Lighthouse

Copied for Col '64

Camden, Maine
June 2, 1964

Dear Mr. Snow:

In reply to your letter about a rescue at Eagle Island, I can tell you very quickly the story I believe you mean.

My former husband, C. H. Curtis, BM, USCG, then stationed at Eagle Island Light Station, had gone with a yachting party for three days, leaving me to perform the lighthouse duties.

The second day in mid-afternoon, an unusually brisk squall struck the area. As I hurried around the house closing windows and making the house safe against wind and rain, I saw a sailboat, in no apparent difficulty, in the lee of Bradbury Island. Later, after my tasks were done, I noted briefly, but without surprise, that the sailboat was not in sight. There had been ample time for it to have reached shelter presumably.

What actually had happened was that the sailboat had capsized due to the unexpected force of the squall. The owner, who was consulting his charts in the cabin when the squall struck, was able to cut the dinghy loose from the sailboat with his jack knife before it was dragged to the bottom with the sailboat. He got himself and one passenger (possibly his wife) into the pram and rowed ashore towing his mother-in-law who did not have strength to get into the pram from the water, and a young man, the second guest.

After getting them safely ashore, the owner -- and if my memory is not faulty -- a Professor Springer, summer resident of Deer Isle, rowed from Bradbury Island to Eagle Island for help -- about one and one-half miles.

Professor Springer rested beside the stove while I gathered blankets and hastily made a large thermos of hot coffee. We had to seek assistance from another island, as there was no one left on Eagle Island with knowledge of dangerous landings in bad seas. That involved the decision to take our boat to Great Spruce Head Island for help. Professor Springer was a sailing man and expressed little or no knowledge of power boats. I had never run the boat but had rather elementary knowledge of what should be done. Somehow we got to Great Spruce Head Island, inching slowly through a narrow channel between the Barred Islands and Butter Island, and made a pretty awkward landing. Captain Erland Quinn, then mail carrier for the islands, and manager of the estate on Great Spruce Head, immediately took charge of the rest of the rescue. Capt. Quinn had been raised on Eagle Island and knew the area better than anyone else, as well as having expert knowledge of the sea and its treacheries. It was he who took the boat to Bradbury Island and got the three people off of the beach despite a heavy ground swell and difficult landing conditions. He

then took the Springers and guests to their home on Deer Isle, after which he landed me back on Eagle Island in time to light up the lighthouse kerosene mantle lamp before sunset.

Captain Quinn did the actual rescue, and my part was hardly worth mentioning. Captain Quinn lives in Camden now.

I would like to know how you came to hear of this incident, and if my version is at all like the story you heard. Sometimes the truth takes on strange and wonderful embellishments when passed from mouth to mouth. Perhaps this account will be of no interest to you, and maybe it isn't even the story you were after.

I remember your Christmas lighthouse flights well. We shared your books and contents of the package with others on the island.

The four years spent at the light station made an interesting episode in my life, but I'd never want to repeat the experience. However, we watched the Coast Guard demolish the light station at Eagle Island with heavy hearts. Captain Quinn tried for a whole year to come to some terms with the Coast Guard to buy the dwelling. We and, I'm sure, others tried to buy the house too, but the Coast Guard would sell only if the buyer moved the buildings from the property. That was ridiculous! The May issue of Down East Magazine covered the story very well.

Yours very truly,

A. Margaret Bok

A. Margaret Bok

AMB/jm

May 25, 1964

Mrs. Cary Bok
Camden
Maine

Dear Mrs. Bok:

Your name has been given me by a friend who says that you lived at Eagle Island and had a very unusual event take place there in which a rescue was made. I am very anxious to learn your story.

Very sincerely yours,

ERS/S

Edward Rowe Snow