

# *Tales From the Kittiwake Coast*



*Written by Robert E. Tulk*

*Edited by Eileen Smith / Greg Seaward*

Published by Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation

*Tales From the Kittiwake Coast*

*by*

*Robert E. Tulk*

© Robert E. Tulk 2001

## Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Tulk, Robert E., 1945  
Tales from the Kittiwake Coast

ISBN 0-9688372-0-4

Bonavista Bay Region (Nfld.) - History -  
Anecdotes. 2. Tulk, Robert E., 1945 -  
3. Newfoundland - Biography - Anecdotes. I.  
Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation II.  
Title.

PE1126.N43T84 2001

971.8

C00-901 786-0

Some of the tales & anecdotes in this book are transcribed from oral stories, as told to the author. Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation and editors accept no responsibility for inaccuracy of dates or facts written in this publication.

For more information contact

Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation  
P.O. Box 2222  
Gander, NF A1V 2N9  
709-256-2595 or 256-7368

or Robert Tulk  
General Delivery  
Newtown, NF A0G 3L0  
709-536-5759

Cover Picture: One of the oldest houses in Newtown, once owned by the Norris family  
Tribute to the Inshore Fisherman was written by Ms. Faye Sturge, Wesleyville, NF

## **Tribute to the Inshore Fishermen**

An inshore fisherman comes from a rare breed.  
Who harvest the sea to meet their need.  
He loves independence and the call of the wild.  
This feeling has been there since he was a child.

Looking out to sea through knowing eyes  
He checks the wind and scans the skies.  
Today will be a good one to haul the traps.  
He scratches his head and refits his cap.

He walks to his boat with lunch in tow  
Not noticing that the wind is cold.  
He sails his boat into the bay  
Thankful to God to have a good fishing day.

Seagulls encircle his head like a wreath,  
Waiting for morsels to slip underneath.  
The drone of the motor, the roar of the sea  
Ah, this is where he wants to be.

This way of life is bred within  
Generation to generation has passed it to him.  
But fishing is not an easy way to provide.  
The fishing can fail and the bottom can slide.

An inshore fisherman needs to hear  
Words of encouragement, support and prayers.  
Don't kick him when he's hurting the most,  
May his way of life prevail on the coast.

**This book is dedicated to all inshore fishermen and all adult learners.**

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank the National Literacy Secretariate for continuing to fund literacy projects, and in particular this publication.

Thank you to Ed Oldford and the Central Eastern Literacy Outreach Office for nurturing my idea until it became a reality, and for being there every step of the way.

Thank you to the Kittiwake Economic Development Corporation for believing in my work and for applying for the funding.

A special thank you goes to three students who returned to school to continue their education. Reginald Sheppard, Sherry Oakes and Audrey Woolridge piloted-tested the book and gave it their stamp of approval.

Thank you to all the people who spent hours relating stories of the past to me.

Thank you to Katie Bungay who urged me to go back to school during the Cod Moratorium and to Guy Perry, my instructor at the FFAW Training Centre, for encouraging me to start a writing career.

A big thank you to Greg Seaward, who coached and encouraged me when I first started to write for the Gander Beacon.

## Foreword

On the surface, this collection of short stories, musings and memories provides a delightful read for anyone who can look back at their life with a smile. And yet, it is so much more. Together, Robert Tulk's colorful tales paint a picture of rural Newfoundland: its people, its values and lessons too often learned the hard way.

These were times when hardship and tragedy were commonplace; when courage and faith were not reserved for heroes alone; when fellowship and humour were not mere social graces, but the most basic tools of survival.

Robert himself has faced his share of obstacles and been knocked flat on his fanny more than once, only to pick himself up, dust himself off with a chuckle and run headlong in search of life's next adventure.

It is in this spirit that he relates these stories of a hardy, stoic people, beginning with the story of his own remarkable life.

Greg Seaward

## Table of Contents

My Childhood Days .....	1
My Teenage Years .....	8
The Beginning of the Rest of My Life .....	11
Uncle & Me .....	15
Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness .....	17
The Faithful Commandment .....	19
The Tea Pot .....	20
Uncle's New Fishing Rod .....	24
The Eel .....	27
The Rat .....	30
The Lure .....	33
The Ten Commandments .....	36
Bingo & Me .....	40
The September Gale .....	44
A Close Call .....	46
Child Birth .....	48
UIC .....	50
Granny Tell Me .....	52
How The Cape Freels People Got Shifted .....	54
The Saddest Sight .....	56
A shot From The Past .....	57
Cape Freels Branch Road .....	58
The Three Rocks Tragedy .....	61
The Pouch Island Tragedy .....	63
The Cabot Island Tragedy .....	65
The Last Mug-up .....	67
The Wheeler Tragedy .....	69
The Pound Cove Tragedy .....	71
The Wonder Medicine .....	72
The Storm Door .....	73
Johnny Hall .....	74
Lucky Strike .....	76
The Labrador Era .....	78
The Long Walk Home .....	81

Seven Days Adrift .....	83
The Pouch Island Ghost .....	86
The Voyage Home.....	88
The Riseover.....	90
From The Past.....	92
The Restless Spirits .....	94
The Bully.....	96
Against The Savage Sea .....	97
Pictures .....	99
Jakie Kelloway, 1889 – 1964 .....	101
A Tale From The Past .....	104
Pictures .....	105
The Missing Heads .....	106
Coronet.....	107
Example of Courage.....	109
Edward Blackwood.....	113
Francis P. Duke .....	115
The Eider Duck Fight .....	118
The Lone Beothuk .....	120
God’s Iron Man .....	122
Billy Myrne.....	124
Back From The Dead .....	127
The Dark Stranger .....	128
The Phantom Light .....	129
Outsmarted .....	131
High Hopes.....	132
Overboard.....	133
Black Rock .....	135
The Dream.....	136
Newtown Verus Templeman .....	137
Edward Sainsbury.....	139
Bennett Island .....	140
Uncle Tom.....	141
The Missing Dog.....	143
A Gift From Heaven .....	144
The Barking Pot .....	146
The Bear.....	147

The Icy Prison .....	149
Adrift .....	151
A Ghost of a Tale .....	154
Dead Man's Grave.....	155
The Broken Promise .....	156
How To Combat Stress .....	158
The Treasure of Shoal Arm Hummock .....	160
The Outhouse Down By The Landwash .....	162
Duck Hunting .....	164
Cape Freels Reunion.....	166
The Wooden Cross .....	168
The Ghost of Shalloway .....	170
Paddy Poor .....	172
The Carter's Pond Ghost .....	173
Amputated .....	175
The Long Bridge .....	177
A Tall Tale.....	178
Sammy .....	179
Stranded on Pouch Island .....	181
A Double Tragedy .....	185
The Legend of Tom Dollar.....	189
The White Dogs .....	190
Cat Harbour Wreckers .....	192
The Susie Stokes Tragedy .....	193
Picture .....	195

## **My Childhood Days**

I made my first outcry in Dover, Bonavista Bay, on September 30, 1945. The night I was born my father was running flat out to get the midwife. Someone had a punt hauled up across the pathway, he ran smack into it and ended up with three broken ribs. Because of that one accident, my grandmother said I was trouble from the day I was born. I was still a small baby when my parents brought me to Newtown, my present home.

Newtown is located on the north side of Bonavista Bay. It is a small village made up of islands connected by bridges. The place used to be called Inner Pinchard's Island. It also used to be called the Venice of Newfoundland, because of its many tickles; Venice, Italy is famous for its many canals.

The Norrises and the Blackmores were the first people to settle in Newtown. Later on, in the fifties, more people moved to the area from Outer Pinchard's Island and Cape Island, which added to the population.

Except for a few skilled carpenters, the working class of Newtown were fishermen and labourers. The Perrys, Tulks, Norrises and Greens could turn their hand at anything, but the cod fishery was the lifeline of the community. My earliest recollection was of watching my father clean and salt fish.

At that time women worked just as hard as the men. While the men were away at their jobs, women had to bring water from the well, work in the vegetable garden and help put away the fish. Then they had to cook meals and look after the house. Today's women have it easy compared to the women of that time period.

There was no hydro in Newtown until the sixties. The only links to the outside world were the telegraph office and the old battery radio. The mail used to arrive once a week. That was a very important day, especially if the baby bonus or the old age cheque was due.

The battery radio was the best source of entertainment. Every evening we would gather around that radio to listen to the Doyle News. Messages would be read to let people know who were coming home from the hospital and who were staying in. To let people know fish prices or anything else connected with the fishery, the Fisheries News was also broadcasted on the air.

Hockey Night in Canada was popular. Every Saturday night we would gather around the radio and listen to Foster Hewitt and Danny Gallivan do the hockey commentary. Sometimes an argument would start between the Montreal and Toronto fans. Most people were for Montreal or Toronto, but a few were Detroit fans. Everybody wanted to be a fan of the winning team.

There was no Rock and Roll music on the radio at that time. Wilf Carter, Hank Williams and Hank Snow were popular Country and Western singers. The movies were another popular pastime. Back then it was known as the 'show'. Once a week Ned Andrews would be at the United Church Hall showing a movie. There were a couple more people that brought shows to the area too, but Ned Andrews was our favourite. Who can forget such stars as Roy Rogers, William Boyd and Audie Murphy. William Boyd was the star of the Hop-Along-Cassidy movies, which also starred Gabby Hayes. Western movies were by far the most popular, followed by comedians such as Bud Abbott and Lou Costello.

You might wonder what we did for amusement. Well, for the girls there was hopscotch and skipping rope in the summer. In the winter there was sleigh riding and ice skating. They also had the old stand-by, which is playing with dolls. Speaking of playing with dolls reminds me of a smack of a lifetime. My own fault too.

There were a couple of girls, whose names I won't mention, playing with dolls one day. I was strolling by with a couple of my buddies. We saw the girls and being a little bored, we decided to have a little fun. One of us grabbed the doll and started tossing it from one to the other. We ignored the warning from one girl who said, "Give us back that doll, or else."

I learned two very important lessons that day. One, never get between a girl and her doll. Second, a soft head wasn't meant to take a blow from a hammer. When that hammer made contact with my skull, I saw more stars than there were seen in the galaxy. Even today I make a wide circle around every little girl playing with dolls. Got to play it safe you know.

Believe it or not, dolls also remind me of funerals. On the old homestead, there are more dolls buried than there are bodies in the graveyard. One of my buddies used to have a mock funeral, complete with grave-side rites, every time someone died. In the future, if some archeologist starts digging on the old homestead, they will be wondering about the strange beliefs of the natives.

Newtown was a small boy's paradise when it came to fun. King of the Mountain was one of our favourite games. Sam Knee's cellar was our favourite mountain; when school started, the big rock out behind the school became the mountain. My son, the Battle of Beaumont Hamel was nothing compared to the battle to be king of the mountain here in Newtown. Another one of our favourite games was playing pirates. Large wooden rafts were our ships. The harbours and channels were the high seas. With wooden swords we would attack other rafts. The battle that followed was often a wet one. Our treasure was the other boy's raft or swords, which we would always return, so we could start the game all over again.

When we weren't playing King of the Mountain or pirates, we were playing Cowboys and Indians on a place called 'the farm'. With cowboy hats and bigger-bang guns, we would spend all day roaming around the farm. We'd lasso the local horses with our ropes. The farm wasn't really a farm, but a place with hills and high rocks. Years ago there were vegetables grown on some of the land, but when I was growing up, there wasn't anything there except Uncle Ned Green's chicken coop. That place was paradise for small boys. There were more imaginary Indians killed than there ever were in the Old West. The farm was also a hot spot for teenagers. If a rock could talk, you would hear lots of stories from one particular rock on the farm. Depending on your age and mood, it was called the Jumping Rock, Drinking Rock, Courting Rock and various other names.

Roaming along the landwash was another pastime. We were forbidden to do it by our parents, but that only made it more exciting. One of the best places to roam was a place called Branishtickle Pond, out back of Uncle Pearce Hall's potato cellar. We would spend hours catching little fish in tin cans. Later on when nylon stockings came into fashion with the girls, I had it made. These stockings were made for catching Branishtickles, or Specklebacks. There was only one problem. My sisters were complaining about losing nylons. Of course I got the blame, but it was never proven.

The best thing about growing up in Newtown was that we never got bored. There was always something to do and somewhere to go. George Tulk's big store was our favourite place to go when the weather was unsuitable to be outside. We took our first trip to the moon in that store. Our rocket ship was a big wicker basket that had plenty of room for two boys. The basket was hung from the rafters, with a piece of rope fastened to the bottom. One or two of us would get in the basket and the other would swing the rope. What a training program it would have been for people going into space. NASA would have saved the United States a lot of money if they had only known about us. We would have supervised the program free of charge.

We always had a hangout in Newtown. There were no pool tables or pinball machines. We had something far better, and more fun in the form of a man called Jim Hall. Jim's house was our hangout. He used to run a little business from his house. He and his wife sold soft drinks, candy, Cracker Jacks, apples, and a variety of other things. I used to marvel at the variety of things a man could sell, from two built-in cupboards in the kitchen wall. There is not a comedian on T.V. today that could match that man in humour. He could almost make a dead person laugh.

There is one thing that stuck in my memory about Jim Hall's house. Jim used to make the best ice cream on this shore. Ice cream wasn't available back then and neither was electric power, so the local businesses had no way of keeping the stock on hand. We had to wait until winter to get some. There was one good

thing about eating ice cream in the winter or early spring. No germs would dare enter our bodies; they would have been frozen in a second. After the hydro came to this area, eating ice cream while sitting on a snow bank went by the wayside. But ice cream never did taste the same after that.

Another pastime was watching our fathers return from a day of wood cutting. School would be in session during wood cutting season, but sometimes we would get lucky. We would be out for recess or dinner break when they'd pass by. The horse path went right by the school and we would hear some colourful language, as the wood cutters passed on their Newfoundland Ponies. It got so bad that the teachers would keep an eye out for them, and we were ordered back inside when they spotted the wood cutters returning. Now don't blame the teachers or the wood cutters. After all, we did practice the colourful words while in school.

Speaking of school, that was a torture for me. Not because I couldn't learn. I had learned to read and write before I ever went to school. The trouble was, no outport boy wanted to be in school when he could be outside doing something. I used to devise all kinds of plans to stay out of school. One of my favourites was writing a note explaining why I wasn't in school and signing my mother's or father's name to it. I got away with that for a long time before the teachers found out neither of my parents could read or write.

One of the threatening remarks our parents would make was, "If you don't stay in school, you will end up being a fisherman." My God, when we were younger, that's all we wanted to be.

When we were older and started to find out more about the world, we realized that the fishing boat wasn't the only occupation in the world for us. For me it was a different matter. I went partly deaf due to having the measles at an early age, and because of that I developed a speech problem. At that time I figured my only future was in a fishing boat.

School was a source of frustration and embarrassment for me. I remember my

very first day in school. I ran through the door, passed the teacher and sat at my desk. The teacher came marching over, grabbed me by the hair and demanded, "Why didn't you stop when I asked you?"

"I didn't hear you," I replied.

"Well, learn to listen," he retorted. Now how could I listen, if I couldn't hear?

Every year when school began, I always tried for a seat in the back. I kept hoping the teacher wouldn't notice me. That way I wouldn't have to answer any questions. We didn't have fill-in-the-blank tests. Most questions were written on the blackboard or the teacher would ask them. When the questions were written on the blackboard, I would do pretty good, but I dreaded the oral ones. Even if I did hear the question and knew the answer, the words would come out a different way. I could never say a word properly. Then there would be gales of laughter from my classmates. Spelling was a nightmare for me. I got so bad that every morning I would get sick just thinking about spelling words. Sound-alike words were a torture.

There was one teacher that I had a special dislike for. She would always mock me when I mispronounced a word. One day in class we were going to have a spelling test, so I asked my buddy to let me know when the word 'Christmas' was asked. When the word came up, I wrote on my paper 'Kissmeass'. Ever see a teacher lost for words? I didn't until then. But she didn't forget how to use that strap. Swinging the strap at me that day resulted in adding a few muscles to her upper arms.

Women teachers were worse than men back then. I guess the women had to prove themselves. One good thing about the men teachers was, if they thought you weren't worth the bother, they would leave you alone.

There was one day when I was in school that I will never forget. I got into a fight with one of my classmates. The teacher came over, grabbed me by the neck and

marched me up to a desk that was close to his - to keep an eye on me, he said. Shortly after we went in, we were given a history test. I could see the teacher perfectly and realized I could read his lips. I got 100% on that test and received a prize. The prize was a licking. He accused me of cheating. You see, he had his mind made up that I couldn't be taught and I couldn't learn. He didn't want to be proven wrong.

Right then and there I made my mind up that I was going to quit school. Enough was enough. No more was I going to put up with that kind of treatment.

The next year, the school closed. Everybody who was in grade nine and over was supposed to go to the new high school in Wesleyville. There would be a lot more teachers to look after the students. Well, one teacher was bad enough. There was no way I was going to put up with a lot.

I quit school and went into the fishing boat. It was the happiest day of my life. It was also the sorriest day of my life.

## My Teenage Years

The move from school, with lots of people your same age around, was quite different than gliding across the bay with only your father and the sea gulls for company. Each had its own kind of hell. I became sea-sick from the day I set foot in the boat and I hated fishing from day one, but it was a job with an income. Every day I wished the Lord would end my life. Being sea-sick can make you wish for death. I must have given my father a hard time, being sick all the time, with my head hung over the side of the boat.

Still, it was better than school. I had plenty of time to be alone. I wanted to be alone. If you think the old saying is true, 'Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you', well, think again. Words can cut through you like a knife and rob you of every bit of self-esteem. If you are called stupid enough, you will begin to believe it.

Because of the mental and verbal abuse I suffered in the public school system, I didn't want to be around people. I used to spend a lot of free time reading books, wandering around in the woods with my dog, or fishing with my uncle. The best years of my life, my teenage years, were spent alone. I was like a hermit. I had few friends. When asked to go somewhere, I declined. I had this terrible fear of being laughed at.

Even my family didn't know what to do with me. Except for my mother and father, I was an outcast or someone to put up with. Finally, during a trip to St. John's, my aunt took me to see an ear specialist. Later I was outfitted with a hearing aid.

How I hated that hearing aid. It was like a small radio with ear-phones. People used to come up to me, put their mouths close to the receiver and talk as loud as they could. But that wasn't the only reason why I hated it. It made me feel like a marked man. Wearing that darn thing made me feel like I was advertising my handicap.

Then a social worker decided that I should go to trade school and learn a trade. I went, but I wasn't ready for it. I tried it twice. Both times my nerves were at a breaking point. The first time I dropped out. The second time I managed to finish a tile laying course. It wasn't the course I would have preferred, but with grade eight, there were few other choices.

I did learn one thing, and that was how to drink alcohol. I started drinking heavily because it helped me to associate with people. Or so I thought. Drinking helped me face each day and gave me false courage. But I was no better off. I still couldn't face people when I was sober. I still didn't have a job. So I still had to go back to the fishing boat.

It was a wonder how I got through life. At one point I considered ending it all. I had nothing to live for. My life was a mess. How I managed to reach my twenties, I'll never know. Then one day I just had to leave home. I couldn't take it any more; somewhere, somehow, there had to be a better life. I ended up in Ontario, my hearing aid ended up in the garbage and I was ready for a fresh start.

When I look back, the one thing I can clearly remember is that grown men can be much worse than kids. I remember one day, talking about finding a job and one man remarked, "How do you expect to find work, you're retarded." That was the worse verbal barb that anyone ever stuck in me.

Today, when I hear about a student threatening to kill a fellow classmate, I always wonder: Was he being picked on? Was he enduring the taunts of other students day after day, just because he was a little different?

The school system of my youth was bad. From what I hear on the news, today is not much better. In some schools students are still subjected to verbal and mental abuse.

When I look back on my school days I feel terribly angry. No one should have to go through it. Your young days, especially from age thirteen to twenty, are the

days which should shape your future. Teachers should realize that not all students are the same. There are some people who are very sensitive about themselves.

## **The Beginning of the Rest of My Life**

After spending nine years on an Ontario farm, I returned to my home town again to work at fishing. I had no other alternative. With only a grade eight education, fishing was my only chance to earn a living.

The first year in the fishing boat was a repeat of my younger days. It was a love-hate relationship. I love fishing, but it hates me. Yet again I hated the thought of spending the rest of my working life in a fishing boat.

Then came the fateful day when John Crosby announced the closure of the Cod Fishery. Every fisher knew it was coming, but still it was a shock. Fishers would have to go to school, I was told, to upgrade their education. They would have the opportunity to retrain for jobs outside the fishery. Well, I had some laugh out of that. School! Plain foolishness on the part of the government. I wanted no part of it.

But, deep down inside of me I knew I was only kidding myself. I always regretted not finishing school. Books were the passion of my life. I still worship books. There is never a day in my life when I am not reading something. I think I have read an average of one book for every day of my life.

Then one day after the closure of the fishery, my cousin, Mrs. Cathy Bungay, who was a Northern Cod Adjustment Recovery Program (NCARP) counsellor came to visit me. When she brought up the subject of going back to school, I said two words, "Not me." I refused to discuss the subject any further.

But the seed was planted. After my cousin left I told myself I was foolish. After all I was 47 years old. Another problem was the teachers. They weren't my favourite kind of people. My God, when Clyde Wells used to come on the television and talk about cutbacks to teachers, I used to yell at the T.V., "Cut them again, Clyde."

Cathy Bungay came to visit me again. She knew my weakness. It was books. Once again she brought up the subject of school. "Look Bobby," she stressed, "you always said you would like to get an education. This is your chance. Why not take it?"

"Forget it, Cathy," I said. "You know how I feel about school and teachers." After she left I tried hard to put it out of my mind. But the thought of going back to school kept nagging at me. It was as if I was being torn in two different directions. One part of me wanted to go and the other part of me was afraid of making a fool of myself.

Then the announcement was made about the opening of a school by the Federal Fisheries and Allied Workers / Canadian Auto Workers (FFAW/CAW) in Templeman, about a mile and a half from my home. The decision to attend wasn't an easy one but, once made, it was the turning point in my life. I remember the first time I went to the Templeman Education Centre. I walked past that building three times before I could summon enough courage to go in. Deep down inside me, I had this fear of being ridiculed. I guess when you spend all your life being put down, you'll develop that feeling of being inferior.

I must admit that my first impression of Mr. Guy Perry, who was my instructor, wasn't a good one. All I could see in front of me was a teacher. It took me a couple of weeks before I saw he was a human being, just like myself. I recall, all during the first couple of weeks, whenever Guy got close to me, I would tense up. I kept expecting a lambaste. But, my fears were unfounded. He made me feel relaxed and right at home.

Shortly after enrolling in the FFAW/CAW Education Centre, another school opened at Templeman. It was a school for Adult Basic Education (ABE). I had to go to Valleyfield to take a Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT), if I was interested in attending. So I made the trip to Valleyfield and, to my surprise, I qualified for Level III. I couldn't believe it. I thought for sure they had gotten me

mixed up with someone else. I enrolled in the ABE class and realized it was almost like regular school. There were plenty of books for me to study. I was almost like a drug addict, and books were my way of getting high. I couldn't get enough of learning. There were times when the instructors had to order me to slow down.

That first winter I went to the ABE class during the day and the FFAW/CAW Centre at night. A lot of my friends and also my family thought I had lost my mind. I had my doubts when I first went back to school. There were those who told me I was foolish to go back. Members of my family even said, "Look Bob, if you couldn't learn when you were in school, what makes you think you can learn now?" Not once did they take into consideration that my handicap was a hindrance when I was attending public school.

I almost quit after my first math test. I failed. My instructor said I was trying too hard. It turned out that she was right. I was trying to pack a lifetime of learning into a few weeks. After a while my math improved. The ABE Centre closed down before I completed my Level III. I only needed a few more credits so I went back to the FFAW/CAW Centre. I graduated from there at the age of 49.

Where do I go from here? That was a big question. For now I plan to stay in the fishery. But I also have a dream. While I was attending school, all my instructors knew of my love of reading and writing, and they all encouraged me to continue with it. I owe them a lot.

My dream is to write a book. It is something I have always dreamed of. I love writing stories about the old way of life in this province and real life experiences of the people. Regardless, I am going to keep on writing stories, even for my own enjoyment. Who knows, maybe some day my stories could turn out to be a best seller on the market.



Robert Tulk (front) graduated from the FFAW Training Centre at the age of 49.

## Uncle & Me

Every boy should have an uncle he can look up to, an older man he can pal around with. I was fortunate to have, what I considered the best uncle in the world. But Uncle had a few strange quirks. Some I found funny, others I found annoying. Now, Uncle was a God-fearing man and he believed in the Bible but only to a point, then he would twist it around to suit himself. The Lord could perform miracles, but anyone else was in doubt.

Uncle was fond of hunting and fishing. He was the happiest man in the world when he was around his hunting dog, gun and fishing rod. I was the second happiest because I got to tag along with him on his hunting and fishing trips. One day I asked Uncle, "What is a miracle?" He told me I would know when I saw one. "Uncle," I said, "was it a miracle when the Lord walked on the water?"

"Of course my son," he said. "Everybody knows that."

"The parting of the sea by Moses," I asked. "Was that a miracle?"

"You're some stunned boy," he retorted. "That was a tidal wave. We had one of them in Newfoundland one time."

"Uncle," I asked, "how come miracles happened in the Bible and not now?"

"My boy," he said, "you'll see a miracle one day, and then you'll know."

A couple of days later we went partridge hunting. The dog went on the point. Uncle walked up beside it. Up flushed a dozen partridges. Usually that was an easy shot for him, but this time he missed! He turned to me. "Boy," he said, "you just seen a miracle. There flies a dozen dead partridge."

Thou shall have no other God but me. Now, I was suspicious of him about that one. I've seen him stare for hours at a picture of a partridge or a trout, a look of

rapture on his face and sometimes saying out loud, "Please God, tomorrow."  
When we were fishing for trout, he would stroke his fishing rod and say. "Please God, just one more."

I heard Uncle take the Lord's name in vain only once in my life, and that was a long, long time ago. I was walking past his house one day when I heard him shouting at his neighbour across the road, "I killed the Lord, yes sir, I killed the Mortal."

Horrified I stopped, "Uncle," I said, "that's impossible, you can't kill the Lord."

"What do you mean impossible, Boy?" he replied. "He was only 30 yards away when I pulled the trigger."

This was a harlequin duck he had been talking about. The duck was known locally as the Lord and Lady.

