near it. Only the warning of the drawings, and their own care had enabled them to skirt this danger.

“But once past the junction of the rivers, they beached their canoes near some higher ground on the western shore of the Mississippi – at today’s site of St. Louis. They wanted to determine their latitude, update their maps, and discuss the importance of this new river. Obviously it covered a great amount of ground. The Mississippi appeared to be driven to the south. This new river went to the west. Did it go all the way to the west?

“Marquette had a theory which he made the mistake of entering in his journal. There it would become the basis for some terrible maps that misled travelers for well over a century. How many men died because of his journal entry, we will never know. His theory? Yes, this new river led to the ocean. In his journal he combines what he has just seen with stories he has heard over the years from various Indians, and he decided the river flows this way:

“By ascending this river for 5 or 6 days, one reaches a fine prairie 20 or 30 leagues long. This must be crossed in a northwesterly direction, and it terminates at another small river, on which one may embark, for it is not difficult to transport canoes through so fine a country as that prairie. This second river flows towards the southwest for 10 to 15 leagues, after which it enters a lake, small and deep… which flows towards the west, where it falls into the sea. I have hardly any doubt that it is the Vermillion Sea and I do not despair of discovering it some day, if God grant me the grace and the health to do so, in order that I may preach the Gospel to all the peoples of this new world who have so long groveled in the darkness of infidelity.

“Marquette was a brilliant man, but he let rumors pass for fact. And, since he was soon to become an explorer well-known to all the world, his journal entries became the gospel of map-makers and explorers. Generations went to their graves in the west thinking the Pacific Ocean was just over the next hill. We know that traveling from east to west across the continent is virtually impossible. The natural navigation is not east to west, but north to south. But that obvious fact would be obscured for another century and a half.

“On that note, we should end for the day. Unfortunately I have discovered that these are busy times, even for a retired man on vacation.”

“I appreciate your time,” I responded. “Will you have time to see me again this month, or should I await your return to Green Bay?”

“I will instruct Picard to find an appointment for you in the next week to ten days. These are interesting times in Louisiana. I think you will be glad if you stay.”

Then I shall.” Somehow Picard knew that this was the time to come get me and he appeared at the door to escort me out of the house. There at the front door I encountered the most comical sight of my time in Louisiana. There was the

Governor, Francois Mitterand, enduring a search by security men with a metal detector. The security men seemed delighted every time they could find a cigarette lighter or loose change so they could repeat the search process. Mitterand, meanwhile, pursed his lips and kept himself quiet, but it was clear he was upset about this treatment. I recalled Picard's admonition to me on my last trip—"these are serious men, but they are *our* serious men."

Serious men or not, they were enjoying what they were doing to the Governor, and I smiled about it even as I drove the distance out to the front gate with a very serious security man staring at me.

Chapter 12

Down the Mississippi to the Arkansas. 1673

Picard phoned the next day to give me an appointment later the following week. I had nine days with nothing scheduled. I continued my visits to the national library and phoned Elise each evening. Her class was off to a good start, and her dissertation was coming together quickly. She had even been given a date to defend her research—April 10. If that defense went well, she would receive her Ph.D. at May commencement. I was happy for her and miserable for myself. After my calls to her I found myself sitting alone on my balcony looking down at the park and drinking French wine—too much French wine. I wasn't nineteen any more. I should have been better able to handle our separation.

Finally I decided to follow the President's advice and see a bit of the river. I checked my maps one evening and the next morning headed south out of town on the Belle Chasse Highway. I could see from my maps that I wasn't going to be able to go all the way to the gulf, but I could get about fifty miles south of town. Maybe somewhere along there I would see whatever the President wanted me to see. But it didn't appear likely. Mostly what I saw was swamps. Nobody lived down here. There were tiny fishing villages about every ten miles, but they looked ready to sink into the soft ground and disappear. As for the river, much of it was diked, so I only saw it in glimpses. What I saw looked pretty much like what I had been seeing for weeks in New Orleans.

But I kept driving. I found myself thinking not about the river, but about the journal entry of Marquette. What was he thinking? He sees one river and suddenly he merges it with old Indian legends and declares exactly how many miles one paddles, how long one portages, and when one will get to the Pacific. God willing he will make the voyage himself? Dying as he did was bad enough. It would have been cruel of God to let him attempt the voyage he so optimistically describes, only to discover his mental map was off by a thousand miles and neglects two huge mountain ranges and endless desert. How horrible to let his last sights be of the Rockies and their impenetrable heights.

How many others had died with that sight before them? The truth was the Missouri was a mirage. It went west, but not nearly far enough. Hundreds of men in canoes and on horseback had gone into those mountains and never come back. One hundred and fifty years passed after Marquette wrote his description of the way west before anyone was able to make it all the way to the Pacific and return to tell the tale. The stories they told were so discouraging, even the discovery of gold could not get Americans to cross the mountains and deserts of the west. They crossed at Panama or rounded the Horn to get to California. The mountains could not be conquered.

DeVoto had been wrong. I saw it more plainly every day I lived in Canada. America go from coast to coast? The continent was designed to make that impossible. Each coast was hemmed in by mountains. The only place where this huge land could be crossed with ease was in the middle – from north to south. Jolliet could paddle from Green Bay to Arkansas without encountering a rapids, much less a water fall. Railroads were built without a single grade. Highways had no hills. Even the lousy French cars would work here since there was never any reason to strain their shoddy engines. The largest, most fertile valley on the planet was open from one end to the other to any Frenchman with a canoe and a paddle. God must be French.

As you can tell, I was not in a great mood as I drove. The end of the ride did not improve my mood. The last village on the highway is named for Jean Lafitte, the pirate adored by the French for all the British and Americans he helped kill in 1814. I drove slowly through town looking for something worth seeing. There wasn't much to choose from. Finally I just parked and got out to stretch my legs.

I saw a café, but it looked about ready to fall into the river along with every other building in town. I wasn't hungry enough to risk whatever diseases awaited the unwary in there. So I wandered over to the river and walked along its raised bank. What was I supposed to see here? It was just water flowing south. I followed the current and found myself amidst some docks. Fishing charters left from here. Half a dozen boats sat beneath painted signs advertising the best fishing on the gulf. Two were taking on passengers armed with rods and tackle boxes. The rest sat hopeful that tourists would venture down from the north as I had.

"Five hundred francs for the day." I looked around and noticed that one of the captains was shouting at me. He was a very sunburned man in his late forties dressed all in white—a Huguenot. He had several men on board already, but apparently wanted more cash. "I will supply the tackle and the bait. All you need to do is sit on your ass and catch the best fish in the gulf. Just hop in. We are about the leave for a great day on the river."

On the river. Why not? I had nothing else to do all day, and maybe I would see something on the river that I wasn't seeing next to the river. I climbed onboard.

"All right," I said as I stepped onto the boat. "But I don't want to fish, I just want to see the river."

"It is still five hundred francs." He held out his hand and waited while I counted out the cash. "The head is at the bottom of those steps, the wine is in that chest, and if you change your mind, I can rig a pole for you." With that, he took one more look around the dock for possible customers and then cast off. The boat was about twenty-five feet and set up like most boats of that size. There was a wheel on the

first level, and another wheel and set of controls in the higher, flying bridge. He climbed up there immediately and left me with the other fishermen. It turned out they were salesmen from Toronto down for a week's vacation. I had the sense they had already had a couple glasses of wine to loosen up for the trip, and they were having a good time harassing each other about how they were baiting their lines and how schooled they were in the ways of the gulf. They quickly ignored me and concentrated on a bottle of wine they had already gotten from the cooler.

The captain had pulled out of the berth and was heading down river at increasing speed. I climbed the ladder up to the flying bridge so I could get a better view of the river.

"You from Toronto too?" He asked, but didn't wait for my reply. "It seems like folks from the north come down here in waves. This week it is Toronto. Last week it was Montreal. Two weeks ago I had mucki-mucks from Green Bay in my boat every day. Boy is that one fussy bunch. You're not from Green Bay, are you?" He suddenly became aware he had said too much.

"I'm from Philadelphia."

"You're an American? Welcome to Louisiana." He instantly smiled and held out his hand. "We don't get many Americans down here. You guys do most of your fishing down in Florida. Or do you think more Americans will start coming this way?" He looked at me with so much eagerness I was sorry to disappoint him.

"The Keys are still pretty popular. Guys can drive it, and there's no custom problems, no visas, it's just simpler."

"Yeah, I suppose." He seemed disheartened for a minute, but then brightened and went into his salesman routine. "But I swear we have better fishing here. We've got freshwater fish a mile out into the gulf because of the Mississippi, and we have saltwater too, so there is much more variety. Want bass, we have it. Want marlin, we have it. You can't do that in the Keys."

"I'll pass that along to my friends."

"Do that. You sure you don't want to fish yourself? I can set you up in a few minutes."

"No, I just wanted to see the river. I have been in New Orleans for the past few weeks, constantly seeing the river flow by. Finally I decided I would see it flow into the gulf. Sort of see it to the end."

"It's a beautiful river, but it's tricky. It moves. It will be one place for weeks or months, and then suddenly it has turned another way. Maps are always out of date. We used to get people who would want to just rent a boat and take themselves down to the gulf for fishing. We lost too many boats that way and now the province requires a licensed captain on every boat. Did you know there are three places where the river enters the gulf? Ten years ago there were four. By the time you visit next, there might be five entries, or there might be two. The river has a thousand miles of dirt in its clutches, and it puts it where it wants, and then goes around it."

"Which route will we take today?"

"I always take Passage A. I know it the best and it takes us past Blind Bay."

"Is that where the best fishing is?"

"No." He turned fully toward me so I could see his face while he answered. "I want those bastards from up north to see what they are doing to my Louisiana.

They want to live in those fancy chateaux up north where it is cold nine months out of the year, they need my oil and my gas. Then when it comes time to tax the flow, they give all the money to the national government and peanuts to the province. Let them at least see what Blind Bay looks like. Of course by the time we get there, they are usually too drunk to know where they are or what they are doing—just like this bunch." He pointed over his shoulder at the men below. They were having a great time throwing bait at each other. "You Americans are fairer. Florida gets rich from its wells. We in Louisiana stay slaves to the Papists." Having mouthed that insult he knew he had gone too far, and he dropped into silence. I said nothing. What was there to say? That I was a Papist? I let the remark go and watched the river.

He was right about the river. There were bends in the channel and sand bars that he carefully negotiated. Once a huge ship came up the river and we had to pull way over to our right to give him room to maneuver. I was glad an experienced hand was at the wheel. He and I made small talk on occasion, but mostly just watched the water. Had the President wanted me to see the river, or was it the oil platforms that he had steered me towards. I didn't see how it did him any good for me to know how discontented the Huguenots were. Maybe he was just suggesting that I get out in the sun more, and I had gone overboard in my interpretation. Oh well, I was here now, and I would be for some eight hours until the drunks form Toronto had landed their trophies and we had returned up river.

When we turned into Passage A, we were headed almost due east. Here too, efforts had been made to mark the main channel and it appeared this was one of the favored channels for larger ships. I was in awe every time we came near one of these behemoths. The drunks in back waved whenever one of the ships went by, but the waves were never returned. I wasn't sure the crew could even see us so far below them. Eventually we got to the gulf. The mud and the trees and the grasses on each side of us just dropped away and there was the Gulf of Mexico.

"Watch below us," the captain told me. "See how long it takes for the water to change from brown to blue. The river takes the dirt a good distance out into the gulf before it finally drops it." I watched over the side of the boat and he was right. We were still traveling on brown water for another fifteen minutes. When the water finally cleared, he throttled back and went down to the fishermen. He helped them bait their lines and made the first cast for them. Once he had each one positioned so their lines would not tangle, he climbed back up and slowly pulled the boat ahead.

What can I say about the rest of that day? Nothing that matters. The salesmen from Toronto each got several fish. They seemed happy enough with what they got, and drunk enough so that the ride back was much quieter than the ride down. I got to see the oil platforms in Blind Bay. They were huge and ugly. The captain looked at me as if to say "See what I mean?" But didn't say anything as we went by. The guys from Toronto never took their eyes from their fishing lines. We could have been trolling past Martians and they would not have noticed.

Eventually the day ended. We docked and I went back to my car while the salesmen took pictures at some scales and looked for ice to preserve their treasures. I had seen the Mississippi all the way to the Gulf. One final thought occurred to me as I drove back into town. This was the river LaSalle couldn't find.

But it entered the gulf at three different places. How bad do you have to be at navigation to miss a river that has three entry points?

"Are you ready for some drama?" The President asked. I had gone over to his residence a week after my fishing trip. The sun was out and the day was warm enough that we could sit out in his imitation Luxemburg Garden. "South of St. Louis is where Louis and the men were almost killed."

"Yes, if I remember the story, they were greeted with a hail of arrows." Periodically I needed to point out that I was not a complete neophyte and had read a few books.

"Well, it was never that dramatic, but they did meet the first Indians who might have been hostile to them. Let's begin again where we left off. They had found the Missouri River and carefully mapped its juncture with the Mississippi. As they continued down the river, they found the river beginning to turn toward the southeast. So It might flow to Virginia after all. Then two days later, they came to what we now call the *Ox Bow*. It is just south of the present day Cape Girardeau. The river bends back on itself and turns directly north for about ten miles. Not only did this confuse and concern them, since they were afraid now that the river might not go to the gulf, but the canoeing is some of the most difficult they would encounter on their trip. Imagine, if you will, the forces at work when a river that size is bent back upon itself. The water boils and froths against one bank and currents spin the canoes. Even today we have drownings in that area, even though the dangers are well known."

"It took them a full day to make their way back up the ox bow and then around the bend. Once they saw the river would head south again, they beached their canoes and took a well-deserved rest. Although resting from here on was not easy. These men were used to mosquitoes, and they all wore buckskin so they had some protection, but any place that was not covered was constantly under attack. What they didn't know was that these mosquitoes were malarial. Their nights were never restful, and their days were hot and hard. They were beginning to feel the effects of their journey."

"The day after they cleared the ox-bow, they found the Ohio River. I wish I could tell you that they knew they had found where the Ohio entered the Mississippi. But they had no idea which river they were encountering—so many flowed into the Mississippi. They mapped each and tried to measure the width and depth of each as well as they could. They also fixed the latitude of the place each river merged with the Mississippi. Marquette called the river the "Ouaboukigou" after some Indian stories he had heard. Louis thought the river was the Wabash, another great river they had heard of. Neither had any idea they had found the Ohio. They even got the latitude wrong, placing it a full degree north of where the entrance really is.

"But they had a sextant, right?" I asked.

"Yes. And we know from other measurements he made that Louis was good with it. And for that matter, so was everyone else who had some basic training. The sextant is one of the best inventions of its time. Even the basic ones of this period could work accurately, because all they do is measure the angle between the sun and the horizon. Assuming you knew when the sun was at its peak—when it was noon—and assuming you had a table that told you how high the sun would be on

this day in the year, you found the angle and calculated your latitude. What went wrong this time? Maybe he missed noon. Maybe his horizon was obscured. Maybe the instrument was getting banged up in the canoe. But to be off by a full degree is a significant error for a map maker."

"Do you know if he tried to calculate longitude?"

"No. They had no time piece. All they could do was carefully measure their passage to see how far they had come in any direction. His map turns out to be within fifty miles of the real longitude of the Mississippi, but then the river flows mostly south, so many measurements east and west were not required.

"But, back to their voyage. It was south of the Ohio that they began to encounter Indians who threatened them. First it was a group of Indians armed with muskets on the eastern shore. Marquette stood up in the canoe and showed their calumet—peace pipe—and the Indians allowed them to come to the shore. There Marquette talked with them in Huron and discovered the Indians had had much contact with Europeans—*to the east*. They had many trade goods and had even learned a bit about Christ. As you can imagine, the Jesuits spent many years subsequently trying to determine where these Indians might have gotten such training, and came to believe these Indians had encountered Spanish Franciscans who had a mission in Georgia.

"Louis was more interested in learning how far away these Europeans might be. He had been told to steer clear of the Spanish, not that he needed to be warned what might happen to them if Spanish troops found them in territory they claimed for their own. The Indians gave various answers, but were sure of one thing—the river was near its end. Ten more days paddling would bring the group to the gulf.

"Over the next several days they became more convinced that the Indians were right. The land changed. The prairie was gone and forests rose up on either side of the river. The land here was less promising of agriculture and more foreboding. They paddled on believing they were near the gulf.

"And then they were attacked. Indians in wooden boats surrounded the canoes while other men on shore marched up and down shouting and threatening to fire arrows at Louis' party. Marquette stood up with the calumet as he had in the last village, but this time an Indian threw a war club at him and nearly killed him. Other Indians threatened to swim out to the canoes and pull them over.

"As it should be, wiser heads ultimately prevailed. Two older chiefs watched from shore and when the voyageurs got close enough for them to see that Marquette was waving a calumet, they called on the younger men to cease. They still had to struggle to keep the young men back, finally ending the conflict by wading out to the canoes and putting their personal weapons inside. With this sign of their personal protection, the other Indians backed off and let the voyageurs land.

"Communication was a problem. Marquette knew six Indian languages but none of them made sense. For their part, the Indians brought forward members of their own tribe who knew languages, hoping that they could find some common dialect. At last they found one young man who knew some Illinois. Marquette and he were able to talk well enough to explain who they were and what they were doing. And of course Marquette also wanted to describe the life of Christ.

“It turned out these Indians were Arkansa. They were not having an easy time of it. South of them some other tribe was at war with them, preventing them from trading with the Spanish down the river. They had a larger village a day’s travel farther south and invited the voyageurs to it. Louis and his men were not very comfortable staying with this tribe, given how hostilely they were greeted, but they decided to spend a couple days with them to learn as much as they could about lands further south.

“The first night went well. They were fed and treated as guests, but you can imagine they posted guards. In the morning they paddled down river to the larger village where they were met by more Indians in canoes. Once again they went onshore and once again they were able to find someone who spoke Illinois. They exchanged gifts, spoke of their travels, learned about the peoples to the south, and hoped they wouldn’t be murdered in their sleep.

“After two days in the larger village, one of the chiefs came to them and told them he had prevented their murders. A plot had been building to kill the Frenchmen and take all their trade goods. He had stopped the murders. Had there really been an attempt on their lives? They had no way of knowing if the chief told the truth, but everything they had seen and every encounter they had told them that they were in danger here.

“The voyageurs met that night to determine their next steps. Louis had measured their latitude that noon and determined that they had reached thirty-three degrees. Their maps showed that the gulf was at thirty-one degrees, a distance they could cover in several days. Should they go south to the gulf? If so, they risked capture by the Spanish, or murder by this or some other tribe on the way south or on the way back. They had already established that the Mississippi flowed south into the gulf – that was obvious. Why not start back north to report on all the things they had seen? It was the wise course, the prudent course, and one of the reasons Louis always returned from all his explorations with all his men. He didn’t take stupid risks.

“Of course his political enemies always used this decision against him. He hadn’t gone to the gulf. The gulf was hundreds of miles south of where he stopped. He was a coward. It was LaSalle who was the real discovered of the Mississippi since he traversed its entire length—LaSalle the great explorer. So it is said yet today. But as they sat together in that village, surrounded by hundreds of warriors who had already threatened them and had tried to kill Marquette, the choice of the seven was obvious. They needed to go back north. This was ugly country—forests and swamps and Indians anxious to kill. It was time to leave.

