

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Feb.24, 1961

## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Thrilling saga of sea recalled

I HAD the privilege recently of meeting two of the real life heroes of a saga of the sea that goes back more than half a century. It was Frank Weeks, Alberton bureau manager for these newspapers, who suggested several weeks ago that we visit the two surviving heroes of the A. J. MacKean rescue on a stormy November 16 morning back in 1906.

We visited William Leavitt in his Alberton home and listened with pride as he recounted for us some of the feats of daring that were accomplished that stormy morning when he was a young man. Mr. Leavitt made the feats seem commonplace as he calmly answered some of the questions we threw at him. But even 55 years later, the tale of heroism thrilled us as we listened with rapt interest and continued to ply this fine Island gentleman with questions that kept popping into our minds.

GEORGE MacBETH is the other Alberton man who survives that perilous rescue operation. I was unable to see him that day because of fading time, a pressure of other duties that could not be postponed and weather developments that were making the highway almost unfit for travel; and I had to get back to Charlottetown that night.

But I saw Mr. MacBeth here yesterday in the Charlottetown Hospital where he is recuperating after an operation which he underwent several weeks ago.

Mr. MacBeth noted that he and Mr. Leavitt are about all that are left of his generation in Alberton, and he was "feeling spry" a few weeks ago, just as Mr. Leavitt felt when we saw him in Alberton. I hope that both of these men have many years ahead to reminisce about some of their experiences when they were young.

### Hatch Label Identified Ship

NOW MORE than eighty, the two Alberton men were in their twenties when a water barrel and a main-hatch, labeled "A. J. MacKean", drifted ashore at Alberton South that storm-swept morning so long ago. Captain John Champion and Daniel Fraser organized a nine-man rescue crew that pulled toward the dangerous North sandbar into the teeth of a gale that sprayed rain and sleet in their faces, kicked up tremendous seas and reduced visibility almost to zero.

The 35-foot seine boat was beached on the North sand hills about 7:30 am and lighthouse keeper James Tuplin joined the party as they tramped across the sand and tried to spy the wrecked boat. But the driving sleet storm made this impossible.

THEY ROWED another three-quarters of a mile through raging seas and found three men clinging to the rigging, with Captain Tom DesRoches still in the ship that was being broken up by the pounding seas. The men had been there since midnight.

The rest of the tale was told quickly. A tossed rope was finally seized after many attempts, and the men were hauled to safety. Unfortunately Captain DesRoches was

lost, as the boat broke up and threw him into the sea. His body was found some time later.

### Daring Rescue Bid Proposed

BUT IT was Calvin Lewis, Patriot editorial writer, who told me yesterday that William Leavitt had to be forcibly restrained from jumping into the 30-foot waves and swimming to the side of the wrecked schooner. The rescue boat could not get near because of the heavy seas. Leavitt had watched for some time as thrown ropes failed to reach the imperilled men. He wanted to tie a rope around his waist and take it to the wrecked sailors.

Mr. Leavitt told me nothing of this of course, but Calvin, who was born in Alberton, recalls the rescue story and the tales told about it during his boyhood days.

THE LOST ship was owned by J. H. Myricks Co. Ltd., Tignish and Alberton. The rescued seamen were William Mallet, Joseph Laviolette and Jerry Richard.

Others in the rescue boat were John McCabe, James Cahill, Frank Skerry, Charlie Perry, William Smith, Charles MacNeill and James Tuplin who later became one of the province's biggest ranchers when P.E.I. became the talk of the fox world

### Watches, Medals In Recognition

MY MIND kept drifting back to the thrilling rescue as I sat in the Leavitt living room, and again this week as I talked briefly with Mr. MacBeth here. I have seen in the Leavitt home one of the watches presented to heroic crewmen by "The Government of Canada" and one of the two gold medals presented to the rescue boat captains.

Tales of heroism are uncommon enough here on the Island where many of the best stories are lost or forgotten, but it was a rare treat to meet and talk to these men who were a part of this feat of skill, stamina and daring so many years ago.

### Buntain Cow Brings P.E.I. Fame

THE FEAT of a P.E.I. Holstein was observed officially when the National Holstein-Friesian Association's annual meeting paid tribute to Susie Seaside Abberkerk who set a new all-time record for Canadian cows in milk production. We had a news item on it before, but it is worth recalling that she produced 250,454 pounds of milk in 15 lactations. Butter fat production was 8,880 pounds for an average test of 3.55. Her owner Roland Buntain certainly has every right to be proud of her.

Walter Buntain and Son was the name that the farm was under when Susie started her long record of production. But Walter Buntain died several years ago. Susie is the first cow in Canada to pass the 250,000 mark which possibly gives her extra distinction. She surely brings fame to the province

### Abegweit Blood Is Prominent

BLOOD FROM the Abegweit Holstein herd at Bunbury played a prominent part in developing the herd of A. D. Neill, Fredericton, N.B. who last week was granted a Master Breeder's certificate at the annual session of the Holstein breeders of Canada. It's the highest honor the association can bestow on a member.

Abegweit Saladin was the first outstanding sire used by Mr. Neill "to produce the families on which the greatness of the present herd was founded", the association's head office reports.

THE MASTER breeder tag is awarded only to breeders who reach a certain standard in the breeding and development of high grade cattle, both for type and production efficiency.

The late Senator J Walter Jones, a one-time premier, who founded the Abegweit herd, was the first private breeder in Canada to get a master breeder's certificate.

The herd was "dispersed" at a big sale last summer but B. B. Jones still has a few good cows left. Last time I heard, he had a cow working on what looked at the time like an unusually high production performance.