## **Thou Shall Not Bear False Witness**

There was one commandment in the Bible that Uncle always had trouble keeping. Thou shall not bear false witness. The reason he had trouble keeping this one was because he found it simpler to put the blame on someone else whenever he got into hot water.

Uncle's fondness for hunting often got him into hot water with the local Game Warden. The reason for this was Uncle's weakness for poaching. To Uncle's way of thinking, all birds, fish and four-legged animals were put on earth for humans to use. He didn't see anything wrong with poaching as long as it was for his own personal needs.

The Game Warden was also Uncle's brother-in-law. One of his favourite pastimes was baiting Uncle. He knew Uncle was a poacher, but he pretended that he wasn't wise to it. He would never miss an opportunity to try and entice Uncle into a trap.

On this particular day Uncle came home after a day on the barrens. That same evening the Game Warden dropped in for a while to swap yarns and find out the news. "Well Uncle," asked the Warden, "see any partridges on the barrens today?"

"Not one." replied Uncle. "Why?"

"Well," answered the Game Warden, "I was down by Gull Pond today and thought I heard a few shots."

"Wasn't me," said Uncle, "but I know who it is. It's the people from the Cape. That's who it is. There won't be anything left for me when the season opens."

Aunt must have been in a bad mood that day. After listening to Uncle put the blame on other people, she lost her self-control. "Shut up Uncle," she shouted.

“You got no room to talk. You and the boy brought Partridges home yesterday about the size of a robin.”

Talk about total silence. You could almost hear a pin drop down by the land wash. The explosion that followed was like an atomic bomb. Uncle accusing Aunt of bearing false witness against him. Aunt accusing Uncle of bearing false witness against his neighbours. The Game Warden choked on his laughter, while trying to keep a straight face. It took a couple of weeks before they were back on speaking terms. But, from that day on, Aunt was never present when the Game Warden came to visit.

## The Faithful Commandment

In the 17 years that I knew my Uncle, there was one commandment in the Bible that he kept faithful. That was 'Thou shall do no manner of work on the Sabbath day'. Uncle went a step further: he tried not to work on any day. When Aunt would ask him to do a job, he'd say, "I'll do it tomorrow." It was always tomorrow. One time I asked him, "Why not do it today?"

He said, "If I do it today, I won't have anything to do tomorrow." Yes sir, wise man my Uncle. I couldn't argue with a logical reason like that.

It was not because he hated work. He didn't. He would work for hours in his workshop, building models of boats. He would also go out of his way to do work for other people, as long as that other person didn't belong to the local Orange Lodge. Work, he thought, took him away from his hunting and sport fishing.

There was one job he hated doing. That was bringing water in from the well. As long as there was six inches of water left in the barrel, he could not see any reason to do so. Because of this Aunt was often in need of water for washing.

The well was only about 300 yards away, but it took Uncle all day to make one trip. Often Aunt would tell me, "Boy, go find that foolish mortal of an uncle. I ain't got a stain to wash with." I would go and look for Uncle and it would be the same thing every day; he would be swapping yarns with the neighbour. I would start carrying the water home to Aunt and when I'd be making the last trip he would say to the neighbour, "Got to get this water home. The old woman ain't got a stain to wash with."

## The Tea Pot

Uncle's bamboo fishing pole formed a large part of his life. I used to think that the fishing pole was an extension of his arms. He was seldom without it during the fishing season.

One day I dropped into his workshop and Uncle was busy carving a boat out of a piece of pine wood. One of the first things I saw when I entered was an Eaton's catalogue opened on his work bench. "What's up with the catalogue, Uncle," I asked. "Aunt pestering you for something?"

"Nope," replied Uncle. "Aunt pestered me for the last time for something from the Women's Bible. The last time she ordered a dress and it only fit a little girl, and do you mind that tea kettle she ordered?"

I smiled. The Women's Bible was Uncle's favourite name for a catalogue and I remembered very well the episode with the tea kettle. Aunt was in need of a tea kettle. Money was scarce at that time so she ordered the only one she could afford from Eaton's. The cost was seventy-nine cents. When the kettle arrived, it was a toy kettle for a little girl. "They haven't got enough sense to fill my thimble," stated Aunt. Then she ordered another one that cost a little more. When that kettle arrived it was damaged. Now, Aunt wasn't a big woman but she had a big temper, with a short fuse.

"She's a cross between a weasel and a bobcat." Uncle always said. "You can't talk no sense to her when she gets saucy like that."

Aunt sat down to compose a letter to Eaton's. She could read and write but the big words were beyond her. She wrote first, "This kettle is squat." Then she crossed that out and began again. She wrote, "This kettle is all banged up." That still wasn't to her liking. She started writing again. This time she wrote, "This kettle is no good for tea. It is broken so please send me another."

After a few weeks Aunt received a letter from Eatons requesting that she send the kettle back if she wanted a replacement, or that she send a payment for another kettle. Aunt wrote another letter saying, "Me husband needs the kettle for tea. I will send it back after I get me new one. Please send it right away."

Another few weeks passed. Finally another letter from Eatons came in the mail. This letter advised Aunt to send her payment or have the new kettle come C.O.D. By now, Aunt had all she could take. Her bobcat side was showing, like Uncle used to say. She wrote another letter saying, "The first kettle was broken. I will not pay for another one until I see it. Send me another one and I will send back the first one, or else keep the darn kettle."

About a month later Aunt got a new kettle in the mail from Eatons, with a note saying they were sorry for the inconvenience they caused her. The kettle was free of charge. Aunt wrote back, thanking them for the kettle and adding, "You didn't cause me any inconvenience, but you did cause me some trouble, and since the first kettle was broken, please send me back my money."

I don't know what happened after that, but I often wondered if that was the reason Eaton's left the mail order business.

To get back to the beginning of the story, "Uncle, if Aunt doesn't want anything, what are you doing with the catalogue?" I asked him.

"Boy, you knows that I'm getting me pension check?" he answered.

"Yes Uncle," I replied, "and coming every month too."

"Right! I'm going to buy meself something. I'm going to buy one of those new trouting poles."

"Rods, Uncle," I said. "They're called rods."

“You’re some stunned, Boy,” he retorted. “A rod is something you use for measuring.”

“Uncle, it says right here,” I told him, showing him the rod in the catalogue. “Fishing rods.”

“Hmm, you could be right,” he said. “Now, how much do that one cost?”

“\$15.99,” I answered, “and that includes 150 pieces of fishing tackle.”

“Sounds good,” he said.

“Are you going to get Aunt to order it?” I wanted to know.

“You’re crazy, Boy,” he shouted. “Remember the tea kettle? No sir, I’m going to get me brother-in-law to order one next week when I gets me pension check.”

About a month after that I was walking pass his house when Aunt called out, “Boy, come here and see what Uncle got.”

I entered the house. Uncle’s brother-in-law was sitting beside the table explaining out the various hooks, lures and spinners. Finally he came to a spool of line called catgut.

He held up the spool of line and said, “Catgut.”

“Catgut,” echoed Aunt.

“Yes, catgut,” replied Brother-in-Law.

“Why is it called that?” Aunt wanted to know.

“You’re some stunned,” retorted Uncle. “Because it comes from a cat, that’s

why.”

“Yes,” replied Uncle’s Brother-in-Law with a smile. They kill the cat, collect the stomach and stretch it out for fishing line.”

That was enough for Aunt. She declared that nothing made from a cat was coming in her house. Aunt allowed that it may be from a tomcat, and everyone knows that a tomcat smells.

Well, having the catgut in the house led to some angry words between Aunt and Uncle. Uncle stated that since the cat was dead and the guts washed, it was no different than having a fox skin in the house and she didn’t mind that, so why was she making such a fuss.

I didn’t have the heart to tell them that catgut came from sheep. I was afraid it would start another fuss.

## Uncle's New Fishing Rod

The day Uncle selected to try out his new fishing rod was the 24<sup>th</sup> of May; a day that all outport boys lived for. It is a tradition that on this day, all work stops and a mass exodus from the community starts. Every pond and brook, both large and small, takes on a new look. I have seen some fishing spots that had so many people gathered around them that the shore line sunk and the water level went up.

Uncle would have tried out his new fishing rod sooner but first he had to wean himself away from his old bamboo pole. Once he made up his mind, there was no turning back. The 24<sup>th</sup> of May saw Uncle and me at our favourite fishing pond. The pond was only about 25 yards wide, but it was a good place to catch pan-size trout.

“Now Boy, there’s no need for you to use that old-fashioned bamboo. I can catch enough for the two of us with this outfit,” boasted Uncle.

I knew it was better not to argue with Uncle. I also knew there could be some fun developing, so I planted myself down on a rock to watch.

“Now Boy, the very first time this hook is thrown out, I’m going to catch something.” Uncle was still boasting.

Uncle was a man who kept his word. True to his prediction, he did catch something. On the very first cast the hook and line shot out about the same length of the rod, sprung back and hooked his salt and pepper cap. Not knowing his hook was embedded in his cap, he cast again. The cap came flying off his head and landed about fifteen yards out in the pond.

Now Uncle had never taken the Lord’s name in vain, nor would he take God’s name in vain, but anything or anyone else in the Bible was opened to blasphemy. Boy, was he good at it. He could rhyme them out so well that the trout went into

hiding. They were ashamed to hear him. The last lot of blasphemy was aimed at David's slingshot.

After he retrieved his cap, he tried again. This time he was successful, but he overshot the mark. The hook sailed across the pond and landed in the bushes. The blasphemy started again, but this time he skipped David's slingshot in favour of Noah's Ark.

After he cooled down and got his fishing rod in working order, he tried again. This time he made the cast perfectly. It wasn't long before he had a strike and hooked a fair sized trout. He started to reel it in, but he forgot about the drag on the reel. The more he tried to reel the trout in, the more line he lost. Finally, he just grabbed the line and started to haul the trout in. The trout, who had other ideas, got rid of the line and headed for parts unknown. The blasphemy started again, but this time he included both Noah's Ark and David's slingshot.

Uncle wasn't a man to give up. He did learn how to use the fishing rod and became quite good at it. One day he had an accident with a beaver. Well, it wasn't really an accident. He did it on purpose. This particular day we were in Island Pond doing a bit of fishing. It was getting late in the evening and there were a few beavers swimming around.

"Bet you I can hook a beaver," Uncle said.

I didn't want to miss out on any fun and, knowing Uncle, the unexpected can always happen. I took him up on his bet.

It wasn't long before a small beaver came swimming past the place where we were fishing. It was about fifteen yards away. Uncle made the cast. It was perfect. The hook landed in the water just beyond the animal. The beaver showed his displeasure with a slap of its tail and went under water. In diving, its tail encountered the hook.

It was unexpected. Uncle didn't really think he was going to hook the beaver, but now that it was attached to the line, he wasn't going to back down. He started to reel it in. The beaver started to swim under water, towards Uncle. Uncle thought he was winning the fight. He started reeling in the slack line.

After suffering the indignity of having a foreign object embed in his tail, the beaver was fighting mad. He came out of the water with revenge on his mind, just a couple of feet away from Uncle. Uncle decided it was better to be a live coward than a dead fisherman. He turned tail and ran. When he got a safe distance away, he cut the line. After all, he won the bet. He did hook the beaver.

## The Eel

*“Roaming in the gloaming,  
with a lassie by my side.  
Roaming in the gloaming,  
with a Bonnie near the Clyde.  
‘Tis when the sun goes down,  
that’s the time that I like best.  
Oh, it’s lovely to go  
roaming in the gloaming.”*

To hear Uncle sing was a joy unto itself. “Uncle, I didn’t know you were a Scotsman,” I teased.

“Bite your tongue, boy. I’m Irish to the backbone and don’t you forget it,” Uncle retorted.

We were having a boil-up beside Island Pond. The tea kettle was simmering near the campfire and the smell of roasted capelin was enough to whet anyone’s appetite. With Uncle in a good mood, no boy could ask for more.

Uncle could sing, but he couldn’t carry a tune. That’s why he only sang when he was on the barrens, or when I was with him. But his voice was a pleasure to listen to, and I never got tired of listening to him sing the old Scottish Irish songs.

“Come on Uncle, sing another song,” I begged him.

Uncle took a sip of tea, cleared his throat and started singing one of my favourite songs, The Wild Colonial Boy. After that one, he topped it off by singing about my childhood idol, Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier.

“That’s enough. Let’s finish our tea and start picking bakeapples,” declared Uncle after he finished his last song.

We finished our mug-up and began to pack our knapsack. Just as we were ready to leave, a large trout breached in the water nearby.

“Too bad we can’t fish and pick berries at the same time,” I remarked. I should have kept my mouth shut, because I could see the wheels spinning in Uncle’s head.

Later that night, I decided to mosey over to Uncle’s house to find out what he had planned for the next day. When I entered the house, Uncle was sitting at the kitchen table with a batch of hooks and line in front of him. “What are you up to?” I asked.

Before he got a chance to answer, Aunt piped up, “Up to foolishness, what else? I scarcely had enough water to last the day. And where was he? Gallivanting around on the barrens, that’s where the two of you were.”

“What do you mean?” retorted Uncle. “There were a good six inches of water in that barrel when I left. What did you do with it all? Store it in your body like a camel?”

I could sense an argument developing, so I quickly volunteered to fetch some water from the well. After refilling the barrel, Aunt met me outside with a quarter and warned me not to tell Uncle. After I went inside and Aunt disappeared upstairs, Uncle slipped me another quarter and whispered, “Now, don’t tell Aunt. You know how tight that woman is with money.” I was richer by fifty cents.

Then Uncle explained what he was up to with the hooks and line on the table. “Now boy,” he said, “this is a trawl. Tomorrow evening we’re going to put this out in Carter’s Pond. We’ll get our trout from now on, and get our berries too.”

But how are we going to get it across the pond? We have no boat.” I told him.

“I’ve got that figured out,” said Uncle. “See this small keg? We will tie one end

of the trawl on it and float it across the pond. Then you'll fasten it to the shore.”

The next evening we set the trawl out in the pond. I could hardly wait until the next day to find out the results. The following evening, after we finished picking berries, we went to check the trawl. I walked over to the far side to unfasten it. The Uncle started to pull it in. We had a good catch, but not what we expected. There was an eel on every hook!

It was impossible to unhook them. The slimy imps would curl around our arms and slip through our hands. Finally Uncle took out his knife and started cutting them loose. For every eel that went in the lunch bag, the air turned a shade bluer with cuss words.

Finally we finished the job and headed for home. Now, there weren't many vehicles on the old gravel roads back then. But luck was with us. A car stopped and wanted to know if our bakeapples were for sale. They were and we sold them right then and there. The stranger was so grateful that he offered us a ride to the branch road leading back to our community.

Uncle was in the back seat. The knapsack containing the eels was resting between our legs. Suddenly, the eels started slithering out of Uncle's knapsack. I made a motion to Uncle, who spotted the eels just as they disappeared under the back seat.

By this time we had arrived at our drop-off place. Neither one of us wanted to ask the stranger to wait while we looked for some live eels in the car. But we asked where he was from and thanked him for the ride.

He was from St. John's. The eels had a long trip ahead of them. From that day on, Uncle made sure only dead eels went into his knapsack.

## The Rat

If there was any living creature that Uncle hated more than a cat, it was a rat. Just the sight or a sign of that furry rodent would send him into a fit of rage. His potato cellar was one big booby trap. To get a meal of vegetables from that cellar could be compared to finding your way through a mine-field during a war. On one trip to that cellar, Aunt returned with two turnips and one rat trap called a 'jumper' fastened to her fingers.

It didn't take long for the rats to find out that it didn't pay to mess around with Uncle. Only the boldest and the wisest would venture into that cellar for a free meal, and they didn't last very long. But there was one particular rat that almost drove Uncle insane.

One morning Uncle returned from the cellar with a black cloud hovering above his head and a dark look on his face. I was sitting by the kitchen table when he entered. I could tell he was mad because the cuss words were coming in one long stream and in one breath. "By the lard dying that SOB of a rat," were his last words before he took another breath.

"What kind of rat is that Uncle?" I asked jokingly.

"What do you mean?" he roared. "There's only one kind of rat, and that's a cellar rat. The damn thing has been eating my turnips."

"Maybe he didn't like the potatoes," I said, bolting through the door, because I knew Uncle wasn't in the mood for jokes.

Later when I figured Uncle had cooled down, I went over to his house again. Just as I turned the corner to his house, Uncle came out carrying a cardboard box. "Come with me Boy," he said. "We're going to get that rat."

When we got to the cellar, Uncle opened the box. Inside there was some flour and

a trap. Uncle had set the trap and covered it with flour. The he sealed the top of the box and cut a small hole in the side.

“Now Mr. Rat, come back tonight,” Uncle invited.

Early the next morning we went back to check the trap. Uncle entered the cellar, and for about two minutes there was complete silence. The torrent of curse words shattered the stillness. This time he must have set a world record for the longest sentence consisting solely of cuss words. When he quit, I entered the cellar. Uncle was kneeling besides the box, staring at it. I figured he had the rat and I wanted to see it.

I figured wrong.

That was a smart one. Every bit of flour in the box was licked clean, and resting between the jaws of the trap was one potato. The war was on. Uncle wasn't about to let a rat outsmart him. Every trap that Uncle had was set out in the cellar. But the rat's ability for avoiding traps far surpassed human intelligence. This was proven when Uncle's fingers got nipped in the jaws of a jumper, while trying to set another trap.

Uncle figured the rat must have had his toes nipped in a steel trap before. He decided to try another tactic. In his workshop he had a large glass wine bottle. Uncle was really proud of that bottle, and used it to bottle his dogberry wine. But he wanted to catch that rat, and according to Uncle, it was perfect for catching rats.

The bottle was taken to the cellar and buried with just the neck protruding out of the ground. Some bait was put into the bottle to lure the rat in. According to Uncle the rat would be unable to climb back out due to the smooth surface.

I was skeptical. But the next morning, much to my surprise, the rat was in the bottle. Uncle jumped for joy. A cork was jammed in the mouth of the bottle.

Uncle figured that once all the oxygen ran out, the rat would expire.

We waited all that day. The rat acted like it could live without oxygen. It showed no signs of weakness until the third day. On the fourth morning, it was limp in the bottle. Uncle figured it was dead. Since he had a fresh batch of dogberry wine waiting to be put in bottles, he decided to get rid of the carcass.

Uncle opened the bottle. The rat came tumbling down to the opening, curled up in a ball. He shook the bottle vigorously, but the carcass wouldn't come through the neck of the bottle. He tried putting a piece of wire into the bottle and guiding it to the mouth. But the rodent would slide every which way but straight.

After an hour of trying to get the creature out of the jar, Uncle was getting mad. About two hours later, the cuss words started to flow. When he ran out of words he forgot about his prize bottle. He grabbed the axe and gave it a smack. The bottle shattered in about a hundred pieces.

Then he realized what he had done. His prize bottle was destroyed. This brought on another torrent of cuss words. When he cooled down, he tried to console himself with the thought that it was worth it. The rat was dead and he wouldn't be stealing any more vegetables. Uncle decided to celebrate by having a cup of tea. We left the rat lying amongst the broken glass and went into the house.

That was a bad mistake. It must have been playing possum. When we went back, it was gone. This was too much for Uncle. His prize bottle was gone, and so was the rat. His face turned a molten purple. Slowly the cuss words started. He started with Noah, for allowing two rats into the Ark, and ended with the Maker, for creating them.

What happened to the rat? Nobody knows. But a couple days later, Uncle Noah Andrews' tomcat came from the direction of the cellar carrying a large rat between its jaws. After that, Uncle had no more trouble with rats.

## The Lure

“What are you doing Uncle? Trying out a new recipe?” I asked.

Uncle was busy stirring something in an old pot. It smelled worse than a combination of rotten cod oil and cat urine. He stopped stirring and put the lid on the pot.

“Something like that Boy,” he answered. “You remember that fox’s lure you showed me in that outdoor magazine? Well, I’m whipping up a batch.”

“But Uncle, what do you know about making fox’s lure?” I asked.

Uncle went and got the magazine. He flipped through the pages until he came to the page advertising the lure. “Now Boy, read this to me again,” he demanded.

“Blue mountain fox’s lure. Used by professional fox trappers,” I read out loud. “Made from beaver castor, fish oil, and the sex glands of a female fox.”

“Now Boy,” Uncle crowed, “why order from them when they tell you how to make it? I made it myself and it didn’t cost me a cent.”

“Where did you get the ingredients?” I asked him.

“Ingredients? You didn’t say anything about that. Does that go mixed up in it too?” he wanted to know.

Now, with Uncle there wasn’t any such thing as ingredients. It was a bit of this and some of that, and mix it all together.

“Never mind, Uncle. But where did you get all the stuff to make it?”

“I got the beaver castor from the beaver your father trapped,” he told me, “and I

got the sex glands from the female foxes I trapped. The fish oil comes from Job Tulk's blubber puncheons."

"Uncle," I said, "that's not fish oil, that's cod liver oil."

"Don't be stupid Boy," retorted Uncle, "that oil came from a fish, so it's got be fish oil. Besides, if it's good for humans, it's good enough for a fox."

I didn't press the matter any further. Uncle could be right.

When trapping season rolled around, Uncle had the mixture sealed in small bottles. Finally, the day arrived to put out his traps. A small bottle was selected and placed in his knapsack. Early in the morning we were on our way.

We were near Shoal Arm Pond when an overpowering smell started to emit from Uncle knapsack. Uncle, who was walking into the wind, didn't notice. But I was walking behind him. The smell was so terrible I started to gag and my eyes started to sting. Rushing ahead of Uncle, I yelled at him to stop.

"What's the trouble Boy?" he asked. Then, seeing my eyes full of tears, asked, "You fall and hurt yourself?"

Then he caught a whiff of the stench coming form his knapsack. He started to get a little green around the gills.

"Good God Almighty!" he exclaimed. "The cap must have come loose from the bottle."

By the time Uncle had removed the knapsack, the mixture had oozed through and had made contact with his jacket. Now the smell was so overpowering that a gull flying overhead got a whiff of it and crash-landed into the nearby pond.

Uncle managed to salvage part of the mixture left in the bottle. The knapsack had

to be left behind to air out. But he wasn't going to leave his jacket, even if it did smell like a combination of cod liver oil, rotten eggs and cat urine.

After setting the fox traps, we headed for home. When we reached the road we encountered the game warden, who was also Uncle's brother-in-law. We stopped to have a chat and the smell drifted across the warden's nose.

"By the lard dying!" he shouted, while moving upwind from Uncle. "What's that smell?"

"That's the after shave you gave me last Christmas," replied Uncle. "Do me a favour. Don't buy me any more." Then he continued on his way.

The next morning we checked the traps. They were untouched. Uncle decided to check the knapsack, figuring it was aired out by this time. When we reached the site, the first thing we saw was a large red fox lying dead near the knapsack. Nearby, reposed in death, were two mink and a muskrat. Apparently, they expired after breathing in the fumes.

Uncle burnt the knapsack right on the spot. When we returned home, Uncle took the remaining bottles and buried them beneath the earth.

"Too dangerous to have around," he remarked. "What if it falls into the wrong hands? It could wipe out the world."

Uncle's jacket hung on the fence for a long time. After being washed about a dozen times, the smell still lingered. But it served a good purpose. While that coat hung on the fence, no tomcats came around the yard. It was the greatest cat repellent ever invented.

## The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments was one thing in the Bible that always got Uncle upset. The reason for this was because he couldn't get his own way with everything, but he could twist things around when it suited him.

“Thou Shall Not Steal.” Now that was a tough one for Uncle. Stealing, to Uncle's way thinking, was as bad as murder, but ‘bucking’ was okay. I could never figure out the difference between the two. To me, one was as bad as the other. Uncle figured anything laying around was his for the taking, even if the person was in sight but not close by. He used to say, “It might have been lost.”

My Great Aunt, who was Uncle's sister-in-law, lived just down the road. She had a flock of chickens that used to build their nests around the wood pile. Uncle used to say to me, “Boy, go down to my sister-in-law's place and buck me a few eggs.”

“Uncle,” I said, “that's stealing.”

“Boy,” he replied, “that's not stealing. That's bucking. My brother might never find those eggs and if he don't they'll go bad, then they won't be any good for anything.”

More than once I got into trouble with Great Aunt because of this. Great Uncle threatened to “kill that brazen mortal”. To Great Uncle I was an egg thief and he used to say, “He's worse than a weasel.”

One day we were on one of our partridge hunting trips. Aunt told Uncle before we left to make sure and bring home some partridge berries, so she could make some tarts. We lost track of time while we were hunting and to tell the truth we never did pay heed to time while we were hunting and fishing. Anyway, Uncle would never pick berries as long as there were partridges to shoot.

Getting toward the end of the day I remembered the berries and Aunt's parting words, "Be sure to get me berries or the both of you will get a clout on the side of the head."

"Uncle," I said, "we'd better pick some berries or Aunt will be mad."

"Yes, Boy," he replied, "I know just the right place. It's right close to the road, too."

When we got to the place he had in mind, there was a group of people already picking there. Everything was picked. Uncle was so mad he was hopping.

"Uncle," I said, "what do we do now?"

"We'll go home," he replied. "I'll tell Aunt we never saw any."

"But that's lying," I said.

"Boy, that's not lying, that's fibbing," he shot back.

On the way down the path, what did we see? A bag of berries. The nearest person was a good 200 hundred yards away. Uncle took off his knapsack, picked up the berries and dumped them in his knapsack, bag and all. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," he said. "Blessed is the name of the Lord."

"Uncle, that's stealing!" I cried.

"You foolish mortal, Boy," he answered. "That's not stealing, that's bucking. Somebody must have lost them. You wouldn't want them to rot, would you?"

Wise man, my uncle. He could be right.

When I was 17 years old, Uncle was in his bed, dying from cancer. I was already

following in his footsteps. Like Uncle, I loved the outdoors.

One day he said to me, “Boy, a meal of partridge would be good. Can you get me one?”

The next morning I got up bright and early to go hunting. I left and started walking. When I was almost to the area where I was going to hunt, the rain started to fall. That didn’t worry me because I had a secret place. A home away from home.

When Goodyear’s Construction built the road through the area, they constructed a place to store their dynamite. It was a big hole dug between two rocks. It’s about 12 feet by 12 feet and the doorway was concealed by alder trees. It was sort of a cave. Many times I spent the night there when I was on a hunting trip, or when I wanted to be alone.

About the time the rain started, I was close to my secret place, so I went inside to get in out of the rain. I was comfortable in there, smoking my pipe and reading a book. I always carried a book in my knapsack when I was hunting or fishing.