“The next morning they made a graceful exit, full of speeches and gifts, and then started back north. It was July 17th. They had been on the Mississippi for a month. They had paddled a thousand miles, knew the path of the great river, had found and mapped huge rivers that flowed into it, had met and talked with Indians, and had hunted and described the many animals to be found along the river. They had done much and knew much. It was time to take that knowledge back to Quebec. Little did they know how much more they would accomplish on their journey home.

“But I must end our story there for the time being. As Louis and his party start north, it is time for our family to start our preparation for our return north. I

expect you are also anxious to return to Green Bay." There was just a hint of a smile on his face, leaving me to believe he was referring to Elise. In truth, I was anxious to return to Elise, even if it meant returning to the frozen wasteland she chose to live in."

"Yes, there are many attractions in Green Bay." That was as far as I was willing to go to describe my love life. We shook hands and Picard came to escort me from the garden. He and I spoke at length as we walked through the house. For security reasons, the President's travel plans were kept secret, but I was to expect a call in a couple weeks setting up our next meeting in Green Bay. We talked briefly about the opera season which would begin within weeks in Green Bay as the elite returned from their winter sojourns, and about lacrosse. Picard seemed in no hurry to end our conversation. It appeared that his schedule would be more relaxed now that the time in Louisiana was winding down. The parties were over, the packing was beginning. The elite were on the move north.

Chapter 13

Up the Mississippi.
1673

I was done in New Orleans! Much as I liked the warmth and beauty of the city, there was another beauty I had been away from for three weeks now. As soon as I got back from my interview with President Jolliet, I felt like throwing my clothes in a suitcase and catching the next flight north. With luck, I could get back to Green Bay by that evening.

But I held back. For the past several days I had been thinking of driving north rather than flying. I could take the Mississippi highway and see the lands the President had been describing to me. I could probably drive to Green Bay in two days. If I stopped to look at some of the main historic places, I could do the trip in four. Four more days away from Elise. I reminded myself I was a professional historian. Who knew when I would be able to take such a trip again? I should see the river I was writing about. I called Elise that evening and the longer we talked the more I wanted to jump on a plane, but in the end I made the responsible—if not the romantic—choice. I would see her in four days.

Our business agent took care of closing up the apartment. I called the car rental agency and warned them I would be keeping their car a few more days. I did not tell them I would be taking it to Green Bay. I was sure this was going to cost me a huge fee when I got north. Oh well. My decision was made. I would see the Mississippi north to Green Bay.

The next morning I was up early and had the car loaded and headed out of town by eight. If I moved fast enough, maybe I would see Elise in three days rather than four. The Mississippi Highway is easy to follow, and I made good time. The highway is actually several miles from the river along most of its route, but there

are regular views of the river, and I got a good sense of the general topography—flat with a few rolling hills.

My first destination was the junction of the Arkansas River and the Mississippi. Somewhere in that vicinity the voyageurs had turned back. I thought I could reach it in about five hours. As I drove, I watched the cotton and cane fields around me, and thought back to yesterday's interview. Even the president admitted that the journey had its share of rough spots. They had the wrong latitude for the river that was to mean so much to both our countries. They didn't even know they had found the Ohio. And then there was the Indian trouble. Why the sudden hostility? What was at work there?

And there were the odd musings of the President. Because Louis did not make it to the gulf, the Jolliets had been attacked politically. Was that what he had said? It was an odd comment, and the more I considered it, the more I sensed he was talking not about Louis, but about present day Louisiana and his personal relations with the Huguenots. He needed a lever to give him personal strength in his dealings with the south, and he didn't have it. But there was Claude—the first Claude—who had fed the Huguenots. That would seem to help. Or didn't it? This was a family that used its personal history for political ends, and it was coming up short. Why? I needed to hit the library again as soon as I reached Green Bay. This puzzle had too many missing pieces.

Meanwhile, I made good progress up the river. The French may not be good at anything else, but give them a long flat valley with no real hills, and they can make a highway. I was near the junction of the Mississippi and the Arkansas River in under five hours. The highway runs along the east side of the river here. The Arkansas comes in from the west, so I was not going to get a clear view of the junction on the other side of the Mississippi, but then, Louis didn't get much of a view either. This is where their main concern was Indians. I started looking around for a place to get off the highway and feel the mood of the place.

Then I found Christmas. Imagine giving a town that name. I got off the highway and drove down the main street of Christmas, looking for lunch and for a better view of the Mississippi. I found a spot on the edge of the river and parked. Boy was I glad to get out of that car. I was used to French engineering with all the resultant squeaks, rattles, and vibrations, but you'd think they could at least make seat cushions. Not on this car. My legs were already going to sleep after just five hours behind the wheel. I stood up and grasped the top of the car while blood finally got down to my feet. What do you call the dummy in high school who can never learn the simplest algebra equations? A French engineer.

The river bank was raised for a levee, and I climbed up the grass embankment to get a look. I knew from my map that the river had moved west here. The river was slow enough this far south that it was winding more and more – becoming a snake river like the upper Fox. But here it periodically threw a new loop around a hill and left an old loop to become a stagnant pond. This is what had happened west of Christmas. I could see the old loop about a mile to the west. Beyond that somewhere was the current channel. All around was marsh grass and short trees. It looked like all of this flooded in the spring when the river was up, but here in February it was just mile after mile of marshland.

Somewhere around here Louis and his party had lost their courage. Claude had mentioned swamps and forests. Those appeared to be long gone. I could see a good distance from where I stood, and everywhere I looked was farm land. The forests were gone, the swamps drained. The ground for miles around had been tilled, waiting for the spring planting. There was nothing frightening here now. And the Indians? Who knew. Maybe they had moved on, maybe they had been killed by their enemies, maybe they sold gas down at the truck stop. There was nothing left now to give any sense of what the voyageurs had experienced. This was just one more farm town in an endless string of farm towns.

I did a quick walk through of the town to see if they had any commemorative displays to mark the end of Jolliet's voyage. But I saw nothing. There were a couple small stores that sold Christmas items, apparently making a living from the town's name, two very small cafes, and a grocery. And there was one oddity. I noticed the name of the main street – LaSalle Boulevard. I must have looked silly standing there, but I couldn't take my eyes off the sign. My mind just wouldn't register it. LaSalle? I turned to look to see if there was a cemetery in sight. No. Just a sign for main street. Why?

I had thought to get lunch here, but the more I looked at those sad little cafes, the less I wanted to get stuck eating a two hour lunch in this town complete with bad food, bad wine, and poor service. So I headed for the grocery. I would buy a couple baggettes and get back on the highway. I found some reasonably fresh bread near the back of the store. I was nearly alone there. This turned out to be lucky for me, since the few people in the store were all staring at me. I was the only person there not wearing white. Uncomfortable as I was, I am a professional historian, so I decided to talk history with the man at the checkout register.

"I see your main street is named after LaSalle. Did he found this town?"

"No, but he was the first person to travel the river, so we named the street out of respect for him." He bagged my bread and gave me change quickly. I was used to small town folks wanting to have endless conversations with strangers. But this man had no interest in any kind of conversation. Maybe that's why I pushed him.

"But if my map is right, Louis Jolliet and Father Marquette got this far south in 1673."

"Was your map printed by the Pope?" The other people in the store seemed to think that was pretty funny. I took my bag, thanked him for his time, and slowly walked out the door. I was damned if I would be the butt of some clown's joke. I stood just outside the grocery, ate a bit of my baggette, and then walked with all the control I could muster back to my car. What the hell was wrong with these people? I drove out of town as slowly as I could, but once I got back onto the highway I hit the gas.

The map was accurate. Their journals were accurate. There was no question that Jolliet's party got this far south. Historians had had three centuries to review the data available. There was no possibility of fraud. I knew that before I had started my research. I might be able to find some flaw in Louis' character, but complete fraud? No. Yet that is what these people believed. The people in white. The white people. I kept the car headed north and slowly got control over my breathing. About half an hour out of town I saw a sign I welcomed:

"You are leaving Louisiana. Come visit again soon."

I doubted that would be the case for me. About a mile farther along I found an even better pair of signs:

"Welcome to Missouri"

and

"You are riding on the Claude Jolliet Highway."

I exhaled slowly and felt much more comfortable. It was evening by the time I got to St. Louis. There is a huge bridge that takes the highway east to west over the river and into the heart of St. Louis. They have a gigantic arch on the shore of the Mississippi. I had heard of it—the "Gateway to the West." It was actually in the wrong spot. The Missouri River is a few miles north of downtown St. Louis, but then symbols don't need to be accurate. I suspected it was downtown away from the Missouri because that's where local business leaders wanted it.

I found a hotel near the Mississippi in the older part of town. Where else would an historian stay? Across the street from my hotel was a restored section of old buildings called LaClede's Landing. I tossed a suitcase into my hotel room and then immediately headed across the street to LaClede's. They had done a great job of restoration. The streets were cobblestone, the street lights were globes on top of poles, looking like they might still be powered by gas. I knew few of the buildings were original, but the architects had done a fine job of matching the building styles of the early 1800s. The idea was to match the flavor of this district when riverboats had docked down the hill and trappers and traders filled the saloons and hotels night after night.

The district is about four blocks square and I walked through all the streets before deciding where to eat. Then I picked a place none of my friends would have expected—Pierre's Rot Gut Saloon, Buffalo Steaks Our Specialty. I decided I wanted to eat buffalo. The inside was decorated to look like saloons of 1800 would have looked. Not being a saloon historian I had no idea how accurate they were, but I was in a funny mood. I just wanted to be around loud talk and people who laughed. And people who wore real colors.

I was greeted by a man wearing a fur hat. Raccoon? Beaver? "Do you want liquor or victuals?" He asked in a loud voice with a hard edge. Actually he sounded more like a Disneyland pirate than a saloon keeper, but his old style French was pretty good.

"Both, and lots of them." I shouted. "I've come four hundred miles up river today and I need food." I have never in my life taken on a role like that, at least not sober. But it was fun. "And make it fast."

"I'll have a girl bring you a bottle," he shouted back, "But you will wait on the food until the cook is ready." He led me to a table and threw a menu down. "And don't spit on the floor." I took a chair and began to read the menu. It was one of those "theme" menus. They served "rot gut brandy" and "red eye bordeaux." They also had buffalo steaks in all sizes.

"I see you can read." The waitress said as she got to my table. She looked like a college girl, but had put on layers of makeup to take on her role. "Do you want red eye or rot gut?"

“I want a bottle of your best red eye, and a buffalo steak so big it fills the plate.

“Since you can read I suppose you are also the kind that will want a fork and a napkin and a glass for your wine. Am I right?”

“Yes, and I want it fast.” And the service was fast. She had a bottle of very good Bordeaux at my table in minutes, complete with a glass that she noted was “mostly clean.” My part in the play ended then. I settle back, drank my wine, and enjoyed the shouting around me. Would trappers and traders have been so boisterous two centuries ago? I hoped so. All of them were headed for months of hardship in the west, and many of them would never return.

And in 1673? Those men might have been loud that night too, as they sat along this shore, within a mile or two of where I sat now. For weeks they had seen new sights around each bend in the river. Herds of buffalos, flocks of geese, fish to feed a nation. And they had found a river going west. Even Marquette, the missionary, might have been loud that night. They had found a way that led to the Pacific, so easy to follow he might well be able to do it in his lifetime. The world had opened itself to them and it was abundant.

By the second glass of wine my attitude turned and I began to think of what they didn’t know sitting in that rude camp. The Missouri went far, but not far enough. It would get France a fortune in furs, but no passage to the Orient. And our voyageurs? They would be stopped just two hundred miles south. There Father Marquette would be nearly killed. And worse, three centuries later the residents would deny he had ever found that shore.

But, I mused as I had my third glass of wine and worked my way through my buffalo steak (which is actually pretty good. A bit dry, but not tough at all), their celebration was still appropriate. They had come far, seen much, and lived to tell their stories.

The next morning I drove for Chicago. A major highway links St. Louis with Chicago, so I was there is only five hours. The highway runs roughly parallel to the Illinois River, but I made no attempt to look for the river. What I wanted to see was the prairie. The land is flat. While it is hard to believe, it is even flatter than Wisconsin. And it was all being farmed. Except for a few trees right around farm houses or around small farm towns, the land was all being used for crops. It was bare soil now, covered with an inch or two of snow, but come summer it would raise an incredible amount of food. Hour after hour I drove across that rich land. I have never seen anything like it.

Finally I came to the large cities by Lake Michigan – first Jolliet, and then Chicago. I drove through their business districts just to see what was there. It was probably a mistake to get off the main highway. I got lost pretty fast and spent half an hour finding the highway again. I had no real interest in the cities anyway. We have bigger cities in the U.S. I knew no one here and we did no business here. If anyone asked, I could say I had seen Chicago now. That accomplished, I drove north, trying to stay along the western edge of Lake Michigan.

What I wanted to see was the lake shoreline. I had heard stories of the cliffs that had been such a danger to early travelers. What did they look like? I discovered that seeing the shore was not easy. The main highway ran some miles west of the shore, so I had to take local roads in and out of small towns, ducking into residential districts to get a glimpse of the water. It took forever. Finally, by

evening I was tired of the whole thing. I had driven all the way from St. Louis, had gone into the big cities of the Lake, and driven down every lane that might get near the water. I had had enough. I found a hotel in a little town called Sheboygan and spent the night.

The next morning my luck changed. I found a couple shoreline parks and was able to get a good look at the lake. Were there cliffs? Yes, in places. I would guess the height to be about one hundred feet. But there were also lots of beaches, and of course there were rivers entering the water where anyone in a canoe could paddle upstream a bit to be out of the storm. It looked like the cliffs were an intermittent problem. For those who had traveled the lake before, they would know where the shore was accessible and where it was blocked by cliffs. A little experience would solve the problem. Of course for the first few, there would be no experience to lean on. They would have to paddle on, hoping they could find a break in the cliffs before the storm overcame them.

I made that brilliant observation before noon and then felt like I had done my last professional duty as an historian. Now I could do what I really wanted—steer that silly French car to Green Bay by the quickest route I could find. I was there before three. Before I got my first bag into my apartment I was on the phone to Elise. She was out, at the university no doubt, but I left a message and hurried to unpack my car. By five I had all my things unpacked, had claimed my mail, and had checked in at the company. I sat by the phone and waited. Fortunately, my wait was just a few minutes. She was home, she wanted to see me, she wanted to cook me dinner. I was to get there at seven.

I don't know what possessed me, but we had been apart so long it felt like a first date. I took a shower, put on a good suit, and stopped at a store for a bottle of wine, two baggettes, and some salad fixings. I was at her door exactly at seven.

"Shawn." She opened the door and leapt into my arms. I had never had a woman do that. I was so surprised I almost dropped the wine. Fortunately I held onto the bottle and wrapped my arms around her. She looked good, smelled good, and felt good. I held her for a very long time. Finally she eased herself away and we stood looking at each other. She was beautiful. Even though we were staying in, she had put on a party gown, had done up her hair, and was wearing a necklace and earrings. I was so glad I had thought to wear a suit.

I closed the door, put down my packages, and we sat on her couch. She put her arms around my neck and I wrapped mine around her shoulders, and we sat together and talked. I don't remember what we said. It was silly stuff mostly. I described my trip, she talked about a few mutual friends, but it wasn't the talk that mattered, it was being together. We must have sat like that for an hour—maybe two. I know I was in no hurry to move.

Finally she reminded me that she had promised me dinner, and she got up to get started. In the months we had been together, we had worked out kitchen etiquette. There are really four choices to be made. The man can cook. I always thought that was stupid. There was a brief period in America when men were encouraged to cook, to clean, to raise the kids and I suppose pick out the wall paper. Fortunately that fashion went away with disco music. I did cook on occasion. Once in New Orleans when Elise had stayed over, I made crepes for

breakfast. But it had nothing to do with expanded gender roles. I knew where the fixings were and where the pans were in my kitchen, so I cooked.

Second, the woman can cook while the man watches. I liked that. I liked being wherever Elise was, and watching her… well, I liked that too. But it didn't seem fair.

The next option was to share the cooking. How many relationships has that ended? Too little room, two people looking for the same pan or same spatula… No, we knew right away that this was a recipe for disaster.

So we picked option four. I made the salad. I just needed a corner of the kitchen, I could do it without getting in her way or burning things, and it gave me a reason to be close to her. That's what we did that night. I poured the wine I brought, worked on the salad, and talked to Elise. She was making soup. I waited until she had sautéed the ingredients for the soup and had put them all in the pot. Then I finished the salad and came around behind her. She let me wrap my arms around her waist while she stirred. I had never felt so good as I did at that moment.

Then I spoiled it all by opening up my mouth. What an idiot. I picked the absolute worst topic of conversation in the world.

"So, how do you like being a teacher?" I could instantly feel her stiffen in my arms. Oops. What had I done now?

"This is my first class, and I think it will be my last. I value statistics. They don't."

"So it is a required course?" She nodded and I knew the problem. I had taught several history classes while working on my Ph.D. The worst was an American History course required for all school teachers in the state of Virginia. They had all taken history in high school, had hated it there and hated it in college too. Not only could I not excite them about the events that had happened at their doorsteps, but after staring at their bored faces for several semesters, I felt myself losing my own excitement for the times.

"Is the course too hard for them?" I asked. The French have a well-earned reputation for being abysmal in math.

"They will never know. They have to work the problems and do the assignments before they will even know if the mathematics is easy or complicated. I write the problems on the board, they copy them down, and they hope what they have copied down will appear on the test in exactly that form. They will memorize, but not learn."

"I would think with you as a teacher, it would at least be an inspiration to the women in the class."

"No, I had one woman tell me after class that statistics is an American subject. The French should not have to learn it. She wanted to know if I was an American." Now I began to stiffen. This conversation was going in a very bad direction. Fortunately, God smiled on me. I asked a question so stupid that it made Elise laugh.

"Ah, has anyone else been saying that maybe you are too American?" I held my breath waiting for her to tell me that our friendship was causing her trouble.

"I see." She started laughing. "You wonder about us?"

"Yes." That was all I could manage to say. She turned off the stove, put down her spoon, and turned around to face me.

"You should never read Shakespeare. But you Americans love him, do you not?" I nodded in agreement. I had no idea where this conversation was going, but at least she seemed happy. I kept my arms around her waist and hoped for the best.

"Shakespeare makes you all sad. Teenagers are all silly Hamlets wondering if they should be or not. Politicians are all MacBeth, and old folks all think they are Lear, abandoned by the young. And lovers?" She paused for effect. "They are all Romeo and Juliet destined to die in confusion. You are Capulet and I am Montague, or is it the other way, and we can never find love. That is what Shakespeare does to you."

"And the French?" I asked.

"We read the greatest playwright in the world—Moliere. All his plays are beautiful. Silly people do silly things, but in the end they find love and happiness. No one dies, no one goes crazy, everyone finds love. That is the perfect play. And that is the French way."

"I like the French way.' I said.

"I am glad." She kissed me, and I kissed her, and you can guess where things went from there. We never did eat that soup. I left the next morning a very happy man.

