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With George Prosser of Whitney Pier: stories from Over 92 Years Edited from Conversations with Don Nugent and Cape Breton's Magazine (Were you born in Sydney?) George Prosser: No, Newfoundland. Isle-aux-Morts, right off of Port-aux-Basques. Fourteen miles. My family-- six were born in Newfoundland, the other two were born here. My father was a fisherman. That's what I was, too. The First World War, I was down in Labrador, thirteen years old, fishing. Three brothers was on • me and Bill, the older fella, and Albert --and we had a shipman too. About four hundred miles from home, you know. But still, we were in a harbour. You fished out of a harbour, back and forth, way down in the Straits of Belle Isle. I fished with my grandfather and my father, and I fished with my brothers, and I fished with myself too. All my life, ever since I was thirteen years old, I went down on the Gulf (of St. Lawrence). First World War was over and I was about four hundred miles from home. Three brothers of us. At that time my grandfather was old. And my old man. We always left them home to look after the house, do all the work. So, (it was) my three brothers, and we shipped a man. When the war got over, them days you had the Western Union there--the cable was run across the Gulf at that time • I think that's how the news came. We got the news that the war was over, and then we got a message saying that my grandfather died, so we tried to get home. In them days, no motors, all sail. Took us a week to get home. My grandfather was dead and buried and the war was all over by the time we got home. We had a load of fish all the same. Two hundred (joints, or two-fifty, whatever. We got home, but it took us a whole week. (How long did it take you to get down the Labrador to where you fished?) It didn't take very long. But you see, what they call the herring schools, that was the spring of the year. The wind was always southwest. A fair wind down. You'd always get down there in three or four days. But coming out of it you always had the wind. We used to have to go up the Quebec side, up Labrador, go all up that way, and then cut across. That was seventy-five miles. Get up as far as Haddock Coast, cut across, and you had another hundred and twenty miles to get over to the mainland. That Cape Anguille, Cape Ray. You had to have the wind to get out around 'cause it was like that. This side the wind was southwest, that side the wind was northeast. That's the way the island was made (reached), just like that. Take a long time to get out of the Gulf. No motors or nothing. The last time I was down there we had a motor in the boat, and when the wind was ahead we'd lower down the sails and use the motor. (But not back in 1918.) No. (But I don't understand. You had water all around you, why did you have to travel so far for your fishing?) Well, in the spring tff the year there was fish come out of the Gulf, and there was lots of fish • but the drift ice come around, and the bottom was deemed. There was nothing. So it seemed like down in the Gulf, that's where the herring and the capelin used to land down there. So you go down among the herring schools and the capelin schools. (How were you catching the herring?) Oh, nets. A what you call "seine," same as a net. Like a bag, and you'd throw it overboard and the lead would sink down. That's how you'd Cape Breton's



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