Suddenly, I heard a voice saying, “This is as good a place as any.” Plop, down came a case of Coke beside the doorway. I didn’t make a sound because I didn’t want to give away my secret place.

When the rain ceased I looked outside, and far down on the edge of the barren there were people picking berries. I looked at the Coke. Now, Coke was rare back then. Orange Crush and Keep Cool were easily gotten, but Coke was hard to come by. Temptation got the better of me. I knew it was stealing but, I followed Uncle’s way of thinking. After all, they may never have found the Coke again. So I bucked them and put them in my knapsack.

I continued on hunting, got Uncle his partridge and every once and a while I had a Coke. But, I had a guilty feeling. I knew it was stealing.

When I got home, I went and gave Uncle his partridges. I also took along two bottles of Coke. I told him the story, and he asked, "Was there anyone around?"

"Yes Uncle," I said, "far down the other end of the barrens."

A smile lit up his face, which banished all my guilty feelings. Then he said, "Well, you never stole them, you bucked them. They might have been lost anyway."

Then we had a long talk. He made me promise him one thing. That I would never buck anything again. I have always kept that promise.

## **Bingo and Me**

When I was 19 years old I had one of the best, if not the best, hunting dogs in the area. The dog was a large black and white English Setter crossed with the United Nations. That dog might have been a mutt, but she had the heart of a purebred. That dog could out hunt anything on four legs. Uncle had passed on to the Happy Hunting Ground, and I'm pretty sure that dog was a reincarnation of my late uncle. Just like Uncle, my dog Bingo had some strange quirks.

One of the quirks was that the second bird killed belonged to her. No amount of coaxing or even a beating would stop her from eating that second bird.

After a while Bingo developed a pattern. If we were hunting alone, she would always eat the second bird that I shot down. If we were hunting with a third party, she would leave my bird alone and eat the second bird that belonged to the third party.

Bingo was a born retriever, but again, she used to behave in a strange way. She would never retrieve for anyone but me. But, if I missed three shots in a row, she wouldn't retrieve for me either. If anyone says that a dog can't think, then they didn't know Bingo. If a partridge was wounded but still flying, she would sit on her behind until it fell. Sometimes it would be too far for me to see, but Bingo would know when it went down. She would take off in the direction of the bird and sometimes be gone for an hour or two. When she came back she would always have the bird.

One day my cousin from St. John's came for a visit. He wanted to put in a weekend of hunting. Now, my cousin was a real macho man when it came to the outdoors, as long as there was someone with him.

"To the high country, we'll hunt the high country," he all but shouted.

That was fine by me. I didn't care if we hunted the high country or the low

country, as long as we hunted. The next morning we left bright and early. When we left the road we could hear the partridges calling out, “kerback, kerback.” It was going to be a good day for hunting.

We hunted until we were in the vicinity of Windmill Brook. We bagged a few partridges; the hunting was good. Bingo already had her lunch, which left my cousin with one less bird to carry and a long list of cuss words on his conscience. Cousin was still saying, “To the high country.” Well, you’ve got to humour someone who is half insane, especially when it comes to hunting.

On the north side of Windmill Brook there’s a place that I always called Indian Camp. It is a small bog encircled with rocks with one large rock in the middle. That rock is the height of a single storey house, with the sides going almost straight up. A good many times I stopped beside that rock for a lunch. I often tried to climb it but, due to the smooth surface, I never did.

It was a good place for a flock of partridges and, sure enough, when we got to the far side of the bog, Bingo went on point.

At that time Cousin was the proud owner of a pump action gun. Now, a pump was rare in the outports at that time. The guns that we had then were single shots and, more often than not, were patched up with bailing wire around the breech piece to keep it together when we shot. A pump gun was a novelty. We walked in for the flush. Up flew a dozen partridges. To give Cousin credit, he was a crack shot. He fired three shots, downed three partridges and wounded one, which fell a long distance off in an alder bed. I got one with my single shot.

Bingo went about the job of retrieving in a no-nonsense manner, bringing the birds to me. All the time Cousin was praising her by saying, “What a dog.” There was one bird left. The wounded one. Cousin said that it was a lost bird, gone for good. But he didn’t know Bingo. She would rather die than leave a bird. She knew there was one more bird down because she was sitting on her behind watching when we were doing the shooting. Anyway, she took off in the direction

of the downed partridge.

“Where is she going now?” Cousin wanted to know.

“Gone to get that bird,” I answered.

“But that’s impossible,” said Cousin. “That bird fell a long way off. How would the dog know anyway?”

“She knows,” I replied, shouldering my knapsack and walking away.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“Back to the road,” I answered.

“But what about the dog?” he shouted. “Are you going to wait until she gets back?”

“Look, Cousin,” I said, “Bingo is not coming back until she finds that bird, and that could be an hour or more from now. When she finds the bird, she will find me.”

Cousin started to follow behind me, muttering about losing the bird and something about the dog having another meal. I smiled because he didn’t know Bingo.

We were about 100 yards away from the big rock when I heard him shouting, “She’s back and she has the bird.”

I stopped and waited. Cousin started to go toward Bingo to get the partridge. I grinned because I could see some fun developing. Cousin was reaching for the bird saying, “What a dog. What a dog.” But the compliment was wasted on Bingo. When Cousin reached for the bird he was greeted by flashing teeth.

Cousin turned tail; forgotten was his macho man image. All records were broken in the hundred yard dash with Bingo's flashing teeth scant inches from the seat of his pants. I watched in awe as he climbed that big rock. In fact, he was trying to climb thin air for a while, until he realized he was safe. But he was safe before he got to the rock. Bingo wouldn't have bitten him. That was all a bluff. You see, Bingo loved to frighten people. It was her idea of fun. But try telling that to a frightened man, who was shouting that he would shoot the mutt for acting like a wolf.

It took a while to coax Cousin down from the rock. Funny thing about it, Cousin who was always a crack shot, missed every shot on the way home. I guess it's hard to shoot while keeping one eye on the dog and one on the birds.

Bingo has gone to the great dog kingdom in the sky, but Cousin is still with me. To this day he always says that he wasn't running from the dog. He just wanted to get up on the high rock so he could have a look at the country.

I wonder, would Bingo agree?

## The September Gale

There was little warning of what was going to happen that day in September, 1940. There wasn't a draft of wind and the sea was flat calm. The fishermen of Cape Freels were out jigging for cod on the outside grounds. The weather glass was showing signs of a gale. The glass was 'bottom up', as the old saying goes. The fishermen were a hardy bunch and most would say, "If you pay attention to the weather glass and the forecast, you'll be on land all summer."

Percy Humphries, Bishop Humphries, Phenes Stokes and Erza Stokes were out fishing that day. Billy Hann was also out fishing with his crew. They were jigging for cod around Rat's Spot, Sam Hunten's Spot and Miller. The wind came out of nowhere. In less than a minute the sea was white with foam. The boats were being tossed around like a feather in a whirlpool.

Phenes Stokes was steering the boat and he had his hands full keeping it on course. Phenes, an experienced fisherman, told the crew to watch for waves and to let him know when they were coming. When the crew shouted, "Now!" He would 'give it to the waves'. That way the boat wouldn't take a beating from the waves which would hit their boat with the force of a cannon ball. Nevertheless, the men were in for the fight of their lives against a raging sea.

While they were battling the sea and making headway toward land, Skipper Emmanuel Barbour passed them in his schooner. He had bare spars, trying to ride out the storm, which he successfully did.

Meanwhile, back in the community of Cape Freels, there were a lot of worried people. Fishing boats were sunk at their moorings, from winds that gusted up to eighty miles an hour. The Humphries and Hann families had lost hope. They figured their menfolk were lost at sea. Then a boat was spotted fighting its way to land. It was the Humphries. Bill Hann and his crew weren't far behind. They had made it safely to land. Everybody rejoiced and "Thank You God" was on everybody's lips.

Today Cape Freels is a thriving community. The people still make a living from the sea; it's a fitting tribute to the hardy fishermen of the past.

## A Close Call

There was nothing unusual about a day in 1943 when Llewellyn Rideout left the community of Cape Freels, bound out to the fishing ground to tend to his trawls. There was nothing to foretell the near disaster that was to befall him.

He was accompanied by his 14-year-old son, Jim Rideout, and his friend, 12-year-old Sam Humphries. They were making good time in the 22 foot motor boat that was powered by a four horsepower Acadian engine.

The engines in those days were the 'make and break' type with a fly wheel in front. In order to start them, you had to grab hold of the handle in the fly wheel and give it a few spins. The handle was supposed to retract into the fly wheel upon being released. Sometimes the fly wheel handle wouldn't retract and people would end up with bad bruises and, at times, broken bones.

On this particular day, Llewellyn was standing near the fly wheel. Jim was steering the boat. They were in the vicinity of their trawls when Llewellyn spied a cork float in the water. He thought it might be his, so he told Jim to steer close to it. As they were passing the float, Llewellyn reached over to grab it. He lost his balance. His foot hit the handle in the fly wheel and it sent him tumbling over the side of the boat into the water.

It happened so quickly, the boys had no time to react. They were frightened, but they kept their heads. By the time Jim got the boat turned around, his father was about thirty feet away from them. The oilskins he was wearing were buoyant enough to keep him afloat, but he was slowly sinking. By the time the boat got close enough, he was almost under water. Jim yelled to Sam to grab his father as they passed by. Sam tried and missed. As the boat was gliding by, Jim let go of the tiller and made a grab for the only part of his father that was showing: his fingers. As Jim said later, "I had the grip of death on him and I wasn't about to let go."

“I could move anything that day,” said Jim, when he told the story. “I didn’t know my own strength.”

Jim hauled his father aboard. Llewellyn was semi-conscious. The boys started trying to get the water out of his lungs. After a time he started to come around. The first words he spoke were, “I had a like to be gone.”

He would have been gone, except for a 14-year-old boy who kept his head in an emergency.

## Child Birth

Before Confederation, and for a time after, women usually delivered their babies at home, with a local midwife in attendance. A doctor was only called upon if a complication took place. Such was the case in the winter of 1949, when Mabel Rideout, wife of Llewellyn Rideout, went into labour. The midwife was in attendance, but unable to deliver the baby. It was too big. A doctor was summoned from Brookfield Hospital to help with the delivery. Since there were no roads to the Cape at that time, the doctor had to be brought in on horse and sled.

The doctor did all he could but the baby could not be born. He left the woman and went into the kitchen. He stated, "I've done all I can. If the baby isn't born, we will lose them both."

The doctor knelt down by the couch for about ten minutes. When he got up he asked if there was a telephone in the community. He was directed to the Post Office, where he proceeded to call Brookfield Hospital. He asked them to send down three nurses and the necessary equipment needed for an operation. He was going to operate and try to save the woman's life.

It was a race between life and death. The men in Pound Cove were enlisted to go to Brookfield. They delivered the nurses and equipment at the far end of Pound Cove. They were met by the men from Cape Freels, who transported them to the Cape.

The operation was carried out in the kitchen, on the kitchen table, with the old oil lamps for light. The woman was spared, but the baby died. According to the doctor, it was a miracle that the woman lived.

When we look back on the past, we marvel at the hardships of the women as they entered motherhood. Unlike today, they had no such things as modern hospitals and transportation.

Today when we see people who are seventy or eighty, we can feel a kinship with them, because we are a part of the legacy from the past.



Brookfield Hospital as it looked in the 1950s

## U.I.C.

In the early days of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, fishermen stopped sending in their forms on the day they started lobster fishing. They were afraid of doing something wrong. As a result of this, they were sometimes owed money they knew nothing about. Llewellyn Rideout started lobster fishing one spring and, half way through the season, a storm wrecked his lobster pots. He still had the U.I. forms so he decided to send them to the U.I.C., just to see if he could get some money. He also composed the following poem and posted it along with the forms.

Storms has beaten on our glittering strand.  
Washed 99 lobster pots up on the land.  
The voyage is completed,  
That is all I can do,  
So I filled in this form  
And sent it to you.

Don't try to catch lobsters  
On the bill of Cape Freels.  
For the wind, it will blow  
And the sea, it will roar,  
And beat all your lobster pots  
Upon the sea shore.

My name is Llewellyn Rideout.  
I hope you understand  
I live on the Cape  
On the rocks and the sand.

My poem is complete  
As plain as can be.  
If there is anything wrong

Just reply it to me.

After a period of time, Llewellyn received a reply from the U.I.C. Enclosed were more forms and the following poem.

Your poem, it is excellent  
We know it is true.  
To write out a check  
For a sum of 56  
We can't send to you.

Llewellyn filled out the forms and posted it back with the following poem.

I hope you will perish, and then you will die.  
There be no one around to hear you cry.  
St. Peter will grab you and give you a shake  
And say, "Look what you done to the poor man  
Who lives on the Cape."  
May you hang upside-down in a bottomless pit  
And always stay there, if you don't  
Write me a check.

Two weeks later Llewellyn Rideout received a check for \$112.00.

## Granny, Tell Me

Oh, Granny won't you tell me  
What 'twas like back in your time?  
Did you have Confederation,  
And what about Term 29?  
Was there unemployment  
For fishermen and such?  
Did babies get their bonus,  
If they did, how much?  
Poor Granny, that was awful stuff.  
How did you live at all?  
Was there any television?  
Or lights switches on the wall?

How did you do your washing then  
With no electricity?  
To wring those quilts must be a job,  
Even for Hard Boiled Haggarty.  
What did you cook your moose on?  
Did you have a modern stove?  
Did you burn coal or oil?  
Or wood from Hermit Cove?

Now Granny what about it?  
When the snow was on the ground  
Did the people keep their cars in  
Till the dozer came around?  
Who ploughed the roads in winter  
To let the buses through?  
And those big trucks from Gambo  
With Mammy's Bread for you?

Now Granny, what about the time  
You fell and broke your wrist?  
Did the doctor come and set it  
Or send you to Bonavista?  
Was the cast you had real heavy?  
Could you hold it out in front?  
And if you were out jigging  
Would that upset the punt?

Now Granny, I forgot to ask  
What did your Mommy do  
When she sent away to Eaton's  
To get some things for you?  
Did she scrape the money for it  
A way she couldn't see?  
Or did she take chances on it  
And have it come C.O.D.?

## **How the Cape Freels People got Shifted**

On the eighteenth of November, as you may understand,  
A hurricane of northerly wind swept over Newfoundland.

It washed away a lot of stuff, as you can plainly see.

But of all the damage done  
There was no one scared like we.

We were cut from the mainland.  
Nowhere could we get.  
We all got out of tobacco  
We couldn't get a bit.

What we did all day long  
Was walk back and forth the gut.  
We said to one and other  
We won't cross here for a month.

We were like a crowd that was mesmerized.  
We didn't know what to do.  
We didn't know where we would spend the winter  
Or where we would get our fuel.

We all made up our minds to leave.  
And then the shift began.  
To bundle in with someone else  
The winter for to spend.

Some went to Lumsden  
And some went to Cape Freels South.  
We were like a crowd of wanderers.  
We were all scattered about.

Then we had a meeting.  
Send some money for to get.  
The government wouldn't notice us.  
They wouldn't give us a cent.

After the meeting, the people of Middle Bill  
Decided to move their houses themselves.  
So they started to move their houses across the water.

They thought they were going to trick us.  
But we landed safe and sound.  
We're not very far from the water  
But on higher ground.  
They sent down some inspectors  
And they did look and spy  
Then scurried off back home again.  
And now we are all settled in  
Just like we were before  
I don't think we'll have a big enough breeze  
To cut us off no more.

Now we have Confederation.  
I guess everything will be alright.  
There will be electric lights and everything else.  
We won't know day from night.  
Or else, 'twill be the other way.  
We won't get a thing.  
We'll be a bit fat in the fall of the year,  
And poor as a snake in the spring.

Written by  
Llewellyn Rideout

## The Saddest Sight

One of the saddest sights I ever saw  
Was on the Trans-Canada late last fall.  
We were driving along on a beautiful day,  
When suddenly, obstructing our way  
Stood a poor helpless moose.  
Some hunter must have been on the loose.

It stood on the pavement, not knowing how to go.  
The blood from its wounded side did flow.  
We stood to look at its terrible plight.  
The look in its eye was wild with fright.  
Then it hobbled back the way it came.  
I suddenly felt a terrible shame.

I thought why, oh why, should this happen today.  
Surely there must be a better way.  
How many wounded animals must there be,  
Just like the one we happened to see.  
Dying somewhere every day in pain  
But in the name of sport, man will do just anything.

Oh how I long for a better day,  
When all these things shall be done away  
And animals can live in peace,  
And the shots from the hunter's gun shall cease.  
It's a sight I shall always remember,  
That wounded moose on the highway last November.

Written with the permission of:  
Mildred Hillier

## **A Shot From The Past**

When the people were living on Pinchard's Island storms were common. Just about every night the fishermen had to haul their boats ashore. Sometimes they were caught unaware.

One fisherman was caught unaware during a sudden storm. He had his boat out on collar, just off shore. He was unable to get to it and the wind was starting to veer off the land. He was afraid that by the time he did get to it, the boat would have dragged its anchor and would be lost.

He went back to his house and got his rifle. He took aim at the mooring, which was about 75 yards away. His one shot parted the mooring, and the boat drifted in on the beach, where a group of people were waiting to haul it to safety.

## Cape Freels Branch Road

In the Fall of 1951 as you may understand  
They started the road from Pound Cove  
And Goodyear was the man.  
There were men from Newtown and Pound Cove  
And Templeman as well.  
The first man they hired on from the Cape  
His name was Uncle Phil.

He soon went across the country  
And that you ought to know.  
But went they started Cape Freels Branch  
They came out mighty slow.  
Now, when they got to Square Rock  
You all know very well,  
Instead of following out the pegs,  
They turned to Flag Staff Hill.

Now when they got to Flag Staff Hill  
It was there to their surprise.  
What they thought was gravel  
Was pug before their eyes.  
The weather it was awful wet,  
The trucks could hardly travel.  
And to every man that asked for work,  
They would say, "We're hung up on gravel."

On Flag Staff Hill each morning,  
That was where the crowd would meet.  
Some fellows been there all day,  
Without a bite to eat.  
Now when they started the bridge up there,

That time it got very bad.  
They made the old boss dirty,  
He took off every stitch of clothes he had.

He took off after Albert,  
And gave him an awful fright.  
He went head over heels in the bushes,  
And he turned blossom white.

He said, "Don't let the boss strike me boys.  
I only said what's right.  
We only came to look for work,  
We didn't come for a fight."  
Now when the boss put on coat again,  
We had a sensible talk.  
We came out over Flag Staff Hill  
As fast as we could walk.

Now when we got out to the bridge,  
Not a word was said.  
He took on four or five more men,  
And the bridge went right ahead.  
He said, "I'll want all you men  
When the weather it gets cold.  
So go home, I'll send for all of you  
In another week or so.

So when the weather it turned cold,  
He gave it an awful shove.  
He took on every man that was here,  
And never had half enough.

I suppose we'll have our branch road this spring,  
Right alongside our door.  
But it would have been a lot better  
If they put it down along shore.

And now to Joey Smallwood,  
The credit we should give.  
And not to Peter Cashin,  
Because we would not have it yet.

Now to conclude and finish,  
I think I have done well.  
I'm afraid when the boss comes back this spring,  
He'll put me in jail.

And now to end my story,  
What I said was true.  
And if they put me in the pen,  
There's nothing I could do.

Written with the permission of:  
Lloyd Stokes  
1926 - 1991

## **The Three Rocks Tragedy**

The Three Rocks lies three quarters of a mile south-southwest from Whale Bone Head, Flowers Island. They lie in a triangle shaped area. When the sea is running high and the wind is from the northwest, this place is known for breaking in rough seas. It is said that the rock that lies to the south is the worst rock for breaking.

It was on September 6, 1938, when five fishermen from Badger's Quay area were out fishing on New Ground. The wind started to blow from the north west. The men left for their return trip and for some unaccountable reason they ran over one of the three rocks, just as it was breaking. The boat capsized, throwing all five men into the water.

A heavy tide, combined with high waves, washed the men away from their boat. Like many other fishermen, who spent a lifetime around water, they couldn't swim. They were unable to reach their skiff. Sheppard went under water when the boat capsized. When he broke the surface, he was away from the boat. It must have been an act of God because another wave slammed into the vessel, spinning it around. A rope trailing from the boat was swept in front of him and he grabbed it and held on.

Call it a mystery, luck or the will of God, but something happened that day that goes beyond human understanding. Maybe it was fate. The older fishermen always said that you will not die until your time has come, no matter what.

In 1938 people from Badger's Quay area used to visit Flowers Island for fishing purposes. They would stay for a week and go home on the weekends. Jacob Sturge, Abram Kean and possibly Tom Kean from Clotty Island Neck were staying on the island the same time as the five fishermen from Badger's Quay were fishing on New Ground. The men from Clotty Island Neck were finished work for the day and were relaxing around their cabin. One of the men decided to go for a walk. During his walk he thought he heard a shout. At first he couldn't believe it, but then he heard it again. He looked out to sea and saw a boat that

seemed to be capsized. It was too far out to be certain, so all three men decided to investigate.

What they saw when they arrived at the site must have been a shock to them. A lone man was clinging to the bottom of the boat. The man was Reg Sheppard, the lone survivor of a tragic accident that took the lives of four men.

The four men who lost their lives in that tragedy were 48-year-old James Spurrell, 15-year-old Peter Stockley, 15-year-old Wilson Sheppard and 16-year-old Walter Jessie Spurrell.

## **The Pouch Island Tragedy**

The hunting of seabirds wasn't a sport before Confederation. It was a way of providing fresh meat for the families that lived along the northeast coast. Hunters often went to the offshore islands and stayed for a while.

It was on January 29, 1929, when a group of hunters from Pinchard's Island were staying on Pouch Island for the purpose of hunting ducks. There were six hunters, using two boats. One boat was hauled up on shore, while the other was used for hunting in Pouch Island Tickle. Pouch Island Tickle is located on the north side of the island. There was a moderate wind blowing from the east. Slob ice was pinned up along the island, but there was a lead of water from the tickle, running up toward Honey Pot Island.

The boat in Pouch Island Tickle was occupied by Jack Gill and Rod Bourne, two experienced seamen. A seagull came flying by. A shot was fired. The gull came tumbling out of the air, hitting the water beside a small tickle. There was a swell running that day. The sea wasn't really that rough, but every now and then a breaker would cap. For some unaccountable reason they rowed over a breaker just as it broke. Their boat was swamped. The two men were thrown into the freezing water.

The men on shore saw what happened, but they were helpless. The other boat was pulled up on shore on the other side of the island. They figured it would be useless to launch it because of the slob ice. Then courage and endurance of the Pinchard's Island men took over. A rush was made to get the other boat. They hauled it across the island, launched it and the rescue operation got underway.

Through the stories that got passed down over the years, one important fact stands out; Jack Gill did all he could to save the life of his friend. He got him to the boat, which was almost filled with water, but due to the freezing temperature his friend was unable to hold on. Twice Jack got him to the boat after Rod lost his first grip. By that time both men were starting to weaken and Rod succumbed and

disappeared beneath the sea.

Jack managed to climb into the boat. By the time the rescue boat had reached him, he had drifted up toward South West Brook, almost a quarter mile away. He was frozen to the boat, his hands had a death grip on the gunnels, but he was still alive. They got him to shore where he was revived.

The body of Rod Bourne was not found until July. He was found by Benjamin Sturge of Pound Cove. His remains were brought to Pinchard's Island, where he was laid to rest.

But the worst of all was the fact that, for the sake of a gull, a baby girl was brought into the world deprived of a father.

## The Cabot Island Tragedy

Rising out of the cold Atlantic Ocean 49 10 75 north and 53 10 00 west, lies an isolated island called Cabot Island. The island is surrounded by shoals and breakers. The water around it is familiar to the fishermen who fished the shoals. The high waves and breakers make it a threatening place to be on a stormy day.

In the early days a lighthouse was constructed there. At the time lighthouse keepers worked year round. If the weather was bad they were isolated for long periods of time. There were no radios, telephones or CB radios.

On November 27, 1954, two brothers from Newtown, Eli and Fred Gill, along with their cousin Baxter Gill, also from Newtown, sailed for Cabot Island in their motor boat. They were going to deliver supplies to their fathers, who were lighthouse keepers on the island. They reached their destination, unloaded their supplies, exchanged information and sailed back home.

Alex Gill, father of Eli and Fred Gill, had been the lighthouse keeper for twenty years. Bert Gill, his brother and father of Baxter Gill, was his assistant. After their sons left, the two men went about their duties and, in the late evening, retired to their quarters. The house had been built for two families, with each family having its own living quarters. Bert was in his own quarters, writing up the report for the day. He heard a noise from Alex's quarters and went to investigate. He found him dead on the floor. He had died of a heart attack.

The following Sunday, November 28, the Gills were returning home from church. They got the news that something was wrong on Cabot Island. The residents of the town were reporting that a fire had been seen on the island. Eli knew the *Norma & Gladys* sailed past the island that day. The ship was in Wesleyville, so he went to question to the captain. He was told that a flag was seen flying upside down, which was a distress signal.

The next morning the sea was running quite heavy which meant big swells. The

Gill family was given the use of the passenger boat, *Miss Newton*. The *Miss Newton* was owned by E & S Barbour of Newtown. The boat departed for Cabot Island towing a twenty foot boat owned by William Norris, also of Newtown. On board was the Gill family, their Uncle Archie Blackmore and Clayton Parsons.

When they arrived at Cabot Island, landing was impossible. It was decided that an attempt would be made in the smaller boat. With great difficulty the men transferred to the other boat. Eli, Baxter, Clayton and Archie made the trip toward the island. With skill, courage and determination, the four men maneuvered the boat in to the vicinity of Latrine Cove. Bertram Gill came to the edge of the island and shouted through a funnel, "Alex is dead." Shocked and grief stricken, the men returned to the *Miss Newton*. The weather got worse and they had to return to their home port. The next day the weather had gotten much worse. No attempts were made to sail to Cabot Island. A telegraph was dispatched for the aid of a helicopter. The helicopter arrived at Newtown on December 1. Ephrian Blackmore went to the island with the pilot. The body of Alex Gill was taken to Newtown. Later he was laid to rest in the Anglican Cemetery on Pinchard's Island. He was fifty-two years and three months old. Bertram Gill lived to be 86 years of age. He died in 1991 and was laid to rest in the Anglican Cemetery in Newtown.