Our pattern over the next few weeks was to spend several evenings a week together, either at her apartment or at mine. The social scene was still in transition—the elites were still straggling back into Green Bay and the opera season had not begun yet. We went to a couple parties, but they seemed pretty muted since Lent is observed in at least some fashion.

I also tried to respect Elise's time. She had an amazingly good attitude, but I knew she was experiencing some stress while completing the final drafts of her dissertation and preparing for its defense. And there was the class she taught, which didn't seem to be going any better. She would sit over a stack of papers and groan as she graded. So I stayed out of her hair several nights a week, and often when we were together I sat reading while she graded her papers.

During the day I alternated between work and the library. Things at the office were also quiet with so many lead customers on vacation, but I puttered around there for a few hours each day before going over to the National Library to read and dig through the archives. I found myself drawn away from the Jolliets and towards the Huguenots. This was dangerous. Many a piece of historical research never got finished because the historian got sidetracked once and then again and then again… There is so much to read and so much to learn, for those of us who find history exciting it is easy to follow one trail after another and never complete the original research. But I wanted to know more about these people, and I thought I would need to know more anyway to understand Claude's interactions with them in the early 1700s. There was much to learn.

In the second week of March, Picard called me and arranged my next interview with the President for the following week. I drove down there on a rainy March day with the wind and the dampness making it feel colder than it had felt in January. When I got to his home I discovered much had changed. An elaborate security system had been constructed over the winter. It was no longer possible to drive

into his circle drive and park by the house. Concrete planters had been placed to block the driveway. A small parking lot had been created across the road, and I had to park there. Then, before I could get out of the car, I had to have my identification checked and my name found on a guest list. A guard walked with me to the house. In short, security here was now almost as tight as it had been in Louisiana.

Another security guard was waiting for me inside the door, and he stood with me until Picard came over and greeted me. For the next part of this story to make sense, I need to describe Jolliet's house. The front entrance is in the middle of the house, and opens into a fairly large two story foyer. To the right side of the foyer are several chairs and a couch where visitors can wait for their appointment with the President. Two men were sitting there as I came in that morning. The President's study is to the left of the foyer, the idea being, I guess, that visitors would be contained in the front middle part of the house, while family members could enjoy the rest of the house in private.

Picard and I were standing just inside the front door and making small talk when we began to hear loud voices in the President's study. The door was closed and the room is well insulated, so it was unusual to hear any sound from the study. But this morning, not only were the voices audible, but they kept getting louder. After a few seconds Picard turned from me and took a few steps towards the door of the study. At that point he was knocked sprawling across the floor and four security guards rushed into the room. One stopped just outside the study door and aimed a machine pistol at those of us in the waiting room.

"If you move, I will shoot," he said. Move? I could barely breathe. The three other guards had crashed through the study door. Two threw the visitors, two men dressed in white suits, up against a book case while the third threw the president back into a corner and stood with his back firmly against the President, his machine pistol aimed at the visitors. There was suddenly complete silence in the room except for one guard who gave brief, direct orders to the men. "Do not move. Put your hands on the wall." Each man was searched and then they were ordered to sit on the floor.

Two more guards came flying in at this point, and they pulled the President out of the study and down the hall. The rest of us stood frozen. Finally Picard picked himself up and went in to talk with one of the guards. They had a brief whispered exchange, and then Picard came out of the study, closing the door behind him.

"It will take the security people a time to sort this incident out. In the meantime they have told me that all today's appointments are cancelled. I am sorry. I will call you in the next several days to reschedule your visits." The guard, meanwhile, moved away from the front door, but he kept his gun aimed at us while we left. I was scared out of my mind and was happy to get out to my car and back out to the highway. Unfortunately, my hands were shaking so badly I couldn't drive very far and had to pull over for a time while I fought to control my breathing. I wish I could say I was all right again in two or three minutes, but it was more like fifteen before I was fit to drive. Even then, I suspect I was a menace on the highway, not really being aware of the cars around me.

By the middle of the afternoon I had settled down enough to head for the library, and I was there in the stacks when my cell phone rang. This was odd,

since I had just gotten the phone the day before. I was still working my way through the instruction manual and learning all the features, so I hadn't even given the number to Elise yet, the only person I wanted to be able to reach me night or day. No one else was going to get this number, but here it was, ringing in the library. I answered as much as anything else, just to stop the noise.

"Hello?" I answered while I looked around to see if I was disturbing anyone.

"Msr. Murphy, it is Picard. President Jolliet would like to speak with you." Then there was a brief silence and the President came on the line.

"Msr. Murphy, it is Claude Jolliet. I understand you were here this morning during our little disturbance."

"Yes sir."

"Well, you should know it was really nothing—just a bit of confusion. But I understand that your meeting with me was cancelled. That is too bad. I wonder if you would care to visit me this evening instead—for dinner? And feel free to bring Elise if you would like. The three of us can have a quiet meal and discuss the old days."

"That would be excellent, Mr. President. I am grateful for the invitation."

"Very good. About seven thirty then?" And the call ended. It didn't take me long to understand how an ex-president of Canada could find the number of a brand new phone. My immediate concern was reaching Elise. I quickly dialed her office number and held my breath while the phone rang. She was in! I explained the situation and she said she would be happy to go. We agreed I would pick her up at six-thirty so we would have plenty of time for the drive south.

I then drove home as quickly as I could, feeling like a kid invited to a party. A private dinner, just Elise and me and President Jolliet. I showered again, pulled out my best suit, and decided to wear the shirt Elise had given me for church. I was ready a full hour before I needed to be, and paced the apartment nervously watching the clock slowly inch towards six.

When I got to Elise's I found her ready—and beautiful. She wore a long gown of a darker shade of red—silk, I think, with half sleeves and a fairly high neckline. Her hair was up and she wore both earrings and a necklace that appeared to be diamonds. She was beautiful, and elegant. I just stood there, a man with a Ph.D., the official biographer of the Jolliet family, and the best I could think to say was "Wow."

That was apparently the right thing to say, for she smiled and gave me a long kiss. Then she handed me her fur cape, I placed it around her shoulders, and we were off. On the drive down I described the incident of the morning, but Elise didn't seem all that concerned. Security people were paid to over-react, was her appraisal of the incident. She chatted happily about events of the day, calming me in the process. By the time we reached the estate, I was in a much better mood.

As we approached the house, I was preparing to drive towards the new parking lot, but a guard stopped me, checked our identification, and then motioned me towards the driveway. Two of the concrete planters had been moved, and a car that stood in their place, backed out so that I could pull right up to the front door. There a servant waited to open Elise's door. I left the car there, with the keys in the ignition in case someone would want to move it, and then joined Elise. She took my hand and we walked into the chateau.

A servant had just taken our coats when I heard the president coming up a hallway. “It is so nice of the two of you to come all this way to visit me,” he said as he came into the room.

“Uncle Claude.” Elise ran the last couple steps to him, wrapped her arms around him and gave him a big kiss on the cheek. They exchanged pleasantries while I stood dumbfounded. Uncle Claude?

“I am Elise’s godfather,” Jolliet explained as he held Elise. “Elise’s family and my family go back many generations.” Both he and Elise paused and looked at me then. Clearly, they were waiting for me to make some connection. Her name was Elise DuPry. Had there been a President DuPry? A minister in one of his administrations? DuPry. I knew that name. Where had I heard it before? And then it hit me like a bolt of lightning. Claude DuPry! Her ancestor had been Louis Jolliet’s right-hand man during the voyage down the Mississippi. Was it even possible that the families had stayed in contact through three centuries? Apparently it was.

“You are a descendant of Claude DuPry?” I asked them, feeling like a student who is trying to pass an oral exam.

“Yes.” And both of them smiled like they were very happy I had passed the test. Then Jolliet let go of Elise and led us through the house.

“Let’s see if we can find a comfortable place to sit in this drafty old house,” he said as he led off down a hallway. Elise took my hand and managed a quick kiss on my cheek as we followed. I can’t imagine what I looked like, confused and overwhelmed, I imagine. She simply looked beautiful, and kept hold of my hand to provide some well-needed reassurance for me.

We ended up in the sun room. There was no sun, of course, the sun sets at six in March, but we did have a very nice view of the lights across the lake—the buildings of Oshkosh, and the Mississippi Highway snaking down from the north. Jolliet sat is a comfortable wing-back chair, and Elise pulled me down next to her on a couch, her hand still locked on mine. A servant immediately brought us each a glass of red wine.

“We have a standard toast that is perfect for this occasion,” Jolliet said, raising his glass towards Elise. “To the beauty of Canada.”

“If I may add,” I said, also raising my glass towards Elise “To the beauty and surprises of Canada.” That drew a laugh from both of them, and removed any concerns about how I was handling this news. The conversation then moved on to other matters, with Elise scolding the President.

“You are retired now. Why do you have assassins in your house?”

“The only dangerous people in my house are the security guards the state makes me retain. One slammed me against a corner so hard I think I will be bruised. You are probably too young to recall,” Jolliet said, turning to me, “But once when I was traveling abroad some fool took a shot at me. He hit a poor reporter and never came close to me, but my security team knocked me down and jumped on top of me to shield me with their bodies. I landed so hard I broke an arm.” He and Elise laughed about the arm as if he was telling a great joke. “For the next weeks, every time I was out in public, people wanted to know if that was where I was shot. My guards were so embarrassed by what they had done, they dreamed up a wild conspiracy that was being planned against me, when all they

really wanted was to keep me out of sight until the cast came off. They are good men, but very excitable."

"But Shawn tells me there was shouting in your study."

"Now, Msr. Murphy," Jolliet said, wagging a playful finger in my direction. "You must be more careful with state secrets, especially with a god-daughter who worries too much. I was the one doing the shouting. Governor Mitterand sent up two of his lackeys to tell me lies. I wanted to make sure he never did that again. Those two men had the scare of their lives, and I think they will hesitate to carry false messages again." He winked at Elise and smiled with satisfaction as he finished that story.

"But Uncle Claude," Elise asked, "When will you really retire?"

"Oh, but I am retired. That's what makes me so valuable. Everyone knows I do not have the political strength to run for President again, so now I can be used by both major parties as an ambassador for special assignments."

"And if I can venture a guess, "Elise continued, "Your current mission involves a very dangerous place where people love to wear white."

"It seems sad, does it not, to be an 'ambassador' to part of one's own country. But this is where great care is needed."

"If my research is correct, more care will be needed in the future." Elise then outlined her migration studies and the impact that would have on Louisiana.

"Six point four years?" He asked. "I fear much trouble will come before then. But your study gives us more to think about. Have you spoken about it to Minister de Shazer? I assume you plan to work in the Interior Ministry after you graduate. He should know both about the study and about the fact that it will be public in the near future. It *will* be public, won't it?"

"Yes, all dissertations are public. There is really nothing we can do about that." They talked more about the study and migration patterns, and I realized how little I knew about Elise. I thought I knew her family, but I had only met one generation. And I had never talked to her about her career after college. This was a very surprising woman. But now that I thought of it, of course she would work in the Interior Ministry. Where else would a woman with her skills work? As if reading my mind, and trying to get a message to me, she now took my hand in both of hers.

"Shall we see if the cook has found some food for us?" Jolliet asked as they finished their migration discussion. A servant who had been standing out of sight now stood at the entrance to the room and told the President that dinner was ready if we wished to dine. He then led us down a hallway to the formal dining room. It seemed a bit silly for the three of us to sit at one end of this huge table, but I was glad he chose to lead us there. The room was beautiful. The ceiling was inlaid with a variety of woods in beams and panels supporting a pair of chandeliers. The walls were wainscoted with beautiful oak paneling on the bottom and landscapes of various sites in Canada hung on the top half. Since there were just three of us, the chandeliers were left off and we ate by candlelight. Elise, who was clearly enjoying her evening with her uncle, seemed to glow in the candlelight.

"What is fortuitous about this evening," Jolliet said as we were nearing the end of our meal, "is that we were going to talk about the journey back up the Mississippi today. This is a good part of the story to tell with Elise present, since

some of it involves her ancestor, and I suspect I may even know some parts of the story that she does not."

"Oh oh, it sounds like I may have to defend the family honor."

"Only if I start talking about Claude's cooking." They then bantered back and forth, joking and teasing, and enjoying each other's company.

"As you can imagine, the first day on the journey north was a hard one." Claude began when he and Elise had stopped their teasing. "They wanted to put as many miles as they could between them and the Arkansa Indians, so they paddled for nearly twelve hours. As night approached they pulled into the west bank of the river and set up camp as if they were done for the day. Then when the sun had fully set, they got back into their canoes and paddled even farther north. They were now well north of the two villages, but it made no sense to take chances. They anchored their canoes off shore and slept in their seats. At dawn they were moving again."

"Paddling against the current was more work obviously, but they still made good time, covering twenty to twenty-five miles a day. In part, they could move faster since they had mapped all this area on the way south. Their only responsibility now was to paddle north, and paddle north they did."

"By the third day they felt safe enough to build a campfire and to go hunting for some game. Fresh meat and a hot meal made all of them feel better. From this point on they were much more relaxed. As Louis writes about it, you get the impression of school kids on an outing. They had done the serious work of the voyage, now they could enjoy the river. They hunted, they fished, they paddled. Each day got them closer to home. It would not surprise anyone that they should feel a bit giddy."

"Maybe this would be a good time to tell you more about the personalities of the men on the river. Elise can listen and tell you if I am exaggerating. Shall we?

"Yes, please do." I answered. "I am curious about these men."

"Jacques Largillier was a devoted disciple of Father Marquette. In fact he would be with him until his death. He was always the first man to prayers and the last man to get up off his knees. He always rode in Marquette's canoe, and always looked for ways he could help the good Father. Around a campfire he rarely said a word, and no one had ever seen him take a drink. He was strong, and he worked hard, and if he was on guard duty, you could sleep at peace, because you knew he would be alert for every minute of his time."

"Pierre Moreau was a trader's trader. You assumed he would be rich one day. He knew the best sources for all trade goods and always got the best prices for his furs. Around a campfire, though, he could tell funny stories, most of them so good he could tell them three or four times, as he often did as they went down the river, and they were as good the third time as the first. He was also a strong man, and a good man to have on your bow when you went into rapids."

"Jean Tiberge was a man who would be totally ignored these days. He had no education, was slow of speech, and always looked a bit surprised. He could go days without saying a word. But when you came to a portage, he always carried the most packs."

"Jean Plattier was the camp cook. Here was a man with talent. Whatever they shot, he could dress and cook as well as any man on earth. He had brought salt

along on the voyage, a great need given the amount of sweating they did, and he had also thought to bring some other seasonings with him, and even a bit of cooking oil. While the others had spent their evenings cleaning their muskets and sharpening their knives, he had spent the winter nights tying up packets of spices. By the time they got back to Quebec, every man was singing his praises and he had the pick of any trade group from then on."

"I think I know who comes next," Elise interrupted. "Just remember Shawn, I will have the ride home to give you a complete description of my forefather if some corrections are needed."

"We shall see," Jolliet replied. "Yes, next comes Claude DuPry. Claude was the hunter. He was the first man to learn how to kill a buffalo, and he was the man who was most quick to kill a deer or a moose or any other game that came near them. And I should say he was a bit of a naturalist. He always wanted to study what he had killed. He didn't just gut a deer, he looked for the position of the heart, even though he had already killed dozens in his career. After the first buffalo, he spent nearly a day examining the beast from every angle. With him along, the group would never be hungry. How's that?" He asked Elise. Anything you care to add?"

"No, that was very good." She nodded at her uncle. "It is true he was noted for both. He could hit many an animal at great distance—people were astounded by his eyesight and careful aim, but he was also a thoughtful man. You see that pair of traits today with most of our men being hunters, and many of our men in the medical field."

"So, now that I have safely passed that shoal…" Jolliet smiled at his god-daughter. "Let me continue with the two other members of the group. I have described Marquette as a man who spoke many languages, and as a man who risked his life to bring Christ to the Indians, but there is more. It turned out he was fun to have around a campfire. He still remembered some of the plays he had learned as a boy in France, and with very little encouragement, he recited long passages into the night, sometimes even standing and acting out portions. Jolliet was the only other man to have any level of formal education, so he was the only one who knew some of the plays. But all of them found the plays fascinating. Marquette probably recited some passages a dozen times over the months going down and back up the Mississippi. He had a gift."

"And Louis? He sang around the campfire. Even his greatest enemies would admit that he had one of the finest voices of his time. He had gotten some training while in college in Quebec, but he had a natural talent. He sang some of the songs they knew and some of the songs he had learned during his time in Paris. Whatever he sang, they loved. He and Marquette were destined to part that fall, but for the brief time they were together, two of the greatest talents in Canada shared campfires in the wilderness."

"Every night they were farther from danger and closer to home, so every night the singing got a bit louder, and the acting lasted a bit longer. As tired as they were from eight or ten hours of paddling against the current, this was a happy group."

"After a few days they passed the Missouri River again, and came around the ox-bow. The paddling was hard, but they knew what to expect, so they managed

well enough. Then they came to a place where they needed to make a decision. They found a small group of Indians who appeared to be waiting for them. Marquette held up the calumet and was shown one in return, so they paddled ashore to meet these Indians. They were Illinois. They had been told by Peorias of their passage, and they had been waiting by this shore for nearly a month in hopes of seeing the Frenchmen."

"Here were the Illinois! This was the tribe they had been looking for and had nearly given up hope of finding. Marquette quickly explained the purpose of the voyage and learned where the main Illinois village was located. It would be six or seven days to paddle up the Illinois River, but the Indians assured them that the Illinois ran almost to the great lake, and that they could take that lake up to the Sault. That seemed too much to hope for, but even if they had to return the whole way and resume traveling up the Mississippi, the Illinois was a significant tribe that needed to be visited. They started up the river immediately, with the Indians walking along the shore."

"It took them six days to paddle the two hundred miles up the Illinois to the village at Kaskaskia, the great village of the tribe, but it was time well spent. They were able to speak with the Indians who had greeted them, so they learned much about the village and the people. By the time they arrived to a huge welcome, they were already convinced that this was the tribe they were hoping to find. A large tribe, it was clear there were several thousand Illinois. With large fields of corn and squash, they built their cabins and stayed in one place for much of the year, the perfect circumstances for missionaries who would have a stable congregation to preach to. This was a tribe with significant possibilities."

"Do you want to explain that you and I might have turned out very differently had things gone differently with the Illinois?" Elise asked.

"Now I was saving that part of the story." He then turned to me. "You know some of us like a bit of drama. While others, like to rush ahead and spoil everything. And the truth is…" Jolliet now turned back to Elise. "The Illinois had nothing to do with the way things turned out. It was all Intendent Colbert. And that decision wasn't made until the next year, so let me save it until then."

"Okay, I yield." Elise replied. "Tell the story your way, but I think the end result had nothing to do with Colbert, but with God."

"God?" Jolliet and I asked in unison.

"Of course. It was God who made the Mascoutin women more beautiful than the Illinois women." What could we say to that? The three of us laughed and sipped some wine and talked of other matters. Some time during the evening the dishes had been cleared and cognac had been set out, but we continued to sip the fine Bordeaux. I looked across the table at Elise smiling and laughing with her uncle and thought how perfect she looked in the candlelight. She must have seen I was staring, for she turned just briefly, gave me the perfect smile, and then went back to talking with her uncle. I will carry that smile with me for many years.

