

CHAPTER XI

The End of the Beginning

When a year of Inspectorship had rolled around I took stock of circumstances. I had collected thousands of dollars in revenue for the town, some bad characters had been sent to jail, the bootleggers had tightened up their system, but otherwise there was as much rum sold as ever. As for myself I had acquired a degree of prosperity that a brief year before would seem impossible. I was learning to live and laugh. Along with these things a sense of mental sharpness in the pursuit of my duties had grown upon me. I could sense friends or enemies and foresee dangerous situations. This sixth sense along with Dannie MacLennan's caution, "to survive we must be able to change with changing conditions", made me mentally alert in all matters of law. Surprisingly enough I found the biggest danger I had to face was the chance of getting a "swelled head". The flattery of the limelight is always a dangerous thing.

Having spare time on my hands the thought of polishing up my crude knowledge of English began to assert itself. Bought some technical books, paper pencils and a typewriter and labouriously tried to write short stories. But they wouldn't click. However it wasn't time wasted for years later when I got into the tourist business the knowledge of composition did me good service.

Often did I speculate on the infiltration of the Rum Trade. The bootleggers were great buyers of new cars. They spent their money lavishly on new clothes. Even the business of selling rum cans was a noticeable item in the trade of a well-established hardware firm. Also, I began to learn that there were powerful forces near the top in politics who were holding off the day when a preventative force to curb smuggling would be set up. In the body politic it was hard to tell who didn't have a finger in the pie.

A watchful eye had been kept on Delores and before three months were up I felt that her trade was becoming too open. One fine summer day in June while passing in my car I saw a window of her house open and without a flyscreen. Stopping the car I told Officer Langille to follow me. Diving through I rushed for the sink. But she was too quick for me. She smashed the bottle and gave herself a bad cut. An old timer of the town, "Posty Chisholm", had a partly filled glass of rum in front of him. This was taken and I asked "Posty" Did you find this to be rum you were drinking?

"Never saw it till you pointed it out to me."

"Posty, you can tell that one to the judge."

"Sure thing, Cliff, sure thing at any time."

For wit and dramatic situations that was a notable trial. Stan Fraser was her lawyer and the fireworks between he and I were interesting.

We put "Posty" on the stand as our witness. Rod G. was my lawyer as usual.

"What were you doing in Delores N-----'s house on the afternoon of June 7th?"

"I was looking for buyers for a line of books."

"What books?"

"Pilgrim's Progress, for one."

"Did you have any rum to drink in that house on the afternoon of June 7th?"

"No, didn't know she sold rum."

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?"

"Sure thing, I do."

"Do you believe in God?"

"Lookahere Rod G, I'll have you know that I'm a better Presbyterian than you are."

Stan went ahead with the cross-examination.

"This liquid that was on the table beside you, was it rum?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"If your honor pleases, the Inspector says it is rum, yet his own witness with an extensive knowledge of life says under oath that he knew of no rum being there. I submit, your honor, that I be permitted to sample this presumed rum."

"You may do that."

Stan tilted the glass and drank the evidence.

When Delores got on the stand in her own defence and was asked her name, she answered, "Delores N-----, ninety-eight pounds of Hell."

"No, no she never sold rum within the space of three months." Such perjury would be hard to beat and I lost the case.

With such victories and close attention to politics Stan Fraser was acquiring a provincial reputation as a constructive organizer. Across Canada R.B. Bennett was making passes to jump into the Premiership, so an organizer was wanted in Nova Scotia who could put pep into the party and Stan was picked for the job. As I remember it he was supposed to get five thousand dollars per year and expenses. Not bad picking for less than a year from the time he had got Charlie Lorimer free.

We had a great fishing trip to Archibald's lake that spring, only marred by one incident. Early one morning after the boys had had a bit of a spree, I fortunately had hidden the rum some distance from the cabin. On these occasions it was but little liquor I drank except a "slug" when travelling from one part of the lake to another.

We were awakened by wild whoops coming through the woods. Soon Black Tom MacNeil and some Westville miners appeared on the scene. The boys had no stomach to come out of the cabin to see Tom looking under every bush for the Inspector's rum. I was left to "kid" them along and they didn't find our ammunition.

The Town council had again raised my salary and being all good Tories were up to that time just one big happy family. I was rolling a lot of solid cash into the town treasury and even James A. Fraser of Eastern Chronicle fame had little criticism.

Towards the middle of June Tom MacKay informed us that he was going to make a big haul in Guysboro County. Five of us went down with him on that raid. That county at that time was a smuggler's paradise. Its lonely harbours and isolated hamlets with few custom's officers made it easy for the Trade.