## **The Last Mug-up**

Strange deaths and tales of the unexplained were always part of the folklore in the New-Wes-Valley area. One of the strangest concerned two trappers from the Badger's Quay area in 1935. Joelah and Heber Spurrell often spent up to a week in the woods tending to their trap line. Both were experienced woodsmen and felt right at home on the Newfoundland barrens.

It was December 5, 1935, and the two trappers were scheduled to return home. There was a storm of wet snow and northeast winds that day. When they failed to reach their homes, there was no cause for alarm because they had been late before. Their families figured they had stayed at their cabin to wait out the storm. When the storm abated and the men were still missing, the alarm sounded. A search party was sent out but no traces of the missing men were found. A search of their cabin proved fruitless. The men hadn't been there for a while. It seemed like they had dropped off the face of the earth.

That summer, in late August, a group of berry pickers were in the vicinity of Cull's Lead. This is a valley which led from the woods to the salt water in North West Arm. They were in sight of the salt water when they stumbled across a scene that chilled their blood. Two partly decomposed bodies were on the ground beside the remains of a campfire. It was Joelah and Heber Spurrell.

Apparently the two trappers were on their way home and had stopped for one last mug-up before completing their journey. What was the cause of their deaths? It was unlikely that both men died of natural causes at the same time. There was no autopsy performed because of lack of facilities.

About two years after their deaths, a well known doctor from the area had died. Some facts came to light. The trappers had some deadly poison, which was provided by the doctor. They were using it to harvest fur-bearers. They were carrying it in their knapsack. Wet snow was falling that day and, unknown to them, the poison got wet and leaked into their food. The poison was fast acting,

which explained why they died close to their campfire when they stopped for that last mug-up.

## **The Wheeler Tragedy**

There was nothing unusual about the morning of April 3, 1935. There was nothing to foretell the tragedy that was to befall the community of Greenspond. The weather was beautiful, with a light breeze blowing from the north.

The day before, Alfred Wheeler had made a successful trip after seals. He had planned to take the pelts to Badger's Quay to a buyer. They were also getting low on potatoes, which was an important part of their food supply in those days. Alfred was planning on getting a good supply in for his family.

On the morning of April 13, 42-year-old Alfred, his two sons, 16-year-old Ralph and 14-year-old Roland, left the island community in their boat. They had hoped to return home by the afternoon. They made it to Badger's Quay, where they sold their seal pelts, purchased a load of potatoes and started their return trip back home.

Whatever happened on that fateful day, nobody will ever know. After they left Badger's Quay, the wind breezed up. It was what the older fishermen called, a 'living gale' with snow. Some fishermen figured that somewhere between Partridge Island and Greenspond their boat capsized.

The next day was sunny, but there was still a gale of wind. A search was made for the missing party, but little could be done that day. The next day a much larger search was conducted. The search lasted for a week, but no trace of the boat or its crew was found.

Later on in June, a fisherman from Badger's Quay strolled down to his wharf. While going about his duties, he spotted something under the wharf. Upon investigation he found it was a body. Members of the Wheeler family identified it as Roland Wheeler.

In August, George Vincent of Cape Island decided to make a trip to Cobblers

Island, which was a short distance of shore. He was walking along Kenny Beach when he spotted something. When he got closer, he saw it was a body. It was identified as Alfred Wheeler. The only way the body could be identified was by his missing finger. Years before, Alfred had a finger amputated due to a bad infection.

The body of Ralph Wheeler was never found.

## **The Pound Cove Tragedy**

There was nothing unusual about that cold winter morning over sixty years ago, when a couple of hunters from Pound Cove were out hunting sea ducks in the boat. The ducks were flying and the hunting was good. One of the men had a gun that kept misfiring, but that was common with single-shot guns, especially if the weather was cold.

They finished hunting for the day and headed for land. Because it was a very cold winter, the water surrounding the community of Pound Cove was frozen near the landwash. The hunters rowed in beside an offshore island to haul up their boat.

A group of young men saw the boat approaching. They decided to walk across the island on the ice to lend a helping hand in hauling up the boat. When they got there, the hunters had the boat ready to be hauled up. The young men laid hold of the painter, a length of rope attached to the stem of the boat. They had a grip on the rope, when one of the men went to remove the guns from the boat. While removing one gun, he accidentally hit the firing mechanism on the side of the boat. The gun discharged, killing one young man and wounding another in the leg. It was the same gun that had been misfiring all morning. The hunters must have forgotten about the cartridge in the chamber.

The man who caused the accident never touched a gun again for the rest of his life.

## The Wonder Medicine

In the early days, along the Straight Shore, ships were often wrecked on the beaches during storms which sometimes swept the area. The people of the area would pick up things that washed ashore after a shipwreck. One man was walking along the seashore and he spied a box. When he opened the box he saw some jars which contained a white substance. The labels were gone so he had no way of knowing what the white substance was. He thought it might come in handy for something so he carried the box home.

At the time, sores, which were known as water pups, were a common occurrence with the fishermen during fishing season. Thinking that the jars held some kind of salve, he rubbed some on his water pups. To his surprise, the water pups disappeared in a few days. The word got around and fishermen started to drop by for some of the wonder medicine.

That fall the district nurse was making her rounds and she happened to meet the man with the wonder medicine. He told her about the salve he had found. The nurse asked if she could see it. After she had examined it up, the man asked her what kind of medicine it was.

“It’s no kind,” she replied. “It’s not even medicine.”

The jar contained mayonnaise.

## The Storm Door

In the early days before factory-made furniture and doors became available in the outports, people had to make do with handmade items. Because of this, they were usually skilled in making things for their homes.

A gentleman, who was a resident of Pinchard's Island, was in need of a storm door one winter. He gathered together all the items he needed and was ready to begin work as soon as possible, but some of his friends, who were skilled carpenters, offered to build it for him. They started at the job and constructed him a beautiful storm door. People said it was a work of art.

One night, the same people who built the door decided to have a bit of fun. They went to the gentleman's house and while some of the men kept him busy by telling yarns and swapping stories, a couple more went outside and removed the door.

Later that night when it was time to retire, the man went to lock the storm door for the night. Imagine his surprise when he found the door missing.

"Me lard!" he cried, "Me starm door is gone."

"Go on, you foolish mortal," his wife said. "I'm coming to bar it." Out she went and the door was indeed gone. They went to bed bewildered and confused.

The door was returned the next day in better shape than before.

## Johnny Hall

In the days before the invention of engines and outboard motors, people had to rely on the wind and sails to get them to the fishing ground. Johnny Hall and Bob Barbour were living in Newtown at the time. Johnny had nerves of steel and Bob was an easy going, careful man.

One day they were out fishing in their boat. It was a fair sized boat with two sails. On their return trip they were making good speed when an iceberg loomed up directly in their path. It was a big iceberg with a large hole in the middle. Johnny knew that if he could get past it on the windward side he wouldn't have to alter his course. He figured he could do it.

"Keep off Johnny, you crazy mortal," yelled Bob.

"Never you mind Bob," said Johnny. "We'll make it. Grab an oar and help keep her to the windward."

"Turn Johnny, keep to the leeward," shouted Bob. "We're getting too close. Turn you darn fool."

By that time they were getting too close to the iceberg. Johnny realized his mistake. Their only chance was the hole in the iceberg. He steered directly for it.

"Look out Bob, we're going through," shouted Johnny.

Straight through the hole in the iceberg the boat went. The spars and the sails came down across the two men, but the boat got through. Bob was shaken up and frightened but Johnny just clapped his hands and laughed. To Johnny it was all a lark.

"You stunned fool," said Bob. "You almost killed us."

“Never you mind,” said Johnny. “Tat was some fine dart I made, Bob Barbour.”

Yes, that was Johnny. He could see the humour in any situation.



Hall's fishing premises in Newtown (since torn down)

## Lucky Strike

The Cobbler's Rock is a favourite place for the duck hunters of Newtown. At one point in time there was a small house built on the rock for hunting purposes. The duck hunters of this area would stay there for short periods of time.

In 1910 Archibald Hall, Sam Hall, Ben Bungay and Jack Hefferton, a group of hunters from Newtown, were staying out at the Cobbler's. The arctic ice was lying out a short distance away and the seals were there by the thousands.

Archibald and Jack were out in their boat hunting, when they heard a sound that was unlike the sound made by the older seals. They thought it might be whitecoats but they weren't sure. When they returned to their hunting camp they reported what they had heard to their companions. After talking it over, they decided to investigate.

They got into their boats and went out to the edge of the ice. They found the white coats. They took advantage of their good fortune and killed two hundred and fifty.

When they returned home, Sam Hall's small schooner, the Bessie Fowler was refitted and made ready for the trip to St. John's. They loaded the pelts and flippers aboard and headed for the capital city.

When they arrived in St. John's a large crowd had gathered on the waterfront to buy flippers and to see the first and smallest sealing vessel to arrive in port.

They sold the pelts and every flipper they had, which put some much needed money in their pockets for their families. But before they set sail for their home port, they took on a load of freight, which was necessary because supplies were running low in their home town. They arrived back home one week from the day they left.

Call it lucky if you want, but it was a combination of luck and hard work that was typical of the people from the past.

## The Labrador Era

Cliff Howell started sailing to the Labrador when he was nine years old. Mr. Howell, a resident of Pound Cove, Bonavista Bay, described the Labrador fishery as 'working for welfare'. He stated, "If we got the price for fish back then as they do now, nobody would be in want. We would have all been millionaires."

In those days butter, flour, tea and a bit of salt meat would be brought ashore for the families of the fishermen who were sailing to the Labrador. That was all. There were no luxuries. The families had to make do on that.

The first summer Howell sailed to the Labrador, he went with his father as a crew member on a schooner. That summer they landed over 2,100 tubs of split fish. When it came time to settle their account, they got fifty cents between them. Fifty cents for a whole summer of hard labour. Their share would have been fifteen dollars, but it went to pay their board on the schooner.

"That's why there was so much poverty back then," said Mr. Howell. "The fish merchants always found a way to get most of all the money."

"There were always hard times at sea," said Mr. Howell, "There were no engines, only sails. When the wind blew, you just had to take it."

One summer he sailed on *The Seagull*, and remembers one trip that he put in a hard time. The wind sprung up from the Northeast in the middle of the night. It was the kind of wind that the old salts called a 'living gale'.

They tried riding out the storm with bare spars, except for the gaff topsail. The wind was howling through the rigging. The gaff topsail got torn with the strain. The captain asked two men to go aloft and 'cap' the topsail. Howell and another man said they would try. Howell took off his rubber clothes and began to climb. It was black as tar. The ship was rolling from side to side and going every which way.

“When the ship rolled away from you,” said Howell, “you could almost walk upright on the rigging. But when she came back, you had to hang on for your life.”

The two men reached the topsail and capped it. Then they began the dangerous climb down. They got back on the deck safely. By morning the ship was still afloat and the wind had died down.

It was in the latter years of sailing on the Labrador that Howell became shipwrecked. He was working on a boat that was collecting salmon from the Labrador fishermen. Howell related, “I was the engineer that time. We had a new engine in the boat and the wind from the southwest was helping us along; we were really moving. It was foggy and for some reason we were off course.”

“When we struck, the ship went up into the air like a ski-doo. When she came down, she cracked in the middle. The ship started taking on water. The captain gave the order to abandon ship. I had to go below to wake some of the crew who slept through the racket.”

The ship was in no danger of sinking right away because of the wooden fish boxes below deck. While they were making preparations to leave the ship, the fog lifted. A fishing boat came into view and saw the ship was in trouble. The crew took the ship in tow and beached her in a harbour. The wreck commissioner later wrote her off as a total loss.

They returned home on the *Kyle*. At first they were refused passage because they had no money. The skipper had seventy dollars, but that wasn't enough for all of them. The skipper was arguing with the purser of the *Kyle* when a man named Mr. Westlo, who knew the skipper, stepped forward and offered to pay for their passage.

“That was the way it was,” said Howell. “Long hours of work, with little or no reward.”

Howell has seen it all. He knows what it was like to fish on the rugged Labrador

and he knows the back breaking work of the lumber woods. He is a testimony to the days of iron men and wooden ships.



A schooner leaving for a trip to the Labrador.

## The Long Walk Home

The cutting of firewood was a never-ending chore before Confederation. The Waterloo stove was the main source of heat in many homes and it had to be fed wood continuously. Just about every home in the outports had a horse or dog team for hauling firewood. In the winter months it was a common sight to see young boys, some as young as thirteen, cutting firewood with an old buck saw.

Cape Freels was blessed with natural resources. The cod would come in close to land. There were plenty of sandy soil for growing vegetables, kelp for fertilizer and hay meadows for the horses. But there was one drawback. The people on the Cape had to travel a long distance, as far as eight to ten miles, to cut wood.

The morning stars were still shining when Jim Rideout, age 16, harnessed his horse Jerry and left for a day of wood-cutting. It was a bitter cold morning, but it had the outlook of a good day. The going was smooth and he lost no time reaching Birchy Pond, about five miles away. When he reached the upper part of the pond, where the sled path passed by the river, Jim halted the horse. It was customary for the men to let their horses have a drink at this place and to get a bit of a rest before leaving the pond.

There was a hole in the ice for watering the horses. Jim led Jerry to it. While the horse was drinking, Jim walked ahead and a little to one side of the trail. Suddenly the ice broke and he found himself in the icy water.

The shock of the cold water almost paralysed Jim. By instinct, he got a grip on the edge of the ice. He knew he had to get out, and get out fast. By this time his hands were like frozen junks of ice, but he kept his grip. He fought his way through the currents to the other side of the hole. The strong tide pushed his legs straight out, and to the surface. With his remaining strength, he pulled himself upon the ice.

Jim knew that unless he got home, he would freeze to death. His hands were so

cold he had trouble getting his boots off. Finally, he got them removed and emptied the water out of them. He quickly put them back on. The wind was increasing from the northeast and the temperature was dropping.

To ride on the sled was out of the question. He knew he had to keep moving. It was five miles across open country to get home, with no shelter of any kind. It was do or die. He turned Jerry toward home. He got a grip on the two rear posts on the sled and ran behind the horse. However fast the horse went, Jim had to go. By sheer willpower, he kept his grip on the posts.

It seemed to Jim that the distance increased as he ran and walked behind the sled. Time became blurred and he was going through the motions of running and walking as if in automation. Finally he arrived at the grade, where he could see Cape Freels. Going down the grade, it appeared to Jim that the town was receding as he got closer. Then at last, he was at his father's house.

Jim's father was sitting in the kitchen when the door opened. His father couldn't believe his eyes. His son was standing there like an ice statue. The only part of his clothes which weren't frozen were around the joints of his arms and legs.

Through chattering teeth, Jim explained what had happened. His father grabbed a large knife and cut the clothes from his body. He was given a mug of rum and put to bed. He recovered from his mishap with only a slight cold. The next day, he was back at wood-cutting again.

After all, those Waterloo stoves needed a lot of wood.

## Seven Days Adrift

Just about everyone has heard about the *Neptune* and her struggle with the Atlantic Ocean. She was under the command of Captain Job Barbour when she was caught in a storm that drove many ships out to sea, as well as some to the bottom. After 47 days of hardship, she finally anchored off Scotland.

But how many people know about the *Mab*? She was a schooner of about 40 tons, owned by John Parsons of Pinchard's Island, Bonavista Bay. Parsons was only 24 years old when he took command, but even at this age he was already a seasoned sailor and wise to the mood of the seas.

The *Mab* left St. John's on December 5, 1926, carrying a load of winter supplies. With a crew of eight, counting the captain, everything was going smoothly until they were in the vicinity of the Butterfly Islands. Butterfly Islands lie about five miles southwest of Pinchard's Island. Then the wind veered to the northwest and increased into what the old sea salts called a 'living blizzard'.

Parsons had no choice but to run his ship before the wind under bare poles. This wasn't unheard of in the days of sail. Many ships were often driven out to sea during a storm, only to make their way back to land again. But little did the captain and his crew know what was in store for them.

For seven days the wild ocean did its best to sink the little schooner; Captain Parsons and his crew pitted their skill and daring against whatever the ocean threw at them. On the first night out, the schooner took a fearful beating. Since she was carrying a full load of cargo, she was riding low in the water. Her decks were awash with white foam. The next morning found the schooner 60 miles off Cape Bonavista.

On December 7, the wind changed and the weather became favourable. Parsons decided once again to set a course for Pinchard's Island. Under full canvass, the *Mab* headed for the land. The crew was jubilant, figuring they would soon be

home with their loved ones. But the fickle mind of Mother Nature had other ideas. Once again, the wind veered offshore. The waves became mountainous. They had no choice but to run with the wind under bare poles again. The next day the weather was the same, and they ran into more trouble. The seams in the schooner opened and the crew had to continuously pump water in order to keep the ship afloat.

Meanwhile, back on Pinchard's Island the people were worried. The *Mab* was overdue. A message was dispatched to St. John's and the *Watchful* was sent out in search of the missing schooner. Having no success the first time, she was sent out again, with similar results. It was feared that the *Mab* was lost with all hands.

On December 10, the weather was worse and the *Mab* was 70 miles out to sea. Now the men were starting to wonder if they ever would see Pinchard's Island again. Night and day, they were at the pumps. Waves were breaking over the schooner. The cabin house was destroyed, the steering gear was damaged and the mainsail was tattered rags. Captain Parsons decided to head for land again, for any part of Newfoundland.

But a blinding snowstorm put a halt to that plan. By now the men were exhausted after five days of fighting for their lives. But the men of Pinchard's Island were hardy men, born to a life of hardship. From deep down inside, they drew up the courage and strength to keep their ship afloat.

Then the weather calmed down again. Captain Parsons had the *Mab* 'hove to'. A couple of other ships were spotted and flares were sent up, but they weren't seen. Once again, the battered ship headed for the land.

On December 12, land was sighted. By this time water had filled the cabin and the schooner's deck was awash. Captain Parsons decided to run the schooner ashore onto a beach. Later that evening she was finally beached a short distance from Trepassey. The men took to the lifeboats and made it safely to shore. They were no sooner on the land when the wind picked up again. Exposed to the heavy sea, the *Mab* split in two and her cargo washed ashore or out to sea.

Captain Parsons and his crew found their way to St. John's, and finally to Pinchard's Island. Today there is one member of her crew still alive. He is Hector Parsons, age 99, now living in St. John's.

## **The Pouch Island Ghost**

Pouch Island, which lies off shore from New-Wes-Valley, was settled around 1800. The population of the island was never above 50, and in 1869 the island was vacated.

Around that time there was a family living on the island by the name of Toomer. James Toomer owned a fishing room, in partnership with his older brother John, who was a bachelor. Life was hard for the Islanders. They were often isolated for long periods of time and James had high hopes of leaving the island in search of a better place to live.

But John was born for the rugged life of the island. He was an avid fisherman and hunter, spending long hours at sea, or roaming the island and surrounding area in search of sea birds. The island was his wife and he guarded it jealously. He was quick tempered and quarrelsome, while James was easy-going and soft-spoken. John had his favourite fishing ground and people avoided going there. To be found fishing on Toomer's fishing ground was to invite a quarrel. The same could be said for Logy Gauge and Wester Gull Rock. To hunt in those three areas was an invitation for trouble.

Finally, in 1868, James Toomer decided to leave the island in search of a better place to live. He approached his brother with the idea of moving, but John declined. He stated in no uncertain terms that he would rather die than leave Pouch Island.

True to his word, John contracted tuberculosis and died in the winter of 1969. He was laid to rest on the island which he loved so much. Now with no reason to stay, James Toomer and his family left the island in search of a better place to live.

The island became deserted. It became a home for sea birds and a summer fishing station for the fishermen of the area. But was the island really deserted? How

about the spirits of the dead?

One winter a group of hunters got cut off from nearby Pinchard's Island by heavy slob ice. Rather than spend the night in an open boat, they took shelter in a cabin on Pouch Island. Late that night they heard an unholy commotion outside the cabin. It sounded like someone hammering on the cabin walls. They rushed outside but there was nothing to be seen. Not even a footprint in the fresh fallen snow.

In the winter of 1930, four hunters from Newtown, Elihu Vincent, Max Melendy, Roland Tiller and Fred Barbour, went to Pouch Island to hunt Eider Ducks. They were going hunting in a place called Logy Gauge, but when they were almost there they spied a lone man already there. They didn't want to interfere with his hunting, so they decided to go to Wester Gull Rock on the western part of the island. But when they arrived in that area, the same man was there also. They decided to go elsewhere on the island but they kept seeing the same figure. Finally, one of the foursome noticed there wasn't a boat near the island. Only their own.

They decided to go back to Wester Gull Rock. When they got there, the place was deserted. Nor were there any tracks in the snow. Perplexed, they went to the other places where they had seen the lone figure. It was the same thing. No tracks. The island was deserted except for the four men.

Who was the lone man who turned up in every place the men wanted to hunt? Was it John Toomer's ghost still guarding the hunting grounds he loved so much?

## The Voyage Home

Back in the days before Confederation, it was a yearly occurrence for some fishermen to sail to the Labrador. It was a common sight in the spring to see schooners under full sail, heading northward. Some went in search of the cod, but others went after the king of all fish, the atlantic salmon.

In 1939, Harry Knee decided to foresake the cod fishery in favour of fishing for salmon on the Labrador coast. He made arrangements with skipper Sam Blackwood to tow his thirty foot trap skiff. Knee and his crew would sail on board the schooner. The first week in June the voyage got underway. Twelve-year- old Baxter Knee was going along with his father. Ches Kean, John Cross and Fred Cross made up the rest of the crew.

Their destination was Indian Harbour. After they arrived and got settled away, they lost no time in setting out their salmon nets. But their hopes of large catches were dashed. The salmon was scarce. Thinking the catches might improve, they decided to keep at it. When June went by and still no salmon, they had to face the fact that it was a lost cause. The men decided to return home.

But how to get home was the question on their minds. The *Maggie Blackwood* wasn't scheduled to return home until September. If the men were going to salvage the remainder of the summer, they would have to leave as soon as possible.

The prospect of travelling back up the coast in an open boat didn't appeal to them. They would need shelter to protect them from the weather. But where would they find the materials to built a shelter on the vessel? The ingenuity of an outport Newfoundlander took over.

Not far from their camp was an abandoned building, which must have been used for crushing mussel shells into hen's grit. The men decided to dismantle it and use the lumber to construct a house over their trap skiff. The men took the building

apart and straightened the nails. Working with nothing more than a hammer, axe and buck saw, the men fashioned a shelter over their vessel. The seams were chinked with whatever material they could find. Finally the boat was ready. Then they began the long voyage home.

But there was another problem. Would they have enough fuel for the trip? They decided to take a chance, and hoped to get fuel in some settlement along the coast.

All went well. They crossed the Strait without any mishap. At night they would anchor in some isolated settlement and continue their voyage according to the weather. They made it to Herring Neck, Notre Dame Bay, with just enough gas to cruise into the harbour.

Then they had another problem. How could they get fuel without money? But luck was on their side. At that time, there was a popular little man in Herring Neck known as the Barrelman, or Joey Smallwood.

After their plight became known, Smallwood used his influence to get a drum of fuel donated to the men. The men thankfully accepted the gift and once more set course for home. It took them two weeks to make it from the Labrador. Their town was a welcome sight to the tired men and to the 12- year-old boy. They were glad to be home.

## The Riseover

The rugged shores near Musgrave Harbour have seen their share of drama played out, when nature matches men against the sea. Such was the case in November, 1911, when the schooner *Riseover* met her death on the Shag Rock.

The *Riseover* skipper was a Pumphrey from Brigus. She was bound to the north when she encountered heavy winds off Musgrave Harbour. Later that night she hit the Shag Rock. The sea was in an uproar, and heavy waves and high winds drove the vessel further on the rocks. Her seams split open and the water began to pour in. The lifeboats were washed off the deck. The ship was doomed and all hands on board faced certain death.

Some men, when looking death in the face, will make peace with their Maker, and wait for the end. The men from Brigus might have prayed to God, but they weren't going to give up the fight for survival. While there was a chance for their lives, they wouldn't yield.

The Captain knew it was only a matter of time before the ship disintegrated, due to the fury of the storm. There was only one chance for survival - a raft. There was plenty lumber on board and he ordered the crew to start building one.

When the raft was finished, the crew launched it over the side of the ship. It seemed like certain death to put their trust in such a thing, but it was surely death if they stayed where they were. The six men got on the raft, throwing themselves upon the mercy of the sea.

At that time, the head lighthouse keeper on Peckford Island was a Mr. Whiteway. His assistant was an Arthur Pardy. Back then it was the custom for the lighthouse keepers to take their families along for the duration, while they were employed at their jobs.

On this particular morning, Mr. Whiteway's daughter went outside to hang the

dish towel on the line. Out of habit, she looked out over the ocean. What she saw made her go rigid with shock. A raft with people on it, bouncing over the tumultuous sea.

The girl broke out of her trance and hurried back inside to report what she saw. Upon hearing her story, the men grabbed some rope and hurried to the seashore.

The raft was still some distance off shore, but was slowly drifting in toward the island. It seemed to be heading for White Point. The party on shore followed their progress. Closer and closer it came toward the point. Then, to the horror of the onlookers on shore, the raft split in two. There were four men on the larger section and two men on the other. The larger section was closer and a rope was thrown from shore. Willing hands grabbed it and the raft was hauled towards the land. Upon reaching shore, the men scrambled over the rocks to safety.

The backlash from the waves hitting the shore forced the smaller raft further out. A rope was unable to reach them. The assistant lighthouse keeper offered to launch a boat to go to their aid, but Mr. Whiteway forbade it. The waves were mountainous. To try and launch a rescue boat would endanger the assistant's life.

Grief stricken, the party on shore watched the raft, riding on the crest of the waves, until it faded from sight.

After the storm abated, a search vessel was sent out to look for the missing men. No trace was found, except for parts of the raft. So ended another drama between man and nature, which claimed the lives of two men who would have been saved except for a twist of fate, which sent them to a watery grave.

## From the Past

“Till death do us part, and beyond.”

There’s an old saying in Newfoundland’s outports that if two people truly love each other, they will be together for all eternity, even after death. It was a common belief that if they were engaged and one of them died, the other was sure to follow.

Weston Blackmore and Dorcus Gill lived on Pinchard’s Island during the 1920s. From early childhood, it seemed their destiny was to become lovers, because one was never seen without the other.

Blackmore grew up to be a symbol of manhood. He was a tall youth, with a body that seemed to be sculpted by the gods. With his wide shoulders, coal black hair and ready grin, he commanded attention whenever he appeared amongst his peers.

Dorcus Gill was an example of blooming womanhood. She was as beautiful as the wild flowers which bloomed in profusion on the island. Along with this beauty was the will to make a life for herself in her isolated island home.