"I think we are done with history for tonight, don't you think?" Jolliet finally asked me.

"Yes. But I want to thank you for this evening. It was kind of you to invite us over."

“The pleasure was mine. Most evenings I sit and talk politics with old men and fat women. Tonight I had the company of a beautiful woman and a man who cares for the history of my country. I hope we can do this again soon.”

After about fifteen more minutes of small talk we were out of the house and into my car. It was right where I had left it, parked by the front door. I drove back to Green Bay with one hand on the wheel, one arm around Elise, and a profound hope that Elise would invite me up to her apartment when we got back to town.

Chapter 14

The Illinois.
1673

Elise invited me to mass with her family again that Sunday, and asked if we could go to her family’s home for dinner after mass. I of course agreed. I had the usual nervousness around the family of a girl I was dating, but I wasn’t a teenager any more, and her folks were pretty good people. Besides, I loved being around her, and I loved that cathedral.

I picked Elise up already wearing my riverboat gambler shirt and suit, which got me a smile and a kiss—always a good way to start the day. Elise was wearing a long gown with a high neckline and long sleeves. It was a church dress, but she still looked great in it. Late March can have all kinds of weather in Green Bay, mostly bad, but that Sunday there was a clear sky and even a bit of warmth. I think it was above fifty, something of a shock after months of biting winds. Women still wore their furs into the church, but many men left their overcoats in their cars, as did I. It was spring in Green Bay.

We found the pew with Elise’s parents and sisters, the same one they had sat in last time, and I was more convinced each pew was assigned, either by pronouncement or by practice. The pew was in the central nave. If you haven’t been in a big cathedral, the main section is usually divided into three sections of pews. The main ceiling is so high, it is supported by two rows of interior columns. Between those two columns is the main nave, the central section with the clearest view of the altar and the clearest view of the ceiling and stained glass windows. This is where the DuPry family had their pew. To the left and right of the columns were more pews, but these had obstructed views of the altar, and lowered ceilings. I don’t like associating status with church, but I would guess status here went to pews in the central nave, while those in the left and right nave were somewhat diminished. However the system worked, I was pleased to be in the middle. The views were lovely. Just as the gothic tradition intended, my eyes constantly moved up above the altar, to the high stained glass windows, and to the sky.

There really isn't much to say about the service. It went as they always do. For me, the more intense part of the day started after the service when Elise decided her father should give me a tour of the church while the women went to look at one of the wedding chapels. This was the first time I was alone with her father. He is about my size, which is to say big for a Frenchman, and in his late fifties. He looks like a kindly old doctor, which of course is what he is. It turned out he was a good guide around the church since he had a passion for architecture.

"Have you visited many large cathedrals?" He asked as we walked up the central aisle towards the altar. Many other people were still milling around the church. They obviously knew each other and were happy to spend time exchanging greetings before going home.

"My family has worshipped in St. Patrick's cathedral in New York many times, and then after college I spent a few weeks in Europe, so I visited the main cathedrals in Dublin and London, and then saw Notre Dame and of course St. Peter's Basilica."

"Did you get to Prague?"

"No." In truth, with just five weeks to spend in Europe, it hadn't occurred to me to visit Prague.

"If you had, you would recognize this church. I am afraid we copied much of St. Vitus Cathedral. Here let me show you." He stopped walking in about the middle of the church. "The standard floor plan for a large cathedral is to take the shape of the cross. This is not only religiously apt, but it helped with building. Since the great cathedrals of Europe took centuries to build, they were built in sections. The top of the cross came first. It was the smallest portion, and could be completed enough to allow at least some use during the centuries the rest of the church was being put up. Then the left and right arms of the cross went up. Finally the longer base of the cross was built. The altar is typically placed here, where the arms cross the main nave, and the church is effectively broken into four parts. The priests end up with the top chapel for their own services, the local royalty take the side chapels, and the base chapel is the one used by regular folk and visited by the tourists."

"St. Vitus is different. It was built over nearly a thousand years, but it was put up with a different plan. The two arms were shortened to fit within the Prague Castle, with the left arm used for the organ, and the right on used as a second set of doors." He pointed left and right so I could see this was exactly the plan used in the National Cathedral. "More importantly, the central nave doesn't stop in the middle, but runs the entire length of the church. That gives the church a more open feeling, and gives far more space for worshipers. That's the concept we stole from Prague. And I think it works pretty well, don't you?"

"Yes, it is a beautiful church."

"We are building a very similar cathedral in Biloxi. We think that will be the next major focus for Catholics in Louisiana. Maybe you saw it when you were down there?"

"No, I spent all my time in New Orleans."

"Try to see it next time you are down there. It is in a beautiful setting overlooking the gulf. Now I guess we should try to catch up with the women." He led the way around the altar where I could see four chapels that extended in a

kind of fan. We joined the women who were in one of them. Estelle, the college-aged sister was describing a wedding she had attended in the chapel the day before. I could see that the chapel would work fine for most weddings. The room would easily hold one hundred people, and while the ceiling only rose up about thirty feet, the room was still filled with light and felt spacious. I eased over beside Elise, who took my hand while we stood listening to Estelle describe the wedding in great detail.

At some point, standing there holding Elise's hand in a wedding chapel, even my slow brain began to think the obvious. Me, Elise, marriage? Would Elise marry an American? I glanced in her direction and she must have sensed my motion, because she turned toward me just then and gave me a beautiful smile. What was she thinking? Suddenly I noticed that Marie, the younger sister was looking at the two of us, and then Estelle was staring at us as she talked, and I knew that nobody was thinking about yesterday's wedding any more. It was a very intense moment. Elise's mother saved us by interrupting Estelle's monologue.

"Maybe we should go home now and get some lunch. I am sure everyone is hungry." Everyone quickly agreed and we left the chapel like it was on fire.

Elise was her usual self as we drove to her home. She sat turned toward me and talked about the service and the church and endless items that were interesting simply because she was the one talking about them. Finding the family home was easy enough. It was on the fashionable east side of course, but I was pleased to see that it was not a fake Loire Valley chateau put on five acres. Hers was a solid two story house in a neighborhood of two story houses. Each house looked like it had four bedrooms upstairs, a formal dining room, maybe a sun room out back, and a garage slightly behind the house in the form of a carriage house. I guessed the age of the houses as twenty to fifty years, and the whole neighborhood was blessed with towering oaks and maples. It looked like a great place to raise kids.

I was right about the formal dining room, at least as far as the DuPry home was concerned. We were quickly gathered there as Mrs. DuPry—Evette—brought out a series of dishes that had apparently been prepared before church. There was lots of food. Conversation started awkwardly as Dr. DuPry—Jean—tried to get the girls talking about school topics, but they were having none of it. They wanted to talk horses, and that is what we conversed about for an hour or more over lunch. It turned out Evette was the real horse master in the house. The girls were quick to tell me that she had won many awards for dressage when she was younger. If nothing else, it meant they could follow their passion for horses without fear of too many complaints from mom.

After lunch Elise took me for a walk through the neighborhood explaining where her friends lived, which trees she had climbed, which was the best street for soccer, where her grammar school was. She showed me her childhood. I listened, held her hand, and enjoyed the afternoon. We left some time later. I drove Elise back to her apartment and left her there—she had papers to grade and a lesson to plan, and I went back to my apartment. It was warm enough that I poured myself a glass of wine, opened the door onto the balcony for the first time in six months, and stood looking over the Fox River. What was on my mind? You could guess that easily enough. Would Elise marry an American? I sipped my wine, thought about her smile in the chapel, and wondered.

I was still wondering the next day when Picard called. Thank God for Picard. He gave me an appointment for Wednesday, which gave me time to hit the library and read up on the Illinois before the next interview, but it also kept me busy enough so that I had something to think about besides Elise. How could I ever solve the mystery of Elise?

On Wednesday I drove down to Jolliet's chateau with a greater understanding of the Illinois. Much was available about the tribe – their location, their size, their massacre by the Iroquois. Theirs was not a happy story.

Security at President Jolliet's residence was just as tight as it had been on my last visit, but the home seemed emptier. Maybe people were afraid to visit now. I hoped this meant I could get a longer interview. I needed to wrap up 1673. The voyage down the Mississippi was a good story, but it was a story that was well-known. I had unearthed little that was new during my library research, and while the interviews with the President added some personal details, I had found no major discoveries. I had come to Green Bay looking for a smoking gun. So far I didn't even have a focus that could help me organize a book. I needed to get past 1673 and on to whatever disasters had occurred in 1674. President Jolliet seemed to feel the same need to move along, for he launched into a discussion of the Illinois the minute we were seated in the sun room.

"You recall the importance of the Illinois. To the east are the Iroquois. They have accepted peace for the moment, but nobody trusted them. Too many French had died. Everyone assumed there would be another war with them, maybe several more. To the west were the Sioux, and while there had not been a war with them yet, every trader came back from that region with the same warning – these people were tough and would never yield on any matter. Conflict with them was inevitable. What we needed were allies against one or the other. The Hurons were pathetic, and most other tribes were too small to matter. A dream tribe would be located where the Illinois were, and would be as large as the Illinois were. Now, would they make good allies?"

"The early signs were good. Louis was impressed with the size of the main village and with the apparent organization of the tribe. Leaders seemed to lead, decisions approved by the elders were actually followed by members of the tribe. What they said one day, they still followed the next. In short, they were a perfect ally. It is really too bad that bastard LaSalle got them all killed. But now I am like Elise and getting ahead of the story."

"Marquette loved the tribe from the moment they pulled their canoes ashore. His initial conversations convinced him that the tribe had a genuine interest in learning about Christ. He talked to one and all, translated for Louis, and prepared to tell the story of Christ in the same way he had told it to the Mascoutins."

"They stayed five days. As you can imagine, the men were all thinking increasingly of home and they still had a very long way to go. But they understood how important this tribe was, so they waited patiently, doing some trading and giving the canoes a thorough refitting while Louis and Marquette held endless meetings with elders and explored the village."

"Marquette was a hit around the evening campfire. Just as with the Mascoutins, he used a cloth backdrop to add drama to his little play, and just as with the Mascoutins, his crowd grew each night. It looked like he could tell Christ's story

every night for a month and have a crowd gathered around to hear him. He was so popular, in fact, that it caused real problems when the voyaguers left after five days. The Illinois wanted Marquette to stay, and I suspect Marquette wanted to stay too, but he also had reporting responsibilities. He needed to return to the mission at Green Bay to describe his voyage to his superiors. The best he could do at the moment was to promise that he would return the next summer to continue their instruction. As it turned out, that promise cost him his life, but I suspect he would have made the promise even had he known what the consequences would be."

"The crowning event of their visit came as they were getting into their canoes to leave. A woman brought a new born baby for Marquette to baptize. Here he was, already standing in the river, ready to get into his canoe, when the woman rushes forward with the baby. He of course stops to baptize the baby, and later tells his superiors about the baby. As far as he is concerned, he knows he has saved one soul. That makes the entire trip worthwhile by his measure. The fact that they have not only found the Mississippi, but have determined two routes to it, one by the Fox and one by the Illinois, is all well and good, but what really matters is that he has saved a soul. Can you imagine him as a parish priest? I bet kids would show up for CCD classes."

"Anyway, the Indians explain again that the river goes all the way to Lake Michigan (which they call Lake of the Illinois), and the chief himself leads the voyageurs all the way up its length. This now gives the explorers a second route to the Mississippi that they can report. As it turns out, both routes are remarkably easy. The Illinois doesn't actually go all the way to the lake, but the portage is really no longer than the portage between the Fox and the Wisconsin Rivers. There is nothing to stop commerce up and down the Mississippi now. You reach the northern sections via the Fox, and the middle sections via the Illinois. Both rivers are home to Indians who want to learn the ways of Christ and want to trade with the French. This trip just keeps getting better for the voyageurs."

"They part from the chief and other Indians at the present location of Chicago and begin paddling up the western shore of Lake Michigan. This is totally new territory to the French, so Louis has the men stop repeatedly while he maps the entrances of various rivers and tries to measure the size of the lake. All this takes time and the men are getting tired, so this is not a section of the trip where they make great time. They had started north on July 17th. It is now late August and they have been paddling against the current for most of that time. There is no current on the lake, but there are high waves and occasional storms that force them to stay ashore for portions of several days. Picture a group of men who are excited by what they have accomplished, but very, very tired. On a good day they cover twenty miles, and there are lots of miles from the bottom of that lake north."

"By mid-September they are back at Door County. They recognize Sturgeon Bay, portage to the other side of the peninsula, and then paddle down the bay and back to Green Bay. They have completed a circuit of more than two thousand miles, found the most important river on the continent, discovered strange new animals, met several Indian tribes, determined two routes to the Mississippi and added tens of thousands of square miles to the kingdom of France. What did they get when they landed in Green Bay? Nothing. The mission was empty. The Indians were all

off hunting, Father Allouez was down river at the Mascoutin mission, and the second priest, Father Andre, was up with the Menominee. The poor cabins of the mission were open to them, and the voyageurs laid their exhausted bodies down in the poor huts and slept. That was their homecoming."

"Why go back to Green Bay at all?" I asked. "It would seem to be out of their way. The main trading and ecclesiastical station in the west was at the Sault."

"You are right. Green Bay was a minor mission in those days, so minor that it could even be left abandoned. But Marquette had been ordered to return to Green Bay as his next assignment, so that is where they went. They all stayed there several days, probably hoping that one of the other priests might return while they were there, but neither did. Finally they unloaded all of Marquette's belongings, gave him what food they could, and then left."

"So Marquette is left alone in Green Bay?" I asked.

"Remember that he had been living alone with Indians for years. While there were no Indians or Frenchmen around at the moment, they expected that as winter came on various Indians would wander into camp. I know it seems very odd to us, but that is how people like Marquette lived in those years. I suspect he was relieved to be out of his canoe, having lived on his knees for more than four months. And remember that he was never alone—he lived with God."

"And Louis?"

"Louis and the others had to get up to the Sault. That is where they had their trading business. Louis' brother Zacharie had been left in charge and now it was time to see how trading had gone. For his part, Louis had little to show for his voyage. Trading profits were supposed to cover exploration costs, and they hadn't. There had been lots of gifts given and received, but very little trading on this voyage. His creditors were not going to be happy. It was now mid October and Louis and his men still had at least two more weeks of paddling to do to get back up to the Sault. They could expect storms and high waves and nights of freezing cold. They needed to leave now while they still could."

"In their last days together Louis and Marquette shared their journals and maps to make sure neither had missed anything, and then when the time came, Louis and his men left. Marquette stood on the shore and waved to them, in perfectly good cheer as they paddled off into the choppy waters of the Bay. Jacques Largillier was the only man of that group who would ever see Marquette again, and he, unfortunately, would have to bury him."

"Louis and his men had a very tough three week voyage north, fighting wind and waves and cold all the way, but they got to Sault St. Marie in early November. There was frost on their canoes each morning for that last week, and they were very pleased to be back in a place filled with Frenchmen, French wine, and the good cheer of family and friends. And, they finally had an audience for the stories they had been waiting to tell for months. There was going to be lots to talk about during the long winter nights this year."

"Thus ends 1673," I said. "A good year, to be followed, I think you said, by a bad year."

"No, 1673 was a magnificent year, followed by a year of endless disasters. I should have Picard schedule your visit for a very rainy day when I tell you about that year. You already know Marquette gets deathly ill that year, beginning his

slow death, and that in itself is a tragedy, but so much more went wrong. There was such foolishness, so many trivial agendas which nearly destroyed so much potential. One of the major discoveries of the century was made in 1673, and essentially lost just the next year. Our next discussion will not be pleasant."

"In the meantime," I replied. "Let me thank you for 1673. You helped me understand the year much better.

"You are certainly welcome." Our interview ended at that point and I returned to my car. On the drive back to Green Bay I thought about Marquette sitting there alone in the fall of 1673. Green Bay, Wisconsin – population one. He had spent six months visiting lands unknown to Europeans and he had no one to tell about it. Instead, he sat in his bark covered hut and wrote page after page of description. I guess he was telling his story to pieces of paper. When would he have the pleasure of human companionship? Not until spring, when Andre and Allouez would return to Green Bay. He had his manuscript, and he had his God, but surely it must have been a trial to endure a Green Bay winter under such circumstances.

Chapter 15

1674.

In early April I learned how Elise handled stress—she walked. And she walked. And she walked. I wish I had bought a pedometer. I am convinced we walked a thousand miles around the university while she handled the stress of her upcoming dissertation defense. Had we been in Virginia, I would have enjoyed the walks. April is fabulous there. The trees are green, the flowers are in full bloom, temperatures are in the seventies. It is spring there. In Green Bay the first week of April means most of the snow has melted, temperatures get into the mid fifties during the day and thirties every night, some of the grass is getting a bit green in spots, and it rains more often than it snows. No one will ever write a song about spring time in Green Bay.

Elise took my hand and we walked. Sometimes we exchanged small talk—how quickly some of the snow drifts were going down, how pretty the mud puddles looked—actually those were the things I talked about. Elise had less and less to say each day. She just grabbed my hand firmly and kept walking. Periodically she would give my hand a series of clenches and I knew she was rehearsing her dissertation defense. Each grab of my hand was another point she was emphasizing. She had strong hands.

I mostly kept my mouth shut and looked for anything that resembled green. I discovered willows. While the sap was doubtless rising in the huge oaks and maples of the campus, it was hidden under their deep bark. Willows have thinner bark on their whip-like branches so I could see them changing from grey to brown to green. Willows gave me hope.

Elise's defense was scheduled for April tenth. It was unclear how many shoes we would wear out in preparation for that day, but it seemed to me that she had

done everything else that was humanly possible to succeed. The French graduate system is very similar to ours, and why shouldn't it be, we both stole our system from the Germans. After completing her bachelor's degree, she spent three years taking graduate courses. Then she took her comprehensive exams—sixteen hours of writing answers to questions covering any topic in her field. You want to claim you are an expert in this field? Prove it. Or so the sixteen hour endurance test seemed to say.

She had completed her dissertation in two years, which is pretty aggressive in either the US or Canada. Most people take three or four years. The objective in either country is the same. If you want to be a Doctor of Philosophy, prove you can do independent research. So far you have just been a good student, capable of learning the work of others. Now show that you can make a contribution to the field.

She was done in two years because she knew exactly what she wanted to do when she started—research migration. She had gathered her data, she had written her dissertation—nearly two hundred pages—and now she had to present her findings to a panel of five professors. If she could handle their cross-examination for two hours, she was done. During the examination anything could happen. Three of the professors had supervised her research and helped her revise earlier drafts of her report. They should be on her side during any debate over methodology.

But it wouldn't be that simple. Elise had chosen an assistant professor as her main advisor. He had had a great career in the Interior Ministry and knew exactly how her research could be applied, but he had only been on the faculty for three years. This is to say, he didn't have tenure and had to be careful of how he presented her work to a panel of people who would later vote on whether or not he got to keep his job. The two other professors who supervised her work constantly fought over how she should present her results. Since the statistical work she was presenting was the whole basis for Elise's research, Elise had gotten a woman out of the statistics department to supervise her work, carefully vetting each measurement technique she had used and every formula she had calculated. The result was that nearly one hundred pages of the dissertation was a description of her methodology and results. The third supervising professor was convinced this was too much and that Elise should present the data "in a form laymen can understand." Elise had visions of the two professors fighting each other throughout the defense. Then there were the two outside professors. What would they find to argue about? Who knew? So Elise walked and walked and worked through every argument she could think of. My hand got a real working over, as did my feet.

