

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Thurs., March 18, 1965

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Top Yank Medal Won By Three Islanders

By NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial-Farm Editor

THIS PROVINCE produced two heroes who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, one of them almost 100 years ago, I learn from Mrs. B. T. Thompson, Summerside who passed along to me information received from her son, Erwin Thompson, who is historian for the United States national parks service, and is now at the Fort Davis national historic site in Texas.

One of the medal winners, Private Daniel Campbell of the U.S. Marine Corps was born in this province on October 26, 1874. He entered the Marines from the state of Massachusetts and that makes sense, for thousands of Islanders went there in former years.

Pte. Campbell's citation read:

"On board the USS Marblehead during the cutting of the cable leading from Cienfuegos, Cuba May 11, 1898, facing the heavy fire of the enemy, Campbell set an example of extraordinary bravery and coolness throughout the action."

THE OTHER medal winner was Pte. Thomas H. Gay, Company B, 8th U.S. Cavalry. There was no date given for the birth of Pte. Gay but the citation said he was born on Prince Edward Island. He was awarded the Medal of Honor on July 24, 1869 for action in Arizona between August and October 1868. His citation read in part "for bravery in Scouts and action against the Indians."

Unfortunately there is no suggestion where these men were born in this province. If any readers have any information I would greatly appreciate it. My thanks to Mrs. Thompson and her son for passing this along to me. Erwin Thompson, a graduate of UCLA in Los Angeles, California completed graduate work in history and has been associated with historic study in the United States. His many assignments have included that of technical advisor to the director of the National Parks service, an agency of the department of the interior.

C. MacGillvray Medal Recalled

THE MEDALS of Honor reported here were completely unknown to Islanders apparently. I recall that during the Second World War a former Charlottetown boy, Sgt. Charles MacGillvray, came here to speak in a Victory Loan drive and our papers said he was "the only Island man ever to win the Congressional Medal of Honor."

Ralph Cameron wrote the story and in one of his scrap books I find that Sgt. MacGillvray's 71st U. S. infantry regiment was moving forward in darkness on the morning of January 1, 1945 to meet the threat of a breakthrough by elements of the 17th Panzier Grenadier Division.

Advancing along the left flank, he ran across enemy troops digging in. At the same time the Germans opened fire and stopped the American advance.

“Sgt. MacGillvray volunteered to take care of the gun positions while another company of the 71st flanked the other strongpoints from the right. He circled from the left through the snow-covered woods, worked his way to the emplacement, and shot the two camouflaged gunners from a range of three feet. Other enemy forces withdrew.”

The same afternoon Sgt. MacGillvray went on reconnaissance, the citation continued, and discovered that his company was being opposed by six machine guns, supporting a company of German troops. Soon after his company began an attack, it was pinned down by furious automatic and rifle fire.

79 SS Troopers Were Destroyed

“AGAIN, HE voluntarily went on a lone combat patrol. Carefully working through the underbrush, he stalked the enemy, reached a hostile machine gun and blasted its crew with a hand grenade. Picking up a sub-machine gun, he advanced to within 10 yards of another machine gun, where the enemy crew discovered him and feverishly tried to swing their weapon into line to cut him down.

“Ignoring the enemy fire, he jumped into the midst of the Germans and killed them with several bursts.”

In all Sgt. MacGillvray was reported to have destroyed 79 German SS troopers in the action which was near Woelfing, France and he lost his left arm which was shattered with 22 bullets.

The story of 1945 said the hero was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles MacGillvray, 23 Spring Street.

Oversight Was Not Intentional

AN ITEM last week intended to pay tribute to the late Stewart MacMillan, father of Billy MacMillan, well known Island hockey player, who is a student at St. Dunstan's University, unintentionally ignored the fact that George MacMillan is also a son.

I have followed the career of George and Billy during the past winter as I read the sports stories which told of the SDU hockey team's successes, and I listened to several of Mike Hennessey's broadcasts of games played here and elsewhere. As a result I was keenly aware of George MacMillan's worth to his team. But I never had any idea that the two boys were brothers.

So George here's my apology to you, and my explanation of how I came to ignore you when I referred to your brother. My appreciation goes to T. M. Linkletter, QC, Summerside who was good enough to tell me the facts of the situation.

And here's my congratulations to Coach Kane and every mother's son on his hockey team for the feat of reaching the Canadian College hockey finals. It's a first time for a Maritime team, and all of us here are proud that it was our Island club, St. Dunstan's, that won that honor.

Horse Whip Was Used But Little

MRS. EARNEST Coles, Suffolk, tells me that her husband has one of the horse whips of which I spoke in a recent column. The whip “still is in good shape”, says Mrs.

Coles who observe that's "probably because he didn't believe in whipping his horses. He only carried it in case he really had to use it."

I understand, Mrs. Coles, and remember that many people usually did nothing more than shake the whip, or whistle it at a horse and that usually was sufficient. And that reminds me of a story I've been telling at several of the places I've been speaking in the past few months.

The late Joe MacDougall of Alberton told me many an interesting story for this column while he was alive. Last fall I called on his nieces, with whom he had lived, to pay my respects because Mr. MacDougall had died only a few days before I visited that part of the country.

But one of his nieces told me this story that I had never heard from himself. It concerns a horse whip, so here it is.

Rug Hops In Air As Whip Cracked

THEY HAD good horses at the MacDougall farm when Joe was a young man and one of them was a "blood" horse, as they called a driver in those days. The term Standard Bred is mostly used now.

Most horses used to cringe and crowd up into the stall as far as possible when someone shook a whip at them. But the MacDougall horse was so full of life and pep, he used to jump an even foot straight in the air. Of course everyone admired the animal and nobody in the family would think of actually striking him with the whip, least of all Joe.

But the young man often shook the whip behind the horse and watched with admiration how the nimble animal sprang straight into the air just about a foot. Well the time came when the horse died, as all horses do eventually. The family thought so much of him that they carefully removed his hide, cleaned, tanned and lined it and made a beautiful floor rug out of it.

The MacDougall family thought so much of the horse, they put the rug in a little used corner of the dining room, where the rug would be admired by visitors, but tread on by as few as possible.

Joe, then a young man, had a whip in his hand one day as he strode into the dining room, and he shook it in sort of an absent minded manner. "And," he reported, "the rug rose exactly one foot off the floor."