The two young sweethearts became engaged and made plans for their future. But fate had other plans. Weston, in the prime of his youth, was stricken with tuberculosis.

As his strong young body wasted away, Dorcus was always at his side, giving him courage to fight on. Finally the battle of his life was over and, in the spring of the year, he was laid to rest. Dorcus was torn with pain and grief over her lost love. As she watched the cold damp earth being shovelled in the grave, she whispered, “I’ll soon be joining him.”

The people of Pinchard’s Island figured that time would heal her grief. But as time went by, a strange thing started to happen. Dorcus, who was always the

picture of health, began to change. As a flower fades away in autumn, she started to fade. Gone was the radiant look on her face. Finally she took to her bed.

No cause for her strange illness could be found. It seemed that the girl had lost her will to live. Some of the older folks whispered amongst themselves, “She wants to be with him.”

Then as the first tree shed its leaves and winter embraced the land, Dorcus embraced death and was laid to rest beside her sweetheart. Together in death, they were reunited.

In the cold damp earth they lie,  
Two young lovers, side by side.  
As they belonged together in life,  
To each in death they belong.

## The Restless Spirits

Do the dead rest in peace? Who knows what transpires after the soul leaves the body? Maybe their spirits are doomed to roam the earth, seeking, but never finding what they seek.

One fine winter morning, two men from Wesleyville left with their horse and sled for a day of wood-cutting. Because they had to travel a long distance, the stars were still in the sky when they departed. A full moon lit up the landscape as they travelled.

In their line of travel was a place called Jakie's Droke. It was a place covered with low growing fir trees. According to the residents, there was something strange about that spot. A stranger was often spotted at the edge of the woods. He never raised his hand in greeting. He just stood there, as if he was waiting for someone else. If any traveller started to approach him, he would vanish into the trees.

The two men were yarning about the stranger as they rode on the sled. They were wondering if they would see him that morning. At one point, the path cut through the corner of the area. Just when the men reached that corner, the stranger appeared.

He was dressed for the woods, wearing breech pants and a heavy woolen coat. Across his shoulders hung a buck saw.

"I've been waiting for you," remarked the stranger. Saying that he jumped on their sled.

It was a cold morning, but nothing like the cold that enveloped the sled after the stranger got on. It seemed to penetrate the two men right to the marrow of their bones. The horse rolled his eyes and bolted down the path.

One of the men, though frightened, reached over to give the stranger a shove. When he did, a strange thing happened. A voice that seemed to come from everywhere proclaimed, "I waited in vain."

Then the stranger disappeared from the sled and appeared in the trail. He was standing on his feet, as if waiting for someone. Then he vanished.

With the man gone, the freezing cold left the sled. The horse calmed down and the two men continued on their journey. After that incident, the stranger was seen no more near Jakie's Droke.

## **The Bully**

Can the spirit be summoned from the beyond? One man from the area found out that it's better to let the dead rest in peace. This particular man was mean, a born bully who ruled his wife with an iron hand. When he wanted something done, she had to jump and do it. When she died, it was said that she was hounded to her grave.

Early one morning, shortly after her death, the man decided to go hunting. He got out of his bed, crossed the room and lit the lamp on the bureau. Then he went back toward the bed and started to dress. He was used to having his wife wait on him and old habits die hard. While dressing, he yelled, "Wife, take the lamp into the kitchen."

Then he remembered that his wife was dead. But, when he glanced up, he got the shock of his life. The lamp was lifted from the bureau by unseen hands. Petrified with fright, the man watched as the lamp crossed the room, out of the bedroom and into the kitchen. Then it was gently put down on the kitchen table.

Breaking out of his motionless state, the man rushed outside and headed to his closest neighbour. He learned a valuable lesson about summoning the dead.

## Against the Savage Sea

The codfish were plentiful in Newtown in the year of 1953. It was 'load and go', as the old saying goes. Every fisher was out there trying to get his share.

It was during that time that John Gibbons had a large haul of fish in his cod trap. He filled his motor boat and bagged the rest in a cod bag.

At that time it was the custom to share with your fellow fisherman. If someone had more fish than he could handle, he could give it to a neighbour, or another member of the family. Since Gibbons had more than he could handle, he asked Jim Goodyear to take the surplus.

Jim got his trap skiff ready. Since it was a beautiful day he decided to take along his daughter and nephew, ages five and six, who were playing down on the wharf.

Jim reached the cod trap, which was in the area of Windmill Bight. He had just finished loading his boat with fish when suddenly, without warning, the wind veered to the north. The northern wind is the most feared in the Lumsden area because it is blowing directly on the land. With northern winds, there are usually big waves and rough water.

Jim pointed the boat toward home. The wind increased in intensity and the waves started running high. He put the two children down behind the engine house and covered them with some oilskins.

Nevertheless, Jim was in for the fight of his life to reach home. He was towing a small punt at the time, and right from the beginning there was trouble. Because of the wind, there was a big strain on the tow rope. The rope snapped and the punt came loose. He had to turn around and go back for it.

After retrieving his punt, he once again set out for home. By this time the weather had gotten much worse. Then his boat started to take on water. He had to shut off

his engine and drop anchor to keep the boat head to the wind, while he bailed the water out.

Meanwhile, back in Lumsden, Jim's family was uneasy. His father, who was busy splitting fish, would pause at his work and climb to the roof of his stage, hoping to see Jim returning.

Out at sea, Jim was still fighting to get back to land. The waves were breaking over the boat. Three times Jim had to drop anchor and start bailing. Each time he hauled up the anchor he would lose ground. The boat would drift back a considerable distance.

The children, down back of the engine house were unaware of the danger. They were too young to understand. They thought it was great fun when a wave broke over the boat, and would laugh with glee. But Jim was aware of the danger. Their lives were in danger and he had to get them safely back to land.

Back on the land, Jim's father was still keeping a lookout. His wife was also there, praying for her husband, daughter and nephew's safety. Finally, the boat was spotted fighting its way to land. Jim and the two children made it in to safety. The children were excited, telling everybody about their adventure, but to Jim it wasn't an adventure. It was a fight against death.



Two men and their horse - back from a day of cutting wood.



A family cleaning cod fish - down by the stage.



Taken on April 2, 1949 - the day Newfoundland  
joined Confederation



Highchair made on Cape Island in the 1800's.  
Owned by 4<sup>th</sup> generation, Walt & Shirley  
Andrews.



Robert Tulk's two friends, Tom & Huey Vincent, cleaning the day's catch.

**Jakie Kelloway**  
**1889 - 1964**

Every community has its share of characters or, people who were special. Wesleyville was blessed by having one of the greatest characters of all time. He was well liked and had a way of making you laugh, even when you didn't feel like laughing. He was often on the receiving end of a joke, but he often turned the tables on the joker.

One of my favourite stories about Jakie concerned the way he conned people out of their cigarettes. He would stop travellers passing through Wesleyville and ask them for a smoke. When the pack was extended to him, he would take one and remark, "One smoke is enough for any man."

More often than not, the unwary traveller would agree. Jakie would return one cigarette and keep the rest.

Another one of my favourite stories is how he turned the tables on the local school inspector. Jakie was on the government wharf in Wesleyville, when the inspector dropped by. There were some smelt swimming in the water by the wharf. The inspector figured he'd have some fun with Jakie.

"Hey Jakie, what do you call those fish down there?" he asked.

"That's a school of smelt," replied Jakie.

A big sculpin came swimming by.

"What do you call that?" asked the inspector.

"That, my friend, is a school inspector," answered Jakie.

When Jakie passed to his reward, the late Bobby Winsor of Wesleyville wrote a

tribute to Jakie, which said all that needed to be said. I was given a copy a few weeks ago. Here it is, as written by Mr. Winsor:

“Jakie Kelloway of Wesleyville is dead. Perhaps it was, in a sense, his disabilities which contributed to his accidental passing one moonless night last week. But Jakie is dead and Wesleyville, Brookfield and Pound Cove will miss him a lot.

“Jake was popular in his home town, in fact in all of Bonavista North. We all liked him. Whenever we go on sentimental journeys to the old place, we’ll heave a sigh. For Jake won’t be on the back of Sainsbury’s shop, waiting to get a pack of smokes, which he always wanted. He would always lift his cap to greet us.

“The problems of every day living never kept Jake awake at night. He cared little for those distinctions which vex us. Jake was the same to all men living. He greeted the cigar smoking bigwig in the same language he used when he talked to the young fellow digging ditches for the Cyril Babb Construction Company, on the Wesleyville road.

“We’ll find it difficult to disassociate Jake’s image from Wesleyville. We knew him, we liked him. For most of us, this unforgettable personality will still be all over the place, from Pound Cove to Brookfield. He’ll stalk the corridors of our lives, sometimes disturbing us a little, fretting with us about the poor times and making us laugh with his quick and apt rejoinders to our teasing.

“Jake will indeed be hard to forget. For a long time to come we’ll see in our mind’s eye the photograph of ‘Jakie the Man’. The short spare figure with his unruly hair and that little old bib cap that he always doffed to greet us. We’ll hear the rap at our door and his request, ‘I’d like to come in and have a cup of tea.’ Yes, we’ll remember Jake and the hundreds of episodes centred around his doings and sayings, each and every one individualistic and expressive of our kindly, modest little friend.

“It was a cold, chilly night, when Jake, on his way home from a friend’s house in Wesleyville, walked out towards the harbour waters and slipped over a snowy

bank. There, with the sentry light of Bennett's Island intermittently flashing its warning over the slob-filled bay, Jake, enveloped by the lonely darkness of a chilling February night, let go of life. He left behind a legacy of friends and well-wishers, who came by the hundreds to pay their last respects at the funeral. They were all saddened as Jake's body wended its way from the lovely church to its last resting place in the old cemetery on the hill."

## **A Tale From the Past**

During the Second World War, the conflict came close to the shores of Newfoundland. Sometimes, even innocent bystanders got to witness the terrible power of warfare first hand.

John Powell settled near Anchor Brook, Notre Dame Bay, shortly before the Second World War broke out. He and his family procured their living from the land and the sea. Everything they wanted was in abundance near their home. In the summer salmon teemed in the nearby river. The barrens provided berries for the table, as well as for sale. For a time, he canned bakeapples; there were 48 cans to a case, which was shipped to St. John's and other markets.

It was a peaceful setting, but the tranquillity was to be abruptly broken. The northeast coast of Newfoundland faces the Atlantic Ocean. From time to time Powell and his family could see the battleships and other ocean-going traffic passing along the coast. But there was something else out there that they couldn't see. Something deadly, which was drifting at the mercy of the wind and tide.

On this particular day, Powell and his son Ned were outside their houses discussing the day's work. Suddenly a terrific explosion tore through the air. Beach rocks, kelp and other debris from the nearby beach became airborne. The ground shook, the houses trembled and windows shattered.

For a while it seemed like the Powells had witnessed the end of the world. When they came out of their daze, they went and investigated the source of the explosion. Down on the beach, they saw first hand the destruction caused by the terrible explosion.

Further investigation proved it to be a floating mine from a war ship. The action of the waves caused it to detonate when it hit the beach. After the excitement died down, Powell coined the following statement: "Hitler almost got me."



Schooner - being hauled up for repairs.

## The Missing Heads

Unmarked graves are scattered around the coves and harbours of Newfoundland. While some are never found, some others come to light. Usually, they are re-buried in a graveyard, or the remains covered-up and the site marked. But, there are some people who treat the dead with contempt.

Do the dead claim vengeance on those who disturb their rest? Do they return to claim what is rightfully theirs? One man found out the hard way that the dead are better left alone.

While breaking ground for a vegetable garden, one man unearthed a skull. Upon inspecting it, he decided it would make a nice spudgel for bailing water out of his fishing skiff. When he returned to his house, he took the skull along.

His wife, who was a Christian woman, begged him to re-bury it. The man, who didn't believe in God or the devil, stated, "I'll give up my own head first."

The man took the head out to his workshop and removed the jaw, which he threw into the sea. He painted the object and placed it aboard his boat. A couple of days later the man left on a fishing trip. Later that evening, the wife saw the skiff returning. She decided to go down to the wharf, to help him clean and salt the fish. When she got close to the landwash, she couldn't see any signs of her husband in the skiff. The boat seemed to be sailing straight to the wharf on its own. The vessel came into its usual place. Unseen hands fastened it to the pier. Thinking that her husband was somehow playing a joke on her, she rushed over and looked into the boat. What she saw made her scream in horror. Her husband lay in the bottom of the skiff, minus his head. There was no sign of the spudgel.

Years later, another man took possession of the land. While he was excavating a basement for his new home, he dug up two skulls. One was missing the lower part, but one was intact.

## Coronet

It was a profitable voyage for the crew of the *Coronet*. After fishing all summer off Greenland, the crew was looking forward to home and their families. But the God of the seas had other plans. The crew was to undergo a harrowing experience. The *Coronet* was a Danish motor vessel of 60 tons. Her home port was the Faroe Islands and she carried a crew of 21 men. On September 4, 1935, she left Greenland, homeward bound. The vessel was powered by a 40-hp Kromhout single cylinder engine. The engine was powerful, but slow. If the ship had been faster, she might have escaped the storm which struck three days after she left.

The fury of the North Atlantic is well known to those who wrestled a living from the cold depths of the ocean. The storm struck suddenly. The first huge wave smashed the foremast off. The bowsprit was the next to go. Wave after wave battered the ship. Another wave swept the wheelhouse from the deck, taking with it all the nautical instruments. A few minutes later, all the lifeboats were swept from the deck. The ship was at the mercy of the sea.

For days the ship was battered by wind and mountainous seas. The pounding from the heavy sea caused some of her seams to open. A considerable amount of water flooded the engine room. The men had to stay on deck after the crew's quarters and the captain's room became half filled with water. The pumps had to work continuously. Some of the men barely escaped being washed overboard when a large wave engulfed the vessel.

Onwards the *Coronet* drifted. With the loss of the sextant, chart and compass, the men had no idea where they were. Some of them had lost all hope of ever seeing their loved ones again.

On September 20, the weather had moderated. Some of the fishermen from the New-Wes-Valley area decided to head out to the fishing ground. Two fishermen, George and Harry Knee from Valleyfield, had plans to go fishing on New Ground,

about five miles outside Flower's Island. Early that morning they left, accompanied by Harry's nine year old son Baxter. They were in their 25-foot motor boat, powered by an eight horsepower Acadian engine. They were near New Ground when they spotted a vessel that seemed to be flying a distress signal. When they approached the ship, the Knees saw that it was in a battered condition and low in the water. On deck, there were men lashed to the rigging to keep them from being washed overboard.

The Knees hailed the strange ship, and a problem arose - a language barrier. One couldn't understand the other. George and Harry knew that the ship was in trouble. After a while, both parties understood enough to know that the disabled ship needed a tow. A hawser was thrown from the *Coronet* and fastened to the Knee's boat. Straining under the heavy load, the little motor boat headed for Valleyfield.

When they arrived at Valleyfield, there was still the language problem. At that time, however, a remarkable man lived in Valleyfield. He was a Swede by the name of Carl Anderson. He could speak 14 languages and was fluent in 10. His service was engaged to speak to the men. Through Anderson, they told of their ordeal.

Later, the vessel set a course for St. John's. She was supposed to be refitted for the trip back to the Faroe Islands. Instead, she was sold and her new master, Skipper Abram Winsor, renamed her the *Hazel Pearl*, after his two daughters. After a successful summer at the Labrador fishery, she was sold to Jim Tiller. Later, she changed owners again. This time, the ship was lost near Baccalieu.

## Example of Courage

The people who first settled the area surrounding New-Wes-Valley were a rugged breed. They had to be. Since the coast was first settled, men had wrestled a living from the land and sea, often under harsh conditions. The tombstones in graveyards around the coast bear mute testimony to the hardships some of the early settlers endured. Scattered around the graveyard are scores of headstones of young men and women whose lives were taken at an early age.

The survivors molded themselves to fit the environment, and thus evolved into men who could look death in the eyes and laugh in its face.

There were such men as Jesse Collins from Newport. Collins was one of the survivors of the *Newfoundland* Disaster. While facing death on the ice, his courage and leadership helped pull other sealers back from the brink of death. There was also George Tuff of Templeman, a man of iron who survived both the *Greenland* and the *Newfoundland* Disaster. Billy Fifield, a blacksmith from Wesleyville had reputation as a blacksmith far and wide. It was said he could handle hot horseshoes with his bare hands.

The list goes on. While some names have long faded from memory, others are still remembered by a few. Robert Standfield from Port Nelson and Billy Sheppard from Pool's Island, Bonavista Bay, are two such men.

Standfield was a fisherman and sealer throughout his life. The circumstances that shaped his life made him as tough as leather. He was a kind man, who wouldn't shirk any obstacles in his path. Whatever it was, he met it head on.

When he was still a young man, he broke his leg when he fell down in the hold of a schooner while at the ice. The broken leg never did mend properly and he spent the rest of his life crippled. But that didn't stop him from signing on sealing vessels as a cook. Neither did his leg stop him from fishing from his own boat. He got around with the aid of crutches. On every trip to the fishing grounds, he

would place the crutches in the boat to aid him in getting around. It was on September 27, 1947, that his iron will was put to the test.

Billy Sheppard of Pool's Island was a veteran of the First World War. He was wounded, and then discharged. He returned to Pool's Island and the life of a fisherman. One day while hunting sea ducks, the muzzle loader he was shooting burst. His left hand was seriously injured and had to be amputated at the wrist.

Being one-handed didn't hinder Billy. At first he had a hook fitted onto the stump. By resting the prong in the hook, he could prong fish from the boat with the best of them. He could also hold his own at jigging one-handed. He would haul with his right hand, then use his left arm to pin the line against his chest. With his one hand he also cut timber, and built a 25-foot fishing skiff called *Over The Top*; it was a name that reflected his war experiences. The fishing skiff and Billy Sheppard were put to the test on September 27, 1947.

On that autumn morning, there wasn't a breath of wind, but a haze hung low over the ocean. In spite of the weather glass being 'bottom up', the boats were already out on the fishing ground. The thoughts of most fishermen run the same, when it comes to the weather. Take a chance was always their motto. If you had to pay attention to the glass and the weather report, you would spend most of the season on the land.

That morning, Billy Sheppard and his two-man crew were hand-lining on a spot of ground known as Ireland's Eye.

At 65, Robert Stanfield was feeling his age. But his iron will wouldn't bend to his many aches and pains. He too was out on the fishing grounds aboard his 19-foot punt.

The storm came out of nowhere. One minute the water was flat calm, the next minute it was a maelstrom. The wind was hurricane force out of the northeast. In the blink of an eye, the peaceful ocean was turned into a death trap. Everywhere, fishing vessels were scurrying for the nearest land. Some didn't make it.

When the wind hit *Over The Top*, she was tossed around like a cork in a bubbling pot. Sheppard wasted no time starting the four-horsepower Acadian engine. With his strong right arm on the helm, he displayed the same kind of courage he had shown when he went over the top in no man's land. Every wave, beyond and ahead, was a deadly foe. There wasn't a bit of black water to be seen. Everything was feather white.

He set his course, and the little vessel ran before the wind. Every wave threatened to swamp the craft. Just when it looked as if she would founder under the breaking waves, she would pop up again. Finally, land was sighted. It was Deer Island, which lay further up in Bonavista Bay. Although the wind was still a hurricane, it was sheltered from the mountainous sea. They were safe.

When the storm broke loose, Stanfield was close near Shoe Cove, a short distance from Greenspond. Having no engine he had to rely on a sail. While riding on a large wave, the little boat turned broadside to the wind. She flipped over, tossing Stanfield into the tumultuous sea.

A lesser man might have given up, but the words 'give up' weren't in his vocabulary. Somehow, in spite of his bad leg, he reached the capsized boat. Then, with a superman effort, he climbed onto the bottom of the vessel.

With a grip of steel, he hung on to the keel. Wave after wave battered the boat and man. It didn't seem possible that a human could take such punishment. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, another vessel riding out the storm hove into view.

It was a boat from Newport, whose skipper's name was John Collins. Upon seeing a boat capsized with a man clinging to the bottom, he put his crew's own safety aside in favour of a rescue.

By this time Stanfield was exhausted from exposure to the cold. But his grip was as strong as ever. With daring, and good seamanship, Collins and his crew

maneuvered their boat along side and took him aboard. After reaching land, he soon revived and displayed the same indomitable will.

Billy Sheppard died at Pool's Island at the age of 78.

Robert Stanfield continued fishing after his close brush with death. He died at Port Nelson.

## Edward Blackwood

Just about every community on the northeast coast has its share of remarkable people. Some were known for their hard work, others for their contributions to their communities. But others were known for their daring and feats of strength. Edward Blackwood of Port Nelson, Bonavista Bay, was one.

Blackwood was a living legend. He stood six-foot-six, a giant of a man with a body that stood out in a crowd. There wasn't any limit to his strength. He was so powerful that he avoided shaking hands with people out of fear that he might harm them. Removing an engine from his trap skiff was child's play for him. He would get a grip on it with his mighty hands and man-handle it out of the vessel. Sometimes, just to entertain folks, he would lift a 100-pound bag of flour with his teeth.

Like most Blackwoods, he was a seafaring man, sailing to the Labrador in search of cod. In the early days, it was a common thing to have a large family. The Blackwoods reared nine sons. When they all reached seafaring age, he and his sons built a schooner of about 60 tons, which they called the *Nine Brothers*. Together, they fished the Labrador waters, and seldom failed.

One summer, the family was in St. John's with a full load of fish. Edward knew to the nearest pound how much fish the vessel could carry. He got suspicious when the ship was about half unloaded, and the required weight wasn't there. He got a hammer and went to the weighing machine, and yanked the wooden cover off the weight box. His suspicion was correct. Inside the weight box, nestled in among the legal weights, were some large rocks.

The company thought that since Blackwood was from the outports, they could get away with it. To make it look good, they called the cops to have him arrested for tampering with the weighing machine. First, it was only a couple of cops. Then the whole force was called to the scene. But it wasn't enough because they had a tiger by the tail.

The first cop that tried to put the cuffs on Blackwood was met by a hard right to the jaw. There were six pork barrels standing in a row on the wharf. When that hard right hand connected, the cop went flying over the six barrels. Then they ganged up on Blackwood with their nightsticks, but it was like trying to beat a bear to death with straws. St. John's finest were scattered like straw in the wind.

Since they couldn't arrest Blackwood, and a number of them were shaken up by his iron fists, they decided to investigate the weighing machine. They saw the rocks and decided that Blackwood was in the right. After all, it was easier to arrest a city man than the giant from Port Nelson.

When everything calmed down, the fish merchant agreed to pay the Blackwood family for the lost weight, plus more for some fish that was shipped previously.

## Francis P. Duke

There is an old saying in the outports: "In the midst of life there's death." This appeared to be true on that stormy night of December 16, 1947. Life was going on as usual for the people of New-Wes-Valley and the surrounding areas. There was a concert in progress at the Orange Lodge in Badger's Quay and, in the island community of Greenspond, Doris Janes was preparing for her marriage to John Jerrett the next day.

Before the concert in the Orange Lodge was over, the storm had transformed into a raging gale with heavy snowfall. The people attending the concert had to spend the night in the lodge. The residents of the area were snug in their homes, unaware of the drama that was unfolding almost on their doorsteps.

The *Francis P. Duke* was a schooner of 50 tons, owned by a Pat Miller of Fogo. She left Fogo early in the morning of December 16, with a crew of five and one passenger. In her hold was a load of fish destined for St. John's. The captain and crew were hoping for a fast trip to the capital city, to get back and attend the Christmas 'time' that was planned for the following week.

But their hopes were dashed. When the storm overtook them, Captain Miller decided to steam back, hoping to find shelter. By the time they had reached Greenspond, the storm had unleashed its fury.

Captain Miller set a course for Valleyfield. He was dead in his reckoning. In fact, maybe he was too precise in his course, because sometime in the night he hit the Shag Rock, dead on.

When she hit, the mountainous waves quickly destroyed the schooner. Her bottom split on impact and the schooner was impaled on the breakers. No one will ever know how long it took for the sea to complete its destruction, or the men's last thoughts. The next morning wreckage was scattered all over the place. Six men had gone to their doom.

The next day life went on as usual. In Greenspond, Doris Janes was united in holy matrimony to John Jerrett. The social gathering was under way when the guests heard the shocking news.

The first inkling of something being wrong was when a dory, bearing the schooner's name, washed ashore on Hermit's Cove Beach in Badger's Quay. Then wreckage from the schooner started drifting ashore near various communities. A search couldn't be carried out that day because of the tempestuous seas. On December 18, the wind had died down, but the sea was still violent. Men from nearby communities braved the high seas and converged at the wreck.

Fred Hoskins, now a resident of Gander, was living in Badger's Quay then. His father, the late C.M. Hoskins, was the postmaster and wireless operator in the community. He recalled, "No one was aware of the tragedy until the following afternoon. Some residents from the area found some wreckage and informed my father. He immediately notified the authorities in St. John's."

The first crew to arrive at the site of the disaster was Jim and Art Wicks from nearby Port Nelson, followed by Dana and John Jerrett of Greenspond, and Ben and Dan Downer from the same community. John Jerrett, only married for one day, left his young bride to take part in the search for the drowned victims.

Art Wicks, now a resident of Badger's Quay, recalled the terrible tragedy. "When we got there, it was a terrible sight. Parts of the schooner were scattered everywhere around the Shag Rock. Water was shallow around the wreck. When I looked over the side, I could see one body on the ocean floor. It was brought to the surface by the Downers."

The Downers and the Jerretts worked tirelessly, dragging for the bodies. Four bodies were recovered due to their efforts. Ben Downer, now 77 years of age and still living in Greenspond, talked about the search for the bodies. "It wasn't a pretty sight," recalled Downer. "No drowned person ever is. My brother Dan and I had good nerves for doing things, but we were nothing like the Jerretts. They

had nerves like water dogs. They were afraid of nothing.”

The bodies that were recovered were laid out in the Greenspond courthouse. Later, they were put on board the *S.S. Glencoe* and transported to Fogo.

## The Eider Duck Fight

In the early days of settlement on the northeast coast, hunting for sea-birds was an important part of the settlers daily lives. Before freezers came to this area, most meat was preserved in bottles or salted.

My great-uncle, James Green, known as Uncle Jim, had a love for hunting. He was also known for his temper. Uncle Jim was a small man, but his temper was something to behold. Because of this, some of the youth of the area like to 'get him going', as the saying goes.

