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From Visits with Capt. Michael Tobin Coastal & Gulf Ferry Captain, Ret'd ~
Memories from Nearly 50 Years Afloat ~ Capt. Michael Tobin served for nearly 50 years with the coastal boats and the Newfoundland-to-Nova-Scotia ferry system • serving aboard the Argyle, Clyde, and Home (1928-34), then the Glencoe (1934-40). He earned his First Mate ticket in 1939. He sailed under Capt. Gullage on the BurgeoUom 1940 to 1946, and then was Master until 1955. As Captain, he brought the first car ferry, the William Carson, to the Gulf, and sailed her from 1955 to '66. He was then Captain of the Leif Eiriksson (1966-68), and the Ambrose Shea (1968-74). After his retirement (1975), he served as a pilot on the St. Lawrence, getting the ships to Montreal. (Captain, when I see weather like this--a cold, bitter winter day--I wonder if you miss the ice.) Capt. Tobin: Oh, yes. There's quite a bit of ice out there this year. I was out there for eight days, you know (in 1962)-- couldn't get in Sydney Harbour. (Caught in the ice?) I was eight miles off Low f. "*****B f" 'KKSK -' Point. I got " • ? JPiit"iL* out (of the ice), but I never got in. I had to go to Mulgrave and land the passengers. The ice broke off and I got out through and went around to the Canso Causeway. (When you were in that ice, were you actually caught or were you just trapped?) We were trapped. There was three icebreakers behind me--three of the best they had--but they couldn't even get up to where I was at. I remember the last night I was there. I backed up as far as I could and I left a road of water about two or three hundred yards ahead of her so I'd get a start in the morning.... And that night she took off on her own; the ice must've moved. And it come right in. Couldn't see a drop (of water) anywhere. And where the discharge came out over the side, we'd put down the jigger and we went down twenty-five feet, but we never got (through) the ice. There was still ice there twenty-five feet be? low. Where the hot water was running out (the discharge from the engine), drilled the hole down by the side of the ship. Twenty-five feet, and that was right packed tight against the ship.... Never moved. And three icebreakers behind me: the John A. MacDonald--tfo more--I forget the names of the other ones. Nobody could stir. I never got in. When the ice broke--southerly wind came--I went to Mulgrave and landed the passengers. At that time, when a passenger was stuck like that, you had to feed him and give him a berth--when you couldn't get in. So one of the fellows from Toronto said to me when he was going ashore, "If you ever get on another excursion like this, let me know. Cape Breton's MAGAZINE • Number Seventy-Three Wreck Cove, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia BOC IHO Publications Mail Registratioii Number 3014