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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Salty Tale Told Of P.E.I. Seaman

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I HAVE to thank George P. Thompson, Charlottetown for this salty tale of an old sea dog from Cardigan, P.E.I. It's fashioned from what Mr. Thompson told me and information in a newspaper clipping that he has received from Vancouver where the veteran mariner now resides.

Captain Dan MacDonald - Earl MacDonald of Cardigan is a nephew - took the Victory Chimes on her maiden voyage and George remembers her because his father George A. Thompson had a share in her, along with the late Senator John A. MacDonald, Cardigan and Charles Lyons, Charlottetown.

CAPTAIN MacDonald who lives now in Vancouver, B.C. has had many thrilling experiences, but I think you'll like the one about a thrilling escape from a German submarine in the First Great War.

THE OLD salt was wounded in the leg when a German U-boat shelled and sank his three-masted schooner - she was carrying coal from Le Hayre to Cardiff - and he was taken prisoner by the submarine captain who spat in his face when MacDonald told him "I'm a Canadian". Ordered below deck, the sub was starting to submerge when the Cardigan native "had to get away quick or go below." Recalling the experience, he continues:

Hit him "A Poke In His Dirty Mug"

"I TOOK the chance, gave the captain a poke in his dirty mug and then I jumped over the side of his pirate ship. It was March and the water was good and cold, and I was bleeding a lot. I managed to get hold of one of the hatches and that kept me afloat. There was hell to pay aboard the sub. The commander was bellowing orders to get me and everyone was running around with rifles trying to get a shot at me."

He swam underwater as much as he could and was lucky that a British destroyer came on the scene, and the U-boat got out of there with all possible speed.

Taken aboard a British ship he had his leg dressed and got a "peg of rum" which made him "feel a lot better".

MacDonald is still hale and hearty though he started to sail before the mast 68 years ago.

I SHOULD add that the Vancouver clipping came to Mr. Thompson from Dr. King Grady, a former Summerside athlete of renown who is known by many in his old home town and other parts of the province. Chick Williams, himself a great athlete of other years, tells me that King Grady was an outstanding all around athlete. Dr. Grady has been a lifelong friend of Mr. Thompson, was home last year on a visit, I'm told.

Mr. Thompson had heard the story of the U-boat escape many years ago but it was brought back to his memory when he received the clipping from his friend.

“1900 And Froze To Death”

RECALLING THE unusually bad weather of last year - the rain started the first of July and hardly ever stopped - I'm reminded of an interesting story Mrs. Lester Brehaut gave me at Murray River recently. The widow of the beloved Dr. Brehaut, she had an old clipping among her souvenirs which she was kind enough to save for me.

Bill Ledwell, Patriot News Editor first told me about “the year there was no summer” and he got it from his dad, Tom Ledwell, St. Peters, but this old clipping recalls a few of the grim details of 1816.

It followed on the heels of the infestation of mice in 1815, a plague that destroyed the crops, and disappeared as mysteriously as it came, according to old reports.

THE WEATHER was normal January through March, but April was chilly, May was even worse and blizzards howled over the Maritimes in June, snow lay deep in the fields and the wind blew as in the dead of winter. The temperature dropped below freezing, stock went hungry and many animals died of starvation.

The unusual weather continued through July into August, grain would not grow enough to ripen, amateur scientists were predicting another “ice age” and preachers denounced “worldliness” and said “the hand of the Lord lay heavily upon the land.”

Farmers, and others, lived fearfully through the following winter and naturally wondered what the next summer would bring. But the weather returned to normal.

Charged To Volcanic Eruptions

THE UNSEASONABLE weather was charged to volcanic eruptions in other parts of the world “a pall of volcanic ash which interrupted the sun's rays”, the old clipping suggests. The year was 1816 but it became known as “Nineteen Hundred and Froze to Death”.

If that sort of weather came now I believe many would charge it to nuclear tests or some such developments. I recall a bad spring some years ago which the late Art Gaudet blamed on the Canso Causeway. He said it was interfering with the normal flow of water through the Gulf of Canso. There are people now who suggest construction of the Northumberland Strait Causeway would make our spring much colder and later, because “it would keep ice in the Strait much longer each year”.

Chinese People Appreciative

THE DEPARTURE of three well known Chinese families from this city yesterday reminds me of an observation I have often thought of making. It was my privilege several years ago, when I was in Ottawa, to be of some assistance to several fine Chinese families, and I never met anyone who was so appreciative as they were.

International relations and power politics are often difficult to understand, but I have often thought of how much the Chinese people as a whole could contribute to the world

family of nations, if a difference in ideology which divides China's people, did not keep a large section of them out of the world councils most of us accept at the present time.

Much of their craftsmanship, for example, is incomparable as we have learned at our house from some of the beautiful gifts. But their friendship and kindness are even more impressive.

A Guide To Winter Weather

HERE'S A way to find out what kind of weather we're going to have this winter. Vere Beck, Guardian News Editor, who comes from Alliston in Kings County, tells me that an old saying in his area is that the first, second and third day after Christmas indicates the type of weather we shall have in January, February and March respectively.

I checked on those days this year and noted that January should be blustery, though there was very little snowfall on December 26; February should be crisply cool and fine; and the December 28 weather, which indicates what we can expect in March, was fine and the temperature ranged from a low of one below zero in very early morning to a moderate "20 above" during the warmer daylight hours.

And here is another weather predictor Vere gave me. A northeast wind is usually a storm producer, but if the wind is northeast for six hours without any snow, it will not bring any snow.

I can't vouch for the weather predictors, but it might be fun to watch and see how they work out for this winter.