One day Uncle Jim and his neighbour, Charlie Tulk were out hunting eider ducks. On the same day, two young men from Fox Cove, who were known for their humour and fun-loving ways, decided to have a bit of sport with Uncle Jim. The young men were Tom Tuff and Joey Jones.

Tom and Joey were in their row boat, a short distance away from Uncle Jim and Charlie. An eider duck came flying by. When it flew past Uncle Jim, he opened fire. Tom shot at the same time, just for the fun of it. Down came the duck.

The young men started rowing toward the bird, shouting to Uncle Jim that it was their bird. Uncle Jim said it was his. The two boats raced toward the bird. Both parties got there the same time. Tom and Uncle Jim lay hold of the bird at the same time. A tug-of-war started between the two men for the possession of the bird. Joey and Charlie were the referees.

Charlie said, "Come Jimmy, that Tom Tuff is getting your bird. Pull harder, Jim. That's it, you're getting it."

Joey said, "Come on Tom. That Jimmy Green is getting our duck. Harder Tommy, pull harder."

Nothing could stand the strain. The duck parted down the middle. Tom had the

neck and back. Uncle Jim had the breast and legs. Afterwards, Jim said, “Tommy Tuff is tough enough, but I got most of the bird.”

When Tom told the story, he said he got the best of the deal, because of the fun he had getting Jimmy Green ‘going’.

## **The Lone Beothuk**

The sleek craft glided over the ocean as the lone occupant steered a course for the Island of the Birds. Without a compass or a chart to guide him, he relied wholly on instinct, the same instinct that guided his people, the Beothuks, to the Island of Birds, for hundreds of years.

But now his people were few, driven from their homes on the cape, by newcomers with sticks that killed with a loud noise. They had retreated into the interior of the land, and could no longer reap the bounty of the ocean. This was the reason for the voyage to the island. His family needed food and he hoped to collect eggs from the birds which inhabited the place.

Another vessel was also en route to the Funk Islands. A fishing schooner from Bonavista Bay was heading for the rich fishing grounds which surrounded the area. At the wheel stood a man who was totally without scruples. It was said that he feared neither God nor devil.

The lookout spied the canoe with the lone Beothuk. He shouted a warning to the captain at the wheel. The man stated in foul language that wouldn't change his course for no heathen. With a strong wind filling the sails, the vessel was bearing down fast on the tiny craft.

The Beothuk saw the large vessel. He paddled furiously to get out of the path. He succeeded, but the wake of the schooner swamped the small canoe. The man was thrown into the ocean.

The captain saw the Indian struggling in the water. He changed course and headed for the man. But he did nothing to help. In fact, he laughed at the helpless Beothuk fighting for his life. Finally, the red man slipped beneath the surface, and the schooner continued on its way.

The cod was plentiful and the incident with the Beothuk was soon forgotten. The

men soon had a full load and set sail for their home port. But on the way back, a strange thing happened. It was a moonlit night and the captain was relaxing on deck. Suddenly, a canoe came gliding over the water, keeping pace with the schooner. The lone figure could clearly be seen. He shouted to a crewman to bring his gun. Shouldering the muzzle loader, he took aim and pulled the trigger. The gun fired and the man looked, expecting to see the Beothuk slumping down in the canoe. Much to his surprise, both the man and the canoe were unhurt. Thinking that he had missed, he reloaded and fired again. The craft and its occupant continued to keep abreast of the schooner. All through the night the canoe kept pace, but on the breaking of the dawn it faded away.

All that summer, the captain kept seeing the lone Indian in the canoe. He declared he feared no Indian, dead or alive. But then things started to go wrong. If he put out a net, the moorings were cut. His fishing gear started to disappear at an alarming rate. Then one night he saw the lone Beothuk beside his schooner, which was moored in the harbour. It appeared that he was getting ready to cut the mooring which held the schooner at anchor. Again the man grabbed his gun and fired. Again, the Beothuk was unhurt. But the shot parted the cable. With a strong offshore wind, the schooner was driven onto the rocks and became a total loss.

The drama came to an end one night while the man was out tending to his salmon nets. While hauling the net, he saw what he took to be a canoe. Hoisting the sail, steered a straight course for the object, intending to run it down. The vessel hit with a crash, puncturing a hole in its side. Water began to pour in. The boat capsized and the man was thrown into the water. He struggled to stay afloat. Just before he slipped beneath the sea, he saw the lone Beothuk in the canoe.

The next morning, a search party found the boat, partly submerged. Floating nearby was a dead tree, with one large limb in the middle.

## God's Iron Man

Delivering the word of God was no easy task in the 1800s. Most of the travelling was done by boat in the summer. In the winter, it meant long walks in the piercing cold, often over the frozen bays.

Reverend Nathaniel Allen Coster was one of the early ministers at the Greenspond mission. During his stay he travelled long distances, and tended to the needs of his flock in 20 settlements. He was devoted to the needs of the people. One winter he was called upon to visit a dying man. The man was 11 miles away and the Reverend had to travel in an open boat. On the return trip a gale sprang up. Neither Reverend Coster nor his companion were experienced seamen. Their tiny craft was besieged by wind and mountainous waves. To add to their misery, they were soaked to the skin and bitter cold. When they reached land the people were amazed that they had survived. But the trip had taken a toll on the Reverend's health. For a long time he suffered from exposure from the storm.

In the spring, the ice would be packed close to the shore. It wasn't uncommon for people to travel long distances on the tossing ice floes. Often, the wind would change directions and the ice would move offshore. The travellers on the ice would be at the mercy of the wind and tide.

Such a thing happened on blustery cold day while Reverend Coster was travelling alone over the arctic ice pack. The wind was on his back and he made good time.

But to his chagrin, when he got near his destination, he saw the ice had moved away from the land. He had no choice but to turn around and face the freezing wind. He was exhausted after walking almost ten miles, and shortly he became numb with the cold. Reverend Coster knew he wasn't going to make it but he forced himself on. Finally, he couldn't go another step. He sat down on the ice and awaited death.

But God had other plans for his servant. He sent an angel in the guise of a sealer. Reverend Coster was unconscious. At first the sealer thought that he was dead,

but he detected a faint heartbeat. Dragging the Reverend to his feet, he started out. When they reached the land, Coster was a dead weight. The man had to drag him to the nearest house. Inside, he was placed under warm blankets and rum was forced down his throat. After a while, he revived, but it was a long time before he could return to his duties.

## Billy Myrne

The five men skilfully maneuvered their small dory in to the rocky beach. Four of the men embarked from the boat, leaving one of their mates to keep the dory offshore while awaiting their return. Carrying a heavy chest, two on each side, the men marched inland. Later, they returned, minus the chest. After being picked up by the man waiting in the dory, they dipped their oars and started rowing towards their ship, which was anchored on the lee side of the island.

Billy Myrne was leaning against the rail of the ship, watching his mates return from the Island of Cats. It was not his first time in the area. Three times before, the ship had sought refuge in this isolated place. The crew felt safe here because other ships, apart from their own kind, seldom ventured this far north. Even if they did, they preferred to keep far offshore, away from the rugged stretch of coast known as the ship's graveyard.

For 30 years Billy had sailed before the mast. Twenty years on various trading ships before the last one was plundered and sunk by pirates. He was given a choice then. Join the pirate crew or take a short walk on a plank.

But now he was tired of being a sea rover and longed for life on the land. The Island of the Cats reminded him of his native land. The land in the background, with its sandy beaches, beckoned to him. Already he had made plans to leave the ship at the first opportunity.

Later that evening the ship sailed closer to the mainland and dropped anchor for the night. Billy could see the land clearly: deep forest running down to the coastline and long sandy beaches.

“Yes,” thought Billy. “A man could live out his life in this place without fear of being hung from a yardarm on some British warship.”

That evening, Myrne didn't take part in the carousing with the crew. Later that

night, when all was calm and the crew were sleeping off the effect of too much rum, he put his plan into action. With the help of a friend, he loaded a dory with part of the loot from the ship's treasure, along with all the necessities for survival in a strange land. Then, in the darkness, they rowed ashore, landing on a beach near some flat rocks halfway between two points of land which jutted out into the sea. Under the cover of darkness, they buried the loot. Billy's friend returned to the ship, but promised to come back some day for his share of the plunder.

Early morning saw the ship sail away. It appeared that Billy's absence went unnoticed. When the ship disappeared over the horizon, he started to look for a suitable place to build a hut.

It was then he discovered that the place wasn't deserted. There was another family living there by the name of Gray. After making himself known, he told them that he had escaped from a pirate's ship after being held captive.

The Gray family gave him all the help they could. They helped him gather timber to build a hut near the woods. The hut was constructed near a large rock. The flat side of that rock formed one wall. When the hut was finished, Billy gathered flat stones and built a fireplace by the side of the rock. It served the purpose for heating and cooking.

Billy's friend from the ship never did return, so Billy settled down to a new life on the land. He always seemed to have a bit of money whenever he needed it. This was strange to the Gray family because he seldom engaged in fishing for a living.

He also had a liking for a strong drink. When drunk, he would roar out sea-chants and tell tales of buried treasure on Cat Island in the vicinity of Cat Harbour.

When he got older, the Gray family looked after him. One day after recovering from a drinking binge, he called one of the women to his bedside and asked her if she could keep a secret. Thinking he was going to reveal the location of the treasure, she told him that she could.

He replied, "So can I lass. So can I."

Toward the end of his life, Billy moved to Aspen Cove, where he died of old age.

Outer Cat Island, which is now called Northern Island, lies offshore from Lumsden. It has been searched for buried treasure many times. So was the ground where Billy Myrne's hut used to be, but no trace of the treasure was ever found.

In Lumsden there is a rock known as Billy Myrne's Rock. It has a hollow burnt into it about eight inches deep and twenty-four inches wide. It's mute testimony of the only known pirate to settle in Lumsden.

## **Back From The Dead**

Cape Island was settled in the early 1800s. The names of the families who settled there were White, Vincent and Andrews.

John White, ancestor of the White's family, went seal hunting out by the Gull Island one spring. While he was hunting seals on the ice, he got separated from his companions when the ice drifted apart. His companions tried to rescue him but were unable to do so. They stood there helpless while he drifted away on a pan of ice.

After being driven off with the ice and spending a night alone, he spied a ship in the distance. He started walking over the ice, waving his jacket. The ship spotted him and took him on board.

Meanwhile, back on the Cape, the people were in mourning. After a period of time, a funeral service was held for the missing man. There were no telephones or wireless at the time, so they had no way of knowing if he was dead or alive.

Three months went past. Then one morning a Mr. Andrews was out having a look with his spyglass. He saw this man walking down the path that led to Cape Island. He trained his spyglass on him and got the shock of his life. There was John White, back from the dead.

It was said that John White made the most money on Cape Island that year. The ship that picked him up signed him on. They struck the seals and had a bumper trip.

## **The Dark Stranger**

When Knob Lake, now known as Labrador City, first opened its mines, people from this area of New-Wes-Valley worked there. At that time the company had trailers for their workers to stay in. There was one man who didn't believe in ghosts, until then. While he was staying in a trailer he had an experience with the supernatural.

On that particular night, he decided to go to bed a little early because the next morning he had to start work. He undressed and climbed into bed. He glanced at the clock, which said the time was a little before midnight. The man thought he heard a noise. He looked at the doorway, thinking it was his roommates. He got the shock of his life. The door was closed but, between the door and the door jam, a man in black emerged. The apparition walked over to the bed, rested his hand on the table beside the bed and looked down at the man. The man was terrified as he watched this dark stranger. Then the apparition slowly sunk through the floor.

The man hopped out of the bed and was still putting on his pants as he went through the door. Later the next day when he calmed down, he went back to the trailer and checked the door. Above the door he saw the written words, 'Beware of the tall dark stranger'.

## The Phantom Light

Shoal Arm Bog and the nearby pond are renown for berry-picking, hunting and fishing. It is also know by the local residents for the mysterious light that appeared there from time to time. What is this light? Nobody seems to know. Every generation has seen this light in one form or another. Sometimes it appears in the form of a ball of fire, other times it takes the shape of a flashlight. It takes the same route every time, from Carter's Brook, where the old bridge used to be, down to Shore Arm Hummock. It has never been seen outside that area.

One man, a former resident of Cape Island, was walking along the old roadway that used to lead from Cape Island to Newtown. When he crossed the bridge that used to span Shore Arm Brook, a light appeared. The light was like a small ball of fire. It followed him all the way to Carter's Bridge, then it disappeared.

A hunter saw this mysterious light one morning. He was sitting down, waiting for daylight. It was a beautiful morning with a full moon that had not yet disappeared. While he was waiting, he saw what he thought was a flashlight. The light came closer, then he saw there was nobody near it. The light came quite close and hung suspended over his shoulder for a while. Then it faded away.

A group of hunters also saw this light. Four hunters were on their way home one night. One hunter looked behind and saw a light coming. They thought it was another hunter. They stopped and waited. The light came close to them and stayed just above their heads. It followed them for a while and then it disappeared into the ground. The hunters said that it looked like a light bulb.

My uncle partly solved the mystery. One night he was on his way home from hunting, when a light appeared. He fired at it. When he went to investigate he found a large owl, whose eyes were shining in the moonlight.

Was it an owl the other people had seen? Not likely, because an owl would probably fly on by. Swamp gas could be the answer, but swamp gas doesn't

follow people. The light is harmless. Some of the older people say it foretells a storm. Whatever it is, the mystery has yet to be solved.

## Outsmarted

Poaching was always a way of life in the outports. Some people would go to extreme lengths to outsmart the game wardens. But sometimes the best laid plans can go astray and backfire.

Take the case of a couple of men who decided to go to their cabin for a couple of days. They took along their rifle, just in case a moose would wander by their cabin.

When they got to the cabin one man decided to go and put out some rabbit snares. The other man went into the cabin to get a fire going in the stove and have a mug-up. Before he got a chance to light the fire, he heard a helicopter. He figured it might be the game wardens so he hurried and hid the gun.

The helicopter landed and sure enough, it was a couple of game wardens. They entered the cabin and started to look around, but they couldn't find any guns. They were having a nice chat when the other man arrived. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "No fire lit and I'm freezing. You could have lit the fire and offered these gentlemen a cup of tea."

His buddy didn't say anything so he proceeded to light the fire in the stove and put the kettle on. When the water boiled they all sat down for a mug-up.

After the game wardens left, the man said, "Whew, that was close. Where did you put the gun?"

Without saying a word, his buddy put the fire out in the stove and dismantled the stove pipe.

The only thing left of the gun was the barrel.

## High Hopes

The grandmother was dying and she wanted very much to see her granddaughter. She sent her a message but the granddaughter just didn't want to visit her. Then the grandmother sent her a message saying she had something very important to tell her.

The granddaughter thought there was money involved. She said to herself, "There might be money for me. Maybe lots of money." The more she thought about it, the more she was sure there was money for her, so off she went to visit her grandmother. When got there she was shown to the room where her grandmother lay dying.

"Come closer my dear," said the grandmother. "I have something important to tell you."

The woman went beside her grandmother's bed thinking for sure there would be money for her.

"My dear," said grandmother, "before you start to do any sewing, always make sure that you tie a knot in the end of your thread."

## Overboard

Ike Kean of Pound Cove has spent a lifetime on the sea and he has had some close calls. None were as close as that day in 1976 when he was fishing on the longliner, *Vina Pearl* with skipper Ralph Kean.

There was a gale of northeast wind blowing that day when the crew of the *Vina Pearl* were out hauling their nets. They had finished hauling in one fleet of nets and were resetting them when, for some unknown reason, Ike Kean became entangled in the net. The force of the longliner going ahead pulled Ike over the side of the boat. For a space of a minute, they didn't know what to think. Then with the instinct of men who were born for the sea, they swung into action. The engine was stopped and the men started to haul the net back in by hand. By this time Ike had disappeared below the surface of the sea.

Now, hauling a net from a longliner is no easy task and it was made even harder because of the heavy winds. To use the net hauler was out of the question. The strain on Ike would be too much. The men had no choice but to do it themselves. But would they get to the man in time? They knew he went out with the net, but how far out they didn't know or, for that matter, if he was still in the net.

The men fell into the task of hauling back the net. Finally, after hauling in about 100 feet, Ike was alongside the boat and was taken aboard. In all, Ike spent fifteen minutes in the cold Atlantic waters. When he was brought aboard he was still conscious. A crew member asked him if he was still alive.

Ike replied, "Yes my son, I'm still alive."

He was laid back on the deck for awhile as the men tried to get the water out of him. Then he started to get cold. He went below, took off his wet clothes and turned up the heat, but he got colder. Then his arms started to go numb.

Meanwhile, the crew had reset the net and were heading full speed for land.

When they got into port, Ike was rushed to the hospital where he spent three days and nights. The doctors said it was a miracle he was still alive.

Upon his release from hospital, the doctors asked Ike if he would return to the sea and fishing again. "Sure," said Ike. "I'll take my chances, like I did before." Ike did return to the sea until his retirement.

## **Black Rock**

A short distance from Pinchard's Island lies a rock. It's not a big rock but, except for the south side, it's surrounded by breakers. In 1934 a group of seal hunters got caught in a snow storm while hunting seals. They became trapped in slob ice. The men made it to the rock and hauled up their boat. The fury of the storm increased and the men froze to death.

Meanwhile, due to the fury of the storm, the residents of Pinchard's Island had no idea what was going on. The next morning a fisherman from the island saw something strange on the rock. After the storm abated, a group of fishermen rowed the short distance for a closer look. What they saw must have been a shock to them: four frozen bodies huddled under a boat. The names of the four were William Black, Henry Black, Thomas Bishop and John Bull.

Today the rock is still known as Black Rock.

## **The Dream**

I saw it in a dream. How often did we hear that from people after a loved one met a fatal accident. But, do people really see things in a dream?

During the early days of the settlement of Cape Island, Alfred Andrews and George Vincent were good friends who worked and fished together. Often, when you see one, you'd see the other. One day Alfred went duck hunting. A storm came up and he failed to return home. A search was made for the missing man, but no trace was found.

That night George Vincent had a dream about his missing friend. In the dream he saw the location of his friend's body. The next morning, George went out and found the body of his friend. He had drowned near the Cobbler's Island Gunning Rock.

## **Fishermen's Prayer**

I thank God for the lighthouse.  
I owe my life to him.  
For Jesus is the lighthouse,  
From the rocks of sin.

He has shone his light around me,  
That I might clearly see.  
If it wasn't for the lighthouse,  
Where would this old ship be.

## **Newtown versus Templeman**

Before the roads went through the area of New-Wes-Valley and the cars came to this area, the young men and youths often walked long distances to see the girls in another town. It wasn't unusual for the young men from Templeman and Pound Cove to travel to Newtown for a night of courting.

But it was no easy task entering the town of Newtown. First, you had to cross over White Rail Bridge, which spans Emily Tickle. This bridge was guarded by Tom Roberts, who was known as the best fighter in Newtown. The law laid down by the youths in Newtown was, to see a girl you had to fight your way past him. If you won the fight, you and your buddies could enter the community.

To give the lads of Templeman and Pound Cove credit, they tried, but to no avail. They lost every fight with Roberts. After the last fight that took place on the bridge, the boys from Templeman decided that something had to be done. The solution to the problem came one day when the boys were unloading salt fish from a fishing vessel at the Barbour's place of business. Tom Roberts was there and so were some of the boys from Templeman.

Sid Jones was one of the boys from Templeman. Sid was a tall youth with long arms. He was known for being very nimble. An elderly gentleman by the name of Uncle Saul Tuff, from Templeman, was also there. Uncle Saul was a fun loving man, always up to some devilment. Every time Roberts bent down to pick up fish, Uncle Saul would egg Sid on. Uncle Saul whispered to Sid, "The next time he bends down to pick up a yaffle of fish, give him a good wallop across his rear end." Sure enough, the next time Roberts bent over, he received a blow across the seat of his pants that straightened him up in a hurry.

The fight started in the vessel, proceeded to the wharf and then into the fish store. Both boys were fighting all out. Sid had the longest arms and he was landing punches. Uncle Saul was shouting words of encouragement. "Hit him hard Sid, hit him hard."

Finally Sid landed one hard blow which sent Roberts down. Unfortunately, he landed face down in the lassie pan, which was a large pan used to catch the molasses dripping from the spigot in the punchion. He came up with a roar, his face covered with molasses. The fight stopped while Roberts cleaned up. Before the fight could start again, Job Barbour walked in. “Now boys,” he stated, “if you two want to fight, I got just the place.” He led the way to the top loft in the store.

The fight resumed in the loft. Sid was using his arms to his advantage. He was landing punches. Tom Roberts was like a live wire. He seemed to be everywhere at the same time. But finally the rain of blows from Jones began to take effect. The end came when Roberts took a blow that seemed to come out of nowhere. He went down for the count.

Tom Roberts proved that he was a man, as well as a fighter. When he regained his senses, he offered his hand in friendship to Sid Jones. The two youths became good friends for many years. It also solved the problem of the boys from Templeman courting in Newtown.



The Barbour Premises. Restoration began in 1993, by the Cape Freels Heritage Trust Inc.

## Edward Sainsbury

There are many tales of bravery in this area, as well as stories of courage and endurance. Ed Sainsbury was an example of that. He was a big and powerful man, about seven feet tall. It was said he didn't know his own strength.

One day Ed and his brother Stan were out tending to their herring nets. For some unknown reason, their boat capsized. Both men ended up in the water. It was late in the fall and the water was very cold. A person doesn't last long under these conditions.

With brute strength, Ed placed his brother up on the bottom of the boat, but when he tried to get on himself, the boat would careen on its side. By this time his brother had weakened from the cold, and was unable to stay on the boat. Ed stayed in the water and kept his brother on the boat while the craft drifted toward land. Ed stayed in the water for over an hour until a passing boat spotted them and took them on board.

That wasn't the only time Ed's endurance and nerve was put to the test. In 1920, two young girls were on their way to school. While crossing a nearby channel, they fell through the ice. Both girls were swept under the ice with the tide. The alarm was sounded and people arrived at the site. Ed was one of them. He knew it was a sudden death to dive into the hole with a heavy tide running, so he went and got a ladder and put it in the hole. Ed went down the ladder into the freezing water. He didn't know how far under the ice the girls were. He hung onto the ladder while going beneath the ice. He felt around, found both girls and pulled them to safety. The names of the girls were Delilah Bungay and Sarah Bungay.

There is another story about Ed Sainsbury. He was out lobster fishing one day with another man. Their boat capsized and both men ended up in the water. "Help me. I'm drowning," shouted the other man.

"Don't see how you're drowning," said Ed. "The water is only up to your arse."

## **Bennett Island**

Bennett Island lies just off shore from Newtown. To many people it is just an island, but do they know it was once the home of George Tuff, of the “Newfoundland Disaster” saga. It was also the home of some of my ancestors, the Green family.

There are other things connected with that island, stories that I heard as a boy. One of them concerns the Beothuk Indians. When I was a boy, I used to see red sand on the north side of the island. I often wondered why. One day I asked my uncle why that sand was red and this is the story I was told.

In the early days of settlement, people settled on the islands to be close to the fishing grounds. People were already living on Pinchard’s Island but Bennett Island was the summer home of the Beothuk Indians. When the Indians moved back to the woods in the winter, the settlers took control of the island. When the Indians came back the next summer they were all killed, and buried in the same area where the red sand is located. My uncle told me that the sand was red because of the crime that was committed there. He also told me that as long as there was a living descendant to carry on the name of the settlers who killed them, the sand would be red.

My great-grandfather had no brothers. He had two sons. One son had no family, the other had no sons.

The red sand is gone now ...

## Uncle Tom

Thomas White was born on Cape Island in the year 1891. He moved to Newtown in the early part of the 1950s. During my childhood he often told me stories about life on Cape Island.

In the old days on Cape Island, wood was the main source of heat. There were no furnaces or hydro like there are today. Uncle Tom had to haul wood from as far away as seven miles. Horses were used to haul the wood, and on some occasions, a dog team was used.

One fine winter morning, Uncle Tom and his nephew Wallace White harnessed their horses and left for a day of wood-cutting. The morning was clear, not a cloud in the sky. It looked like it was going to be a good day.

They arrived at their destination and started to cut firewood. By twelve noon they had cut enough wood to fill both sleds and by one o'clock they were on their way home. But the Newfoundland weather is known for the tricks it plays on the people of the island. By two o'clock a blizzard had sprung up, blotting out everything in sight. According to Uncle Tom, it was a 'proper whiteout', as the old saying goes.

Uncle Tom knew that their only hope was for them to stay close together. He got some rope and made a leader between Wallace's horse and his sled. He told Wallace to tie himself to the horse's reins. Uncle Wallace did the same thing. By that time, the storm was so bad they couldn't see each other.

They kept going until they came to a big rock. Uncle Tom knew this was the marker for the trail that led across Shore Arm Pond. They kept going blindly across the pond, shouting to each other to find out if the other was alive or dead. When they were halfway across the pond, they lost the trail. Uncle Tom told Wallace to stay with the horses, while he looked for the trail. He got down on his hands and knees and started crawling around. It took fifteen minutes for him to

find the trail again. He made his way back to the horses, tied himself to the reins again and told Wallace to follow him. After a while they lost the trail again. Uncle Tom crawled around in the snow until he picked up the trail again.

After about three hours they arrived at Cape Island, weary and half frozen. Then they proceeded to the stables to take care of the horses. Uncle Tom stated afterwards, "There is one thing I can't figure out. We both tied ourselves to the horse reins, but when we got home, Wallace had my horse and I had his horse."

## **The Missing Dog**

In the early days of the community of Newtown, people used to climb the church tower to look for schooners coming up around the Cape, bound home from the Labrador.

Reg Perry strolled down to the church one morning. Some of his friends were due back from the Labrador fishery. He was going to see if there were any schooners coming around the Cape. He was accompanied by his pet dog. He went and climbed inside the church tower. When he came back down, his little dog was missing. Reg didn't pay any attention to it. The dog was male and he figured it must have wandered off somewhere.

A week went by and the dog still did not return. Another week went by and Reg lost hope. He figured he would not see his little dog again. The dog was missing for over two weeks. On Sunday the sexton went to ring the church bell. He climbed the stairs to the first landing. When he raised the trap door, he was greeted by the little dog with bared fangs and frightful growling. He retreated and spread the news. Reg heard about it, and immediately realized that it was his dog. He went to the church. The growling changed to joyful barking. Reg and his little dog were reunited.

The little dog followed his master a good many years after that.