When I wasn't escorting Elise around campus, I was paying more and more attention to the news. I hadn't read much of the news my first year in Green Bay. I hadn't been much interested in the current century, and besides, you know how it is when you are new to a place. The paper and TV are full of names you don't know doing things you can't really understand. You have no context and you have no sense of movement. Pierre So and So did such and such. Who is Pierre, and does he always do such and such? Why does it matter?

Over the last year I had made a more serious effort to follow events. I was interviewing the ex-President of the country. It only seemed fair to be able to name the current president, major officials, major issues. I was getting the sense that the major issue of the day was Louisiana. At first I thought I might be seeing too much there since I had just been down to that province and I had had my own personal dealings with folks there. But the more I followed the news, the more I was convinced something big was building.

Much of the focus was on the governor's race. The election was scheduled for September and the rhetoric just kept getting louder as the day approached. The current guy was running for a second four-year term, but he had lots of opposition. It seemed like there were twenty or thirty political parties down there, but each of them had the same platform—we are getting screwed by the bastards in Green Bay. Listening to the candidate debates I sensed the main effort was for each candidate to list as many injuries as possible, with the winner being whoever found the most fault with the national government. Going bald? Losing your job? Not landing a trophy bass with each cast? Those rotten guys in Green Bay were at fault. Some of the accusations were so weird I sat in front of my TV and laughed. But when they panned to the audience down in Baton Rouge or Biloxi, the faces were all clenched in anger.

The weirdest group wore blue arm bands with white crosses on them. These boys looked seriously constipated. I wondered what a blood pressure cuff would register on them. A few of them even wore pistols on their hips. I was glad I hadn't run across any of them in New Orleans, but maybe they only came out after midnight. They seemed to have several leaders, but the guy actually running for governor was the shortest of the three. I kept waiting for him to pose with his hand in his shirt like Napoleon, but I never saw him do it on camera.

I asked one of the guys at work about the arm bands and if they had any meaning, and I was glad I asked him rather than President Jolliet.

"It's a clever twist of history," he told me. "Blue arm bands is what the Jolliets gave the citizens who rose up to defend Quebec after the governor had run off to Montreal with the regular troops. It has since always meant citizens taking over government. The white crosses? That means the white religion, which in their twisted view is how some Huguenots see themselves. If I were a Jolliet, I would go a little bit crazy every time I saw one of those arm bands."

I quickly filed "arm bands" away as one topic I would never broach at the President's residence. My next appointment with the President was the same day as Elise's dissertation defense. By the time I got back to Green Bay she would be done. She told me that if things went well, she and her committee would go out to dinner at an Italian restaurant just off campus. I was to look for her there first. If things didn't go well, I was to go to her apartment and help her work her way through a case of brandy. I gave her a good luck kiss and promised to be at the restaurant by six.

As I drove into the new security parking area I could see that the President was busy again. There were a dozen cars in there already and more arriving with me. It looked like negotiation time again, or at least a time for some serious meetings. Security took fifteen minutes to let me in the front door, but Picard was right there to meet me. I was impressed with how calm he remained even when things got

hectic like they surely were that day. He explained that this would be another of our “small office” days, and he led me down a side hall to the chef’s office we had used before.

President Jolliet arrived after about ten minutes and his first thoughts were about Elise.

“How is she doing today?”

“She’s a bit tense,” I said. “But she is completely prepared for this exam. If those profs aren’t careful, she will jump in and give a two hour lecture on migration statistics and none of them will get a word in.”

“Yes, I bet she would do it, too. Where is the celebration later?”

“They are going to Antonio’s off campus. Do you know the place?

“Yes, before they went upscale, they were a great place for a student to get a cheap pizza. Maybe I will drop over to congratulate her.”

“That would be great. I bet with you there the service will improve.”

“I just hope the wine has improved. I used to go there to eat with my children as they were in the university. They had the worst Chianti on earth. But let’s talk quickly of 1674. I will save Father Marquette for a day when we have more time. His story should not be rushed.

“1674 had four other problems, three involving paper work and one involving Louis’ future. Let me at least see if I can get through the paper work problems before Picard comes for me. You will recall that Louis and Marquette each kept a log of the journey and that they kept them in separate canoes. These logs included the maps they had made, observations of animals, reflections on the tribes they had encountered, all important matters. They were also a form of legal proof. The logs established to the world that Frenchmen had been to new places and found new territory, so they helped establish legal claim to the lands on behalf of the French King. Yet here they were, being jostled around in the bottom of a leaky birchbark canoe that could tip over with any wave or any shift in the wind. For two thousand miles, these logs rode the bottom of these canoes.

“In 1674 Louis had spent the winter in the Sault. He had lots of time to make a copy of his journal, and he did so. The safest place to leave the journal was with the Jesuits. With one copy safely stored with the good fathers, he could take the second copy down river with him in the spring. And as you know, having paddled across most of Canada, portaging all the portages, fighting through all the rapids, he was within sight of Montreal when the canoe capsized. The log went straight to the bottom and was lost.”

“And Louis was almost drowned.” I added.

“Yes, that is where Claude DuPry first saved his life. Nobody was much of a swimmer in those days. There was no Red Cross to give lessons. Besides, going under in the midst of a rapids, few men had time to swim. The water was ice cold and knocked the air out of their lungs instantly. The rocks broke limbs or gashed ribs. And then there was the tangle of canoe and packs and trade goods all being tossed around and onto the unlucky men in the water. Men drowned every year in pretty much the same manner. It looked like it was Louis’ turn.

“Fortunately, Claude was at the stern and was thrown clear of the canoe when it went over. He landed in a small pool of water and was able to get his feet. He got out of the river and ran along side looking to see if he could find either Louis or

Jean Tiberge who had also gone in. You can imagine what things were like for him, trying to look for his two friends in the midst of the confused articles rapidly floating down river. He got Jean first. Jean had his head above water and was working his way over to a side of the river, fighting the current and looking for some place solid to grasp. Big Claude managed to jump around a rock and grab Jean by the shoulder as he passed. That was all the help Jean needed to get his feet under him. He was a bit unsteady, but he was able to grab a rock and sit down on the shore. He would be okay.

Louis was the bigger problem. Claude thought he saw him once, but then he was gone again. Everything was flying down river so fast, Claude had to race along shore to stay even with the canoe. Was Louis under it? Behind it? Somewhere totally separate? When he did finally see Louis, he thought he was too late. Louis was floating down the river just beside the canoe, but he was floating face down with blood streaming from his head. Claude jumped into the river one more time, pushed the canoe aside, and grabbed Louis by the back of his coat. As he dragged him toward shore he flipped him over on his back, but he could see no signs of life. Jean joined him as he pulled Louis the last few yards to shore, and both of them laid Louis bent over a rock, the standard approach of the day to force water out of a man's chest. Louis did cough out some water, but he was still unconscious and bleeding badly. He was unconscious for over an hour, by which time Claude had bandaged his head and slowed his bleeding. It was a very close call.

"I suppose the fact that he had survived the capsizing gave Louis some perspective on his loss, but his loss was still substantial. The log was essentially the King's document. It was gone. The pelts he had traded for over the last year? Gone. The gifts he had gotten from the various Indian tribes they had met on the journey? Gone. The canoe he had borrowed from his mother? Gone. Had he managed to go just five more miles without mishap, he could have paddled into Montreal a hero. As it was, he and Claude and Jean had to walk the rest of the way and arrived in Montreal like beggars. Then of course they had to travel the rest of the way to Quebec and face the governor. If there was one saving grace to his situation, it was that he had made a copy of the log and left it safely with the Jesuits at Sault St. Marie."

"When did he find out that it was lost too?" I asked.

"News never traveled fast in those days, but he knew already in August that the other copy had been destroyed. One would have thought that the Jesuit mission would have been the safest place in the world to store such a document. It wasn't. You have probably already read it was the Ottawas again. Do you mind if I take us on a tangent about Indian politics?"

"No, please do."

"Both our countries learned to fear and respect the Iroquois. They were brave in battle and savage in victory. All the stories about torture are true. They spent twelve hours killing captives, slowly burning them to death from sundown to sun up. But so did the other tribes. The brutality of those times was unbelievable—and universal. What made the Iroquois so fearsome was their political skills. Tribal leaders actually controlled tribe members. Young men couldn't just run off and do what they wanted, and then run back to the tribe where the whole tribe might

have to face the consequences of their actions. Eighteen year old men are inherently stupid and savage. Societies that can control them survive, societies that can't, fail.

"The Iroquois could not only control their young men, but they managed to coordinate five separate tribes in a confederacy that lasted centuries. The Sioux exercised the same kind of control and the same kind of organization. They fought us to a stand-still for two centuries. The Illinois seemed to have the political organization to survive, or at least that is what Louis thought after meeting with them. I trust Louis' judgment on that. They could have been a powerful ally.

"Then you get tribes like the Ottawas. They had already murdered Sioux near Chequamegon Bay, and so had had to run hundreds of miles to escape the obvious consequences. Many still lived in St. Ignace in hopes that that was sufficient distance to save them from the revenge that was to be expected from the Sioux. A few Ottawas had settled around Sault St. Marie. They hunted, they fished, they traded, and they drank. By 1674 there were maybe a hundred in the vicinity of the mission.

"In June, a party of ten Sioux braves approached the settlement and asked permission to enter so they could discuss trade. For the French at the settlement, this was a marvelous event. The traders wanted to trade with the Sioux since they controlled huge swaths of land that were reported to be teaming with beaver and other animals with commercially valuable pelts. The missionaries wanted to meet with the Sioux since a treaty with them might enable the Jesuits to send missionaries to the west for a thousand miles and save tens of thousands of souls. But the French saw the problem immediately—the Ottawas. There was no sense exacting a promise from the Ottawas—they never kept their word. So the French did the best they could. They admitted the Sioux into the fort, and admitted only a couple dozen Ottawas, disarming all of them as they came in the gate. But they did not search them carefully enough. The Sioux had barely sat down when one of the Ottawas took out a hidden knife and stabbed one of the Sioux. A fight broke out and the outnumbered Sioux retreated to the mission house—the strongest building in the fort. The Ottawas didn't even hesitate. Once the Sioux were in the mission, the Hurons piled wood up around the building and burned it. All the Sioux were burned to death, and of course the missionaries lost their church and all its contents—including Louis's log.

"By the next morning even people as stupid as Ottawas knew they had brought big trouble upon themselves, and they took off straight north, where most were never heard from again. I suspect the Athabascans made short work of them. But in the meantime, they had killed innocent men, destroyed the mission church, obviated any trade pack between the French and the Sioux, and of course they had also burned the sole remaining copy of Louis' log. Word of all of this reached Quebec in late July."

"But there is still Marquette's log." I added.

"Yes, the poor father was ordered to immediately make a copy of his log and send it to Quebec. Of course *immediately* had a different meaning in those times. A message was sent to Green Bay in late July and would have reached Father Marquette in late August. He was already ill then, so it took him several weeks to make his copy. By the time traders had brought it all the way to Quebec, it was

October. Then begins a series of political intrigues that guarantee the log isn't published until 1681. But let me come back to that.

"While these logs are being lost, Claude Dublon, the senior Jesuit at the time, and the Governor agree that they must use the one resource that has not yet been lost—Louis Jolliet. On August first, 1674, Louis is ordered to report to the Governor's residence to provide an oral description of his voyage. He arrives at nine in the morning and find's the governor's parlor is filled with the first citizens of Quebec. The governor is there, as is the Intendent's aide (Colbert was currently back in France), plus Dublon and most of the church hierarchy, plus two dozen scribes and soldiers. There is barely space for him to enter the room.

"Many of these men are Louis' friends, people he has known all his life, but I suspect he was still a bit nervous giving such an extended report before the Governor and the rest of the nobility. He had brought a map with him that he had drawn from memory, and once he was given permission from the Governor to start, he pointed to the map and began his story. For the next twelve hours he described each of the islands he had found in Lake Michigan, the rapids above Green Bay, the courtesy and business acumen of the Mascoutin, the surprises of the upper Fox, the wild ride down the Wisconsin, the first sighting of the Mississippi, the meeting with the Peorias, the hunting of buffalo, the many rivers that intersected the Mississippi, including ones they thought might be helpful when traveling east or west, the Arkansas and their threat, the Illinois and their quick route to the Lake of the Illinois, and the huge lake that flowed into the lake of the Hurons.

"The scribes copied his words as fast as they could, and a few nobles asked questions about the Mississippi and about buffalo, but most of the room sat motionless while Louis told his tale. They broke twice for meals, but otherwise the day was spent entirely in listening to Louis. Of course he had already told much of his story to many in the room during the past several weeks, but this was the first time he had explained the entire trip, and the first time he had made an official report of his voyage. That night fifty men disbursed to their homes where they retold the tale and tried to appreciate for themselves what the voyage had meant. It would take weeks before they all understood the consequences of Louis' discovery—the new lands, the new routes to the south and west, the new source of food. Canada had just doubled in size, and the consequences of that would be many. One of the transcripts of his report was put on the next ship to France, where they too would need time to understand all that had been achieved.

"But politics giveth and politics taketh away. While Louis' report was now available to the leaders of France, Marquette's log was about to be lost to the Jesuits. If any thing, this loss was more grievous than the burning of Louis' log, and it is even more difficult to understand. You see, Marquette's log was unpublished because of the way Catholicism was practiced in China."

"China?"

"Yes. You see every time the missionaries went into a new country they had decisions to make about which local practices to allow and which to ban. Ban too many, and you have no converts. Ban too few, and you have no religion left. Compromise was required at every turn. In the case of China, the issue was how much ancestor worship to permit. The Portuguese Jesuits, who were first into the

country, decided that ancestor worship would be allowed, and they modified their service, defining the new service as the "Chinese Rite." Decades go by and Spanish Jesuits come to China. They abhor the practice and demand that ancestor worship be stripped from all Catholic rites. The Portuguese refuse to change. Both sides appeal to the Pope. His cardinals advise careful review of all liturgical materials, and closer control of religious rites. The Pope agrees and says nothing can be published without his specific permission, meaning among other things, that the Portuguese cannot keep publishing books of "Chinese Rites" until the Pope has had time to review the practices.

"All this seems perfectly reasonable from the Pope's perspective, but in his declaration that he will have full authority over all religious publications, he forgets about Louis 14th. Louis has been working very hard to make himself the head of all religious activity in France, from appointing bishops to determining the location of new cathedrals. Louis believes all publications require his approval, not the Pope's. So the two argue over the matter and during that period nothing can be published by the church since nothing could be approved by both Pope and King. Their argument begins in 1673.

"Among the things that cannot be published are the Jesuit Relations. These are the annual reports on the activities of the missionaries abroad, the reports that had so excited Louis when he had been at school. Now the voyage down the Mississippi is ready to be included in the Relation, and in fact Claude Dublon has created a Relation for the year 1673 and has included Marquette's log. It is sent to France so that the Jesuit schools can spread the word of the great news. A Jesuit father has found the main river of the Americas. What none of the priests in Canada know is that there will be no publication of the Relation this year or any year over the next decade. The Canada Relation is filed away at the cathedral in Chantilly in the hopes that someday permission will be granted. It never is. If you care to see it, the Relation is still in Chantilly. Meanwhile, decades go by and none of the teachers of students of France know that there is a river called the Mississippi and it flows to the south through some of the best land on Earth."

"I can see why you hate this year," I responded. "One of the major discoveries of this era is made, yet remains unknown. Louis' logs are destroyed, and Marquette's logs are blocked from publication. There should be people all over France planning to take advantage of these new lands, but it would appear few understood the opportunity."

"Yes, years are wasted and silly decisions are made. The first portion of Marquette's log, the Recit, is published in 1681 in a book of discoveries written by Thevenot. A member of the Academy of Sciences, he is publishing a series on the main explorations in the Americas, and includes an edited section of Marquette's log. From it he concludes that the voyage of Marquette and Jolliet has shown that there is another way to the west across North America. That is the extent of his interest in the voyage. And that is almost the last mention of the voyage to be found in print for another half century.

"Meanwhile, if there is one man on earth who fully understands the importance of this discovery, it is Louis Jolliet. He spends 1674 reporting on his voyage and fighting off lawsuits from all those who thought they would get rich from his trading in the new lands. It is an ugly time. Even his mother sues. But as he has

time, he plans his next move. He will take a group of men to Illinois. They will trade and they will farm that rich land, and they will feed Canada. The Governor is interested enough to send the request to the King. Why not give Louis some of this new land, and see what can be grown there? The King says no."

"I have read several places about Louis' request," I interrupted. "But I have been unable to find any rationale for the decision. There are millions of acres of new land. Why not use some of them?"

"You won't find an explanation for the King's actions because Kings never explain their actions. They also aren't like presidents who keep their old papers and create libraries for men like yourself to unearth their strategies. We will never know why the King did what he did."

"Do you have a theory?" I asked.

"Yes, yes." The president laughed quietly. "Our family has many theories. My favorite is that Louis the 14th wouldn't approve a move to Illinois because none of his advisors could find Illinois on a map. In that court, such a thing was possible. A more common theory is that the general policy was to keep men near Quebec. There were always threats from Indians or the British, so the more men within two day's travel of Quebec, the more men who would be available to its defense. That is a reasonable theory, but it assumes a reasonable sovereign. Given what we know about Louis the 14th, who can say.

"But whatever the reasons for the decision, we know the consequences. Had Louis been granted lands in Illinois, that would now be our capital. Canada, which in 1674 was still importing food from France, would have been self-sufficient in food a decade earlier and exporting food to France soon thereafter. We would also have had a stronger position along the Ohio and would have been better able to meet the British challenge at Fort Duquesne. Much of our history would have been different."

"That includes your personal history, as I understand it." I added

"Yes, it certainly would have changed my ancestry. And I would be drinking wine along the banks of the Illinois instead of along the Fox. It is even more flat there, but somewhat warmer. That would be nice some days. But, enough of such thoughts. I have a few challenges here in Green Bay that will take the rest of my afternoon. Please give my best to Elise. If I am lucky, I will be able to join the party some time this evening." With that he stood, shook my hand, and left. I wrapped up my tape recorder, packed away my notes, and headed for the front door.

Picard was waiting for me. "Congratulate Elise for me," he asked as I left. I agreed and walked with a guard back to my car. I half expected the guard to also say something about Elise, since it appeared much of the world knew this was her day to defend her dissertation, but the guard, as always, walked with me in total silence.

My time with the President had been longer than I had expected, so it was after six by the time I got to Antonios. I half expected the dinner to be winding down. It would be for Americans, where the after-defense dinner tends to be short and formal, and reserved for just the committee and the new Ph.D. I hadn't even gotten into the restaurant before I saw that the after-defense dinner in Canada was a good deal more fun. Several of her friends were entering the restaurant at the

same time I was, and all of us had to make a serious effort just to get in the door. Antonio's was packed, and all of it was for Elise.

