

"Fogs, Storms, and Tossing Billows"

WERE the frequent experiences of one of Cape Cod's deep-sea skippers who went on his last cruise during spring this year. Captain Manuel Enos was one of the Cape's able mariners, a group fast vanishing now, who were deep-sea sailormen. Always a Cape Codder, he went to sea as young as twelve years. Thereafter, for many a year, his home was on the bounding wave, with only the skin of his ship between him and the water. He went with his vessels to fish off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the Western Banks, and Sable Island. An apt and natural sailor, he quickly acquired essential seamanship and at the age of twenty-three years he became the skipper of the deep-sea schooner *Gertie S. Winsor*. How proud he must have felt to take her out, as her master, on his first such trip.

His many vivid experiences and an inherent capacity for it, made Captain Enos a fascinating sea-story teller. He often told, with undying sorrow, of the loss of

his first love, the *Gertie S. Winsor*. She was the victim of a dense fog on Peaks Hill Bar, off North Truro — that graveyard of scores of fine vessels and their men. Captain Enos and his crew were taken ashore from her by the Coast Guard's using the breeches buoy. The loss of his vessel was all the more hard to bear since she had just weathered two violent storms on the way home, only to meet her doom "at the Cape End's back door."

On another occasion, while skipper of the *Annie Perry*, he was nearing Boston Light, when his vessel was rammed by a beam trawler and went down. All aboard were saved.

week or 10 days spent on a routine trip to the Georges — if any voyage by a sailing schooner in November of 1897 could be called "routine." And after the anxious days and nights, Mr. Viera recalled, came the fear that settled on his own household — and on the town — as local folk spoke to one another of the storm that had battered the Cape End, and muttered and shook their heads.

Grief came afterwards, the former Cape End resident recalled, as the days became weeks and the weeks months — and his own and the other families of the missing fishermen knew for a certainty that the *Susan R. Stone* would not come back to her mooring.

Although battered schooners often did come straggling back to port with their torn sails after an Atlantic storm, all too often there was one that didn't. The same year the three-masted schooner, *Cora McKay*, had sailed out of Provincetown — the *Cora McKay* was bound for the Grand Banks — and the *Cora McKay*, like the *Susan R. Stone*, never came back.

The wife of the *Susan R. Stone's* captain had put in other anxious vigils and for long had pleaded with her husband to quit the sea. Capt. Viera had prospered. More than many fishermen, perhaps, he could afford to do so and risk a living ashore. What his wife didn't know, however, when he bade her a cheery goodbye in November, 1897, was that he, himself, was considering making this his last voyage. As a surprise for her, he had had a house built in New Bedford, where he was planning to take his family when he had ended his voyages to the Banks.

Mrs. Viera learned all this from a Captain Crowell, in town, to whom Capt. Viera had confided his plans, including the surprise home her husband had in store for her. (A year later the family did move to New Bedford to occupy that house, although they remained there only a year when they returned to Provincetown. Four years later they went back to New Bedford to live there permanently.)

Two of the regular crew of the *Susan R. Stone* missed that last fateful trip. Capt. Viera had made them remain ashore on the voyage as a penalty for quarreling. One of the two was credited with pulling a knife on the other and Capt. Viera had impartially ordered both ashore for the trip. The son of the lost captain wonders how the two men felt when the *Susan R. Stone* was given us for lost with all hands.

The son of Capt. Viera went to sea, himself, when he was only 14.

He had gone to live with the family of his uncle, Capt. William Enos, who commanded the two-masted fishing schooner, *Amelia Enos*. (Capt. Enos had previously skippered the schooner, Governor Russell). The boy remained with the Enos family for two years while his mother made an extended visit to the Azores.

Young Frank Viera hadn't wanted to go to sea, he says now — he had found school too interesting. But Capt. Enos was of the opinion that any up-and-coming Provincetown boy ought to start learning fishing and seamanship by the time he was 14. As for the excitement and dangers he experienced on the *Amelia Enos*, they had lasted him a lifetime.

He was once lost for two days with an older dory mate in fog on the Grand Banks. Frightened? "I would have been, probably," Mr. Viera recalls, "if my dory mate hadn't been as calm and resourceful." Each man took food and a half-gallon of water into the dory, which had a small dory compass. They took their bearings and tried to remain in the vicinity until the fog lifted, it did eventually.

The young fisherman did his eight-hour watches, too, along with the rest of the crew. Once he did an eight-hour stint in the forward rigging on a day so cold that at the end of it he had trouble freeing himself from his icy slicker, which had frozen fast to the ropes. He was half-frozen, himself, he remembers, though he laughs at it now . . . "you should have seen me run for the cabin in those icy winds!" Food or drink during those eight hours? "Don't be foolish!" he laughed. In weather like that no one got pampered, not even a 14-year-old boy.

Mr. Viera also recalls how icy spray filled the sleeves of the fishermen's slickers when they were hand trawling on the Grand Banks — and "you had to keep breaking your frozen sleeves so you could work!" He remembers storms when for a week at a time the crew never got out of their clothes but were at the ready in cabin and fo'c'sle, for the emergency: "All hands on deck!"

