

[Page 24 - The Sinking of the 'Caribou' Ferry](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 10](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1975/3/31

(Where were you when she struck, Mr. Pearcey?) In the pantry. I had just cleaned up the place for the boys who would come on next morning. I had it all cleaned up and I sat down and five minutes to four, blip-poj all the lights went out. Couldn't see. But I knew where I was to, I knew what way to go. Second steward • called into him that we were torpedoed and he came out of his room and he went down on the port side and I went out on the starboard side. He was lost and I was one of the survivors. When she got hit she listed over, took water aboard. Well, the people that were down in steerage, they never had a chance. They couldn't get up because she was all flooded with water. They were drowned like rats down there. But you're not supposed to close a door. Anything happens aboard ship you can't get the door open, it jams, see. And all them doors was closed downstairs. They were all warned that night • the captain warned them • be ready for the lifeboats and keep their clothes on, don't take off their clothes. He had an idea. He could have been saved • the captain could. He could have gone with Tommy Flemming. But no, he went down with the ship. There was no need of it. There was nothing he could do. I got out on a raft • they had drums under them. I was on that raft four hours and a half. There was 6 of us • a woman and four men. That's all it would hold. You could not see anything. October, 4 o'clock in the morning, it was dark. But you could hear people screeching. All over. And then the cattle drowning. Three cars of cattle going that night • Number One hold. There were three hatches off to give them fresh air. They went down with the ship. There were oars on the raft but you couldn't do anything. When you started rowing she'd be going around like a spinning top. A raft is not like a boat, you know. V'e covered up the woman with tarpaulin, keep her from getting wet. The water was coming in over her • a little lop that night. We were all soaking wet. We didn't talk much. You had to watch yourself, she didn't tip over or you didn't get washed off. Pretty quiet. V'e were picked up half past eight in the morning. (Was it you or was it your son who dove in the water for the baby?) My son. Yes. He had the baby in his arms. He had it about an hour and a half, passed it over to somebody else. That was the youngest survivor • about a year and a half old. Billy was in the water two hours. He had a lifebelt on. (Was your son with you on the IDEAL ICE CREAM The Only Ice Cream Manufactured in Cape Breton Prince Street, Sydney 564-4549 C.B.School of Diving Pro Dive Shop Scuba Courses • Basic and Advanced Rentals Air Station and Rejpairs Dive Tours Arranged Aboard Our New 42? Dive Boat "Child of Aquarius" Starting May 5th Reservations are not necessary Box 416, 500 Esplanade, Sydney 539-7676 (Upe Breton's Mig??zine/24 r?.'(50 Jrcfili, ddicious seafood. S'n?cd ixi 1 Mile from Fortress Louisbourg Nat. Park FleurdeLis Motor Inn We serve 3 meals a day and Specialize in Fresh Fish Bilingual Reservation Phone: 733-2844