The noise level was as amazing as the crowd. Everyone was happy, and everyone was shouting. Each of us who entered were greeted by shouts of "She passed," from several people who had posted themselves near the doors and felt it was their job to explain the obvious to Elise's friends. We thanked them, shook hands, and pushed onward. I still hadn't seen Elise, but the center of the crowd seemed to be to the left of the doors against the wall. I gradually worked my way in that direction. Along the way I spoke with more of Elise's friends. I learned that she had passed, that her professors were still here somewhere, as were a number of big shots from the Interior Ministry. I was tempted to tell them that President Jolliet was on his way, but I decided to let that be a surprise.

My first glimpse of Elise came after I had already been in the restaurant for over ten minutes. She was where I thought she was, but getting over there was going to be hard. She was in an animated discussion with an older man who I assume was from the Ministry, and I had at least six or eight more bodies to crawl over or around before I could get to her. Thank God for being tall. She spotted me and pushed her way over. "Shawn! I passed."

"Yes, I've heard." I have her a hug and then held on while she led me back through the crowd.

"Shawn Murphy, this is Professor Mitrand, my major professor."

"My pleasure, sir." I extended my hand.

"The pleasure was mine." He replied, looking briefly at me, and then turning his attention to Elise. "This was the first dissertation I have ever supervised, and I suspect it will always be the best. By fall your research will be published in one of the leading journals, and you will be able to pick any academic post you wish."

"And you know," she replied, "that I am not cut out for the academic world. I will work in the Ministry just as you did."

"Ah, but you are smarter than I am," he continued. "You will tire of the meetings more quickly and will get back to the university where you can conduct your research without needing approvals from four layers of bureaucrats."

"If so, I hope I will be able to work with you again." She replied. She gave him another hug and then led me off, as always, taking my arm with both her hands. We never took more than two steps before we had to stop while she took congratulations from another friend or spoke with another member of the ministry she would soon be joining. It appeared she had followed the President's advice and given the ministry a copy of her research, or at least fully briefed them on her work, for they all seemed very conversant in her results. Each of the ministry people was careful to address her as "Doctor DuPry." I wondered how many of them would be her subordinates when she started there July 1st.

"When I hear people say *Doctor DuPry*," she told me, "I think they are talking about my father. It will take me a while to connect my own identity to that name." While I tried to think of some profound response to her observation, we were off again, steering a path through a sea of friends. There must have been two hundred people on that room, and we talked with each of them, pausing only twice to grab glasses of wine that were being brought around on a tray. Some food also appeared at one point, but we never got near it.

Around nine some of her family also began to filter in. I saw Elise's sisters first, the two of them standing together, each with a glass of wine, and both having a great time looking over the boys in the room and comparing notes. Later I saw her father talking with the restaurant manager, and I guessed who was paying for the party. At least he was smiling.

President Jolliet arrived just before ten. Despite the crowd, room was instantly made for him, and he quickly walked to Elise and gave her a long hug. "Congratulations, Doctor DuPry." He said. She looked so proud I thought she was going to cry. Before she could, he turned to the crowd which had suddenly hushed as even the folks in the corners learned the President was there.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he began, in a voice that was louder than normal, but not shouting. He seemed to have determined the perfect volume to be heard, yet to command attention. "I have with me an act of our Legislature, duly signed by President D'Stang this day." He pulled a white envelope from his pocket and slowly unfolded a sheet of paper that had been inside. I could see it pretty well from where I stood, and it looked official to me.

"The Legislative Act, now the Law of our Land, reads as follows:

> 'Whereas Elise Marie DuPry has now performed all the duties required to be named Doctor of Philosophy, and whereas this degree has now been granted by the National University of Canada, and whereas this esteemed woman of Canada will soon be taking a leadership role in the Interior Ministry of her nation, and whereas Doctor DuPry is known to be a woman of fine character and a credit to her country, we the Legislature of Canada and the President of Canada, do this day, April 10, 2004, declare to be Doctor Elise Marie DuPry Day, and do enjoin the leading citizens of Canada to celebrate this day in the appropriate manner. Signed, Henri D'Stang, President, Canada."

"Doctor DuPry," he turned and faced Elise. "On behalf of the current President of Canada, and on behalf of several past Presidents of Canada…" the crowd laughed at that. "Allow me to congratulate you on your achievement." He bowed to her and kissed her hand while her friends cheered.

"And now," he said, quickly taking a glass of wine from one of the people standing near him. "We are under Presidential orders to celebrate appropriately. To Doctor DuPry." He raised his glass and then drank the contents in one gulp as did the rest of the room. There was a cheer, more wine appeared, and the room somehow got even louder.

I have to admit the French know how to have a party. There was still a good crowd at Antonios past midnight, and there was no let up in volume. But I could feel Elise begin to tire. She had been there, on her feet, since before five, and once we passed midnight she began to lean more and more on me – not that I am complaining. I kept an arm around her as more and more people came to talk with her, this time to say their goodbyes. Finally she spent some quiet time with her family. She and her mother had a long hug and some tears, and then there were hugs and tears for her sisters. Finally she and her dad spoke for a while, followed by more hugs and more tears.

I took her home then. It was past one and we went straight to bed. Elise spoke quietly for a little while, a bit about some questions they had asked her during the defense, and a bit about how happy she was so many people came to the party, but slowly she wound down and dropped off to sleep. I listened silently and watched her eyes blink shut. I think I will never see a woman as happy as Elise was that night.

Chapter 16

The Final Journey of Father Jacques Marquette. 1674 – 1675

Over the next several weeks Elise and I were able to spend a lot of time together. She had the dissertation behind her, and while she was still teaching the statistics course, she had come to terms with her class – she would teach as well as she possible could, and they would learn what they chose to learn. Relieved of all the stress, Elise was amazing to be around. We went out for dinner, met friends at clubs, and took long walks. Even the walks were better. She now proceeded at a much more comfortable pace, she talked constantly and excitedly about anything and everything, and periodically she would sort of jump into me from the side. I loved those walks.

Near the end of April Elise called me at work and asked me to join her for lunch at the university and to "meet some people." The golf course was opening up and so was the café near the first tee. This was a rite of spring for the campus. Since most of the university eateries were along the underground passageways between buildings, students and faculty had been eating in basements for six months. With the opening of the golf course café, they were now free to come up into the light. That didn't mean it was summer yet, but it was at least one indication that winter was over.

When I arrived at the café, I found Elise already sitting at a table with two middle-aged men. I assumed they were professors of hers, or maybe people from the Ministry. I was wrong. Elise had prepared a surprise for me.

"Shawn, I would like you to meet Doctors Jacard and Messier." They stood and we shook hands all around before I took the fourth seat at the table. "Doctor Jacard is Senior Editor of the National University Press, and Doctor Messier is chair of the university History Department. " I gave Elise a look at that point that I think indicated a bit of puzzlement, but the men seemed to be aware of my situation and both began explaining their presence.

"Doctor Murphy," Jacard began. "I have been hearing about your work with President Jolliet, and I asked Elise if she would introduce us. You see we publish a biography series, and it occurred to me that your work might be a good fit."

"Well I certainly appreciate your interest," I replied. "But I have to tell you I have no book at this point. I have been gathering information of the first voyage down the Mississippi, and the interviews with President Jolliet have added a great deal

of personal color to the historical record, but I am still undetermined about how to shape the material. Is this a narrative about the voyage? An explication of the political consequences? A portrait of the participants, especially Louis Jolliet? I don't know. I am afraid if you asked me for ten page overview, I couldn't provide it yet."

"Yes," he replied. "I know the problem. But that is also exciting, isn't it? You have so much material and so many possibilities."

"I guess exciting is one way to describe it. But I think I could do with a little less excitement and a little more structure."

"Yes, that does feel better. We currently have three biographies in press. How would it be if I sent copies over so you could see how some of our other authors are facing the challenge?"

"That would be helpful," I answered, "but I should tell you my dissertation advisor is an editor for the University of Virginia Press and we have already talked about placing the book—whenever I actually have a book—with them."

"I like that idea." And from the look on his face it appeared that he actually did like it. "We have been looking for a partner university in America for some time. I could see this book as being the bridge between us. They could publish the English edition, and we could publish the French. This could be very good for both of us."

At this point the waiter came and took our order, so I had a convenient break to think through this offer. It was good on its face, but it also created real problems. I had arrived two years ago looking for a flaw in the Jolliets so I could expose the rot at the base of the French nation. Even if I no longer published slash and burn history, could any thesis I established be equally valid on both countries? We were still enemies, right?

As the wine and salads arrived I mumbled something that I hoped was noncommittal but still courteous. We would keep the issue open. Then Messier began his presentation and I was stunned to hear him offer me a job.

"I read your dissertation with great interest," he told me. "I have always had an interest in Washington. It was always my opinion that he would have done far better in the attacks on Fort Duquesne had he not been under British command." Something in the way he phrased that opinion stirred my memory. Then I made the connection.

"You are Henri Messier, the military historian." I blurted out. "I have read your books." All four of us laughed at my outburst.

"Thank you for remembering. It has been a few years since my last volume has been published. National University Press published the last book, by the way, and they did a fine job."

"I will have to put you on the sales staff," Jacard joked.

"As I recall," I continued, "you were critical of the first attack on Duquesne, finding fault with almost all the military aspects of the assault. The second attack you found better organized. You also had a number of critical comments to make about the command of the fort, an aspect of the campaign that would of course be unknown to us in the U.S."

"You have an excellent memory. Yes, I thought if Phillippe Jolliet had not arrived with one thousand men at the right moment, the fort would have fallen and you

would have taken a foothold in the Ohio Valley. Would the French have ever pushed you out of that position? I am not so sure."

"Yes, that was a key battle, and one that is almost unknown in my own country." Our food arrived around this point but it provided little interruption as Messier and I refought the second battle at Fort Duquesne. He marched his troops forward with two forks and the salad dressing. I came over the Appalachians with a coffee cup and an empty wine glass. Elise just sat and laughed.

"Do you two boys want to adjourn this lunch and find some toy soldiers to play with?"

"No," I replied, "but I could use your soup spoon. Unless I get reinforcements, I am afraid my position cannot hold." That was outrageous enough that we all sat back and laughed. The battle was over. Now it was time to return to the original topic—the job. Messier wasted no time.

"We have three professors in the U.S. history area. One is going on leave, and one is due to retire within the year. I need someone to come in for three years while we determine what to do long-term. We have never had an American teach U.S. history, and I think that is long overdue. My guess is you would challenge much of our thinking in the area, and that is overdue too."

"I am honored to be considered. Yours is a fine university and your department has a good reputation. But this is a complete surprise. Would you mind if I took a couple weeks to consider your offer?" Messier agreed to give me the time, and the conversation turned to leisure matters—the quality of the golf course (I was assured faculty got discounted greens fees and first choice of tee times), a university sailing club that filled the Bay with sails most evenings, and a new prairie restoration project they were creating on the south edge of campus. It was all pleasant, but it was all also intended to promote the university to me.

Eventually the men had to return to their offices, and Elise and I were left alone.

"I hope you don't mind," was her first comment.

"No, it was kind of you to set up the meeting." Rather than walk back to the heart of campus, I led Elise toward the Bay. She held my hand and leaned her shoulder on me as we walked. But she said nothing. It was a nice day, but I have to admit I wasn't noticing much of it. I was thinking about the two offers I had just received. There was much in both that was troubling. As we approached the shoreline, I found a park bench and led Elise to it. It was actually a very nice spot. There was a flower bed near by and the first marigolds of the spring were up. Past the flower bed the green lawn gradually flowed down to the Bay.

"I don't know if having two publishing houses work on my book is possible, but it is certainly an interesting idea to have both English and French editions. Although I have to say this is getting way ahead of things since no book even exists yet. As for teaching, that came as a complete surprise. You do have a prominent university, and anyone would be honored to teach here."

"But…" Elise added. "I know you Shawn Murphy. The next word out of your mouth will be *but*. Something is bothering you."

"A three-year contract seems a very long time."

"You have already been in Green Bay two years. Would three more be so terrible?"

It was at that moment that I knew I would ask the question. The place was wrong, I didn't have a ring, I hadn't rehearsed what I wanted to say, nothing was as it should have been, but now was the time. The issue was not whether I dodged blizzards in Green Bay for three more years, the issue was Elise. Now was the time to say so. "Three years, or thirty years, or a thousand year would be perfect if you were with me. I love you, and I would like to marry you." The kiss that followed was very long. I enjoyed it, but I was also aware that she had not said anything. Was the kiss her answer? I held her and waited.

"Thank you, Shawn," was her answer. Thank you? I was a bit confused. "You are a beautiful man, and I love you too."

"So you will marry me?"

"Shawn, there has never been a divorce in our family. Not one in the three centuries we can trace our heritage. We marry for life. And we marry slowly. I love you Shawn, but we have just known each other eight months. You know me as a student, but soon I will be a government official. You know some of my family, but not all, and I know none of your family."

"So you want more time."

"I want more time, and I want a graduation present."

"Presents are easy. What would you like?"

"I want you to take me on a trip."

"That's a great idea. We could be together, and we could see some of the world. Where would you like to go?"

"I would like to see the Liberty Bell, and Independence Hall, and I would like to meet the Murphy family. I want you to take me to Philadelphia." It occurred to me that a trip to Paris, Cairo, and Mars would be less stressful, but she was right. It was time for her to meet my family. We sat on that bench the rest of the afternoon and talked about the trip and about many things. And there were long silences. We both had much to assimilate.

In the weeks that followed, we planned the trip east. We decided to drive rather than fly. It would give us more time together, it would let me see the Ohio Valley, and it would be a slower transition from Green Bay to Philadelphia. I needed the time.

Meanwhile, Picard called me the first week of May and scheduled another interview with the President. But this one was to be odd. I was to wear old clothes and bring a pair of boots. Picard would not tell me more than that, but assured me I would enjoy the visit.

I showed up as instructed, two afternoons later. Security seemed a bit more relaxed. Maybe it was the pair of boots I carried to the house that made them smile. In any case, they let me through somewhat faster than normal. Picard met me and led me straight through the house to the back door. The minute we were there I could see what the plan for the day was. The President and about a dozen youngsters were out in the vineyard.

"You know I have never worked in a vineyard before," I said to Picard.

"That is all right. Neither have some of these kids. But you'll have fun just as they are."

I left my shoes by the door, put on my boots, and walked back to where the President stood.

“Hello.” The President shouted when he saw me. He was obviously in a good mood. He looked several inches taller than usual and was talking at the top of his lungs. “Come on down and join the fun.” He was about five rows down from the house. It appeared he and the children were slowly working their way down the hill, doing something to the vines. “I thought you might enjoy this.” I descended the hill to where he was standing with two of the young men.

“Doctor Murphy, I would like you to meet Henri and Jean. They are agriculture students at Fond du Lac High School. In May they get afternoons away from school to visit farms and orchards and vineyards to see the many forms farming takes. And they help poor old men like me prepare the vines.” Both boys bowed slightly and shook my hand. They still had the limp handshake of boys, but it looked like they knew what they were doing with the vines.

“Henri,” the President continued, “Would you show Doctor Murphy how we prepare the vines in the spring?”

“Sure.” Henri knelt by one of the vines to begin his lecture. The strength in his voice said he was enjoying this opportunity to show off. “The vines have to be cut back each fall. In the spring the vines send out new canes. Usually there are three or four, but I have seen as many as six. The problem is that the more canes there are, the more grapes will be grown by this one vine. If there are too many grapes, they have less flavor. So we always cut off all canes but two. Then we tie the two canes to this wire support so that the grapes will not drag on the ground and will be easier to pick in the fall.”

“Great job, Henri.” The President added. “Now Jean, tell him the hard part.”

“Well, we will only keep two canes out of the ones coming out of the vine stem, and they all look alike. Our job is to find the best two that will be preserved.”

“Excellent. I will have to tell Monsieur Fayette you both deserve an A.” With that he left the boys to their work and took me a couple more rows down the hill. “Would you like to try it?”

“Yes.” I took a pruning shears from him and took a close look at the first vine in the row. There were three canes. I decided I liked the longest ones best, and held the shears by the shorter cane. “This one?” I asked.

“Yes, that will do fine.” With his permission, I made the cut, and then took a ball of string from him and tied the two canes to the wire support. “Actually grapes are very hardy and will recover from most of the mistakes we might make out here. If anything, they are too strong. Left wild, they will produce huge harvests of grapes, especially if they get enough rain. Most of our job is to stunt them in several ways so that we get fewer, but better, grapes.”

“The boys seemed sharp.” I said as I finished tying the canes and moved on to the next vine. “I suppose they grow up around grapes.”

“They grow up, and I enjoy seeing that. You see those boys in the top row?” I looked up to see several boys near the top of the hill who seemed to be roughhousing. “They are out here because they get an afternoon out of school and a few dollars and a chance to be with their friends. And all of those are good reasons to enjoy an afternoon. But everything they do, they do for their friends. They see themselves in their friends’ eyes. Am I interesting? Am I pleasingly naughty? At the end of the day they won’t remember one vine or one cane. But that is this year. Next year they will pay at least some attention to what they are

doing. Their world will grow to include more than their friends. Each year they let themselves become part of a larger world."

"I can't tell you how pleased I am, "I replied. "That after sixty years in politics you still think people grow and want to see a larger world. I find that incredibly reassuring."

"Ah, I know you feel the same way." With that he started work on the vine next to me, and we both worked in silence as we pruned and tied the vines. I noticed the boys were much faster than we were, but I didn't feel the need to hurry. The sun was warm, the work was interesting, and I got some satisfaction from looking back at a row of vines now prepared for the summer's growth.

After two hours I was beginning to feel the strain in my lower back, but it was time for the boys to catch their bus back to school, and when they quit so did we. The rest of the vineyard would be done another day. Jolliet led the way back into the house and sat at the kitchen table. I had never been in the kitchen before. Somehow it seemed more personal. But we were just in from the fields, we were both a bit dirty, and it seemed right to sit in the kitchen like a couple of farmers. Of course farmers seldom have maids, and Jolliet had several who brought us a large pitcher of water, a larger pitcher of wine, and some cheese and crackers.

"Days like today are worth everything, don't you agree?" He asked.

"Yes. The work is satisfying since you can see what you have accomplished. And after a long winter I feel like a cat that wants to absorb all the sun I can. Such days are special."

"I hear you may be joining the university faculty."

"They have offered me a temporary appointment. I am considering it." And Elise? Would he ask about her next? No, he moved on.

"Shall we talk about Father Marquette? His last years are sad, but they are also inspiring. He truly was a holy man."

"I have this vision of him," I replied. "Sitting alone in a bark hut on the shores of the Fox, all alone. I can't find anything in the historical record about anyone being with him before Allouez returns in the spring. Essentially he is isolated in that hut for six months. Could that be?"

"No, he would have starved. Missionaries relied on the charity of the Indians. He had some food left him by Louis and the others, but not enough to last six months. We have no written record of how he spent that winter, other than the knowledge that he spent a great deal of time rewriting and clarifying his journal of the voyage, but we know a tribe of Potawatamis was just up the Fox a few miles, and there was regular traffic up and down the Fox with French traders and local Indians going both ways. This was an important waterway, and it would have been used almost constantly while he was there.