## A Gift From Heaven

Flowers Island lies about three miles off-shore from the town of New-Wes-Valley. The town was first settled around the late 1700s or early part of the 1800's. The families who settled there were Keans and Sturges.

It was around the latter part of the 1800s when the arctic ice came down from the north and packed in close to the shore beside Flowers Island. The people on the island were unable to travel to Greenspond by boat to get supplies to feed their families.

They were getting desperate. They were down to their last barrel of flour, which was shared among the inhabitants. There were a few salted cod and a pail of mouldy potatoes left. The people waited, and prayed for a change in the wind to move the ice offshore.

A youth by the name of Ben Kean left his house one morning to take a walk. He walked only a short distance when he spied a strange sight. A large polar bear was coming down across the middle of the island. At first he couldn't believe his eyes. Then the thought entered his mind, 'here is food if they can kill it.' He sounded the alarm and the men came on the run.

Samuel Kean, an older fisherman, heard the cry, "Bear on the island." He grabbed his rifle and took up the chase. Samuel was having trouble with his leg that spring. Weak legs they called it back then, but he did his best. He ran as fast as he could. The bear was almost to the shoreline, when Kean, on trembling legs, made it to a hill where he could get a clear shot.

His legs might have been weak, but there was nothing wrong with his eyes when he sighted down the barrel of his rifle at that bear. It was said that the bear looked only as big as a small sheep in the distance.

One shot rag out. The bear lay lifeless near the shoreline.

The bear weighed 900 pounds after it was cleaned. The meat was divided up among the settlers. It was a gift from God, the islanders said. The meat lasted until the wind shifted and transportation resumed to Greenspond.

## **The Barking Pot**

When the people were living on Flowers Island, it was an annual event for the fishermen to dye the cod traps. This method was known as barking. A large pot or vat was used for the job.

One summer the fishermen were barking their cod traps. A group of youths were in the vicinity helping out with the barking job. The men quit at noon for their lunch. Before they left, they warned the boys to stay away from the barking pot.

One youth by the name of Sam Kean was a little bolder than the rest. At that time there were planks laid across the pot. Sam decided to run across the plank. When he got to the middle, the plank broke.

Unknown to him the plank was burnt almost through, where it was lodged on the edge of the pot. The screams from the boy could be heard all around the island. The islanders came running. He was pulled from the pot and immersed in cold water, but it was too late. The boy died soon after that. It was said that the boy's bones, from his feet to his hips, were exposed.

## The Bear

It was in the fall of 1936 when Donald Tulk of Newtown was working in the lumber woods in the Dover area. It was a cold fall day and he was alone at that time, felling trees for his companions back at their cabin. Don didn't mind being alone in the woods. He was an experienced woodsman and often spent long hours working alone.

While he was working he kept hearing a cracking sound, but he thought it was another woodsman working nearby. Then he realized that he wasn't hearing the chopping sound of an ax or the sound of a buck saw. After a while, the sound became loud, but he saw no one. Then suddenly he saw a large black bear. But what was that cracking sound?

Don watched for a while. Then he saw the bear climbing a tree until it reached the top. The bear's weight bent the tree until the top broke off with a cracking sound. The bear and the tree top hit the ground together. Then the bear began to drag the tree through the woods. Don trailed the bear until he saw it enter a large crevice in a rocky hillside, dragging the tree into the opening. Don knew he had found the bear's den. It was the place where the bear was going to sleep away the winter.

Now, Don was a hunter as well as a woodsman. He had no sooner caught the glimpse of that bear when the thought entered his mind. Here was a supply of meat. Enough to last for a while. In his mind he had a plan to kill the animal.

When he arrived back at the camp, he reported what he saw to his father-in-law, Bobby Collins. Collins was a lumberjack, and an exceptionally strong man. Don's brother-in-law, Sandy Keats was also there. Sandy had lost an eye in a logging accident years ago.

The next morning, bright and early, they were in the area where Don had spotted the bear. Don had a gun with a cartridge loaded with quarter shot in the chamber.

Sandy Keats had the rest of the ammunition. Bobby Collins was carrying an ax.

Don led the way to the bear's den. They didn't see the animal anywhere around. At first his buddies didn't believe that he had seen the bear. Bobby Collins went looking around and found another crevice a short distance away. Just for something to do, he reached in with the whole length of his arm. He withdrew it in a hurry.

"The bear," he shouted, "is in there. I put my hand on it."

Don and Sandy didn't believe him at first. Then Don decided to find out. He unloaded his gun and replaced the cartridge with one containing bird shot. He fired into the crevice in the rock. The bear might have been asleep, but it came awake with a roar of pain and anger.

The three men rushed to the entrance of the den. Don had the gun reloaded with the cartridge containing quarter shot. The bear came roaring out of his den. Don tried for a head shot. He aimed and fired. The bear went down, but not out. It regained his footing and charged directly at Don. Don turned to Sandy to get another cartridge. But Sandy wasn't there. He was running flat out, back the same way he had come.

Don yelled for him to come back. Sandy shouted back, "Forget it. I already lost one eye. I don't want to lose another one because of a bear."

Bobby was to one side of the bear when it charged. There was no time to think, only time to act. And act quickly he did. He jumped in close and, with one mighty swing of the axe, he buried the blade in the bear's snout. The bear went down, but started to get up. Another swing of the axe put him down for good.

The bear was skinned and the meat carried back to the camp. It was estimated that the bear weighed 1000 pounds live weight. The hide decorated the side of the camp for many years, until it began to fall apart due to the elements.

## The Icy Prison

It was a bitter cold day in January, 1927, when Eli Cross decided to travel by boat to Bennett's Low Island, which lies about a mile offshore from Hermit's Cove, Badger's Quay. He was going hunting for sea ducks. The water was calm and the tide was receding. It was a perfect day for duck hunting.

The fact that he was hunting alone didn't bother Eli. He was used to being independent. When he was nineteen years old, he was the skipper of his own schooner. He was known for keeping a cool head in any situation.

He reached Bennett's Low Island when the tide was at its lowest ebb. After securing his boat he left for a trek around the island in search of sea ducks. Due to the cold weather the shoreline was full of ice. It had snowed the night before and the ice was covered with a layer of snow. It made walking difficult. He was walking around a clump of ice, when suddenly the ice gave away from under his feet and he found himself falling. Eli went plunging down a shaft, straight to the bottom and landed on his feet.

It was a vent hole. A vent hole is formed during the winter when a large gulch becomes fill with ice. The force of the sea coming in the bottom of the gulch creates pressure, which forces air upward. It works on the same principle as a vent on a pressure cooker.

When Eli regained his senses, he started to take stock of his predicament. The hole was round. It was just big enough for him to move his arms. He could just see the opening above his head. The shaft went straight up, then started to slant towards the opening. There was little water at the bottom because the tide was out. He knew he was safe for a couple of hours, until the tide started to come in.

At first Eli tried climbing, but due to the ice walls of the hole, he couldn't find any hand hold. He was trapped in an icy prison. He tried shouting, but realized the futility of it. There was nobody else on the island but he kept shouting at regular

intervals, just in case someone did come along.

The thing that he was dreading, happened. The tide started to come in. At first he thought about treading water when it got deep enough, but he quickly gave up that idea. He had no idea how high the water would rise. If he couldn't reach the top, he wouldn't last long in the freezing water.

He looked at the icy walls. He thought, "If there were some places where I could put my feet and hands, I could climb out." Then another thought entered his mind. His pocket knife! He remembered putting it in his jacket pocket just before he left home.

He took the knife from his jacket pocket and opened the blade. He started clipping at the icy walls. First he dug out some holes for his feet and then some hand holes. The holes for his feet were in front. The hand holes were on each side of him.

By putting his back to the wall and his feet in the holes, he found that he could push his way up. His elbows fitted in the holes would take some pressure off his legs. He started to climb. It was slow going. He always had to dig out five or six holes before moving, while supporting himself with his feet and one elbow.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, he climbed. Finally his head was through the entrance. Now that his head was through the entrance, he couldn't see where to put his feet. He had to feel around. He found a toe hold. Up he went. He got his arms out and pushed himself out of the hole. He was free.

He retrieved his gun, which was a short distance from the hole. With one last look at his former prison, he started for home, with a story to pass on to his grandchildren.

## Adrift

There was nothing unusual about that morning in August, 1974, when Clarence Norris and his fishing partner, Harry Boland, left their home port of Newtown, Bonavista Bay, steering a course for Chard's Rock, for a day of cod jigging.

On that particular morning the wind was blowing from the southwest, a fine summer's breeze. There was a good swell running, but Clarence didn't mind that. He and Harry were both experienced fishermen and, with a new boat and a brand new Calvin engine, they weren't expecting trouble that day.

They reached Chard's Rock, stopped the engine for a while and tried the jigger. When they finished jigging, Clarence went to start the engine. Much to his surprise, the engine wouldn't start. Harry threw the grapple over the side. The grapple took hold on the seabed and the boat swung head to the swell.

Clarence took the cover off the magneto system and saw that it was damaged beyond repair, unless they had the necessary parts. Meanwhile the wind had increased and the grapple had jumped loose from the seabed. By the time they had got it aboard and thrown in again, they had drifted into deeper water.

There is a large buoy beside Chard's Rock, with a flashing light and a system for sounding warning to passing ships. Clarence knew that if they could make it to the buoy, they could tie their boat fast to it. They took the two big oars and tried to reach it. The tide and wind were against them. They missed it by 20 feet. Now they were really in trouble.

They had one chance. That was to make it to the Cape Freels fishing ground. They took the two oars and tried rowing into the Cape Freels area. By this time the wind had increased. The big waves hit their boat with the force of a battering ram. Rowing the big boat was a formidable task and with the wind and waves against them, it made the job harder. Clarence and Harry were not the type to be idle. Both men were of the Pinchard's Island breed. While there was a chance to

make land, they would try.

They rowed the boat, but as they got closer to the Cape fishing ground, the tide started to push them farther off shore, until they were seven to eight miles to the nearest land. The men had no time to think about anything, but Clarence, who always put God first in his life, asked the Lord for help in getting them safely to the land.

After a period of time, they saw smoke outside Cat Harbour Island. After about an hour a large ship came into view. When the ship was passing them, Clarence put up a distress signal. The ship passed on, then turned around and came back on the windward side. According to Clarence, the big wave from the ship, combined with the waves from the sea, almost swamped the smaller boat. A rope was thrown from the ship. Clarence got the rope and made it fast to the stem.

They were taken in tow for a while, then the larger ship stopped. The crew began to haul the smaller boat up beside the ship. The waves were running high. There were times the two men were looking down on the larger vessel. When their boat went up on a large swell, they took a chance and jumped aboard the ship. It was dangerous, but they had to do it.

After introducing themselves to the captain, whose name was Ned Clarke, Clarence inquired where the ship was headed. Halifax, he was told. Clarence said he didn't mind that, but he asked the captain if he would relay a message to the Beothic Fish Plant and ask them to let their families know that they were safe.

The crew of the ship were a rough lot, according to Clarence. He asked the captain to run his ship in the vicinity of Flower's Island. The captain refused. The cook was worse than the captain. When they went below for a cup of tea, he complained about it. The cook threw them a couple slices of bread, rather than taking it to them. Clarence noted, "We appreciated their help, but we were treated poorly."

When they got in the vicinity of Cabot Island, they saw another vessel. It was

Max Attwood from Valleyfield, taking in his trawls. They asked for a tow to land. Attwood agreed. They transferred from the ship to the longliner, and were glad to do so. Captain Attwood towed them to Flower's Island, where they saw another fishing boat. It was Billy Howell. He took them in tow to the land.

It was late in the evening when they got back to their homes and their families, but they were thankful they did get back.

You just can't keep good men down. Despite their mishap, they went back to fishing again, until the cod moratorium. Then Harry retired. Clarence is still active in the lobster fishery at the age of 65, and is still putting in a full day's work.

"Old fishermen never die, they just fade away."

## **A Ghost of a Tale**

Read this ghost tale of a man from Cape Freels, who decided to walk to the Cape Island Union Store to purchase a hundred pounds of flour and a box of matches. On the way back with the flour on his back and the matches in his hand, he decided to have a rest. He sat down on a mound that was in the line of his travel. He had just gotten comfortable when he heard the voice.

“Get off my grave.”

Scared out of his wits, the man jumped and ran. When he passed through the door in his house, his wife asked, “What is the matter with you?”

“My love,” answered the man, “I got some fright.”

“I can see that,” she replied.

The man was carrying the matches on his shoulder and the flour in his hand.

## **Dead Man's Grave**

When Port Nelson was settled in the early 1800s, it was called Loo Cove. One of the first settlers was a Wicks, an ancestor of Arthur Wicks of Badger's Quay, formerly of Port Nelson.

Arthur related to me that his ancestor was cultivating some ground when he uncovered a pine box. When he opened the box, they saw it contained a mummified body of a blond haired man. When it was exposed to the air, the body disintegrated, leaving only the bones.

The box was in good shape, so being a trifling kind of man he transferred the bones to a wooden biscuit box and re-buried the bones in the corner of the garden.

But, the man couldn't rest or sleep. The remains of the body weighed heavily on his mind. After a couple days he dug up the bones and re-buried them in the original box. After he performed this task, he was troubled no more.

The people who were living in Port Nelson would get an eerie feeling whenever they passed the grave site. Even brave men would speed up when passing the grave.

Who was the dead man? Nobody will ever know. It is just another mystery from the distant past.

## **The Broken Promise**

During the Labrador fishery, years ago, it was common for a captain of a schooner to take along one or two women to serve as cooks, while the men went about their business of fishing.

One summer a schooner set sail for the north. On board the schooner was a young girl who was going to cook for the crew. Tuberculosis was common then and the girl was already stricken with the disease. They were only there a short while before the girl died. Before she died she made the captain promise that he would take the body home for burial.

Upon the death of the girl, a box was constructed. The body was placed in the box and packed with salt. The woman was taken ashore and buried. This was common on the Labrador at the time, especially if the cod was plentiful at the height of the fishing season.

When the fishing season was over they got ready for the return trip. The weather became stormy and the captain was unable to go ashore for the body. He decided to leave the body and set sail for home.

One night after returning home the captain went for a walk along a path beside the seashore. While he was walking along the path an apparition appeared before him. The captain recognized the ghostly figure as the dead girl. The apparition said in an unearthly voice, "You promised."

The captain was frightened so much that he made a promise right there that on the next trip he would bring the body back.

But again the next summer, due to unforeseen circumstances the captain failed to keep his promise. The ghost of the girl appeared again in front of the captain after the return trip. This time the ghost promised the captain that she would be the cause of his death, if her body wasn't brought back for a proper burial.

Terrified, the captain said he would do as she requested. The next year, after the fishing season, the body was returned to her home and given a Christian burial.

The ghost of the girl visited the captain one more time after that and spoke two words: "Thank you."

After that, the captain was troubled no more by the ghost. Was the captain's imagination working overtime, or was he really visited by a ghost from the beyond?

## How to Combat Stress

My son, what a rip off these days when it comes to stress. There are those who visit the doctor, and for what? About all they will do is issue a prescription for some kind of medication. That, my son, is no good. The people in the outports have their own ways of getting rid of stress. The secrets have been passed down through the generations.

One way is called the Cap Dance. Now what in the world is a Cap Dance? You don't know? Well son, I guess I'll have to tell you. First of all, did you ever wonder why the older people in the outports wear head gear? It's to get rid of stress. Just any kind of head gear won't do. The cap must be strong, and made out of good material. A beret is a good choice for certain kinds of stress.

Now, my son, read this story and you will know what a Cap Dance is all about.

One time, a couple fishermen from this area were coaxed by their families to go for a boat ride. Since it was in the glut of the fishing season, the fishermen decided to take them out for a short boat ride. Motoring out of the cove, they hit an underwater object and plied their propeller. Bad job, and at the height of the fishing season too. Did they get mad at their families? No sir. After they got to shore, off came their caps and the dance began.

Now the dance must be done right in order for it to work. You must dance counter-clockwise, never clockwise. Dancing clockwise will bring bad luck. I knew of one fellow who did it that way and he ended up with a leaky boat, a smoking stove and a contrary wife. A few unprintable words must be said and they must rhyme.

Anyway, these two gentlemen were experts at it. After rhyming out the unprintable words and dancing on top of their caps, they worked off their frustrations. One of them grabbed his cap gave it a few whacks to get it in shape and then declared, "Will skipper, it's a pretty bad job, but nothing that can't be

fixed.”

Now that’s how the outport people get rid of stress. They don’t get mad with their families, which could result in a divorce, or worse, the wife withholding certain favours.

The beret - nothing beats the beret when you get angry. Now, you don’t dance on top of the beret. You do what is known as the Dishrag Twist. Just imagine that a storm has wrecked your lobster traps. Instead of calling down the wrath of the Gods, you grab your beret and twist, but make sure you always twist in the same direction, otherwise it won’t work.

The beret is also useful if you are sweating because of nervousness. You just grab the beret and wipe it off. So my son, don’t be ripped off by the doctors and druggists. Rush out and buy a cap and a beret. Learn the Cap Dance and the Dishrag Twist. It works every time.

## **The Treasure of Shoal Arm Hummock**

Tales of the supernatural and buried treasure are told just about everywhere in Newfoundland, stories that are passed down through the generations. This is a story told to me by an old man who used to live on Cape Island, a fishing settlement on the north side of Bonavista Bay.

Shoal Arm Hummock is a high hill that is located about half a mile inland from the sea. It is a favourite place for hunters and fishermen because of its location beside a brook known as Shoal Arm Brook.

It was a summer morning in the year 1800. A group of youths were digging clams on the shoals which lie offshore from Shoal Arm Brook. While they were working, they spied a strange ship sailing into the bight. The ship was flying a black flag. There were no other flags to show her nationality. While the youths watched, a lifeboat was lowered and men got into it.

The youths were frightened, so they hid to watch the scene that was taking place. The men in the boat landed, accompanied by an enormous black dog. Two men were carrying a large chest, then the strange group started to walk in the direction of Shoal Arm Hummock.

The youths did not know what to do, but after the strangers vanished from sight, they decided to follow at a safe distance. They had only followed a short while when they heard a frightful howling and barking, accompanied by screaming. The youths were frightened out of their wits and made haste for home. When they arrived at their home, they reported what they had seen to their parents. Their parents thought it was just their imagination or a story conjured up by the youths.

Later on in the year, a man from Cape Island decided to go eel catching in the brook beside the hummock. It was almost sundown when he reached his destination and he decided to climb to the top of the hummock to eat his snack. He was at the base when he spied a cord. He figured it was lost by some

fisherman. He decided to retrieve it, thinking it might come in handy. He grabbed the end of the cord and started to pull. When the cord became taut, the man jerked it hard, and then he was assaulted by a frightful howling. He looked and what he saw made him dash for his home.

It was a headless dog.

A couple of years later, two women from Cape Island were picking berries in the vicinity. It was getting late so they decided to have a snack beside the hummock. They sat down beside a rock that is located on the eastern side of the hummock. While they were eating, one of the women spied a coin in a crevice in the rock. When she reached down to retrieve it, the two women heard a voice saying, "Touch not the treasure." Then a ghostly figure of a man appeared before them, accompanied by a headless dog!

Terrified, the two women lost no time heading for the safety of their homes.

After that, there were reports of supernatural sounds in the vicinity of the hummock and ghostly things were seen. Is there a pirate's treasure buried there? Who were the strange men from the ship? Was the man and the headless dog a figment of a person's imagination, or was it just a tale conjured up by an old man from the Cape?

## The Outhouse Down By The Landwash

My son, we've got it made today. With the bathroom in the house, we never had it so good, and the soft bathroom tissue, my son, it is heaven on earth. Nowadays, we just march into the bathroom, put an end to the emergency and flush the toilet. There's nothing to it and, best of all, it is nice and warm.

Now back in Pod Auger times there was none of that. We had the old reliable outhouse down by the landwash, or somewhere, depending on where you lived. Of course, we had the chamber pot under the bed, but that was for a midnight emergency. My son, those outhouses were something else. Nice to look at; some of them were all painted, with curtains in the window. One time I saw a salesman knocking on an outhouse door. He thought someone lived there. It was not bad in the summer, with a nice cool breeze blowing in from the water. Kind of refreshing, it was.

The worse thing about those days were the Saturday emergencies. The reason for that was our diet of pea and bean soup. My son, no track runner could match the speed of a person with a Saturday emergency. I have seen people travelling a hundred yards faster than a speeding bullet, and some of them had arthritis too.

Apart from the Saturday emergencies, it was nice and pleasant in the outhouse in the summer. It was the perfect place to do some reading. Nice and quiet.

There was a problem getting toilet paper on times. Nothing was safe if it was made out of paper. I had to guard my comic book collection with my life. I hid it in the safest place possible, tucked inside the wall of an old outhouse.

One substitute was the old Eaton's Catalogue. It was softer than Sears. My son, we were some bad back then. The boys used the women's section of the catalogue and the girls used the men's section.

In the winter there were problems. The Saturday emergency became a real

emergency then. The reason for this was because of all the clothes we were wearing. We had more clothes on than an onion has skins.

The cold weather was a problem too. In an emergency we had to hurry as fast as we could. We had a choice of dying from inhalation or freezing to death. We had to hold our breath, trying to end the emergency in a hurry. It was that, or freeze to death.

The only thing the old outhouse and the bathroom have in common now is that some people still have the Saturday emergency.



An old outhouse by the seashore.

## Duck Hunting

Brave, foolhardy or addicted to duck hunting. I often wondered about it, but this much I do know is: the duck hunters of Newfoundland are a separate breed from their mainland counterparts.

My son, the duck hunters of this province can out-shoot Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill combined. And nimble, my son, a cat with eight legs can't move as fast. Just mention the words eider duck, and he'll jump and start looking with his eyes squinted and his trigger finger automatically getting ready to shoot.

Just imagine, out there on a barren rock in the cold Atlantic Ocean. Is there someone on it? Yes boy. A foreigner looking for cod! No my son, that's a duck hunter from the northeast coast.

Hardy, my son that word doesn't do them justice. I have seen duck hunters so battycattered up they looked like statues. There was one duck hunter that was frozen so much that it took him four months to thaw out. He missed his birthday, but that was okay. He saved four months of his life. Legs? My son, they must have legs of spring steel, resulting from squatting down and jumping up when the ducks approached.

You can talk all you want about the tap dancers. They are slow when compared to the northeastern duck hunters. My son, there was this hunter who decided to jump from his boat to an ice pan. He threw his grapple on the ice pan and then jumped. When he landed, it broke into four small sections. Did he panic? No sir. He started copying from pan to pan and before he was rescued, he had shot nine ducks. He would have made an even ten, but his gun misfired. Now that's what I call dedication to the sport.

When they get older you can always tell a duck hunter. They will be a little bent at the knees which resulted from kneeling on a cold rock or ice. Also, they will complain about arthritis in their trigger finger or shoulders. That's what happens

when they hold their guns in a firing position for a long period of time.

Nowadays the government is cutting back on eider duck hunting by shortening the season. My son, there's something wrong with their noggins. They got no brains and they have no armed forces, but they have a ready trained band of commandos and they don't know it. Who else can climb up the sides of an icy rock in the Atlantic Ocean without climbing equipment? Who else can stand the freezing cold but can't stand the heat? Who else can shoot the legs of a bumble bee at fifty yards and miss a duck at twenty?

My son, Winston Churchill asked for the small boatmen of this province, but what he really meant to ask for was the northeastern duck hunters.

## Cape Freels Reunion

Cape Freels reunion, nineteen eighty-nine,  
Memories still linger, memories so fine.  
Of a way of life long before resettlement took its toll.  
A life so simple, a life so dear, it takes us back more than twenty years.

Trapeising over beach and hill, berry-picking on the bill.  
Playing shop on Graveyard Beach, jumping puzzles out of reach.  
Playing hopscotch, picking flowers, signing hymns in summer showers.  
Bringing water from the well, we always had to take a spell.  
Jumping haystacks in the sun, all in the name of summer fun.  
Not a worry, not a care, the fun of youth year after year.

We grew our own potatoes, turnip and cabbage too,  
Along with beets and rhubarb, groceries we'd need few.  
A barrel of salt beef was always in the 'store',  
And a barrel of partridges berries, who could ask for more?  
Our meat was duck, turr, mutton and moose.  
And in the fall, a Canada Goose.  
Fresh fish, salt fish, capelin, lobsters and salmon,  
But the lumps we wouldn't touch, we simply wouldn't 'ave them.  
Bakeapples for free, was always our Christmas treat,  
If we picked enough of them, we could eat them every week.

We didn't need alarm clocks, we heard the motor boats,  
And if the wind blew too hard, the roosters woke us up.  
Motor cars were few, we had our horse and cart.  
And those of who had the nerve, walked home after dark.  
In winter time the blizzards came, 'mad rough' we used to say.  
Our fathers came up to school, and said we couldn't stay.  
"Cause you can't see a 'and in front of ya face.  
An the wind will blow yees all hover the place."

In sixty-six and sixty-seven, we went our separate ways.  
To Newtown, Wesleyville, Lumsden, St. John's and Badger's Quay.  
Now twenty-odd years later, we had those weekend days.  
To reminisce and relive the memories of our youth.  
And listen to the old-timers tell us 'nothing but the truth'.

We look around 'our little place' that now seems so very small.  
All we see are rocks and flowers. Where were the houses all?  
Oh yes, now I remember, they were all so close, you see.  
Everybody was our neighbour, our playground was the sea.

While walking thru our paths of life, we see flowers, birds, the sea.  
Though far away, they never fail to trigger a memory,  
Of happy days spent on the Cape a long, long time ago.  
For memories last forever and keep the heart aglow.

May our years ahead be blessed, until we meet again.  
On this little neck of land that juts into the sea,  
Into the wild Atlantic, that in a storm doth roar.  
And may our fondest memories ever be, of our life along these shores.

Written with permission of  
Molly (Hillier) Barbour

## **The Wooden Cross**

Before the hydro came to this area and televisions became a regular part of the household, the telling of ghost stories was a favourite pastime during the long winter nights. With the sounds of the wood burning in the stove and the kerosene lamp casting eerie shadows around the room, the family would gather around the kitchen table, listening to tales of ghosts and witches.

One of my favourite story tellers during my childhood was the late Uncle Tom White, of Cape Island. Uncle Tom could tell yarn after yarn, and every story would be better than the last one.

Come and listen and to one of my all time favourites.

One of the first families to settle on the Cape was the Vincents. In the early days on that rugged coast, life was a constant struggle. The early settlers had to make do with whatever they had. Because of that they became skilled in using whatever material that was on hand to create furniture and knick-knacks for their homes.

