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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Alberton Man Discusses Bell

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I TALKED with Arthur Bernard, 79 during a recent visit to Alberton. This man recalled working for Alexander Graham Bell, at his home in Baddeck, N.S. something more than 50 years ago. Mr. Bernard was born in Tignish in this province, but he lived at the time in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton where he was a plumber.

In one interesting flashback he said "I watched K.C. Baldwin and F.B. McCurdy when they were building the 'Silver Dart'. After it was finished Mr. McCurdy flew it over the Baddeck area". Mr. Bernard said.

I recall that a replica of the Silver Dart was built – it was in 1959 – and it got off the ground and flew a short distance before it crashed. This is from memory on my part. I was in the hospital at the time and a nurse, or orderly, took me in a wheel chair to a room that had a TV set in it, so I could watch the proceedings. The 1959 occasion was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original flight.

Mr. Bernard talked with Graham Bell several times – he was doing some plumbing in the home of the great inventor.

"Mr. Bell was a grand man. He could foresee developments many years in the future", Mr. Bernard observed. "They became realities many years after he had died", he added.

Flown On February 23, 1909

THE SILVER Dart was flown at Baddeck by J.A. McCurdy on February 23, 1909. It was the first time an aircraft was piloted by a Canadian in Canada.

It flew about one-half mile on its maiden effort. It had one tiny Curtiss engine of 50 horsepower. It was 32 feet in length, had a wing span of 49 feet and weighed 750 pounds.

I'm quoting here from a historical sketch that was written back in 1959 when the anniversary of the Silver Dart flight was fittingly observed.

That sketch states that Alexander Graham Bell instituted the first Aerial Experiment Association with two young Canadian engineers, K.C. Baldwin and J.A.D. McCurdy, along with two young U.S. citizens. One was Lieut. Thomas Selfridge and the other was Glen Curtis who later became the famous engine inventor and manufacturer.

"Baldwin was the first Canadian to fly, but McCurdy was the first Canadian to fly in Canada", the sketch said.

Flew 20 Miles in 16 Minutes

"IN 1910 McCurdy flew 20 miles in 16 minutes. The same year in New York State, he transmitted the first wireless message in flight. He continued flying until 1916 and his courage became legendary, for pilots in those days were constantly risking their lives in aerodynamic investigation."

I've wandered a long way from my talk with Arthur Bernard at Alberton Manor, but I found items of that sketch on the Silver Dart so interesting I just couldn't resist.

### Will See On Telephone

MR. BERNARD told me, "Mr. Bell told me once, 'I am credited with inventing the telephone but you, or your children, or grandchildren will see the day when two people can talk to each other over a telephone and actually see each other as they talk'".

I have often thought that the Senior Citizens Residences across the province are a credit to the man, or the men who designed them.

Mr. Bernard told me in our talk "I had a brother visit me a month ago whom I hadn't seen in 45 years". The brother, Freddie Bernard has charge of a somewhat similar manor in Philadelphia.

### Praise For Manor

FREDDIE TOLD his brother, "Arthur, I don't think there is the likes of this building in the whole of the United States.

"It is so well laid off and the people are so kind, and so friendly", Freddie added.

"You're well looked after here?" I asked him. The reply was enthusiastic and emphatic:

"The very best, the very best", he told me.

Charlie Gordon, a long time friend, is the Manor manager.