"The bigger mystery is how he got ill, and that mystery may be unsolvable. We forget that Louis Pasteur didn't prove the connection between germs and disease until the 1870s—two hundred years after poor Father Jacques was bled and fed odd potions, and generally hurt more by medical treatment than helped. We know his symptoms well enough. He had fever, chills, and diarrhea. Those are classic symptoms of food poisoning. But those are common symptoms that every one of his contemporaries would have had on occasion—and for the same reasons—they ate bad food and drank bad water. You may recall that well into the 1800s

residents of Paris and London drank water straight out of the rivers there without making any connection to the diseases that were sure to follow.

“So we assume that sometime during the winter Marquette ate some bad food. That is not too surprising. Winters were rough, food ran short, people ate things they would not eat in better times. But where he had probably fought off food parasites hundreds of times earlier in his life, this time he could not. He got sick and stayed sick for months. And that was the condition Allouez and Andre found him in when they returned to Green Bay in the spring. Too sick to eat, too tired to get out of bed, their young friend who had once been the most vigorous among them, was not capable of walking, much less taking the lengthy voyage back to the Illinois.

“They stayed with him and tried to nurse him back to health, but progress was slow. For May, June, and July, he could not eat and so could not regain his strength. Allouez sent a message up to the mission in Sault St. Marie explaining that Marquette was ill, they were tending to him, but the mission to the Illinois was not presently possible. The summer faded away, and with it the best weather for traveling.

“Meanwhile, Marquette lived with the promise he had made to the Illinois. He would return to them this year he had said. Fevers troubled his sleep, as did his promise. He had waited so many years for a mission to the Illinois, and now he was too sick to take the opportunity. It must have been a long, sad summer for him.

“In late summer he seemed to get better. In August he could eat a little, in September he could walk a bit, his strength was starting to come back. Had he stayed right where he was until he had put some meat back on his bones, who knows how things would have turned out? But he had made a promise, and every day got shorter and every night got colder. If he was going to go to the Illinois, he needed to go now.”

“I take it you think he should have postponed the trip,” I asked.

“He was a man of God, and he had given his word, but I think the sacrifice was too great. Had he waited just six more months he would have traveled in better weather and he would have traveled in better health. But how do you question a holy man? He put his faith in God, and maybe he assumed the voyage south would be as uneventful as the voyage north had been the previous September.”

“For his part, Allouez notified his superior at the Sault that Marquette was getting ready to take the voyage, and he was able to get some help for Marquette. Father Superior sent down two lay assistants to help with the voyage and with the new mission. Jacques Largillier had gone with Marquette on the voyage down the Mississippi. Pierre Porteret, the second man, was unknown to Marquette but was a faithful servant of the church and would prove himself many times over during the next year. But sending the men south took time. By the time they reached Green Bay and had prepared for the voyage to the Illinois, it was October 25. Standing on the sheltered shore of Green Bay they could see the water was being whipped up by icy winds, and it was only going to get worse. This was no time to be on Lake Michigan in a canoe.

“As you know, once the three men started their voyage, things just kept getting worse. Given how quickly the weather deteriorates along the Lake, it was crucial

that the men move as quickly as possible. If they moved fast, they might be able to make it to the Chicago River before the deep cold and snows of winter struck. As it turned out, anything that could delay them did.

"The weather was one problem. High winds created huge waves on the Bay, and kept them ashore for hours. Remember also that the days were getting shorter, so they had to quit earlier than they would have wished to. While it had taken them one day to get from Sturgeon Bay to Green Bay when they had returned last fall, now it took them three days to get to Sturgeon Bay. There they met a group of Indians who were also headed to the Illinois. It would be good to have company, but the Indians moved far more slowly than the Frenchmen. Where Marquette and his men portaged across Sturgeon Bay in one day, the Indians took three. The Indians begged the French to wait for them, and Marquette complied, but the result was that October had ended before the men had even begun their travels south down the shore of the lake.

"Progress down the western shore of Lake Michigan was slow. At one point the Indians saw some footprints on the shore and feared they might be from a Sioux war party. That caused them to hide for three days. Another time the waves on the lake were so bad they had to stay on shore for two days. On a good day, and there were a few of them, the group was able to cover twenty five miles. But there were so many bad days, they barely averaged eight miles a day, and took the entire month of November to make it to the southern end of the lake. Most of the time they were cold, wet, and hungry. Hunting was poor, and rain and snow kept them all wet and shivering.

"By the time they reached the Chicago River, it was December 4th. The river was frozen more than a foot thick, there was another foot of snow on the ground, and Marquette was sick again. His stomach was acting up and he suffered from diarrhea. They built a simple hut on the banks of the river and stayed there eight days while all of them rested up from the trip. Sometime during that eight day period they came to realize that getting the many miles down to the Illinois village would be impossible before spring.

"Their solution was to move up the river to a point of portage. Here shelter from the wind was somewhat better, but more importantly there were more people about. They built a small cabin to use for the winter, did some hunting, and received many visitors. The Indians who had traveled down the lake with Marquette had gone on ahead, and word quickly spread that Marquette was back. Small delegations arrived with gifts of food, and Marquette gave gifts of beads and tobacco in return. When he was well enough, he performed mass and preached the Gospel. But he was often too sick to leave his bed.

"When he was able, he wrote a description of his journey which has survived to this day, and he wrote letters back to his father superior. I suspect you have seen many of them. There is one passage that seems to me to best describe his temperament." Jolliet pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and read: *The Blessed Virgin Immaculate has obtained for me the favor of reaching this place in good health.*

"Can you imagine? The man is freezing from cold while his guts rot away, and he tells his superior that he is in good health! But let me continue. *I dread nothing—neither the Nadoissis, nor the reception awaiting me among the nations*

dismay me. One of two things will happen: either God will punish me for my crimes and cowardice, or else he will give me a share of his Cross, which I have yet carried since my arrival in this country. But this cross has been, perhaps, obtained for me by the Blessed Virgin Immaculate, or it may be death itself, that I may cease to offend God. It is that for which I try to hold myself in readiness, surrendering myself altogether into his hands."

"He sounds like a man ready to die," I offered.

"He certainly wasn't afraid of it. He felt the presence of God and the Virgin and he was completely at peace with whatever they had planned for him.

"Winter began to ease up in late March. There were more people passing through their camps. Some were headed north to trade with the French, and Marquette entrusted his letters to them. More people visited to see how he was doing. Even Pierre Moreau came to visit. He was now trading in the area—the first of the men Louis had hoped would create a large settlement in the area. Moreau brought blueberries and corn, both important additions to a diet that had been almost exclusively meat for the past months.

"Marquette's health was somewhat improved, but he was still very weak. A physician would have ordered him to stay and convalesce longer, but I suspect he would have ignored his doctor. The ice broke up on the rivers and Marquette's men portaged over to the Des Plains River, one of the tributaries of the Illinois. With the ice gone, they could paddle with the current down to the Illinois Village. The air was still cold, and the water was like ice. You can imagine what their knees must have felt like as they rested on the bottom of the canoes, but at least they were traveling with the current.

"In eleven days they reached the Illinois village. Five thousand men, women, and children lived there, a huge village for its time. It seemed like all of them wanted to be around Marquette. It was the practice of missionaries to visit every home of the villages where they preached. Marquette couldn't—such a throng followed him everywhere, that he couldn't enter one home without bringing scores of people with him. The village elders responded by creating a meeting place for him on the outskirts of the village. They put up poles and hung bear skins as a back drop. Largillier and Porteret brought out the rolls of cloth they had brought down the river with them, and a stage was set up unlike anything the Indians had seen before.

"On Holy Thursday Marquette preached for the first time. The area was so crowded that only five hundred chiefs and elders were able to be seated. Younger men and all the women stood on the outer edge, straining to be close to the service. Marquette presented his service as ten messages, each of which he acted out. Each of the ten was one of the mysteries of Christianity, the miracles, the basic tenets of the faith, building up to the two miracles that would impress the Illinois most—the miracle of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. He explained how Christ's sacrifice saved all the peoples of the world, even the Indians of Illinois from death and damnation if they would but believe in him. Marquette acted out the death on the cross, the agony of it, the sacrifice, the pain, all of which must have been fully experienced by Marquette who was wracked with fever and pain."

“And then the resurrection. Here Marquette rose from the stage, explaining that Christ had risen from the dead and all who believed in him would do so as well. That was the great gift he had brought—eternal life. The Indians were astonished. First, they had never seen such a theater production, and of course the message was totally new to them as well. We have no record of how Marquette felt that evening, but we can certainly hope he was pleased with the success he was having. His time was almost at an end.

“On Good Friday and Holy Saturday he repeated his liturgical performance to crowds that were even larger and more receptive. Just as he had noted the previous year, it took several repetitions of the liturgy before the Indians began to understand something so foreign. What did it cost Marquette to give those demonstrations? We know Easter Sunday he was hard pressed to get out of bed. He was very sick and almost exhausted.

“Easter Sunday he gave the last mass of his life. He served communion to four Frenchmen, his two companions and two other traders who happened to be in the area and wanted to attend mass. He met with the tribal chiefs one more time to explain the blessings of Christ again, and to explain why he had to leave. There was a meeting he had to attend of all missionaries, he said. In truth, he was going off to die. The Illinois were loath to let him leave. They tried to give him gifts, all of which he refused. The whole village was there to say goodbye. He blessed them one more time, settled into his canoe, and started north.

“Some of the Illinois were so impressed with him they followed his canoe for days, helping him at each camp. While they surely provided some help around the camp, they also forced Marquette to maintain a level of attention he could barely muster. He was wasting away and the act of staying alert and conversant with the Indians was an enormous effort for him. It would have been so much easier if he could just lie down in the canoe and sleep while his friends paddled him north, but he wanted to hide his illness from the Illinois. They were not to see him as sick to the point of dying; they were to remember him as the missionary who had acted out the life of Christ.

“Finally, at the portage of Des Plains, the last of the Illinois turned back to their village. Marquette had completed his mission then. As soon as the last of the Illinois were out of sight, Marquette collapsed. His men put him in the canoe and paddled down the Chicago River to the lake. Marquette would never walk again. He lay unconscious on the bottom of the canoe while Largillier and Porteret determined what to do next. Their hope was to get Marquette back to a Jesuit mission. It was clear he was going to die. What they wanted was for a priest to be at hand to deliver Last Rites.

“In their hurry to get him back north to his brethren, they decided to take a short-cut. Rather than paddle up the western shore of the lake, they would go up the eastern shore, hoping that it was a shorter route to St Ignace and Sault St. Marie. It was a risk to try the eastern shore since neither of them had traveled that way before, but they were desperate. As it turned out they were right in their geography. They saved nearly two hundred miles by following that route. Unfortunately, Marquette had too few days left to make it north by any route. His time was up.

“Largillier and Porteret paddled like demons. It was now the end of April, so the days were getting longer, and they used every hour available to them. For the first few days the route lay east, and then it began to turn north. They had been right—this route would take them north far faster. At breaks and during the evening they tried to make Marquette comfortable. But he was too weak to move himself and could take no food. His digestive system had completely shut down. The biggest comfort they could give him was to read to him from his Bible. Each morning they carried him back to the canoe and tried to make him as comfortable as possible. Each morning they hoped that some miracle would occur and they would find themselves at St. Ignace. They were still over two hundred and fifty miles short of their goal when Marquette died.

“Father Marquette died on Friday, May 17, 1675, two years to the day after he had started on his voyage of discovery. The night before he died, he called Largillier and Porteret to him and explained that he would die the next morning. He was still their priest, and he felt he needed to educate them on how to perform the burial. He told them where to put his grave, how to arrange his body in the grave, even where to find a bell in his belongings. They were to ring the bell while he was being buried. He was perfectly lucid during this lecture and seemed perfectly at peace. In fact he became so concerned with the tears he saw in his companions’ faces, that he told them to go and rest. He would call them when the final moment came.

Three hours later he called them. The time had come. He asked Largiller to take the crucifix from around his neck and hold it before his eyes so he could see it as he died. He then prayed his final prayers. He gave thanks for dying in the Society of Jesus, for dying a missionary, and for dying in the country. His last words were, *Mother of God, remember me*. Largillier and Porteret buried him in the manner he had requested, and then they began paddling north, now to deliver the terrible news to his brethren in St. Ignace. Father Jacques Marquette was dead.”

“He was thirty seven, if I recall,” I added.

“Yes, and even in those years such an early death was a shock. Many men did die young, but others seemed to go on forever. Claude Allouez was the next priest assigned to the Illinois mission, and he was sixty three. He lived on for years. Largillier was assigned to paddle to Quebec to pick up supplies for the mission at Sault St. Marie and to tell the story of Marquette’s death. Largillier later became a Jesuit brother, and worked in the Illinois mission until he died—at age eighty. Death at thirty seven was a tragedy then as it is now.”

“But he was right,” I added. “As he lay dying, he had accomplished the goals he had set out for his life. He wanted to be a Jesuit, he wanted to be a missionary, and he wanted to discover new parts of the world. He did all three, possibly better than any other man of his time.”

“I agree. I believe the stories of his death—that he was at peace and grateful for his fate. He was truly a holy man.” Neither of us had much to say after that, so I started putting away my notebooks and unplugging my tape recorder.

“I hear you and Elise will be taking a trip is a couple weeks.” Jolliet said as I finished putting my materials into my briefcase.

“Yes, we are going to Philadelphia so she can meet my family.”

“I am very pleased to hear that.” He got up and walked with me to the front door. “She smiles when she is around you. I like that.” We shook hands and I walked out the door under the careful scrutiny of two security guards. I waved and he weaved, neither of us knowing that our smiles were about to vanish for a very long time.

Chapter 17

The Bombing.

I don’t know what perversity of human nature causes us to remember where we were when tragedy strikes. Men who can’t remember their anniversary can tell you exactly where they were and what they were doing when a war broke out or a president was shot. Somehow that becomes fixed in our minds. I was with Elise on Thursday, May 14 when we got the news. We were being pretty lazy that morning. We were up and were puttering around the kitchen, moving at the kind of pace people normally have on weekends. I had some coffee going and she was making crepes. I think we were discussing what cities to stay in as we drove east. It was an insignificant conversation for an insignificant morning.

One of Elise’s neighbors pounded on our door, pounding so hard I ran to the door thinking she was being attacked. All Angelique would say when I opened the door was “Turn on your TV.” Then she was off to bang on another door. I did as she asked, realizing that I had forgotten to ask which channel to tune in. As it turned out, of course, it didn’t matter. All the channels were showing the same scenes—the new Cathedral of Biloxi was a smoking ruin.

The announcers were trying to add some information to the picture, the fact that it had occurred at 6:45 that morning, the fact that casualties were unknown. And then they showed the new tape – the tape of the little man with the blue armband with white crosses standing in front of the church just at dawn. He was angry. He was shouting. I understood the words “Papists” and “taxes,” and “rights” but the rest seemed slurred together. He shouted at the camera for about five minutes, and then signaled someone off camera. Then the cathedral exploded. There must have been a huge number of explosive charges in the building to cause it to go up the way it did. It seemed to become an instant cloud of dust. It must even have surprised the men on the tape since they could be seen ducking and looking for cover as the debris rained down.

Then there was a tape of the explosion from the other side of the church, and then a third view taken from a little more distance and a slightly different angle. Three cameras on the explosion? Did the TV station know the church would be blown up? No, the announcer explained that the tapes had been delivered by a spokesperson for the Louisiana Nationalist Army. The criminals had taped the crime! And then it occurred to me why the explosion had occurred at 6:45 rather during the night—they had waited until after sunup so it would be easier to tape the destruction!

Elise turned off the stove and we sat and watched the TV together. She was crying constantly while we watched. I could feel her crying as I held her, but both of us kept staring at the TV and at the sight of a cathedral disappearing. Sometime that morning I called the office and told the office manager I thought it would be best to close for the day. He said that was already in progress. Some of our employees had never come in, having heard the news on their car radios, and those who had arrived at work simply sat and cried. There would be no work done today. I suspected he was speaking for all businesses in Canada. This would be a day for mourning, not for work.

A few of Elise's neighbors began coming over. It appeared they didn't want to be alone while they watched the destruction. Nobody said much. They added what they had heard on the radio, or comments from other announcers on other channels, but in fact nobody knew much about what had happened down there, and none of us felt much like talking. We stared at the TV like zombies—somehow less alive than we had been hours earlier.

As the morning progressed, the TV announcers tried to add in press conference information from the local police, filled in with some experts talking about the construction of the church (it was essentially a replica of the National Cathedral), and had other experts trying to explain who these people with armbands were and what their motives might be.

At noon the local channels brought in local connections to the tragedy, and the news was not good. That morning a group of Huguenot students had seen the explosion on one of the TVs in the student union at the National University and had loudly cheered. Other students, leaving classes as they heard the news, were just entering the union when they witnessed the cheering. They attacked immediately, hundreds of students jumping on the dozen Huguenots. None had been killed, but all were now hospitalized while police arrested scores of Catholic students. In this day of ubiquitous video recorders, a student had captured some of the fight and it was being broadcast, complete with angry Huguenots being carried off still shouting "Hooray for the LNA" while other students were restrained by cordons of police. It was clear that without the police there would be dead Huguenots on campus.

The channel also broadcast man-in-the-street interviews, all of which seemed to provoke violence. Catholic women cried, Catholic men demanded swift justice, while the one Huguenot they could find on the street ended his interview with "Now maybe you will get out of my country." I hoped no one outside of Green Bay had seen that interview. Unfortunately, by four that afternoon the local clip had been inserted into the national news. It was after all, the capital city. It felt to me like a virus being inserted into a weakened cell. This would spread the hatred fast. "Get out of my country." How many men would die on both sides of that statement?

By two, the local news segments began announcing cancellations. The first round was athletic and social events. Some soccer matches were called off, and various scouting meetings were cancelled. It seemed obvious more cancellations were coming. You could almost feel the country shutting down. Elise's apartment kept getting more crowded. Most of her neighbors were in the room now, sitting in

front of the TV. I couldn't tell if they were gathering together to share the pain, or to seek some kind of protection in numbers.

Elise pulled herself away from the TV and started making food. She made a second attempt at crepes, with several of her friends joining her in the kitchen. I was sent out to find more food at the store. She made a list of things she needed to make spaghetti.

Being out in the city was odd. The day was beautiful. It was mid-May and spring had finally come to Green Bay. The grass was green, trees were leafing out, flowers were in bloom everywhere. The weather was out of step with the public mood. I drove around town a bit more than I needed to in order to see what was happening before I went into the grocery store. I saw some lines at gas stations. I didn't understand that. Maybe because so much of our gas comes from Louisiana? Other areas of the town were quiet, with little pedestrian traffic and few cars.

The grocery store was crowded. I can't say that people were buying in a panic, but I saw lots of folks with carts filled to the top, far more than I would have expected to find on a Thursday afternoon. I worked my way down the list of things Elise wanted. They were all in stock, although the supply of bread seemed to be getting a bit low. I steered clear of the one place in the store where there seemed to be a real crush of people—the shelves of bottled water. Did they think water also came from Louisiana? Did they expect utilities to be bombed next? I steered my cart down the next aisle and stood in a long line to check out.