He went through two hurricanes on the *Amelia Enos*. Once the schooner lost her entire bowsprit. "The ship was deep in the water, with lots of ballast, though, and could take a great deal of rough treatment," he points out. "We couldn't have any canvas up at all, of course. All you could do was turn the vessel's stern to the storm — and take it!"

"You could keep the ship's bow into the wind only up to a certain degree of wind velocity. After that you had to turn tail to it. Once we

had not one man but two lashed to the wheel. And I've seen the time when the men in the cabin and in the fo'c'sle were down on their knees praying!" But those oldtime fishing schooners were seaworthy craft and could survive great battering. "You had to be well out to sea, though," Mr. Viera points out. "Woe betide the vessel near enough to shallows to be blown on to them!"

If life on a fishing schooner was hard, the captain of the *Amelia Enos* knew one way to keep up morale — to serve his crew plenty of good food. "We had steak — yes, steak! — twice a week. And 'salt beef' was good corned beef when the cook turned it out. I loved it! We had pork, too. And we ate fish. . . . Tired of it? No, we really didn't tire of it. Our good Portuguese cook knew a multitude of ways to prepare it . . . and they way he cooked it made it no hardship to eat. Once a Boston waterfront reporter ate a fish dinner on board the *Amelia Enos* and wrote a glowing column about it in the old Boston Post.

A man could bring liquor aboard his uncle's schooner, says Mr. Viera, but his background had to be known to the skipper. No fishing captain wanted an irresponsible drinker on his vessel, and the man who brought a bottle aboard could only sample it when his work was over.

"A drinker, a brawler, a troublemaker — all captains got rid of them or avoided them," Mr. Viera emphasizes. "Sometimes if the catch had been good and the vessel was headed for home in fair weather, why the men could bring out a bottle and have a little fling. The captain could be understanding then. But you can't drink liquor and run a good ship."

The Advocate visitor was brimming with local lore of a bygone day. His mother, for example, Hortense "Mary" Coreeia, worked for two years in the household of a Truro family to pay back the \$48 they had expended on her passage here from Pico, in the Azores. The family of Capt. Crowell in Provincetown (Mr. Viera doesn't recall the Captain's first name but remembers that the Crowell's "ran a grocery store here") befriended the hard-working young woman and promised her she would be welcome to stay with them when she made up her mind to quit her Truro drudgery.

Hortense "Mary" Coreeia finally did quit. She packed up her belongings one day and trudged with them more than 10 miles over sandy roads to reach the Crowell home in Provincetown. It was after midnight when she arrived and not

wishing to disturb the family, she curled up wearily on their front door step and went to sleep. There the milkman found her on his early morning rounds and awakened the Crowells.

Mr. Viera went back to school after his voyages with his uncle, Capt. Enos. He has lived most of his life in the New Bedford area. He has a son, Frank, Jr., a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an engineer for the U. S. Naval Ordnance Laboratory, who lives in Rockville, Md., a short distance from Washington, D.C. Mr. Viera's younger brother, Manuel, lives in North Dartmouth.

Mr. Viera hopes to make another visit to Provincetown this Fall and by then, perhaps, hear from others who had relatives aboard the ill-fated *Susan R. Stone*. "I met a Tony Barnes here two years ago who had sailed with my father," he says, "but he has since died."

Mr. Viera is sure there are others in Provincetown who had links with the *Susan R. Stone*, only one of the many Cape fishing vessels lost at sea but to the son of its captain, more than a statistic — a highly personal drama.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1965

Loss Of The "Susan R. Stone" Recalled By Captain's Son

The memory of a fishing schooner that sailed out of Provincetown for the Georges Banks on November 15, 1897, with a crew of 19 local men, never to return, brought a Mattapoisett man into The Advocate office recently to relate this tragedy of his boyhood and to wonder if local descendants of the lost fishermen might be interested in getting in touch with him.

The visitor was Frank Viera of Fairhaven Road in Mattapoisett, whose father, Capt. Manuel Viera, commanded the two-masted vessel, the *Susan R. Stone* — long since written off as a casualty of the sea.

When Mr. Viera, at The Advocate's suggestion, went to Town Hall to see what Town records of 1897 might turn up about the lost vessel, he learned something of the wide impact on local families of the loss of his father's schooner. Town Treasurer Frank Bent, he discovered, had had a paternal grandfather and two uncles on the *Susan R. Stone* when

she rounded Long Point on her last and fateful voyage.

Mr. Viera, a boy of seven when his father's ship failed to return, is one of the five children of Capt. Manuel Viera and his wife Hortense — called "Mary" — Correiria. The fifth child, Manuel, was born, actually, a month after the loss of the vessel. He and Mr. Viera are the only surviving members of the family.

Young as he was at the time, Mr. Viera recalls the anxiety of his mother when the *Susan R. Stone* failed to return after the customary

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