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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Old Ghost Tale Is Most Unusual

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ONE OF the most unusual ghost stories, or, "tales of the occult" as my friend, Charles S. MacDonald, Murray Harbor, calls them, came to my attention recently in the eastern part of the province.

I haven't permission to give you the name of my informant who is an unusually modest gentleman, but I can assure you of his complete reliability. And he tells me the old story is true, names used are family names well known in that area.

Joe Campbell and Felix MacPhee grew up together in the area of Campbell's Cove, indeed they were school chums, I am told. When Joe developed into young manhood he travelled to Gloucester, Massachusetts, and signed aboard a fisherman that was going to the Grand Banks, off Newfoundland.

A YEAR or so later Felix left his home and travelled the same route. The boat on which Felix had shipped encountered a bad storm off the Banks one night and the captain dropped anchor to ride out the blow. Felix was in his bunk below, when he saw a figure come down the companionway clad in oilskins. Getting up and approaching the nightly visitor, MacPhee recognized his old boyhood pal from the Island.

"Good Lord, it's Joe", he exclaimed in amazement, and the figure replied "that's who it is".

When Felix enquired "How are you and how in the world did you get here anyway?" Joe replied "I have a serious problem and I want your promise you will help me set it right."

"My Body Is At Bottom Of The Sea"

THEN JOE explained "My ship is at the bottom of the sea, directly below where yours is anchored. It was sunk a year ago in a storm similar to this one. My body is down there, and my soul cannot go to heaven unless you can do something for me.

Assured once again that Felix would do anything possible for his old friend, Joe continued:

"I bought several bags of potatoes from Philip Rose, Elmira, before I left the Island, and I never paid him for them. If you can pay him what is owing him, I can be relieved of this sin which is hanging over me."

Felix told his captain about the incident early next morning. After he had assured the captain that he didn't just have a bad dream, the captain told him, "I'll sail for Gloucester just as soon as this storm abates, and I will give you the money to go back to your Island and pay the bill."

The rest of the story indicates that the captain did that, and the Elmira man was paid the bill that Joe Campbell came back from the dead to talk about.

I told this story at the official opening of the Dundas Plowing match when my old friend, Leslie Hunter, called on me to speak. As I stepped down from the platform, I met a man who had told me about a year ago of an experience he had had when he saw the forerunner of his grandfather's death almost 40 years ago.

"I believe the story you just told", he said to me. "It's different when you have had a somewhat similar experience yourself", he explained.

Islander Qualified For Olympics

I TALKED here recently with a long-time friend, George Walker, a former athlete here in Charlottetown who retired a few years ago from his YMCA secretary's work in St. Thomas, Ontario.

It was back in the early 1920's that George distinguished himself as the best long distance bicycle rider in the Maritime Provinces. He won the 45-mile Windsor to Halifax race three years in a row and broke the record every time.

George also broke down his bikes with monotonous regularity - there were no paved roads in those days - but that didn't stop him smashing the records at the same time.

The best story I recall is the one where he broke his starting bike, then broke his spare, and rode the last three miles on a boy's bike he borrowed from a youngster, and when that one broke down, he ran the last 100 yards carrying, or pushing the bike along with him.

Best of all he set a record of 2 hours, 14 minutes for the distance.

SO IT was natural that George should be sent to Montreal for the Olympic long-distance trials in the summer of 1924. Money was always scarce for sending athletes on such costly trips and Walker arrived Saturday night, got a bit of sleep and forked his bike early Sunday to start the 105-mile race that called for covering a 35-mile course three times.

The Islander had had no chance to study the course he would have to cover, though the two top men had been riding it for several weeks, and they were paced by motorcycles and the man who finished first was fed oranges and other refreshments from the motor bike.

By some means which George never did find out, the top man managed to escape a stop for refreshments that was enforced on the rest of the riders after they had covered 75 miles of the grueling distance.

Performance Made Fine Impression

I'LL PASS over wearisome details and say George finished third and was offered the chance to represent Canada in the Olympic games in 1924 when the second man was disqualified. The offer from the Olympic committee carried the requirement that he should pay one-half of his own expenses.

George didn't have that kind of money, few youngsters did at the time - but he told me this summer that the late Chester McLure and Lt. Col. D. A. MacKinnon, former owners of this paper, offered to put up the money so he could make the trip.

But it was about the time that George Walker had to make up his mind about the "Y" work that was offering then as a career. So he looked to the future and declined, with some regret, the chance to be a member of Canada's Olympic team.

THE PERFORMANCE of the Charlottetown man made a deep impression on the top bicycle racing men of that day. I saw a letter a few weeks ago that had come to George from William Gladish who was the district chairman of Canada's Wheelman's Association. It said in part:

"Taken on the whole your performance was astonishingly good and quite the most meritorious of the entire field." The letter noted further that the winner had been breaking the rules when he was paced by a motor bike and fed by the rider.

I should say here that the Charlottetown man was not alone in his big test. Alderman Louis Rubenstein of Montreal took George under his wing and did everything possible for him while he was in the big city.

George Walker was active in many other sports but the incident I remember best is the time he was nozzle man on the Charlottetown Fire Department's Hose and Reel team that won the Maritime Championship here in 1925 and set a record of 1 minute, nine and four-fifth seconds for the quarter mile run, pulling a 500-pound reel, that has never been equaled. The department claimed it was a world record at the time. The details are still fresh in my memory after 39 years because I had the privilege of running on that team.