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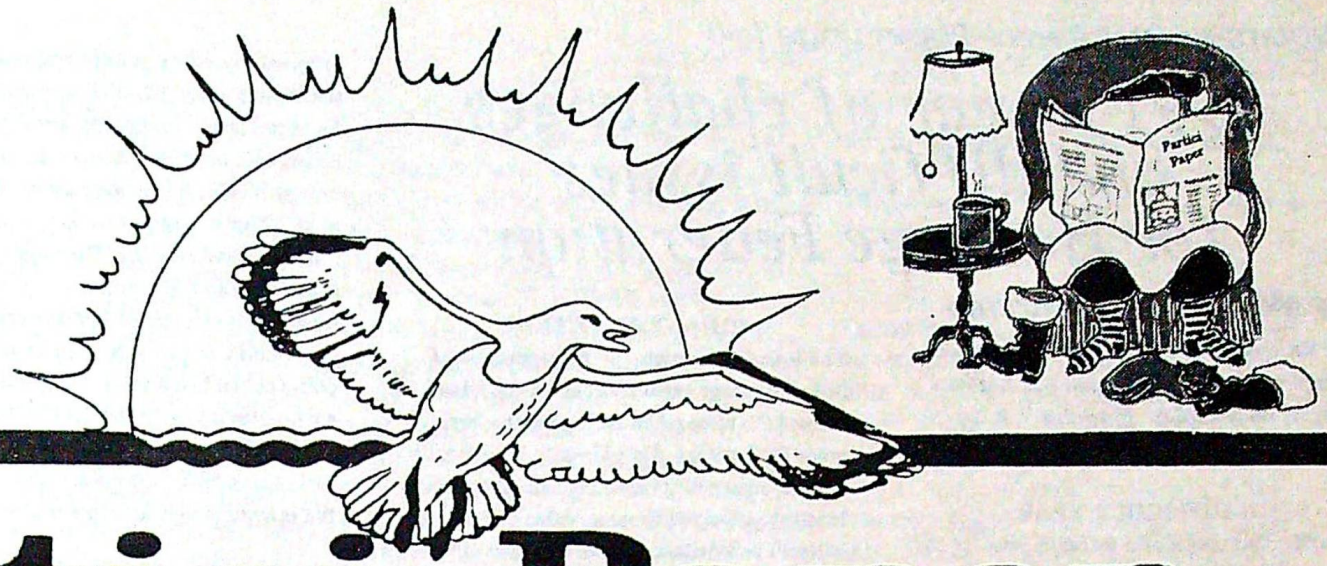

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Air crash Rescue!

by Mary Anne Ducharme

On April 15, 1943, a Canadian military plane crashed at Mabou Coal Mines, killing four crew members instantly. The lone survivor, who was saved only because he happened to be in the tail section of the plane, had several more coincidences working for him. Eventually, however, fate caught up with him.

The Air Force was training pilots and crews on Hudson Bombers in Moncton. They carried out many test training flights over various parts of the Maritimes, including Cape Breton, and this particular training flight left Moncton about 6 a.m. and was circling over the water near the mountains at the Mabou Coal Mines. Between 6:30 and 7:00 am, the young, inexperienced pilot thought the plane had enough altitude. However it became apparent that they would clip the tops of the hardwood trees unless he veered upward sharply. The pilot threw the throttle to go up, but the manoeuvre stalled the engine, and the plane nose-dived straight to the ground. There has been speculation that the altimeter may have been faulty, or that other mechanical defects in the plane contributed to the crash, but pilot error was at least partially responsible.

Ben MacCarthy, a 24 year old from Glace Bay, survived because he was a gunner, and he was the only one positioned in the tail section of the plane. The tail broke off 12 feet from the end, and he was carried in that piece.

The slim, auburn-haired young man climbed out of what was left of the tail section in a dazed shock. His four friends were all dead, their dismembered bodies strewn in different places. He could see the head of one of them wedged near a tree stump.