I have forgotten the exact location of the ambush but it was somewhere out of Boyleston. We waited until early morning hours when three cars heavily loaded with rum kegs rolled into the yard of a deserted farm. It was bitterly cold for that time of year and I took to shivering. Never being tough or rugged physically I knew that I had caught a severe cold. The early rays of the sun felt good to us all and especially to me. It was a great haul of rum that had belonged to a Grit smuggler from Halifax. The events of the day are not clear to me except that the custom's officer in Guysboro town didn't want to have anything to do with the catch.

When I got home I had to go to bed but was around in a few days making preparations for a trip with the wife and family and some friends to Cape Breton. So on the day after the trial in Guysboro town we continued on to that royal island.

The weather was hot and to me it eased a trip of misery, for I was sick, more sick than I realized. The glories of Margaree, Lake Ainslee, Bein Breagh and Nyanza I saw through a fog of fever. In Sydney the Isle Royal Hotel was in the course of construction, the Governor General was visiting the city so we had to put up at some second-class affair that I can only remember for its shabbiness and smells.

As soon as I got home I was packed away to bed and the doctor said "pleurisy". A treacherous evil of a disease being closely related to tuberculosis. I suffered a lot but had a charming and efficient nurse. This along with the visitations of a host of friends during those lovely summer days made the time pass quickly. This incident of sickness would be immaterial to this story were it not that in my absence the seeds were sown for future storms and perils in the Trade. During the early days of August when in the silly manner of convalescents I began to enquire of my nurse, her telephone number, place of residence, etc., she told me that her days of

vigil were over. So I began to move around in my car.

Fred Milligan took me aside and told me that his principal yard worker, Paddy Nolan, famous hockey player of the Maritime circuit couldn't get a job. So the strategy committee had agreed to allow him to open a soft drink shop on "Back" Street where he could sell the odd glass of something stronger. It didn't sound so good to me but Paddy was a likeable fellow and I felt that he would do as he was told. I was still under doctor's care and didn't want to take on any fights. I wanted to hold my job, I wanted to stay alive. So it became my conviction that there must be no more raiding trips involving night-work and bad weather. I must stay in my own baliwick, or be prepared to go a sanitorium.

Looking backward, it is wonderful that I ever survived that decision. It amounted to the fact that henceforth I must put my wits against some powerful former friends, a diseased body and the subtle cunning of the liquor interests.

Walter Weir had gone out of the town council and George Grant had been elected in his place. With George the success of the Conservative party was of first importance for the game was everything. He was a good politician and political intrigue was right up his alley.

Undercover, Fred Milligan was securing the land for the press town parking lot, and was doing a good job for the citizens with the growth of motor traffic. New Glasgow was fast becoming a shopping centre. It is imperative to remember that in those Roaring Twenties we all believed that nothing could stop our soap-bubble prosperity. Anyhow, someone on the inside conceived the idea that the streets close by the parking lot would become valuable property. Fred was quietly picking up some property but one day he found out that Walter Weir and Tom MacKay had bought a lot with an old barn on it that he had been trying to acquire. He lost his temper for he saw that someone had "squealed".

This incident led to such bitterness and emotion that as the years rolled on the well geared Tory machine of those days was ultimately cracked. For me, however, it was a chance for me to get away from liquor raids outside the town. In other words, through sickness I had begun to grow old.

Fred as chairman of police issued orders that there was to be no fraternizing with Tom MacKay or outside inspectors. And he sought by political power to prevent outside inspectors from raiding in New Glasgow. George Grant with his usual political astuteness tried to prevent the quarrel from breaking into the open.

Jim Caldwell had been made chief-of-police some time before and he and Tom MacKay were old friends. But Fred issued orders to him also. No friendship with Tom MacKay or else The happy political family

of former years was through, the honeymoon was over. Through this submerged tempest the Paddy Nolan case became the scandal of the town. Paddy had been Fred's right-hand man in elections, and now he boldly went to the M.P.'s and told them that no political inspector dare touch Paddy Nolan. Paddy, being Irish and human felt puffed up by such sweeping protection and sold rum quite openly in the heart of the town. The temperance forces spurred on by the Grits who had an inkling of the quarrel, were loud in their denunciation of this flagrant rum selling. So it was a "hot seat" that I had to sit upon.

Taking stock of the situation and knowing the craftiness of Tom in liquor prosecution and intrigue, I resolved wherever possible to cut down and centre all liquor raids and prosecutions to those conducted with Sergeant Langille. Thus we continued as fast friends to hunt, fight and "cover up" together as long as prohibition lasted. We both became nimble-witted and learned to know all the "rat holes" of escape. Together we carried out Dannie MacLennan's injunction, — "to survive we must learn to change with changing conditions".

Sometimes it was puzzle to know what course to pursue with the conflicting tides of power. About this time the Liberals at Ottawa started their long-heralded preventative force for smuggling along the coast had become a national scandal. Norman MacDonald, chief-of-police at Trenton and Major Warren Jollimore were provided with cars writs of assistance and told to go to it and stop the smuggling. Fred could not get any protection for Paddy from this quarter but Paddy was cagey and continued to do business at the old stand.

