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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Ship Stories Stir Many Memories

By NEIL A. MATHESON

THE TURRET BELL and Sovinto stories stirred a lot of memories among readers, some of them had interesting recollections to pass on to me.

Dr. Joe MacMillan, Charlottetown recalls that he used to visit his uncle, Rev. K.C. MacPherson, at St. Margaret's when he was a boy. In the parochial house was a bench that had been salvaged from the Sovinto. It was a comparatively hard bench, more like a sofa, with a red plush seat. It was hinged on the ends, so the back could be turned from one side to the other, if that was desirable.

S. Peter White, Murray Harbour recalls that he was in Port Hastings, N.S. with his father when he was a boy of about 10 or 12 years. He was aboard the Turret Bell at that time at the coal pier there.

Has Dinner Bell

BETTER STILL he has a remembrance of the Turret Bell. It's her dinner bell and it was given to him by Captain Joseph Gallant of Rustico in this province. The bell "is still in excellent condition at my home", the Murray Harbour man writes.

This week my brother-in-law, Wendell Glover – he's also a close neighbor – told me he recalls seeing the Turret Bell being pulled off by a tug boat. This would be after the company that moved her had her far enough into the water that the tug-boat was able to pull her the rest of the way until she was afloat.

To those who missed my first column on her, the Turret Bell was washed and blown ashore in the Cable Head area far from the normal depth of water which would float a ship of her size. The extraordinarily high tide, the tremendous waves and the gale-force wind all played a part.

Huge Hydraulic Jack

ONE COMPANY spent part of one summer – just how long I cannot recall – trying to refloat the Turret Bell without success. The next company did the job. They moved her using huge hydraulic jacks. They would lift the ship to the full height of the jacks, then pull her towards the water and she would topple to the stern as the jacks finally let her down to ground level. Then the jacking-up process would be repeated.

Turret Bell Haul Road

SHIRLEY SUTHERLAND, Greenwich tells me that the "haul road" of which I spoke in the original story, is on a farm which he owns in the area. The haul road was built to haul equipment needed for the difficult task of refloating the Turret Bell.

These are the comments on the Turret Bell and the Sovinto that come to memory as I type this column. There may have been several others which I have forgotten.

While I was talking to Dr. MacMillan about the Sovinto, I asked him if he remembered the day he gave me the story on the Maritime Hospital Association being formed. He remembered better than I did, and sports fans will get a kick out of one part of the recollection.

“Dr. Joe”, as many people know him, talked to a meeting of hospital associations at Pictou, N.S. – the date was July 8, 1942.

At the time there was an N.B.–P.E.I. hospital association and a Nova Scotia hospital association, Dr. Joe urged that the two associations unite, and form a Maritime Hospital Association. He had to leave for home after his speech – I’ll tell you why in the next paragraph – but he received a call next day telling him “We’ve formed the Maritime Hospital Association as you suggested, and we’ve named you the first president.”

As I recall it, this step set in motion the co-operative hospitalization scheme which later came to be known as Blue Cross.

Islanders’ Coach Born

AND HERE’S the note sports fans will relish. Dr. MacMillan came home to perform a caesarian operation on a Charlottetown lady. The baby that was thus delivered is the man you sports fans know now as Jackie Hynes, coach of the Islanders hockey team that is far out in front of the Maritime Junior Hockey League competition.