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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Strong Man Stories, Some Are Fantastic

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"STRONG MAN" stunts are told across the Island and Cairns MacCullum, Brackley Beach told me one recently about Adolph MacCallum who was a double first cousin of Edward MacCallum who was Cairns' father.

All of us have heard some fantastic stories of feats of strength that were evidently impossible, but Mr. MacCallum assures me that he has been told of these feats by men whose truthfulness and reliability were unquestionable.

One concerns the lifting of a 200-pound anvil by Adolph MacCallum. That is not unusual in itself but the real story is how he lifted it. The powerfully built man who was five feet, eight inches in height and weighed 190 pounds stuck his thumb in the square hole in which the "hardy" set and lifted the weight shoulder high in that manner. The "hardy" was the piece of steel that set in the anvil and had a sharp, chisel shape top which the blacksmith used for cutting off the ends of horse shoes, and many other pieces of iron with which he worked.

ON ANOTHER occasion Mr. MacCallum carried two 200-pound bags of salt, one under each arm, from the wharf at Covehead to a point some 50 yards away. The wharf would be in the area alongside the Covehead bridge which had a section washed out in the fierce storm on December 19 of last year. The man who told Cairns that story was Robert Shaw, father of Gordon Shaw who runs Shaw's Hotel, he told me.

Cairns' uncle, Robert MacCallum, told him that Adolph drew two men's pay when he worked on a railroad construction job through British Columbia because of the useful manner in which the powerfully built Islander could lift a rail - the weight at that time was 700 pounds - and place it in position on the track. I have seen four men struggle to uphold and carry one end of such a rail, though I have also known one or two men who would carry an end on a shoulder casually.

MacCallum returned home from B.C. and then went to the Klondike in 1898 and never came back home. He went from there to California. Relatives here never heard whether he had struck it rich in the Klondike, but it is probable he may have had success there, for he was reputed to have died a rich man, his relative Cairns MacCallum told me.

As I have said, the reports of the feat of strength credited to MacCallum came from completely reliable people, and there is no question as to their authenticity. But many of the feats reported in the past have been fantastic tales that grew with the telling.

### One From Personal Experience

I RECALL the late Arthur Gaudet used to relate some of those fantastic tales, when

I started with the Patriot as a young sports writer some 30 years ago. One of his favorite story endings was "he was a giant of a man, Tiny. You would be only a child alongside him."

My favorite retort was "never mind Mr. Gaudet, just wait until I am 20 or 30 years older and they'll be telling the same kind of yarns about me". The report was only a defensive mechanism to reply to some of these fantastic and utterly impossible feats of strength suggesting that the tales grew with the passing years, but later I found my prophecy had been correct.

I met and talked with many former Mt. Allison, Acadia, Dalhousie and other university men in Ottawa during a four-year period there in the middle 50's, and often the talk turned to old Maritime football games and unusual feats of strength. Imagine my surprise one day during a noon-day meal chat, to have one of them recall the time I had intervened in a developing fight on the football field in a Maritime rugby final at Antigonish and held a husky Cape Bretoner off his feet at the full length of my arm, while I talked to him.

The funny part is that I couldn't convince them the story was almost completely unfounded. I recalled the instant readily. One of our team members - I was playing with Mt. Allison - kicked one of the Caledonia players while he was lying on the ground. The act was inexcusable and the Glace Bay boys naturally reacted so violently that a wholesale fight was shaping up. Stan Scott was, I believe, the captain of the team, and he seemed to be in the center of the melee. I had a great admiration for the big fellow and quickly barged my way to the center of activity, caught him by his sweater over the chest, shook him once so he would listen to me and proceeded to tell him what was on my mind.

We felt as bad over the dirty tactics of our man as they did, and having explained that to him the fight stopped quickly. But nobody ever thought of holding the big fellow off the ground, particularly not at arms length. I am recalling this story now only to illustrate the type of impossible feats of strength many old stories do describe. I cannot hurt anyone else's feelings when the joke is on myself, as it was that time. But I assure you there are still some otherwise wise and completely reasonable men who still believe that fantastic yarn.

### Centennial Essay Competitions

A GUARDIAN newspaper story Tuesday told of the two Centennial year essay competitions that invite stories dealing with earlier days in this province.

One group of essays, open to grandparents 70 years and over will deal with the topic "when I was very young". The other is a bit more difficult and the theme will be "Rural life in Prince Edward Island in 1864".

The first group should offer no difficulty and Mrs. Eric Kipping who is convener of the essay competition committee - the others are John Martin, district officer National Film Board and myself - is hoping for a large number of entries. There is a prize of \$100 available for the essay selected as the best in each of the two categories, and the subjects themselves should offer an unusually strong challenge to many of our people.

I gather that the essays will be judged on their accuracy in so far as the period

described is concerned, as well as for their literary content. For example the stories of rural life here 100 years ago will necessarily have to refer to the correct farm implements used at the time.

There would be no binders, for example, the first one came here around 1890, Cyril Shaw, Brudenell told me recently. His father had cut grain with a cradle-scythe when he was a boy, said Mr. Shaw who recalled for me that one farm in the York Point area grew 40 acres of grain and all of it was cut with the scythe. Was there a threshing machine then, or did they still use a flail? Did driving wagons exist?, etc.

I hope to do a story on Mr. Shaw's information in a few weeks time and it will answer some of those questions for you, but it will not answer all of them, and I have no intention of trying to provide too many answers. Digging up the information will, I suggest, be part of the fun of getting the essay material together. The deadline for entries is March 31 and they should be mailed to Centennial Essay Competition, Federation of Agriculture, P.O. Box 546, Charlottetown.

Incidentally J. Lincoln Dewar, federation secretary is the chairman of the overall committee on "Agriculture, fisheries and community". Mrs. Kipping is the chairman of the subcommittee on essays.

Judges will be Mrs. Harold Laird , Kensington, Lt.-Col. Leo F. MacDonald, Charlottetown and I believe I am the other one.