As I stood there I looked at my fellow shoppers. Few were talking to anyone. Even those who had come in with others were staring straight ahead or down at their shoes. And all were wearing colors. This being a capital city and university town there are lots of people from lots of places living in Green Bay, including Huguenots. Over the past months Huguenots up here had come to join their compatriots in the south in the wearing of white. Just a few at first, and then it seemed like they all changed their wardrobes. But today I could see no white. If there were Huguenots in the store, they were wearing colors to hide that fact.

By the time I got back to Elise's apartment, I had trouble getting in her door. It was just a student apartment, not very big, and every inch of it was now taken up by her neighbors and their friends. The TV was on mute while one of the students described what had happened in the cafeteria that morning. It was just before nine, he said, when he had gone into the cafeteria near the library. This was one of the biggest cafeterias since it was situated at the junction of several tunnels. The campus was designed for the library to be the central building, so this cafeteria became the main cafeteria by default.

He was just standing there sipping his coffee before heading to class when a student ran in and changed the channel on the TV. Each of the cafeterias had huge projection TVs at one end of the room, which to the chagrin of campus faculty, were normally turned to soap operas during the day. When the student changed the channel there had first been some complaints from students concerned about the show they were watching, but most of them stopped in mid-sentence when they saw what was happening. First they saw the explosion of the church, and many of the students had been confused, since it looked like the National Cathedral had been blown up. Then the spokesman for the LNA was

shown talking and then the various views of the explosion were shown again and again.

Most of the room had been silent, students staring and not fully understanding. But a group of Huguenots all dressed in white sat near the TV, and they seemed to grasp what had happened first. When the LNA spokesman came back on TV, they started shouting things like “Go Renee, go!” as if they could cheer him on. Then when the tape of the explosion came on again, they cheered. Jean, the student who was telling us the story, said he never heard any shouting or any sound from the other students in the room. They just pounced. One minute there were a dozen white-clad boys shouting at the TV, the next there were fifty other boys running toward them. The Huguenots just disappeared under a pile of boys. Jean said he didn’t think any of the Huguenots were too badly hurt—there wasn’t room for anyone to swing a fist and there were no weapons in the room. There was just a huge pile of humanity up near the TV.

Cell phones being ubiquitous among students, calls to the campus and city police went out immediately. Three campus cops got there first, but they had no weapons and could do nothing with the crowd. Their response was to call for more police while they attempted to keep other students out of the room. Four city cops arrived next and waded into the crowd with night sticks, but there wasn’t much they could do either. Finally a dozen cops were in the room and they pulled the boys apart, pushing the Catholics toward one wall. Jean said he left at that point. The cops were clearing the room and seemed to have things quieted down.

There were lots of questions for Jean, and some additions about cops elsewhere on campus, and questions about classes and exams. The campus had been shut down for the day. Would it reopen tomorrow? What about all the exams that had been scheduled for the final weeks of classes? Most in the room were graduate students, so they were concerned both about the class they took and the classes they taught.

Elise and I stayed in the kitchen. She gave me a hug periodically, but kept crying and kept cooking. With the help of several other women she turned out a huge platter of spaghetti, and then went back and made a second batch. I sliced bread and put it out in the main room with a pile of cheese slices. People ate and talked and looked over at the TV, wondering if anything new would appear.

At five the regularly scheduled local news appeared. It consisted mostly of cancellations. The university was shut down for the rest of the week, as were all other schools in the nation. A decision would be made soon about when schools would reopen. Professional sports were also cancelled. A pattern emerged in the cancellations. Anything that would draw a crowd was cancelled. The government wasn’t quite ready to order to people to stay in their homes, but it sure was taking away reasons to go out.

At five thirty the national news summarized the events of the morning and then explained what was happening currently, none of which was good. Arrests had been made of people presumed to be involved in the destruction. At LNA headquarters a shootout had occurred with two cops and two LNA members killed. The news reader reported unconfirmed sources saying a number of Louisiana Provincial Police had refused to participate in the arrests. This was then hotly

refuted by the Louisiana governor, but the head of the police union confirmed that some officers had called in sick. He downplayed any political connections.

The fight in the student union was then shown again, and followed with descriptions of other fights in other schools. In many cases it was the Huguenot kids getting beaten up; in others it was the Catholics who were in the minority. The fights were widespread and included both high schools and colleges. Interviews at all of the schools showed angry kids ready for more fights. The last news was that the President would address the nation at seven.

We muted the TV and went back to talking and eating. Should the university be reopened? Would it be safe? Next week was the main exams of the year. How could grades be assigned if the exams were cancelled? On the other hand, how could the campus be made safe? Would any Huguenots dare show up on campus? Could they have a reasonable opportunity to take the exams? No one in the room could arrive at any solutions.

At seven President D'Stang gave his speech. He said about what you would expect. A crime has been committed, the perpetrators are under arrest or being sought, it is time for the nation to come together with respect for all faiths and belief in a just God. The words were right, but his face was wrong. He was an angry man. There was no forgiveness in his eyes. He looked like he would happily lead a mob looking for people in white. After D'Stang's talk the Governor of Louisiana made a short speech about progress that was being made in the case, the respect all Louisianans have for all religious denominations, the need for all Frenchmen to unite. Unfortunately, he looked like he was giving the speech while someone held a gun to his back. He was on camera so briefly it looked like he was hoping to run from the studio the instant he could.

Someone muted the TV again, and there was more talk, and more food, but gradually folks drifted back to their own apartments. By eleven it was just Elise and I again. I shut off the TV and brought lots of dishes back to the kitchen. It took us until after midnight to clean everything up, but neither of us cared—it gave us something mindless to do. That was what we wanted at that moment—simple tasks, familiar tasks, tasks we could do together. I remember going to bed, but I can't remember when I drifted off to sleep. Neither of us said anything. Elise laid her head on my chest, and I wrapped my arm around her shoulders, and we laid like that for a very long time. Eventually we both slept.

The next morning we left the TV off and went for a walk. It was another beautiful day. We heard no sirens and saw no smoke, so it appeared the rest of the city had also had settled down. Would a weekend be enough time to recover? Could classes and jobs resume on Monday? We hoped so. We were due to drive to Philadelphia in just a few days. It would be nice if the world would just settle down and our biggest concern while driving would be whether the next rest stop had good food or not

The walk did us good and we returned to Elise's apartment feeling like the world was somehow fixed. But we were wrong. I turned on the TV and saw a church burning. Two Huguenot churches had been set ablaze during the night. There had also been more fights, even two shootings. Then the news switched to a bizarre traffic report. They had a camera on the Mississippi Highway just south of St. Louis. All four lanes were jammed bumper to bumper. It was quickly clear that

Huguenots were heading south in huge numbers, just as Catholics chose the safety of the north. It is the French who love the biological sciences, but it seemed like one of their metaphors would be most apt in explaining what we were seeing – a cell was dividing in two. Nuclear materials were splitting and moving towards each of the new cells. If the traffic continued this way for very long, Canada would be two countries before any political action was taken.

It was too sad to watch, so I reached out to turn off the TV. Then a funny thing happened—it turned off by itself. My hand was still a foot from the controls when the screen went blank. I stopped in mid-motion, confused. And then the TV came on again, this time showing a church service. The camera angle was odd, just a simple corner shot with poor audio and no close-ups of the priest. But it was clearly a church service in progress.

I changed the channel to see what other stations were broadcasting, but it was the same picture from the same church. Every station had stopped news coverage and gone over to the church service. We stared carefully at the TV. Was the President dead? Was this his service? It didn't appear so. It looked like a routine mass in a routine church. After a while the priest delivered his homily. The camera was at such a distance it was hard to see the priest's face, but he didn't appear to be anyone well known, nor did he say anything profound. He spoke as if he were speaking on a normal Sunday, except this was a Friday, the Friday following a national disaster. You would never know it to hear him.

We were totally baffled by what we were seeing until a line of text began to crawl across the screen. "President D'Stang has declared today a national day of prayer. Please pray for peace." The line was repeated over and over during the next hour. It was hard to know how to react. We had relied on the TV for news, and now it had stopped providing that. On the other hand, the news was bad and getting worse. Maybe a church service was a better idea.

Then the phone rang. It was Picard. President Jolliet would like to meet Elise and me at the National Cathedral. We of course agreed. Elise jumped back into her bedroom to change into something appropriate for church, and I looked around to see if I had left a tie at her apartment. She interrupted her own changing and handed me a shirt. "I was saving it for your birthday." She said. It was another ruffled card sharp shirt. Now I had two shirts I could never wear in Philadelphia.

The drive to church was more complicated than I thought it would be. We were not the only ones going to church that Friday. I managed to find a parking spot a bit down the street from the church and Elise and I walked to the main parking lot where we saw Jolliet waving to us from a huge black limousine.

"Thank you for joining me," he said as we approached. He was surrounded by security guards who let us near him and then surrounded us too. I thought I felt a hand on my back as if the guards were doing a quick check on me. Since I was only wearing pants and a ruffled shirt, I was in no position to hide much, but they apparently were going to be very careful. Elise gave Jolliet a kiss on the cheek and a long hug.

"Thank you for inviting us. This is the perfect place to be." She said

"Yes," I added, "They are showing a church service on TV, but this is better."

"I am afraid the production values are not the best, are they? Is that the right phrase? 'Production values?' But we didn't have much time. Loyola Cathedral

outside Montreal was testing a new television system for use on the local cable channel, and we just took their feed. I hope we will have more professional looking broadcasts within a few hours."

"We?" Elise asked. "For a retired man, you aren't getting busy again, are you?"

"As I told you once before, a retired President can have many uses. My current use is Information Minister. I am afraid it is my job to make television very boring for the next few weeks. When things settle down President D'Stang can fire me and the press can beat their chests for years about how I violated their rights. In the meantime we will have no pictures of churches burning and children beating each other. I know they think they were giving people news, but I think they were giving people bad ideas. By the way, you will probably also notice some changes in the newspapers and radio. As for the Internet, we are still working on that. We have a couple young men who are teaching me about "denial of service" attacks. It seems to be a way to keeping some of the most rabid sites quiet. Now come with me. We need to pray for our sins, me more than most."

So we walked up to the church, the ring of security men with us step by step. Many other people were also moving toward the church. Those who knew the President—which was many of them—said hello or waved. None tried to break through the security cordon to shake his hand. We entered through the huge doors, then paused by the holy water. I was pleased to see even his security men genuflect. They may have machine guns under their coats, but they were entering a church and acted appropriately. Jolliet led us to his pew near the front in the central nave. Guards were already stationed at the end of his pew.

Once we were in the pew, Jolliet pulled down the kneeling pad and we all prayed, our knees on the pad, our butts on the edge of the pew behind us, our forearms on the back of the pew before us. We stayed that way a very long time. I found myself saying "Hail Mary's" over and over. At some point the prayer did what it always did—it combined with the rhythm of my breathing, and I began to feel an additional level of peace. Time passed. Finally Jolliet sat back on his pew and we sat back with him. He wanted to talk. There was no service in progress, just hundreds of people coming and going and praying.

"The cathedral will be rebuilt, as will all the churches that have been burned. We have the plans, we have the money, we certainly have the talent to build great churches of all denominations. The men who blew up the cathedral will be captured and imprisoned. Their punishment awaits them. They have sacrificed their souls and will live an eternity in agony. My fear is for your students, Elise, and all the other students of our country. It is their souls that worry me the most."

"We are not a mean people. Shawn, your country and mine have fought three wars and tens of thousands have been killed. Men, women, even children died on both sides. There was anger, but I know of no time where the character of either country changed and people became mean. Yesterday morning I saw people become mean. When that beautiful church was blown up—blown up so that all could see—and people cheered, well, that cheer changed people. To celebrate death and destruction is a mortal sin. To celebrate death in the face of innocent people, well that is a sin so unexpected God did not tell Moses to write it down."

"We have to close the schools. They will not reopen this week or next or next month. I hope they can open in the fall. But the violence has to stop and the

hatred has to stop. In the meantime, we will ask people to reconsider their actions. We need to spend more time on our knees before we lose our national soul." As if to underline his words, Jolliet then went back onto his knees and prayed again. Elise and I followed suit. We stayed there for a very long time.

Then Jolliet wanted to talk again. This time he stayed on his knees and pointed up at the ceiling of the church. "Shawn, you know those windows portray the life of Christ. Which do you think tells us the most about God?"

"Father Patrick asked me that question before my first communion," I answered. "The way he asked it was, of all the acts of Jesus Christ, which means the most to you? My answer was the miracle of the loaves and fishes. I think he believed I was just being a silly boy, always hungry, always thinking about food. And I suppose that played a part. But even now that I am grown and less hungry, I still like that miracle. It tells me that in God's world there is enough. There is abundance. God has given us a good world. There is plenty for all"

"I like that answer." He replied with a big smile. "Let's take a walk. I want to show you the end of your book." He rose and immediately security guards started scurrying around. He threw them off a bit when instead of walking all the way out the back of the church, he turned left at the transept and exited by the side doors. He stopped at the top of the stairs while the guards scattered. The head guard waited for Jolliet to continue down the stairs, and when he didn't, he approached.

"Please, sir. You are totally exposed up here. Let's go back to the car."

"No, I am going to show my friends something. We will be up here for a few minutes. Please adjust as best you can, but we will not be moving." The security team seemed to have all heard that, for they moved around in a perimeter that protected the stairs.

"Now you see why we chose the Prague design for our church," Jolliet said to Elise and me. "A view like that should be used. In Prague, the St. Vitus Cathedral opens toward the Presidential Palace. Here, we open to our whole city and the bay beyond." He was right, of course. The whole church was on a hill, and this side faced north. Down below us was the bay, the Fox River running through the heart of town, and the city of Green Bay. On a sunny day like this, the sight was impressive.

"Our last discussion was of Marquette's death. He was a holy man and a great man, but no book should end with death. I think you should add in one more year—1676. Louis came back to Green Bay. He had wanted to build a settlement among the Illinois, and there is no doubt that would have been a great success. But he was denied that. So what was he to do? Creditors hounded him on every side. He spent many days in court defending himself. Fortunately he had friends who sustained him. But what was he to do next? He was recognized across Canada as their greatest explorer and map maker. Would he explore more lands? To what end? He was thirty one, and his blood told him it was time to settle in one place.

"In the spring of 1676 he was finally clear enough with his creditors that he could once again put together a stock of trade goods. Claude DuPry would join him. They would stop first at the Sault to see how his brother Zacherie was doing with the family business, and then he would go on—not to Illinois which had been

forbidden to him, but to Green Bay where he had seen the possibilities of a trading post."

"They arrived in June of 1676 and built their stockade there." Jolliet pointed up the river to a point where a small coal dock now stood. "They have a replica trading post on the wrong side of the river, but at least they remember roughly where everything started. The Jesuit mission was within a hundred feet. Most of the land around them was woods or marsh, but they did what all men did in those days—they cleared the land, building with some of the logs and burning off the rest. They had a small crop of corn in the ground before the end of June."

"We have talked about the tension between traders and missionaries because some missionaries used alcohol to improve their skills in trading. But Louis was a former seminarian and so got along fine with Father Andre. Father Allouez had moved to Illinois by this time. Louis set an example to the other Frenchmen in the area, and he set an example to the Indians for he never missed mass and was regular in his confessions."

"His faith was rewarded. Father Andre was also trying to build up the settlement, and he had managed to bring a number of Mascoutins to Green Bay. Among them was Angelique. She was the woman they had met three years before in the Mascoutin village—the one who met Father Marquette with the sign of the cross. Hers had been a hard life. She had married in her teens to a man who then been killed in a fight with the Sioux. He left her with a baby who died in his first year. At eighteen she had experienced the death of a child and the death of a husband. The teachings of Christ were her sole comfort."

"Whenever Louis went to church, there she was. Father Andre was so convinced of her complete understanding of the gospel that he had baptized her and given her a Christian name—Angelique. She had learned some French and some ways of French cooking. Father Andre introduced her to Louis and God did the rest. Just before Christmas they were married. Under the laws of the Hundred Associates created by Cardinal Richlieu, once she was baptized, Angelique had full legal rights to marry, to own property, even to emigrate to France. She was a French citizen in full. Say what you want about Richlieu, he was no bigot.

"Their marriage worked. It must have worked, because a year later Claude followed suit with Marie, another Mascoutin widow who had been baptized. Both couples produced large and happy families. The land they cultivated grew, the trading post grew, and the number of Indians who visited Green Bay and then stayed on grew as well. Father Andre was happy to report ten or twelve baptisms each year, a significant number since priests were always very careful about the permanence of the conversion.

"For the first time since its founding, there were children in Green Bay. They grew up to play in the trees and in the river, and in the fields. Father Andre gave them some instruction – basic letters and sums – while the boys also learned to hunt and fish while the girls learned to cook and sew. And there was laughter in this valley. Children ran free and laughed. I sometimes think I can still hear it coming from down by the river.

"What happened next? That is a new story. Each of the children grew up to lead this community and then other communities. The Jolliets and the DuPrys were like the loaves and the fishes—they were fruitful and multiplied." We all laughed at

that. “And that reminds me of my favorite miracle. There is no stained glass for this miracle in our church or in any church that I know of, but I still love it. You will recall that the Bible shows Jesus just once did a favor for his mother—the miracle of the wedding where water becomes wine. I like the idea of Jesus obeying his mother Mary, and I like the idea of Jesus caring for the success of a wedding. Weddings are important, don’t you think?” The look on his face was both mischievous and serious. He expected an answer.

“Yes,” Elise replied, while holding my hand. “Weddings are important.”

Jolliet left us at that point. He wanted to go back in and pray some more, no doubt to the great relief of his security guards. Elise and I stayed out on the stairs and looked toward the river. We couldn’t hear children laughing, but we could see where so much good had begun.

“Let’s leave Sunday after mass, OK?” Elise finally asked.

“Yes, that would be a great way to begin the trip.” We stood for a while longer looking at the city. We heard no sirens, saw no smoke. Maybe people were praying. We could certainly hope so.

Note from the Author

I live blocks from Lake Winnebago. Each day I cross the Fox River, and on most days I think little of it. But there are days when I look on that river and think of all the events that have happened along its route. I have tried to appreciate that history. I have canoed sections of the Fox, and driven along its banks. I have followed the voyageur route from the Sault to Quebec and traveled from Green Bay to New Orleans by car and by boat. My wife and I have spent many happy days on Mackinac Island and in Door County. I have tried to learn the land.

This book represents one way to view the land and the French period. I have attempted to be historically accurate with the descriptions of Washington and Marquette and Jolliet. But this is a novel, and I have filled in where there are blank spots in the record. And of course I have taken one huge liberty with history -- I left the French in charge of this land. I did not do so to disparage them, but to highlight just how important Washington's dream was. He is the father of our country in ways little appreciated. My hope is that by showing what might have happened, we might become more aware that history is the result of the work of people -- and history might well go in very different directions. Like the water at Portage, one drop goes to the North Atlantic, and another goes to the Gulf of Mexico. They are just inches apart at the beginning, but those initial inches product many miles of difference over time.

I intend other volumes in this series. There is more history to be gleaned along the banks of the Mississippi, additional chances to explore the French influences here, and yes, more chances to describe Elise. I have my Elise. I hope others have theirs.