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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Balloon Race Scare Is Recalled In Chat

By NEIL A MATHESON

A VISIT to Canavoy last week resulted in an interesting chat with Mrs. John McAdam about the May 6, 1929 day when a U.S. Navy balloon landed in their backyard. It was the winner of a long distance balloon flight competition that had started at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on the afternoon of May 4.

Mrs. McAdam had been afraid, she told us – Byron Burns, Charlottetown was with me – when she saw the men throwing objects over the side of the balloon basket.

The “I’m Alone” rum runner case was in the news at the time and there had been some suggestions that it might provoke an incident with the United States. The Canavoy lady feared the men in the balloon might be tossing bombs. The fact the “U.S. Navy” was clearly identified on the balloon side, made the belief of bombing all the more likely. The men were lightening the ship so it would come down for a landing.

SKETCHY INFORMATION available to me indicates that the “I’m Alone” was an American rum runner and that it was sunk by Canadian guns, hence the suggestion the Americans might retaliate.

Manning the balloon were Lieutenant T.W. Settie, U.S.N. and Ensign W. Bushell. Both were in the naval aviation service at the time at Lakehurst, New Jersey

The start was made from the Pittsburg University stadium and thousands paid from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a seat to watch the take offs, the officers said.

The estimated distance was between 900 and 1,000 miles. The world record for balloon flight at the time was said to be 1,250 miles. The men had been in the air for 43 hours, 20 minutes. They had flown as high as 16,000 feet, which was the maximum attainable with their balloon, they told the Evening Patriot in an interview.

The Patriot noted at the time that the two men had been in the air some seven hours longer than Lindberg had been on his flight from the United States to Paris two years earlier.

A story a few days later said the men had established distance and endurance records, though details were not given.

A story in the same issue of the Patriot said a Captain G.S. Abbot of Ottawa, inspector of civil aviation, was here inspecting sites on Falconwood Farm proposed as suitable landing fields for the Charlottetown Flying Club.

Level Used In Old Mills

ELSEWHERE IN this issue is a picture of Allie Cutcliffe, Charlottetown undertaker, holding a large level. Allie tells me it was used to level the big stones which millers used in earlier days to grind flour, oatmeal and other things. The source of the level is not indicated.

Many More Race Tracks

TIGNISH DID have a race track, as I suggested. It was on the farm of Jim Christopher, who was a brother of the Dr. John Christopher who became well known in racing circles here some years ago.

Sanford Phillips had a track at O'Leary and Will Matthews had one at Howlan, Albert Philips tells me. He raced horses on all of these tracks, also on a track at Egmont Bay, which was close to the church, he told me.

Walter MacMillan called to tell me the MacMillan track at Oyster Bed Bridge was owned by Duncan MacMillan, whose daughter was married to Senator B. Prowse.

Almon Wood, Little York tells me that there was a track at Johnston's River – probably more in the Mt. Ryan area. There was also one at Avondale which would be close to Peakes on the 48 Road.

A man in Lorne Valley last week told me there had been a track in that general area; he thought it might have been at Elliotvale, though he wasn't sure.

Mr. Wood recalled having attended races at the Johnston's River track in the period 1910 to 1920.

Peter Keefe also told me about the Johnston's River track.

Ralph Judson, Pownall recalls racing on the Johnston's River track back in 1917.

The track at Souris River, I am told, was on a farm owned by William Malone. Last racing done there was somewhere about 1927, a man who comes from that area believes.

Unusual Way To Start Horses

ANDREW BAGNALL, Charlottetown has an interesting observation on the track at Hope River. He said John T. Cosgrove was a colorful character. He recalls, for example, hearing of him taking two horses and holding them by the bridles at the starting wire to get them away. Unfortunately Mr. Bagnall has no details on this.

It would seem as though it must have been a match race that was started in this unusual way. Otherwise there would have been more than two horses in the event.

The Hope River track was in its heyday before 1900, Mr. Bagnall said.

Glen MacLaren, New Perth tells me that there was a racetrack at Summerville in the long ago, and that it was operated by "Jim Ben" MacMillan, who was the father of Frank MacMillan, who taught at Prince of Wales College for many years.

There was also a race track in Brudenell, not far from the scene of the present Fraser Valley food plant, he added.

Wilbur Robinson, Winsloe tells me that Rev. Ronald MacDonald (Father Ronnie) had a track north of St. Augustine's Church in South Rustico many years ago. Mr. Robinson recalls seeing the traces of the track some fifty years ago. The racing would have been held considerably before that time apparently.

There must have been a great many tracks in the province in previous years, Mr. MacLaren suggests. I haven't named more than one-half of them yet. I wonder who will be the next person to tell me about another.

Musk Rat Attacks Man On Street

I WAS looking at a few pages of notes I took from old newspapers and found this one:

“A gentleman walking up Great George Street last night was attacked by a large muskrat, which came out of the sewer near W. E. Dawson’s hardware store.”

The year was 1882, and that’s the only time I ever heard of a muskrat attacking a human being, although common cats will attack a person if they are cornered, I am told.

Paul Martin Calls

HAD A telephone call from Hon. Paul Martin earlier this week. “Hello Tiny” he said, “Couldn’t come to Prince Edward Island without saying hello.”

This was the cheery greeting that came over the wire from the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who was to speak in Summerside at noon that day.

It’s refreshing to find a man who never forgets a friendship. In the federal field I’ve found it’s so unusual that it’s almost in a class by itself.

Generally I have found the friendships I made in the House of Commons are fleeting things that are soon forgotten. Paul Martin, apparently, is one of the few who do not forget.

This man was always friendly when we were in Ottawa. He’s still friendly now that I am no longer there, and have no intention of ever trying to return.