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ACROSS THE Island

Ordinary Hand Saw, Fine Music Is Heard

By NEIL A. MATHESON

"I KNOW how you love music, and I brought this man to play something really unusually for you", Houghton Mutch, Earncliffe said as he came to our door Saturday afternoon.

My friend, Mr. Mutch, was right. Elmer Leadbeater, Sydney, N.S. plays beautiful music on an ordinary hand saw. He carries an old hand saw with him that produces music for him better than any other he has ever tried.

But I brought in my rip saw and he played beautifully "An Evening Prayer" on it. He tried my other hand saw, but it was not suitable.

The Sydney man uses a violin bow on the saw as he bends it and twists it in the manner his experience has taught him will produce the beautiful sounds my daughter, Mrs. Jack Crelling, and I enjoyed so much.

First Concert At 13 Years

MR. LEADBEATER told me that he has been a student of music since he was a little chap. "I hired a hall and gave a concert in Antigonish when I was 13 years old," he told me, then added he got two dollars a seat.

The Sydney man played with the RCAF Concert group overseas in World War Two. He told of singing to badly wounded Canadian boys at times, playing his own accompaniment on a guitar.

He recalls particularly one occasion when he played and sang for boys whose faces had been terribly shot up. "The tears were running down my own face while I tried to entertain them", he told me.

One afternoon while preparing for a concert, he tried out a saw – he had seen an old German play one many years previously. That night he played the Irving Berlin number "White Christmas" and "didn't make a mistake".

Mr. Leadbeater plays something like 22 different musical instruments – he even learned the Bag Pipes – and found the "Ukekelin" one of the more difficult ones. It has 32 strings, and numerous hoops among other things which I can recall from our conversation.

Bottles, Cigar Boxes

THE INTERESTING and welcome visitor has played music on just about every sort of instrument, and on a number of improvised ones, like the saw. You can bring music out of cigar boxes, he said for example.

He has "tuned up" a row of bottles and played on them in concert. Once he used about 50 Demarara bottles before he got the seven he needed for the performance. The best ones had thin glass. Once when he was giving a performance, one of the bottles broke and water spurted "all over the place".

Betty Carol (Mrs. Crelling) and I were invited to attend the Cherry Valley church service Sunday. There we heard once more the musical wizardry of this unusual man. He played "Bless This House" and "Sweet Hour Of Prayer", a hymn my wife and I sung a number of times as a duet.

We'll often remember Elmer Leadbeater. Indeed I'll never pick up that rip saw again, but I'll think of the beautiful music the visitor from Sydney played on it.

Ottawa Promises Mean Little

'THE PRIME MINISTER announces that tenders will be called this year for construction of a combined tunnel, bridge and causeway to span Northumberland Strait between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.'

The definite statement, without any conditions or restrictions, was released to the press of this country on July 8, 1965.

The Prime Minister then was Lester Pearson, prior to that Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had said in the House of Commons the causeway "will be built" and later he told a large audience in the Forum here the details of its building, how much work it would give people in the P.E.I.-N.B. area and other details. Memory tells me he even said when it would be completed.

The Pearson government in 1965 authorized one of its ministers to mount a bulldozer and 'turn the first sod', and they felt so smug about it, apparently, they didn't even have the manners to invite the premier of this province to be present.

I was sitting in a Halifax hotel room when I heard about this unpardonable action. For the first, and the only time in my life, I was ashamed to be an Islander.

NOW WE are told the causeway will not be built. The government has not made that definite statement but one of the Trudeau cabinet has blithely explained that the matter is being given intensive study to see whether it should be built now, or be postponed – I don't think he even admitted it may be cancelled for all time to come.

Never in the years I have been observing announcements from Ottawa and their fulfillment or otherwise, have I seen a definite promise of the national government so flagrantly ignored.

If the present Ottawa attitude on the crossing remains what it now appears to mean, it will mean that in future, indeed from this point on, nobody who thinks seriously can ever again rely on what the nation's leaders say.

Mayor Bell's Reaction Told

DURING A trip last week on the Abegweit I was told that Mayor Gilbert Bell of Borden had been away from work because of illness, but that he recovered quickly when he heard the causeway etc. crossing was not going to be built.

I am not poking fun at you Mr. Bell. I can readily understand your reaction, if, indeed, my story teller was describing your reaction correctly.

A part of the promise to build the permanent crossing was an undertaking to do something to cushion the work loss shock to the people of Borden. Some alternative scheme was to be worked out to provide a livelihood for the town's people, when the ferries and ferry dock installations ceased to function.

If the federal government took as long to do something about this employment promise as it has already taken to discuss the causeway crossing construction and still not know what is to happen, your generation, Mr. Bell, and several generations to come could starve to death so far as help from Ottawa to provide other work is concerned.

I found the lengthy press release in one of our closets as my daughter and I were clearing out some rubbish. That's a good word "rubbish", that's what the government spokesmen appear to be giving us, instead of the definite action they promised.