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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Experience Is Recalled In Storm On Strait Ice

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A VISITOR suggested to me when I was in hospital for a few days that I get the story of Lou Harris, Beach Point and his experience on the ice of the Northumberland Strait one stormy night when he was a youngster.

I told the man that I had the story – I got it from Mr. Harris late last year – and here it is. It was Harold and Jessie Carver, Hazelbrook who originally told me about the story.

The date was February 18 and the year was around 1913, Mr. Harris told me, and two companions had been “stumping” or running ice cakes in the water not far from their homes.

They were having so much fun that they didn't notice in time when the wind changed and started to blow them off-shore. They found there was 50 yards of open water between them and the sea wall, he recalled.

Blown into the middle of the strait, they were caught in a heavy snow storm and their folk ashore had despaired of ever seeing them again, Mr. Harris told me.

Were Blown Nine Miles Offshore

WHEN THEY were rescued by the Earl Grey, one of the ice breakers of that time – it was later sold to Russia – the captain told them they were nine miles off shore.

The captain picked the boys from the ice cake, put them to bed, took them to Pictou and brought them back to the Island the following day.

With the 16-year old Harris was Fletcher Jordan who was 20. A third boy, Elliot Lumdsden, had gotten ashore before the wind blew them too far from shore.

“It was quite an experience”, Mr. Harris agreed when I talked to him at his home. He and Jordan had spied a big ice pan just before dark and they had to spend most of the night in an effort to get on it. It was about two o'clock in the morning when they finally did get on the big pan. Then they started to build a fort, or shelter from pieces of ice they could get their hands under. The idea was to build something that would shelter them from the storm.

“It was snowing heavily, it was a real nasty storm, though it wasn't very frosty”, he told me. “The wind was from the southwest.”

The afternoon had been warm so the boys hadn't had warm clothing on them when they left home. Lou only had a sweater, no top coat.

Effort Was To Keep From Freezing

WHEN THEY had reached the big ice cake well past midnight, they co-operated in a systemic effort to keep from freezing, on the wind-swept ice.

First one of the boys would run and exercise, while the other one laid down to rest. Then they would change places and the second boy would run for a time. "Never did we both lie down at the same time", Mr. Harris recalled for me. He gave most of the credit for the good planning to his companion who was considerably older.

They each had a gun with shells. "We shot some ducks before it became too dark. We were going to have them to eat. We didn't know when the searchers might find us", he said.

But they had saved a few shells. "If anyone came looking for us during the night, we'd be able to fire a few shots to let them know where we were", had been the decision.

They would not have been found, Mr. Harris suggested, had it not been for the fact there was a Marconi station right on the beach one mile from Lou Harris's boyhood home. The word had been put out over the station and the captain of the Earl Grey had heard it, apparently.

Mr. Harris was inclined to make light of the experience, when I visited him at his home, but Mrs. Harris emphasized that the experience had been a great deal worse than her husband had said it was. And that was easy to believe.

How would you like to be out in the Northumberland Strait on a drifting ice floe, with a winter snow storm adding to the discomfort?

First Dance With King George Third

SOME INTERESTING inscriptions are seen on headstones in Prince Edward Island cemeteries. My friend, Mrs. Mary Cosh, Charlottetown had kindly presented me with an old photograph of a stone in the Roman Catholic cemetery in Souris which bears this inscription:

"In memory of Elizabeth MacDonald, beloved wife of Andrew McInnis, died December 15, 1852 age 65, R.I.P.

"She was a native of Lochaber, Scotland and was the lady honored by having the first dance with King George Third at the Royal Ball in Edinburgh in 1818."

Methods Used To Kill Animals

WE READ and hear a lot these days about the cruelty seen in the seal killing operations. I'm inclined to agree that there have been rank abuses in the past. I talked to one man several years ago who told me he could kill a seal, and have the skin off, in a period of 22 seconds. One charge is that the baby seals are skinned while they are still alive. I don't see how they could die in time for the entire operation to be completed in 22 seconds.

But my mind goes back to the days when the standard way of killing a pig for instance, was to stab it in the throat with a long knife; presumably the jugular vein was reached. Then the pig would run around the pen, sometimes the yard outside, until it gradually fell to the ground as its life ebbed with the stream of blood that poured from the stab wound.

Some years later the pig was killed by a man hitting it on the forehead with the back of an axe, then sticking it, while the animal was still stunned.

Now, I understand killing plants use a more scientific way of killing the animals they slaughter for human consumption. But the earlier methods of killing the animals at home on the farm certainly left something to be desired.

The standard way to butcher a steer, or some other member of the cow family, when I was young was for one man to hold the animal's head in a certain way, while another struck it with the back of an axe, or a heavy hammer, to stun it. The animal was bled after it had fallen.