**Mortal Remains --- by Chris McGann (1970)**

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| The subject is happiness. I want you to ask yourself, thoughtful reader, where and when in this lifetime have you been the happiest? I don’t mean the kind of momentary spike in happiness that occurs when you find out that you’ve won a lottery prize or when a medical test for cancer comes back negative. Rather, where have you been the happiest over a reasonable length of time?  I have been happy partially immersed in frigid rivers while fishing for Arctic Char. I have also been very happy crawling through the African bush in the final stages of a stalk on Cape buffalo. Most of all I’ve been happy standing up to my waist in an Argentine swamp while clouds of ducks flashed by and I could shoot to my heart’s content. But I don’t think I’d want to do any of these things for eternity.  Which brings me to my second point of consideration. Does it not make sense that our shades may wish to reside in death where we were happiest in life? Morbid or not I have long been cognizant of my own mortality. Therefore from time to time I have contemplated what should be done with my mortal remains when I pass on. Once they have been reduced to an easily transportable container of crushed bone and ash I’ve always thought I’d like them deposited somewhere special, someplace I’ve been happy.  My original place of preference was an English cathedral, the plan was for my wife to smuggle an unobtrusive box of me into the church and leave it in some out of the way corner. The company would be excellent and the scenery spectacular. But sooner or later I would probably end up scattered all over an empty parking lot when the local bomb disposal squad got through with me.  My next idea was to have my ashes dispersed on the westward facing slopes of the foothills overlooking the Canadian Rockies. At sunrise or sunset I’ve never seen a prettier vista anywhere in the world. This idea is still on the table but it is no longer my first choice.  The more I think about it the more I am convinced I’d like to come home to where I grew up and to where I was very, very happy. Of course I am aware this decision is bathed in the sunshine of memory and coloured by time and the sheer euphoria of youth. Regardless, I know that I would be more than satisfied if my ashes were scattered over the track at P.C.S.S. Perhaps this is unorthodox or down right creepy but why be normal? I was there when the track was first put down. It would close a circle if it was there when I was put down. Surely this idea is in contravention of all sorts of environmental regulations and municipal by-laws but what is there worst that could happen? I could be vacuumed up if the wind doesn’t get to me first.  As Admiral Grace Hopper said, “It is often easier to ask forgiveness that to request permission”.  Ideally the ceremony (or what passes for a ceremony) would take place on a sunny Saturday afternoon in late September. This time is important because it was in an impromptu race on a September Saturday afternoon that I first defeated my sprinting nemesis and I knew my days of losing to him were over. It would take place on the back stretch of the track because this is where our race took place. Late in the afternoon my wife and daughter and perhaps a few co-conspirators would casually walk a lap of the track. When they reach the back straightaway Joanne could covertly begin pouring out the powder that was me. Hopefully any prevailing breeze will co-operate and there will be enough of me to last the length of the back stretch. I could blend in nicely with the grey gravel of the track. Once the deed is done perhaps the group will be able to sit down on the bleachers, remove a properly chilled bottle of Krug and some champagne flutes from a backpack and toast my memory. I would be totally content with such a send-off. From then on Port Credit could brag about having a ghost in residence. How many schools in Mississauga can trump that? |