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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Norman MacDonald Has Unusual Record

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Provincial - Farm Editor

THE FACT that Norman MacDonald, principal of Summer Street elementary school in Summerside taught three generations of his own family may not be a record, but I suggest that it is most unusual.

Mr. MacDonald taught his wife, the former Goldie Guignon of Cape Traverse; their three children, and their grandchild, Marsha Schurman, who is the daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Robert (Bob) Schurman, Summerside.

But this is only one of the interesting facts about this unusual man.

Recalling a controversy in the correspondence column of this paper many years ago, I asked him about it when we talked briefly last week in the Guardian office at Summerside where Norman drops in regularly to keep us up to date on what happens in sport in that area.

I HAD recalled that he had topped the third year class at Prince of Wales College - it was in the 1922-23 term I found - and had protested to the then principal, Dr. S.N. Robertson, when he would not give him the gold medal - third year was the graduation year then, fourth year was added later - for finishing on top.

He had topped the class by three-quarters of one percent, Dr. Robertson told him, and the principal suggested it would be unfair to keep the medal from Miss Edith Hugh, a Murray Harbor girl who had topped her class in first and second years, while Norman had not previously attended PWC.

Silver Medal Was Returned

"I SENT the silver medal back", Mr. MacDonald told me, and he heard that Miss Hugh had also returned hers, though he never did confirm it. Norman was understandably annoyed at the time but later, he told me, he "was sorry for having made an issue of it because Edith was a very fine girl, and it was hardly fair to her. But it stung me to have captured first place without getting credit for it, and I acted on impulse," he explained.

Miss Hugh, who was also an outstanding student, later taught at PWC and died some years ago.

But the unusual part of Mr. MacDonald's academic career goes back farther than that. He took the equivalent of Grade XI or first year PWC in Nova Scotia where his parents moved when he was three years old - he was born in Dover, P.E.I. - and took second year work at home while he was teaching in Murray River. It was on top of that feat that he came back to PWC later and was able to top the class.

HE TOPPED his year in four out of seven subjects. They were physics, Latin,

English and chemistry. His average for the seven subjects was about 89 per cent, but he shrugged off that performance as he recalled that Chester Stewart, Norboro had done better than 90. Mr. Stewart is now the dean of the Dalhousie University medical school, I believe, and is a friendly chap with a warm personality as well as an outstanding scholar.

Mr. MacDonald admitted to me that he had never found much difficulty in studying, but added that he had always had a longing to perform on the athletic field, like some of the better known athletes of that time.

Mr. MacDonald may not have realized that ambition but he does write an interesting column, "Sport Echoes", and does this paper's sports stories from his area.

I have often thought that he must enjoy writing his column as I read it, and I found he does enjoy that part of the chore, which must compensate in some part at least for the long and weary hours a sports writer must put in at times. I mean that, Norman, for I can speak from my own experience during a 10-year stint when I started newspaper work.

P.E.I. Man In Moose River Rescue

DID YOU know that it was an Island man, Pat Doyle who came from Hunter River, that was the first to reach Dr. D. E. Robertson and Alfred Scadding in the ruins of a Moose River gold mine shaft in the morning of April 23, 1936?

My informant is Harold Lloyd, a Charlottetown man who came from Westville. His information is reliable for his father, J. C. Lloyd, who was a Westville miner and participated in the Moose River rescue operation told him about it many years ago. His dad died only a few months ago.

Mr. Doyle who is buried in a Westville cemetery, was the first man to break through the last remaining barrier and shout a greeting to Dr. Robertson. But he did not have the privilege of bringing him to the surface. That was reserved for some of the "draegermen" miners specially trained for rescue work in gas-filled coal mines. There was no gas at Moose River for it was a gold mine, but the ordinary miners were told, Mr. Lloyd recalls, that they were to leave to the draegermen the privilege of the final step in the rescue effort that was being broadcast to the world by J. Frank Willis, the man you now see on several TV programs.

FOR YOUNGER readers who cannot recall the dramatic event - it was made dramatic by the news and radio coverage given it - three men, Herman Magill and Robertson and Scadding, all from Toronto, went down into the mine on Easter Sunday, April 13 and were trapped by a cave-in that has never been explained.

At first the authorities gave them up for lost but the narrow bit of a diamond drill operated by Billy Bell punched its way accurately to the stope where the men were trapped 141 feet below. Soups and concentrated food was fed to them through a tube which was lowered into the mine through the hole opened by the diamond drill, and the pair could talk to the surface while the hardy miners dug and clawed their way through a narrow tunnel that couldn't have been much more than four feet high.

THE EVENT stirred tremendous interest. Lights burned in hundreds, perhaps thousands of homes across the province night after night as occupants listened, waited,

hoped and sometimes prayed for the rescue that seemed to be coming nearer with each passing hour. Radio bulletins were flashed every half hour and later the bulletins came much more often, especially in the last few hours when the broadcast was almost continuous.

But this is the first time we heard that an Island man was so dramatically involved in the rescue effort. Doyle was a councillor and a one-time mayor of Westville, Mr. Lloyd told me, as he emphasized the fact that the ordinary miner played a tremendous part in the rescue effort, although the news stories and broadcasts at the time seemed to give most of the credit to the draegermen.

And the going was unusually tough. The miners worked in a tunnel so narrow and low that they filled buckets and passed them back by relay; the only way they had of disposing of the stuff they dug as they pushed the narrow tunnel through hard ground that was comprised mostly of quartz, he told me.

Pastures Are Really Good Here

A CHAT this week with two nationally known Hereford men, pointed up the statement made many times by Agriculture Minister MacRae that Island pastures are "the best".

E. H. Himmelman owns a big Hereford herd at LaHave, N.S. and is the Maritime director, and I have been told he will be the next president of the Canadian Hereford Breeders Association. Keith Gilmore is the editor and publisher of the Hereford Digest with office in Calgary, Alberta.

Commenting on our pastures, they suggested they must come close to handling one cow per acre. I told them that the top men in our annual pasture competitions get an average of about one and one-half cows per acre. Then I asked them what good pastures achieved elsewhere.

They told me that one cow to ten acres is considered good on "good" ranges in the foothills of the Rockies, that one cow to 17 acres is considered average in the High River area and there are range pastures where "the ratio goes up to as high as one cow to 100 acres." And that seems to be a mighty expensive way to raise a cow.