Around 1855, there was one Vincent living on Cape Island who was gifted with a talent for wood carving. Object after object would take shape under his skilled hands.

He was the youngest son in the family as well as the favourite. It was the custom in those days for the youngest son to look after his aging parents, and they were blessed by having a hard working son to care for them in their old age.

In the summer of 1855, the son decided to take a trip to the Labrador for the summer fishery. Before he left home, he carved a beautiful, wooden cross out of a piece of driftwood, which he found on the beach. His mother hung the cross above the kitchen door, so all could see it.

The cross hung there for almost two months. Then one evening while his mother

and father were having supper, the cross came tumbling to the floor. They thought the wooden peg that held up the cross was loose, but a close look revealed that the peg was still intact. They hung the cross back upon the wall, but later that night it fell again to the floor. Thinking that a draft of wind from outside was causing the trouble, they laid the cross on the kitchen table and retired for the night. But the next morning, much to their surprise, they found the cross once again on the kitchen floor.

Something told them that their son was in trouble. But it was almost two weeks later before it came to light. The schooner which their son was on sailed around the cape with flags flying at half mast, which was a sign that someone had died. The schooner dropped anchor in Pinchard's Bight and the captain came ashore. It was then they learned the sad news. Their son was dead. The time and cause of his death? He died from a fall over a cliff when he was ashore, the very same time the cross had fallen to the floor.

## **The Ghost of Shalloway**

Shalloway lies between Deadman's Bay and Musgrave Harbour. There are different versions how that place got its name. Some say it derived its name from the shallow water which surrounds the area. Local folklore claims that it got its name from a pirate ship that drove ashore and was wrecked in that area. The captain's name was Shalloway.

There are a number of tales concerning the area. According to some of the older folks, Shalloway is considered haunted. One day a man, accompanied by his son, decided to go fishing in Shalloway Brook. They went to the area where they were going to go fishing and sat down beside the brook. Suddenly a rock flew through the air, landing in the water. Two more rocks came flying through the air about two minutes apart. The man jumped up on a large rock to have a look around, and not seeing anybody, said, "Come son, we'd better get out of here. This very same thing happened to my father."

They left for their home. Five minutes after they arrived home, a bad storm hit the area.

The older people say that years ago a bad storm took place near Shalloway Brook and a man died because of it. They claim that the thrown rocks are a warning to leave the area before the storm hits.

There is another story connected to Shalloway. Three brothers were living in Seal Cove, which is a short distance from Shalloway. One day they decided to go there. One of the brothers didn't believe in ghosts. He mocked it and laughed out loud, daring the ghost to come forth.

Suddenly a whirlwind came out of nowhere and surrounded the man. There wasn't a draft of wind anywhere else. Only around that man. His two brothers made a mad dash out of the area. Then the man saw something materialize out of the whirlwind that was forever branded in his memory.

A figure had materialized out of the whirlwind. A man with one wooden leg, wearing a uniform with brass buttons down the front. He was wearing a three cornered hat and carrying a cutlass in his right hand. Blood was streaming from a wound in his head.

That was enough for the man who stayed behind. He broke out of his trance and made a rush for his home. It was said that his hair turned white after witnessing the apparition.

Over the years strange sights and sounds have been heard near Shalloway. Unexplained lights have been seen and the sound of a ship dropping anchor has been heard.

Is Shalloway really haunted by the people who had died there, or is it another tale passed down through the generations by the older people. You be the judge.

## **Paddy Poor**

Located just off Pool's Island is an island called Paddy Poor. According to the local folklore, a pirate ship was lost during a storm near Paddy Poor. There have been reports over the years about a full-rigged schooner which had been seen sailing down from Greenspond, and then vanished in the area of the island.

A strange light has also been seen in the area. The light would leave Greenspond tickle and would travel all the way to Paddy Poor.

Arthur Wicks related to me the tale of William Attwood who was sailing out of the bay in his schooner *The Parrell*. The mysterious light appeared and followed them for a distance. There was a sailor on board by the name of Peter Feltham. He was a bold and fearless man. He called to the light and said, "Come aboard, you S.O.B." The light came aboard and went from stem to stern. There wasn't any harm done, but the crew were frightened out of their wits.

Was it a ghost from a lost ship, or a figment of a sailor's imagination?

## **The Carter's Pond Ghost**

Ghost stories were always a part of outport traditions. Before television came to the area, haunting tales would be told while the family gathered around the old wood burning stove; the old Aladdin lamp would cast its eerie shadows around the room. One of the stories that was often told concerned the former inhabitants of this area, the Beothuks.

When people first settled on Pinchard's Island and other islands in the area of Bonavista Bay, Cape Island and the Inner Pinchard Islands were the home of the Beothuk Indians. As time went by the Beothuks were driven from the area. Many of them died from the white man's sickness. Some others were killed by the guns of the settlers.

At Carter's Pond, which lies a short distance from the community of Newtown, one family of indians held out. Then came the treacherous day when they were fired upon by the settlers.

The settlers claimed that the Beothuks were stealing from them, so they decided to get back what was supposedly theirs. They marched to the camp site. When the Beothuks saw them coming they attempted to run away. This was a sign of guilt to the settlers. They fired their muskets, killing the husband and wife. The daughter escaped by running into the alders. Later she returned and buried her parents. She stayed at the camp site all alone. Then the settlers, out of guilt, decided to capture her and bring her to live among them. They tried many times, but she was fleet of foot and could run like the wind.

One day in late autumn, she was picking berries on a long point that extended out into the pond. She was spotted by some settlers who were in hunting. She ran, but the route out of the point was barred. Finally, she dove into the pond to escape her tormentors. The settlers figured that she would yield and come back to shore, but rather than submit to them, she headed across the pond. Exhaustion took its toll and she sank into a watery grave.

Time passed, then one moonlit night, a man was doing some fishing in the pond. Suddenly, an Indian girl came racing along the shore. When she saw the man, she dove into the pond. The man watched as she swam out from shore and disappeared beneath the surface.

Since then there have been sightings of a strange figure racing along the shore of Carter's Pond. Strange lights have been seen rising out of the water, then disappearing when they reach Southwest Point. The older people always claim that it is the spirit of the Indian girl, still trying to escape her tormentors, even after death.

## Amputated

Before modern health facilities came to the New-Wes-Valley area, the people often had to endure hardships in their lives. Sometimes an operation would be performed under primitive conditions.

Such was the case of David Tucker, from Middle Tickle, Badger's Quay. It was in 1897, when 25-year-old David was working in the woods, cutting firewood. Like many men in those days, he was a fisherman. Cutting firewood was a chore that had to be done. Enough wood had to be cut to last all winter, and the coming summer.

Later that winter he was troubled by pain in his left knee. Fluid had collected around the knee cap due to long hours of kneeling with a buck saw. Housemaid's knee it is called. Due to the cold weather a chill must have entered the knee and it became infected.

David finished cutting firewood that winter, although he was in pain. Later that spring, he went to Greenspond to see the doctor. Dr. Jameson was the doctor stationed at Greenspond at the time. He inspected the leg, which by this time was swollen up to twice the normal size. The doctor's diagnosis was gangrene. The leg would have to be amputated in order to save his life.

The doctor's clinic in Greenspond at that time was a small one. For a while, David would need full time nursing care after the operation and it wasn't available at the clinic. Since he was living home with his parents, it was decided that it would be best to perform the operation there. Doing it that way, there would be no need to move him after the operation, and his mother would be the nurse.

To help him with the operation, Dr. Jameson enlisted Dr. Sam Kean of Badger's Quay. Doctor Kean was a very competent doctor and was known for his skill in surgery. He also enlisted the help of an older woman who was a nurse. In most outport homes at that time there was a dining room. The dining room was

reserved for special occasions, like the visit of a minister. It was decided that the operation would be carried out there. Two tables were put end to end in the dining room. David was laid on the table and anaesthetized. The operation was carried out under the light of kerosene lamps.

The operation was a success. David came through and under the care of his mother, he was soon in good health again. Later he was outfitted with an artificial leg, which he soon learned how to use. He continued to fish. He even made some trips to the Labrador on the fishing schooners.

David later moved to Wareham, Bonavista Bay. He used to say in his later years, "I left part of me in Valleyfield."

You see, David's leg was buried in the cemetery in Valleyfield, where he attended church. He died in 1957, at the age of fifty-seven and was laid to rest in the cemetery in Wareham.

## The Long Bridge

In the early 1900s there used to be a long bridge spanning the tickle where the government wharf is now located in Newtown. Because of the length of the bridge, it was known as the Long Bridge.

The bridge had a reputation of being haunted and some timid souls would hurry when crossing the bridge. There were some men who wouldn't cross it at all after dark. There were two men living in Newtown at that time. Both of them were on the timid side. They lived on opposite sides of the bridge. One night one man went to visit the other. After talking until the witching hour, the man decided to go home, but he was afraid to cross the bridge by himself. He asked his friend to accompany him across the bridge. They left together and walked across. Then the friend didn't feel like walking back alone, so he asked his companion to walk back with him. By the time they finished escorting each other back and forth across the bridge, it was daylight.

The Long Bridge was a favourite place for the youths of the community to play pranks on men and women while they were crossing the bridge. It was also a favourite place for young lovers. But it wasn't recommended to go courting on the bridge in your best clothes. The young boys used to smear blubber from the cod oil barrels on the rails. Many a romantic night was ruined because a couple left the bridge smelling of cod liver oil.

Believe it or not, one woman stopped going to church after that bridge was torn down. She got mad at the guy who wanted it torn down so his longliner could enter the channel. She was so mad at the guy, she couldn't bear to walk past his house on the way to church.

## A Tall Tale

Arthur Wicks of Badger's Quay is never at a loss for words. One night when we were yarning on the phone he related to me a story about a moose hunting trip that he took with his father years ago. At that time, few people could afford to buy ammunition at the stores, so most people reloaded their own. Cast net balls were often used when hunting moose.

One day Art and his father went hunting, and spied a bull moose about 25 yards away. His father let drive with his gun but the moose just jumped about ten feet and went on feeding. They couldn't believe their eyes. Art's father reloaded, took careful aim and shot again. The same thing happened again.

"Father," asked Art, "did you plug the holes in the cast net balls?"

"No, I didn't," he replied. "Why?"

"Because you're supposed to plug them," said Art.

They got a piece of wood and plugged the holes in the cast net balls. His father took aim and fired. Down came the moose, as dead as a door nail. At this point I interrupted and asked, "Art, what happened the first and second time he shot?"

"My son," said Art, "that moose was jumping through the holes in the cast net balls."

## Sammy

Sammy used to live on Pinchard's Island in the days before resettlement. He was born a cripple, but his mind was very agile. He could compete with anyone on the island when it came to mentality. Although he had a physical disability and walked with a cane, he had lots of friends. When he couldn't keep up with them on a trek around the island, they would wait for him or help him along the way. Sometimes in good humour, they would dare him to do something. Sammy, in equal good humour, would do his best.

One night he was out skylarking with his friends, when one remarked, "Hey Sammy, bet you can't walk down to Easter Point and touch Uncle Peter's grave with your walking stick."

"And that I can," answered Sammy.

"Well, let's see you do it then," dared his friend.

Sammy started off on his trek to Easter Point. It was over a mile and half away. Due to his handicap, it took him a long time to reach his destination. Finally, he reached the grave site. He was tired and didn't relish the long walk back.

Meanwhile, back at the other end of the island, Sammy's friends were getting uneasy. After all, he was gone a long time. They decided to go and look for him.

At the grave site, Sammy could hear them coming. They were talking loud enough for him to hear them.

"Time to turn the tables," said Sammy to himself.

Quickly he rubbed some earth on his face and slipped his jacket off his shoulders and unbuttoned his shirt. Then he laid backward on the grave, groaning like someone in pain.

“Help, he got me,” Sammy moaned. “The ghost got me.”

Sammy was putting on a very convincing act. His friends heard the moaning and groaning, and the thought that something had happened to Sammy flashed through their minds. Maybe he had fallen and hurt himself. They hurried to the place where the groan was coming from. They saw Sammy on the grave and demanded to know what had happened.

“The ghost got me boys,” moaned Sammy. “The ghost got me.”

Then Sammy went into his faint-away act.

His friends were worried. They tried standing him up, but he appeared to be unconscious. Then they decided to carry him home. One of the boys took him in his arms and started walking. After a while, he became tired and another boy took over.

Finally they got him home and deposited him on his doorsteps. Sammy’s eyes popped open and he stood on his crippled legs. “Thank you kindly boys,” he said. “It was mighty nice of you to save me a long walk home.”

## Stranded on Pouch Island

“We’ll never get to the Cobbler’s Rocks this morning boys. We might as well forget it,” said Arthur.

“You’re right,” replied Eli. “We’ll go to Pouch Island instead. What about it Clayton?”

“I’m all for that,” answered Clayton. “The ducks are flying, so let’s go.”

It was February, 1951 and it was a bitter cold morning. There was a strong wind blowing from the north, but that didn’t bother the Pinchard’s Island men. Eli Gill, aged 20, didn’t mind the long row in the wind. His friend, Clayton Parsons, who was a year older, was of a similar mind. They had their hearts set on hunting, and a little wind wasn’t going to stop them. Arthur Blackmore, the oldest of the group at age 30, the more experienced of the threesome, and more wary. He didn’t like it but decided to go along with his younger friends.

They set their course for Easter Gull Rock, near Pouch Island, and they arrived there in due time. True to Clayton’s predictions, the ducks were flying. The men lost no time in landing on the rock.

The two younger men were so caught up in the excitement of the hunt, they failed to notice the shift in the wind. After the shift, the wind died out completely.

Arthur noticed it though and shouted a warning to his friends, “We’d better head for home. There’s slob ice making, and we could get stuck here.”

“A couple more shots,” said Eli, “then we’ll leave.”

“Right,” seconded Clayton. “There’s nothing to hurt. The wind has died out.”

Finally, after getting a total of eight ducks, the men got under way. They only

covered a short distance when the boat became stuck in the ice. They couldn't go any further. The ocean was completely frozen over.

"I told you," fumed Clayton. "Now what are we going to do?"

Eli and Clayton were busy trying to get the boat moving. Finally, Eli spoke, "Let's go to Pouch Island. There's a small cabin there."

"Okay," agreed Clayton. "It's better than being stuck out here for the night."

"Looks like there's nothing else to do," Arthur also agreed.

The three men got the boat turned around and headed for Pouch Island. After a considerable effort, they made it to Pouch Island. They hauled up their boat and went to the cabin.

Inside the cabin, the men found the stove in good condition. There was also a lamp on the wall with some oil in it. Finding firewood was a problem though. There wasn't any in the vicinity of the cabin. It was getting late in the evening and they needed firewood. But where on the island could they find wood?

"There's that stage down by the landwash," said Clayton. "Let's get some firewood from that."

Eli and Clayton started walking toward the fish stage, with Arthur following. When they got there, they saw it was constructed out of slabs nailed to the stanchions.

Eli went inside and kicked off one of the slabs. "Plenty of wood here boys," he said.

"Boys, we can't do this," cautioned Arthur. "This belongs to someone. We'll be shot or hung."

"You'd rather freeze," replied Eli, while putting his boot through another section

of the wall.

“All right, all right, but don’t blame me if we get in trouble over it,” warned Arthur.

By the time they got the wood back to the cabin, it was late in the evening. They got a roaring fire started in the stove. By this time they were good and hungry. They didn’t know they would be gone for the night and neglected to bring any food.

“We can eat a duck,” said Clayton, “if we can find something to cook it in.”

They started searching. Finally Eli found a gallon can, which he cleaned as best he could. Clayton fetched some snow to melt. The duck was skinned and put into the can, without the benefit of salt.

“We can’t eat that,” complained Arthur. “We’ll die of food poisoning.”

“Better than eating nothing,” said Eli.

After the meal was finished, the men turned in for the night. The next morning they were up with the sun. There wasn’t a draft of wind. The ocean was still frozen over.

“Come on,” said Clayton. “Let’s go shoot some more ducks.”

“Ducks!” cried Arthur. “How can you think of ducks? We got to get home.”

“Never mind that,” said Eli. “We can’t go home yet, so we might as well do some more shooting.”

He and Clayton headed for the shore. Arthur had no other choice but to follow along. Eight more ducks were killed, then fate took a hand. The wind breezed up from the southeast. A passage developed from Pouch Island to the Breaking

Rocks, Pinchard's Island.

"I told you that you were worried over nothing," said Clayton to Arthur.

The three men headed for their launched boat. The passage through the ice was a little wider than the boat. The sail was put up and they made good time heading home. When they finally arrived, the people were waiting to help haul up their boat.

They were home, but already looking forward to another duck hunting trip.

## A Double Tragedy

It was a typical day on board the schooner *Blake*, on that fateful day in September, 1929. Gerald Matthews and his two brothers were hard at work in the hold of the schooner unloading freight. Their father, Skipper William Matthews, was on deck operating the hoist.

The stationary engine that operated the hoist began to sputter. Matthews turned around to see what the trouble was. When he did, his foot became entangled in the rope which ran from the capstan head to the hoist. It happened so quickly that he didn't have time to reach the brake on the engine to stop the hoist. He was wrenched from his feet and pulled by the power of the stationary engine to the capstan head.

The three brothers heard his cries for help. Gerald was the first to reach the deck. He saw his father entangled in the rope around the capstan head and raced to shut off the engine. Before he had a chance to turn the engine off, his father accidentally knocked him into the capstan head and he also got his legs entangled in the rope.

By this time, the two other men were on deck. They saw the predicament their father and brother were in. They shut off the engine, but it was too late.

Captain Matthews' leg was twisted from him, except for a thread of flesh. Gerald had one leg broken in two places and the other almost cut through, due to the strain of the rope.

The residents of Valleyfield heard the cries for help and quickly arrived at the site. What they saw was frightful to behold. Blood was running across the deck of the schooner and two men were laying there in terrible pain, covered in their own blood.

There were no doctors around. The nearest doctor was in Brookfield, about four

hours away. There was another one in Greenspond. In order to get to a doctor then, you either had to walk or go by boat.

There was one man on board the schooner who took charge, Mr. Malcolm White. He began to doctor them as best he could. After a time two doctors arrived, Dr. Sam Kean of Brookfield and Dr. Cecil Kean of Greenspond.

The two patients were taken to their homes and treated by the doctors. Skipper Matthews had his foot amputated. Gerald Matthews' right leg was later amputated at the knee, and he was confined to his bed for seven months.

It was almost three years before Gerald got back to being normal. When he did, he made his own wooden leg. Later on the people of Valleyfield took up a collection and bought him an artificial leg. He continued to work on his father's schooner, until his father retired and the schooner was sold. Then Gerald retired from the sea.

## **The Legend of Tom Dollar**

Tom Green was a resident of Greenspond in the 1800s. There were two people by the name of Tom Green living there at that time. To tell one from the other, they called one of them Tom Dollar.

How Tom got his nickname is not known for sure. One story relates that he was having a nap when a friend walked in.

“Tom,” he asked, “are you asleep?”

“No,” answered Tom.

“Then how about the loan of a dollar?” asked his friend.

“I’m asleep,” replied Tom.

But what made Tom a legend had nothing to do with the dollar. It was an entirely different matter.

Way back then, just about everyone had seal nets, which they used for trapping seals. Tom was no exception.

One morning in January, Tom and three of his friends left Greenspond in their boat to haul some nets. A storm came up and they were driven out to sea. After the storm, a search was made but no trace of the missing men was found. Time passed by and the people of the community gave them up for dead.

But Tom wasn’t dead. After they were driven off, Tom and his companion got trapped in the arctic ice. The four men pulled their boat up and used the ice for shelter.

They had no food. One by one Tom’s friends succumbed to the cold. On the

fourth night, Tom was left alone. On he drifted, with the ice.

The nights were cold. At first, he couldn't bring himself to remove the clothes from his friends. But the instinct for survival was strong. Finally he removed the dead men's clothes and used them to keep warm.

He was on the brink of dying from starvation when a seal climbed up on the ice nearby. Tom somehow gathered his strength and killed it with his gaff. The seal was food, and it gave him the strength to live. The legend states that Tom lived for fifty days on that seal.

When the last of the seal was eaten, and again he was near death, a ship was spotted in the distance. Later that night the ship stopped, apparently stuck in the ice. Although his strength was almost gone, Tom decided to walk it. Picking his way through the ice, he arrived at the ships's side.

He could hear the men talking. He called out. Silence greeted him.

Tom shouted again, saying, "Don't be afraid, I'm alive."

When he said that, faces appeared over the rail of the ship, looking down at him. He didn't have enough strength to climb aboard. He had to be helped over the ship's side.

But Tom's trouble wasn't over yet. When the ship arrived in St. John's, he still had to find his way home. There were no trains running at that time and very few ships were sailing to Bonavista Bay. Finally, he contacted the mailman. At that time the mail was delivered over land during winter and spring. One mailman would go as far as Conception Bay and then another would go to Trinity Bay. The next stop would be in Bonavista Bay. By getting rides with the mailmen, he got to the Greenspond area.

The day that Tom arrived in Greenspond, some of the residents were standing around talking. One man spied Tom coming along the path.

“That man looks just like Tom Dollar,” he remarked.

“Well it’s not Tom. He won’t be coming back, that’s for sure,” said another man.

When Tom got closer, another said in a quiet voice, “It’s Tom.”

The group became frightened. They thought for sure it was Tom’s ghost. When he spoke to them, they couldn’t answer at first. They had to touch him to make sure it wasn’t a ghost.

So ended the remarkable tale of Tom Dollar; a man who had drifted out to sea four months before, and spent fifty days and nights on the arctic ice.

## The White Dogs

At one time dogs were a common sight in the outports. They weren't pampered pets like the dogs of today. They were working dogs. They were of various sizes and colours, but a white dog was rare. Not many people had a white dog. There was one gentleman who had two.

This gentleman wasn't known to be very sociable and neither were his dogs. The dogs would guard their master's property jealously. They were kept in the fish stage during the winter months, and if anybody but their master tried to enter they would be greeted with flashing fangs.

Because of the man's standoffish ways, he very seldom received any visitors. He was a widower and except for his daughter who lived in the city, he was alone in the world.

One spring a neighbour dropped in for a visit. Not seeing any sign of life, he entered the house. He found the man dead in his bed. The visitor knew about the dogs and decided to check on them. When he opened the door of the stage, he found them dead on the floor. They had died from starvation.

After the death of the owner, the property was sold to a fisherman. He started to renovate the house. While renovating he found a pipe and tobacco pouch. Because he was not a wasteful man, he kept them for his own use.

The fish stage was badly in need of repairs, so that winter he started to repair it. One evening after work he left his pipe and tobacco pouch on the splitting table in the fish stage. Later that night he decided to have a smoke before retiring. Then he remembered that he had left his smoking accessories in the stage. He decided to go there and retrieve the items.

He entered the fish stage but, when he approached the table he was met by two white dogs with jaws agape and fangs bared. They attacked him and he swung his fist at one. To his horror, his fist passed on through the dog. Terror stricken, the man fled.

It was the dogs of the former owner, guarding their master's property, even after death.

## Cat Harbour Wreckers

Cat Harbour, which is located in the Lumsden area, was known for the many ships that were lost on the beaches there. The place was also known for another reason - the 'cat harbour wreckers'.

The early day settlers of Cat Harbour, Norte Dame Bay, were fishermen and they felt that anything the sea provided was theirs for the taking. They were God-fearing people and often risked their lives rescuing sailors from a ship that came ashore there. After that, the ships were fair game for just about anybody.

The plundering of the ship usually took place in the night or early morning. The loot was usually hidden in some out-of-the-way place. Not everyone took part in the plundering of the ship. Some would be waiting on shore, watching where the looters hid their plunder. When it was hidden, they would help themselves to what they wanted.

Not all of the people that took part in the plundering were from Cat Harbour. Some were from the Cape Freels area. One person relates, "We got there early in the morning. There were people everywhere, carrying away cargo from the ship. We took it easy and watched where they hid the stuff. Then we helped ourselves."

The insurance company that insured the ship could legally claim two thirds of whatever cargo was salvaged. One humorous story tells of one man who got a couple of cartons of beans from a ship. One day he sat down for lunch with a can of beans. When he finished his meal, he broke wind. He remarked, "They can have two thirds of that one."

The cat harbour wreckers are no more. They belonged to a colourful past. They are remembered by a few, and when these people pass on to their reward, the memories of Cat Harbour will be no more.

## **The Susie Stokes Tragedy**

There are many tales about the early days before paved roads and telephones came into existence. 65 years ago there were only dirt roads leading from place to place. Sometimes the road was only a narrow path.

On October 20, 1936, Mrs. Lucy Stokes, a widow from Cape Freels, decided to visit Newtown, a community about four miles away. She reached her destination safely and visited a few friends until late in the evening. During her stay in Newtown the wind had changed to the southeast and snow began to fall. Susie had a cup of tea at her friends house and was advised to stay because a storm was brewing. The woman was anxious to get home with her family so she declined the invitation.

On her way back the storm struck. The woman bravely kept on walking, hoping to reach her residence before the storm got worse. She made it safely to Carter's Bridge, which was a small wooden bridge spanning the brook. After that, the fury of the storm increased and darkness overtook her.

How that woman must have suffered. All alone in the stormy darkness she struggled on until she finally lost the pathway.

On that same night two young men from Cat Harbour (now known as Lumsden) were on their way home. They were in the vicinity of Cat Harbour Hills which is about a mile from Carter's Brook. They too were anxious to get home because of the storm. While they were walking they thought they heard a woman crying. They started to walk toward the sound but hesitated, they could not believe they had heard a voice. They thought the howling of the wind was making the sound, and not hearing the cry again, they continued on their way.

Meanwhile, back in Cape Freels, the woman's family wasn't uneasy because they thought she was safely in Newtown. Susie often spent a night at the homes of her friends. The people in Newtown thought she was in Cape Freels. There were no

telephones at the time, so the people had no idea what was going on.

After the storm had died down the next day, the woman still hadn't returned to her community. Inquiries were made into the whereabouts of the missing woman. They found out that she had left Newtown the previous day.

A search party was organized. People from Cape Freels, Cape Island and Newtown took part in the search. After an intensive search, she was found dead near Cat Harbour Hills by John Cook of Newtown. It was the same place the two young men from Lumsden had heard the crying.

So ended the tragic tale of Susie Stokes, one of the many tragedies that has happened in this area.



Robert Tulk (about 12-years-old) and his three cousins. Robert is waving goodbye before going to his favourite fishing hole.