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Ceremony commemorating the Tilting Cultural Landscape District Tilting, Fogo Island, NL "Historical Significance of the Tilting Cultural Landscape"

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It has been eighteen years since I first visited Tilting. Driving from Joe Batt's Arm to Tilting late one evening in May of 1987, when I got to Sandy Cove the road was completely blocked by horses, and I started to count. Twenty. thirty. forty. in fact, I lost count. And on the hills, also roaming free, were sheep- LOTS of sheep! And everywhere the grass was chewed down to within an inch of its life, thick and green.

Coming over Bunker Hill, I had my first view of Tilting. Everything I was looking for was here, a mix of older and newer houses, outbuildings of every shape and type, fences, wooden boats, and gardens, but most importantly, from that first view, I had the feeling that still comes over me every time I return to Tilting- an incredibly strong sense of place, and a feeling that I have somehow come home, not to the home of my childhood, but to a spiritual home where the architecture expresses the generosity, courage, and hospitality of the people. I decided then and there to focus my research on Tilting.

I parked my car by the church and asked around for a house to rent for the summer. I went into Michael Foley's store, and Mike put me in touch with Andrew McGrath who agreed to let me rent Ed McGrath's house. Later that evening, he took me up to meet his mother Gladys McGrath in her back kitchen on Post Office Lane. Little did I know at that time, I would be returning to Gladys' back kitchen every year for many years for cups of tea, news, and visits with all Gladys' children and grandchildren.

The next morning, after what I seem to recall was a very cold and uncomfortable night in Ed McGrath's house since the stove was not working yet, I went outside. The man next door saw me and called out, "Have you had breakfast yet?" It was Cyril McGrath, who became one of my best friends in Tilting. At breakfast that morning, I met his son Ryan who was still in a high chair, and later I met Cyril's brother Jim McGrath who eventually became the driving force behind the heritage conservation movement in Tilting. Later that day, I received an invitation for supper from my other neighbour, Mrs. Rose Burke. Rose told me she had heard a "strange man" was in the harbour, but as it turned out, not so strange as I found out Rose had been one of my wife's medical patients, more than just a patient, actually- they were indeed friends. From that time on, I was made to feel truly "at home" in Tilting.

Tilting's architecture has national historic significance as we are celebrating here today, but without meeting and getting to know the people, I would not have been able to do my research and my book would not have been very interesting. Because time is short, I can't possibly thank all the people who volunteered their time to help make the Tilting Cultural Landscape District a reality, but I would like to express my appreciation to Jim McGrath, Fergus Foley, Maureen Foley, Roy Dwyer, Madeline Penton, Mary O'Keefe, Mayor Gerard Dwyer and all the members of Council, former Mayor Lillian Dwyer, the former Chairperson of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador Ruth Canning, the Tilting Expatriates Association, especially Clara Byrne, Kyran Dwyer, Harry Keenan, and Edna Harris, and of course all those who were part of the Tilting Cultural and Recreation Society. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. John Greene, whose book "Of Fish and family" has provided invaluable information on Tilting's social and family history.

The other day, someone was asking me about my book on Tilting. He said, "Robert, your book is selling well. You must be making a fortune!" I truly wish that were the case, but for a book like mine, there are no profits or royalties, in fact, I am still amazed that it ever got published. The reason I mention this is that I would be remiss if I did not thank my publisher, Princeton Architectural Press, for accepting my book without any grants or subsidies, entirely at their own cost. From what I have heard, the book provided invaluable support for Tilting's application for National Historic Site status. I have received letters from people who found my book in the Netherlands, Japan, Australia, and many other countries, and now that Tilting is a National Historic Site, I hope we get many more visitors nationally and internationally, and that we can intensify our efforts to conserve and restore all the historic structures in Tilting. Along the way, it may even be possible to revive some of the traditional practices like animal husbandry. Much remains to be done, and with the sad news we heard yesterday from a fisherman with a lifetime of experience, Mr. Frank McGrath, that the fishery is in desperate shape, heritage conservation and tourism may be Tilting's and Fogo Island's last hope for survival.

Finally, as Chairperson of the board of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, I would like to convey the board's warm greetings and sincere congratulations on your remarkable achievement of the Tilting Cultural Landscape District. We wish you the greatest of good luck in your future heritage conservation endeavours!