One dark night when beset with this web of intrigue, I went down to see Dannie to get his view of the tangled situation, knowing him to be clear-headed and having the craft of a Jesuit.

He was surprised and pleased to see me. For my part I was afraid but determined to get his angle. He ushered me into his private office, pulled a box of excellent cigars and we had a rare evening together. There I learned more about the inner workings of the Trade than I had learned in all my previous experience. Dannie was a great host and an excellent talker.

We discussed local politics and the boom on the stock market. Then I said, "Dannie, have you heard anything about a row amongst local politicians and prominent Tories"?

"You mean between our chairman of police and some liquor Inspector?"

"That's it." The kingpin of the Trade in Eastern Nova Scotia evidently had a good grapevine.

"It isn't a good thing for any of us. I wouldn't want such open protection as Paddy Nolan is getting. That is asking for continual raids from the

Grits new preventative force. Fred doesn't understand this rum game and being a determined man may be like a bull in a chinashop. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes."

"If I had my health again I would enjoy the thrill of matching wits with those opposing forces. But things being what they are I believe I'll have to play down my position in the game."

"That would seem to be your best bet. You've had your share of the limelight. Some Inspectors crave that stuff all the time — but in the payoff there is nothing to it. Friends are your greatest asset, someone you can go to when you are in a tight spot. Things are booming just now with the building of the Guysboro railroad. New Glasgow will be the centre to which the crews will gravitate for their payday celebrations so there will be some loose change around for all concerned. The stockmarket is also booming and cars will be pushing each other on the street. So try to get Fred to pipe down and not to upset the gravy."

"I had something like that in mind, Dannie. What is your opinion of this stockmarket boom?"

"Have you any money in it, Cliff?"

"No, I haven't. But to see them opening fancy offices with all the contraptions of a stockmarket makes one wonder what is behind it, that's all."

"If you haven't got anything in it, keep out of it, because I know you can't afford to lose. I have friends who tip me off now and then and I make the odd dollar. But I play it for the kick that's in it. It is no game for a poor man to indulge in. A lot of the boys will lose their shirts sooner or later. A continent-wide prosperity is rolling along now but government extravagance and the huge public debt is more than can be kept going. It is bound to collapse unless there is another war. That would keep the old chariot going. It is a strange thing how democracy can organize for war but go broke forming the ways and means of peace."

"In other words, we should do as the bees and squirrels do, put something by for a rainy day."

"Exactly Clifford. It will likely be a long, long spell without sun."

Looking backward, Dannie MacLennan's insight into human nature and his correct summary of events are to me a marvel. How different was an hour's talk with him than was the drivel dispensed by so-called leaders of public opinion! Yet to the Holy Willies he was a sinner above all others. Often have I put in hours of mental gymnastics trying to add up the factors that experience and belief had taught me, yet to get an answer that would stand up, I could not. Many a time while on a trip doing police work I would park my car near some beauty spot with which Eastern Nova Scotia abounds and try to reason out these contradictions.

In the fall of 1927 my father died. With his death was severed a last link with boyhood dreams and the memories of the good old days before World War I. He could tell great stories of the romance attached to the ship-building days in Pictou County. He trusted in his God, he loved his native land and though a poor farmer he had finer thoughts than meat-and-potatoes. He looked askance at my seeming prosperity and the hard-boiled manner and ways that had grown upon me.

Early in December two detectives from Inspector Grant's provincial department swooped down on the town, bought liquor in several of our local dives and a furore was created in the Trade. I was tipped off early in the "putch" so Sergeant Langille and I pulled several raids, got the rum and brought the cases to court the same day as the detectives had set down theirs. I had previous knowledge of several bootlegger's hides along with their method of selling and had saved the knowledge for such a time as this.

Chief Inspector Grant, a lawyer, personally conducted the detective's cases. Rod G was my lawyer as always with my victims pleading "guilty". That was a field day in the court house. J. Stanley Fraser defended all the liquor cases and being then at the peak of his power he made a brave showing. As I remember it the detectives didn't win a case. Rod G made the sage remark at the end of the trials, "that will learn those superior-minded Haligonians not to poach on our preserves".

Christmas again came around with its festivities and shower of turkeys. With my New Year's report showing over seven thousand dollars collected in fines the town council were very well pleased. I had learned to sense public reactions and timed raids and splurges so as to stop the clamor.

In those days most of us put up our cars in the winter on account of the snow not being removed from the streets. So our duties were carried out on foot. This lessened the sudden surprise but money was abundant and we got plenty convictions.

Having lots of time on my hands I tried my best to write something that would be accepted for publication but it was "no dice".

[From here was deleted the description of a six week visit to the Southern United States beginning in March, 1928 as Rose sought to recover his health.]