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Caribou Sinking. & Grandmere: 1942 Introduction ?? 'H I There have been two Caribou ferries linking Cape Breton and Newfoundland. The first Caribou served from 1925 until she was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine • October 14, 1942. - 238 people were on board • i; military personnel, as well as civilian men, women, and children • 137 died. The survivors were picked up by the escort vessel Grand- mere. Several bodies were taken from the water by fishermen from the Port- aux-Basques area. The dead included 31 crew members, most of whom lived in Port- aux-Basques. And while other vessels had been sunk in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, this large loss of life brought the war squarely home to Canadians. In 1975 we published "The Sinking of the Caribou Ferry." (See Issue 10 of Cape Breton's Magazine.) It was made principally of conversations with Cape Bretoners who had survived that attack. The second Caribou ferry first sailed on May 12, 1986. We went on the maiden voyage from North Sydney to Port-aux-Basques. On board were 13 of the survivors of the sinking of the first Caribou. As well, there were two men, John Rigby and George Hedden • members of the crew of the Grandmere. Into the night and on the return trip next morning, we talked, took pictures, made tapes • and came away with an added dimension to the story we had first published. We learned that night of a continuing resentment some feel regarding the Grandmere's role as escort • some think she should have stopped immediately to pick up survivors. Others are grateful for her performance. A search through the Public Archives of Canada turned up some related documents. We include here, as well, memories of other survivors. The document portions are inserted within the interviews. These documents should be taken only as what they are: secret letters between military personnel, and from military personnel to politicians. They are not intended as any further evidence than that, particularly as they imply fault with the captain of an under-equipped vessel who had only a few seconds in which to respond. John Rigby & George Hedden of the Grandmere George Hedden, Hamilton, Ontario: At that time I was what they called a coder, in the wireless shack. My job was to decode and code messages, for transmission. John Rigby, Hamilton, Ontario: I was a stoker. I worked in the engine room. (Would you be aware of the Caribou from there, or was it just your job to see to it the Grandmere had steam?) I was off watch at the time. I was asleep when she was torpedoed. (What was the Grandmere's job?) Hedden: Actually, she was a Bangor-class minesweeper. Our function was escort at the time. Most of the minesweepers in Canada were used for escort vessels, especially in the Gulf war, throughout the Gulf (of St. Lawrence), Story Continues on Page 37