Ben was bleeding from a laceration on his arm that had nearly severed it from his shoulder, and the wrist on the same arm was broken. Luckily, his legs were uninjured. However, he knew he would bleed to death very quickly unless the blood flow was stopped, so he tore portions of shirt from one of the other men and twisted it into a kind of tourniquet around his shoulder just above the cut.

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Note: This story was suggested by Theresa Doyle, in response to a query in the November issue of Partici-Paper. She is the sister of Stanley MacNeil of Mabou. The details are from an interview with Stanley who is the son of Dr. A.J. MacNeil who attended the only survivor of the crash, Ben MacCarthy. Ben himself gave the account of the actual crash to the MacNeils, and the details of the convalescence were told to Stanley by his mother. Stanley himself was called into an army assignment during this time, and was not present when Ben left.

Serviceman Ben MacCarthy of Glace Bay was a lucky man. The only survivor of a plane crash, several coincidences worked in his favour. But later, his luck ran out. Below is a photo of a plane similar to the one that crashed on a wilderness mountain at the Mabou Coal Mines in 1943, killing four men.

1991 a year of challenges and difficult issues for Heritage Federation

by Mary Anne Ducharme

The Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage conducted its Cape Breton Island Fall Regional Meeting on Saturday, November 9 at the Nova Scotia Highland Village in Iona.

A DIFFICULT YEAR

Jim St. Clair spoke of a difficult year for the Nova Scotia Highland Village because of break-ins in the museum in October in which many items were stolen. Also the withdrawal of promised funding by the Provincial government has caused serious financial problems. Funding cutbacks may also put the museum studies program at the University College of Cape Breton in jeopardy.

FRIENDS OF CAPE BRETON

Rodney Chiasson, FNSH Board Member, reported on The Friends of Cape Breton, a part of a $181,000. UCCB, Sydney and Area Community Futures Ltd, and Enterprise Cape Breton Corp. project to compile a data base of Cape Bretoners living away. Anyone having friends or relatives living away can pick up a from at the Beaton Institute and their names will be included in the database. The hope in this project is to bring economic investment in specific projects, and establishing a trust fund for cultural and historical museum activities.

WORKING TOWARDS MUSEUM AND HERITAGE FUNDING POLICIES

The Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage has resolved at its '91 Annual General Meeting, to review and assess provincial museum and heritage funding policies already in place, to make recommendations regarding the formation of new funding policies, and to investigate means of gaining funding support. The membership has expressed the view that the Cultural Federations should not remove themselves from the funding issues surrounding culture and heritage. The development of a comprehensive museum policy will be a slow process because of the number of agencies and individuals involved and difficulties of communication. There is a Museum Assistance Policy of the Nova Scotia Museum Complex," for instance, that is little known. Besides communication gaps, another difficulty is the structure of funding channels for Nova Scotia Museums. "The channels are devious," Jim St. Clair points out, "and the situation complex."

ARTS ADVISORY REPORT

The Arts Advisory Committee, chaired by Eva Moore of the Nova Scotia Drama League, has examined the problems of structure and funding policies and a report of findings titled "Coming of Age," is available from the Department of Tourism and Culture.

IONA CONNECTION

The Iona Connection, an incorporation of linked heritage organizations on the Island, formed "to strengthen and unite the Island voice for heritage," is presently in difficulty because many of its members are already extensively involved in many other heritage or cultural activities and have not been able to fulfil the objectives originally set for the group. The result has been a questioning of the value of its continued existence. A resolution was decided to hold a meeting of the membership in early spring to discuss its future.

HERITAGE INTEREST ADVOCACY

Who is responsible?

Discussion of the issue of who is responsible for heritage interest advocacy centred on the importance of lobbying so that tourism agencies will recognize and support the important tourism roles played by heritage and museum groups in the province. There is not a tradition of that kind of lobbying among heritage supporters, yet individuals, such as Candace Stevenson, Director of the Nova Scotia Museum, have long urged heritage groups to be far more vocal, for experience has shown that strong lobbying is an effective strategy.

TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH A REGIONAL APPROACH

"a big step forward"

There is a needs assessment project underway, funded by a Museums Assistance Program grant from the Department of Communications, to identify needs, to make an inventory of resources, and to make recommendations for the development of training programs with a regional approach. This brings the FNSH back into the field of training professional and volunteer museum and heritage workers in identified need areas. Examples of topics could include conservation (e.g. paper, photographs, etc.), how to prepare story lines for slide presentations, and displays, financial management, and requests dealing with specific local needs. This collaborative training effort could be in place sometime in 1992 and may look at professional development at the university level. This program will have the added benefit of helping to form networks of heritage resource people. Coordinating and collaborating in this project are the Nova Scotia Museum Complex, Mount Saint Vincent University, the University College of Cape Breton, and other agencies. Elizabeth Ross, Executive Director of the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage, says 'this is a big step forward and will be beneficial to all.'

THE CONSTITUION

"heritage is the glue"

The Federal Government's Constitutional Proposal regarding culture was recognized as significant at the FNSH Regional Meeting, for it is a sharp contrast to all of the other constitutional proposals over the past years in which culture was scarcely mentioned, if at all. This is thought to be the result of a growing awareness that "heritage is the glue that will hold this country together." This time it was recognized that the crisis facing the country is as much cultural as it is political, and that the federal and provincial governments have responsibility for cultural affairs. However, proposed negotiations in sorting out areas of responsibility between the provinces and the federal government have not provided for consultation with the cultural or heritage communities that would be affected. The president of the Iona Connection, Jim St. Clair made a motion at the FNSH AGM for members to write letters in support of maintaining direct federal presence in provincial culture and heritage policies, as stated in the constitution. In a Canadian Museums Association newsletter, the Association strongly urges its members, trustees and friends to participate in the constitution review by sending letters or briefs to the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada, Parliament Building, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A OA6.

Have a Scary, Merry Christmas!

It looks like a lot of people will have a Scary, Merry Christmas this year. With Breton Books' publication of **The Cape Breton Book of the Night**, and affordable blockbuster has hit the stands. Sub-titled "Stories of Tenderness and Terror," **Book of the Night** is ample proof of the health of story-telling in Cape Breton.

One entire chapter is devoted to ghost stories by young people -- and there is nothing childlike about them. They serve as proof that such stories continue to be passed along, the next generation is telling them. The practise of story-telling is strong.

The Cape Breton Book of the Night is good story-telling. It will raise the hair on the back of your head. It will make you flip on the light rather than risk a walk through the dark room.

The Cape Breton Book of the Night is on sale everywhere. It is also available directly from Breton Books, Wreck Cove, N.S. BOC 1HO. It is a quality paperback with 50 stories for only $12.95.

Let me eat at your table, Madame

Editor's Note: following is a delightfully humorous letter written to Mrs. James H. (Christina) MacMillan, the mother of Mrs. Fred (Jean) Smith of Mabou. The elaborate non-"flattery" obviously worked, for his entreaties for room and board were both given. The last name of the sender is withheld.

Sydney Mines
8 Feb. '38

Dear Mrs. McMillan:

I am due to spend another few weeks in Mabou shortly (21 Feb.). And my big worry right now is: Are you going to be able to put me up? If you can take me in I shall look upon it as a special favor -- knowing as I do that you are not running a boarding house. I shall be very uncomfortable, I promise you, anywhere else in Mabou.

But if you can't find a place for me to sleep, I must insist on one thing at least, namely, that you let me eat at your table. You cannot refuse, madam; your conscience would bother you every time you saw my slowly emaciating figure.

It has been my good fortune to have eaten three meals a day all the days of my life -- save for a few tough weeks every now and again. I began to eat when I was very young, I feel that if i were ever to break off the habit, I simply couldn't go on living. But that is neither here nor there. The point is that after so many years practice it is only natural that I consider myself an authority on what does nor does not constitute a good meal. I believe myself to be peculiarly fitted to appraise your table, madam, and my verdict, which you must on not account receive as flattery, but as a sincere compliment, is that the food you set before your guests is wellchosen, well-cooked, well-served.

I anxiously await your reply.

Sincerely,
Harry L.

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