

Living on Saddle Island

COLLECTED BY: ANN O'BRIEN

CONTRIBUTED BY: MAISIE PIKE
(STORY WRITTEN BY HER MOTHER, WINNIE YETMAN)

Ann O'Brien:

Today is February 18th 2010, my name is Ann O'Brien, I'm here with Maisie Pike and Maisie is going to share a story about her mother wrote a few years ago. Okay Maisie you can go ahead.

Maisie Pike:

**Life on Saddle Island
By Winnie Yetman**

In 1936, he became a lighthouse keeper, my husband, Enos Yetman, until his retirement in 1971. So that was thirty five years of service.

We had good times over there and we had bad times, cause it wasn't so convenient as it is now. We never had no hot or cold water sometimes. The cold water we had, we had to bring it from the Spring well, down in the land wash.

So the new home was built in 1960. We went in the house in 1960, they had a distillery there that's why we had hot and cold water. We had comfort then. The only thing we found bad over on Saddle Island, I don't regret because I enjoyed it over there, the only thing we did find bad was when the kids started going to school, late in the Fall. First in the Fall was okay, but when the harbour would start to freeze up, it was bad coming back and forth in the boat, 'cause some mornings the ice would cut the boat through.

So we built a house over there and the oldest of the family came over and looked after the youngest ones, go to school until the freeze up. But we had it all right over there. It was hard work bringing up water up over the hill in five gallon buckets. Even brought up oil to keep the fog alarm going in five gallon buckets. Lots of times it was par buckled up over the hill but we got through it all right, I don't regret being over there. We had a family of children. His brother was Assistant Lighthouse Keeper, Uncle Al he had ten children and we had five.

We reared them all up, they got their education, some of them got a career, some of them haven't. There was two six's see. His brother use to have a six hour watch and he'd have a six hour watch and that left him with the last watch of the night. We had to keep a log book all the time for the light, and one for the fog alarm.

If the fog alarm was started ten times a day, you'd have to...when she was stopped and started, you had to mark it down. We had to have a true report kept to the station as well as, one sent to the Department of Transport. But then we had to record the time from each hour to twenty four hours. I soon caught up on which way...I never had no big education, but I had enough to run a government job for thirty five years.

Fifteen years he was under the Charlottetown Agency, we never had nothing to work with until then. So they gave us a tractor, where it would be easier for pulling up the oil and that up over the hill. We found the good of that, when we got it. But he punched in thirty five years and he thought it was long enough, so he said he was going to retire.

We had it good, 'cause he lived seventeen years after he retired. I never heard him complaining much but he liked his job. He loved his job. Well he had to bring the water up over the hill and we had to hot it on the stove and then we had to do all our washin' by hand until 1960. Lots of times there was no water on Saddle Island, we'd have to melt ice and melt snow.

We melted ice more then once for a drink from the pond over there. It was good water in the pond. Use to have to melt ice, my son, to get water to do your work with. I guess he was lucky because the reason why he got his job was they put in a good report about him. He use to go over in foggy weather with the old oil drum and an axe and make a noise when it was foggy. And the old Sagona was coming in here them times, Captain Gullage. So Captain Gullage, he put in a good word for him and that's why he got the job.

He helped build the first old fog alarm when they come to build a fog alarm, he helped build it. And when it was all ready and built, he told them, go out and start her now. So that's what he done. He went out and he started her. His father was Lighthouse Keeper one time, Uncle Leonard Yetman, but he never had the fog alarm, he only had the Lighthouse, but Enos had the fog alarm and the Lighthouse.

He never, ever complained much about his job, he was contented over there, he had lots of sleepless nights. He use to start the fog alarm when the fog was about three miles off. He use to keep a close watch on the fog and when it was three miles off that's when he use to start her.

We reared up the children over there and we never had no trouble with 'em. I can't remember if ever the kids went out at the fog alarm, never had no trouble with 'em. We had everything to do our work with over there. We had plenty to eat and drink. We had sheep and we had hens. We didn't want so much to live off then as you do now. You wouldn't getting' a big salary but we lived on it.

I'll tell you what his cheque was every month, \$49.16. And Uncle Al Yetman, he was the Assistant Light Keeper, he was getting \$32. 75 cents. He built a house out of that Uncle Al did. He use to keep her going too on what he was getting. But see everything was cheaper them times. You never had to pay ten dollars for a gallon of molasses then, 50 cents for a gallon of molasses, 50 cents for a pound of cheese. Everything was cheaper

them times, see. Now it's outrageous anyway, you wouldn't do much with \$49.16 now. You'd probably only bring home an old paper bag.

I certainly enjoyed it over there on Saddle Island, I hears the fog alarm now. Lots of times, it makes me lonely but 'twas good. You had plenty of company in the summer time, because every year, there'd be three or four inspectors come to the lighthouse. We wasn't lonesome, we had the family and we had all the land over there and we wasn't lonesome. We got along okay.

Ann O'Brien:

Well what a beautiful story.

Maisie Pike:

Yeah. She done...

Ann O'Brien:

And your mom...

Maisie Pike:

She done pretty good, like she got it outlined pretty good.

Ann O'Brien:

Yes. So your mother did various ... various crafts also, like knitting and

Maisie Pike:

Mom done everything my dear.

Ann O'Brien:

...sewing.

Maisie Pike:

When mom...moms mother died when she was only I think fifty...when she fifty three because she had a little brother that drank gillet's lye and mom said she grieved herself to death.

Ann O'Brien:

Okay.

Maisie Pike:

And ah...mom was left to raise the family, so I mean she made everything from canvas tents to dog harnesses, and dog boots, and then when she come down home, I mean she was really talented in doing stuff.

Ann O'Brien:

And ah.. how old is your...was your mom then when your grandmother...your grandmother passed on? Her mom?

Maisie Pike:

Ah..

Ann O'Brien:

She couldn't have been very old.

Maisie Pike:

Hmm. No. Very young, ten or eleven I think.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmmm.

Maisie Pike:

'Cause I remember my Aunt Ethel telling me that mom was mixing bread when she ten years old. So her mom must have....it was pretty young.

Ann O'Brien:

A lot of women at that time, well children, ah...mixed bread ten or eleven years of age.

Maisie Pike:

Yeah. She was only...about that and ...you know, I don't know the exact...I'm sure she probably told me but I don't remember now. But Aunt Ethel considered her, like'cause Aunt Ethel was the younger one...Aunt Ethel considered her not only her sister but her mother, right.

Ann O'Brien:

Hmmm.

Maisie Pike:

'Cause she was left to do all the work and they had cows and gardens and everything. So she was a hard worker like all up through.

Ann O'Brien:

Yes.

Maisie Pike:

Thank you very much Maisie for sharing that story.