

A major influence in my love and preservation of local nautical lore was that I was fortunate in growing up in the small seaport town of Parrsboro. In my childhood most all my neighbours were either active or retired mariners. Most were not wealthy in dollars but they had a treasure in life experiences. As a youth I envied that and soaked up their stories whenever I could.

The following piece I scribbled out about 20 years ago after spending the afternoon with one of Parrsboro's last 'old salt' mariners, Mr. Daw Moore.

I hope you enjoy my memory of some of his memories.

Them Days Are All Gone Now

We sat in my truck cab, outside his sister's place. There was strength in the winter's afternoon sun but outside it was cold. Sparkling ice was making around the harbour rim; pilings from old wharves stood out like marble columns in some ancient Greek ruin. It somehow blended so well with the old man's conversation of ships, voyages and captains, all long since crossed over the bar.

The scene and the ancient crackle of his voice had a rather strange, almost hypnotic affect on me. He pointed to the snow-covered field across the harbour where the Huntley Yard had been and I watched with him as a score of proud schooners left the ways, raised their flags and sails, and were gone. We then worked together bringing in the topsails of the Nina Nadeau in a blinding snow squall off Cape Sable. Later, we went on to share together the taste of the captain's rum, while crossing the Tropic of Cancer, on Christmas Day, 1919.

I had to agree with him that Cap'n Walley was a good man to sail with and Cap'n Mike was a real driver, but Cap'n Dennis, in the Truro Queen, could take them all when it came to race'n. That afternoon we sailed again through the August storm of 1927 and watched the staysail snap out like a rifle shot and the captain's new wife, Mary, turn pale as a ghost.

I felt his ninety years of life's experiences passing through me. I felt a responsibility to listen. I felt these stories were never likely to be told again. Time was no longer on his side. Who today would care to hear about such things anyway? They just see those grey eyes and age spotted fingers flexing

a briar cane as bent as his shoulders. Hard to visualize this old man, young, and standing at the masthead, watching for logs drifting down the River Plate? Even if they could who would care? He was mildly surprised and pleased that I seemed to and was eager to ramble out his favorite memories. So, the cold afternoon passed, warmed by his Trade Winds and scented with cargoes of pitch pine and touched by the beauty of a girl in Cape Haitian.

We were laughing at the rampaging's of a drunken mate when the spell was broken by a call to supper. The old man sighed, looked a moment at the icy harbour again and left me with a parting reminder.. “ Ah, boy, but them days are all gone now.”