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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Public Servant Is Appreciated

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I HAVE always shied away from paying tributes to the departed, though there have been times when the urge was unusually strong, but Daniel J. MacDonald, MLA, Bothwell has brought to my attention the case of a public servant who left such an impression on the entire South Lake telephone exchange area that the locality has asked that I acknowledge for them something of the real service rendered for them in her lifetime. In doing so may I acknowledge similar service rendered by operators and other public servants in other parts of the province.

What the people here would like to do, Mr. MacDonald tells me, is to pay a tribute to Helen Stewart, this highly respected lady who was a public servant for more than 40 years.

She did the 24-hour service as exchange telephone operator all by herself, and when people found it necessary to call her in an emergency they could leave it safely in her efficient care.

THE PEOPLE called on Helen Stewart for aid whether it was fire, illness, deaths, births or other emergencies or mishaps that humans are likely to meet. And there was always a great feeling of confidence that this helpful, trustworthy, co-operative lady would always do the right thing at the right time to bring aid to those who needed it.

Few explanations were needed. They called Helen, Mr. MacDonald tells me, and the problem was in the hands of a person who invariably knew what to do and always did it speedily and efficiently.

She saved many a person's home, barn or other outbuilding", I am told, "by getting in touch quickly with groups of people who would be the most readily available in such emergencies. She was a true friend of the man in distress, whether it was a stranded motorist in a snow drift, or a snow-plow operator or dispatcher who had to be reached.

THE FISHERMAN, the farmer, the shipper or the fish packer were among the many others who always relied on Helen Stewart for efficient service and for knowledge when and where it was needed.

People in all walks of life knew this faithful public servant and appreciated her services over such a long period of years, Mr. MacDonald emphasizes.

Death came suddenly for she had attended Mass at 6:00 a.m. and felt unwell shortly after 12:00 noon, called her sister-in-law, a next-door neighbour, who found Helen in severe pain when she hurried over to see her, and the beloved lady died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital at Souris only 12 miles away.

Others Are Recalled

AS I have said, I am using this piece here partly in tribute to the memory of this faithful public servant, and partly in recognition of the faithful and valuable service rendered to many of us throughout the province by people who like Helen Stewart, give or have given of their talent so willingly and unselfishly to their communities.

I recall, for example, visiting several farmer friends in the Breadalbane area shortly after the sudden death of Hedley Woodside who had served the area for many years first as a blacksmith and carriage builder and later, when cars came into use, as a garage man and a handy man who could fix or replace many implement parts around the farm.

“HEDLEY OFTEN could make a part for us and save us a long holdup in a busy farming season”, one man told me, and his tribute was echoed by many others.

I knew Hedley well and often thought of talking with him of the early days of servicing automobiles and making them go, when they quit on the road, as they often did in those early days. But, unfortunately, I never did get around to doing that, though I often talked with him briefly when this friendly man would hail me on the street or we would meet somewhere else.

My column is short this week for several reasons and all of them are linked to the disruption caused in the production end of the Guardian by the holiday schedule.

Information On Adam Andrew

BUT BEFORE I do end it I want to acknowledge with thanks calls I received from several people with information on Adam Andrew to whom I referred last week. Mr. Andrew donated to the City a painting of Old Charlottetown which hangs in the Mayor's office and a copy of which is on a desk calendar of the Royal Trust. If I said last week that he painted it, and I think I did, that was in error.

I'll tell you this much about him. He was born in the house where Henry Dixon lived in my youth and where George Dixon lives now. It was known then as Dixon's Mills, for the Dixons were millers. But I have some unusually interesting information about Mr. Andrew who became a rich man and sought to do various things for the province in which he was born.

If I can complete the job of talking with the people who have called me by next week, I shall have the information in next week's column. If not, I shall have it just as soon as possible.

And now at the end of the year, my very best wishes to all of you, and again a word of heartfelt thanks to the many, many people who have helped me get interesting bits of news for this column.