

AMONG MY SOUVENIRS

By Rev. Alphonse Marquis

Dedicated to my relatives and friends

FOREWORD

“There is nothing left for me, of all that used to be. I live in memory among my souvenirs.”

Some 20 years ago as I was referring to some events in my life, dear Bishop Feeney told me that I should write a book. He wasn't the only one to say so. Last year the charming Mrs. Leighton, whose husband is now president of the Seven Islands Co. was very encouraging.

In 1979, when I was celebrating 40 years of priestly life, I was interviewed half a dozen times about what I had seen and heard in my 70 years of life. The St. John Valley and its courageous people's heroic and interesting past. In my humble opinion, much of that beautiful past has never been recorded. I know many who write beautifully but are too humble to try and record what they have seen and learned about this beautiful part of our country and its courageous people.

My Souvenirs: I have seen the recruiters picking up the young men in my neighborhood to send them to the First World War. I remember when oatmeal flour and horse meat were put on the market because the beef and wheat flour were gone to the front for our soldiers. I remember November 11, 1918, being in the woods with my grandfather. All of a sudden we heard the whistles of all the shops and locomotives of the nearest city, Edmundston, 15 miles away, mixed with the song of all the church bells of the country side. When we asked what it was, Grandpa said, “What we were all hoping for; the war is over”.

Then came the Spanish Flu (Grippe Espagnole). I remember seeing my mother's sister, mother of six young children, dead in her thirties. A short while later, it was Grandpa Marquis killed by the flu and he was a giant of a man and just 62 years old. There he was in his home lying on the II boards (sur les planches). I was in a daze and my brother Willie, who was just six years old, was crying his eyes out. I remember the roaring twenties and the first cars in our neighborhood. The courageous little Model T's had to turn backwards to climb the steep hill in front of our house. I saw farmers jack the rear end of them, take the tire off and put a belt around the wheel, connect it with the circular saw or the thrashing machine and cut their stove wood or thrash their grain. And as if that was not enough, to save their time and their legs, they would take the little car in the pasture to round up the milking cows. They did not use their horn

Voften. The rattle they made traveling on those gravel roads could be heard a quarter of a mile away and gave them the right of way. They were too much for a good horse, who would run away in fright, breaking harnesses and equipment.

I remember the log driving on the powerful St. John River, as log jams made of as much as 1,000,000 ft. of lumber riding the strong current at five miles an hour. We would not imagine anything that could stop them, but those log drivers could match power with strength and wisdom. The logs never went passed the saw mill: They were stopped there.

I remember 1929 and the Crash. The poverty of the thirties when the banks had run broke and people had lost their savings. Thank God and Thank Dad, we always had our three meals a day. Sometimes it was just a wild rabbit stew or potatoes fried in salt pork, buckwheat pancakes (PLUGS) and molasses. I remember about the old lady living a few miles from our home who survived the winter with only those Plugs and vinegar for food.

When I went West in 1937, I was told about two men found dead with their stomachs full of grass. They were too poor to buy food and too proud to beg. Then came 1939 and World War II. We French were heartbroken by the defeat of France and scandalized by Mussolini joining Hitler. All were horrified by the massacre of Pearl Harbor, pepped up by the Roosevelt fireside radio talks, and awed by the courage of Winston Churchill. We admired the bravery of the French underground fighters, cried with the martyrs of Poland and the prisoners of Dachau. MacArthur in the Pacific and Eisenhower in Europe wrote beautiful pages in history filled with the courage and generosity of the American people. We priests felt humble at the story of the three clergymen who went down with their ship after passing their life belts to men who could not find theirs. Then came 1945 with victory in Europe and the shameful deaths of Mussolini and Hitler. You have to be big to be a good loser like Petain. Next was the end of the war in the Pacific with the resurrection of Japan under the wise guidance of MacArthur. We could have been proud of ourselves for our share in World War II but now came Korea and Vietnam followed by Cuba and the loss of the Panama Canal to teach us a big lesson of humility and alertness.

I remember the death of Roosevelt and later on, that of Churchill. We must remember that even the greatest are mortal. Truman has come and gone, we loved him. He was one of us. Eisenhower was welcome to the presidency. He did so much for his country and the world during the war. He was followed by the Kennedys. Loved and admired, but it seemed that they had too much courage and not enough prudence. Their young experience was not enough to carry them very far. Johnson, the diplomat, was used to getting what he wanted but found he could not do that when he became president. However, he did his fair share. He was followed by the peaceful Carter. But I forgot President Nixon. He stopped the war in Vietnam because the people wanted him to do so. He is not considered a

diplomat. I imagine if he had more diplomacy, he would not have had to resign. That is a sad page in American History. Ford came after him. He had the qualities of a good president but he came at the wrong time. Since last November, we have Reagan for President. He brings class to the White House and he seems to be at ease with everybody. He is not young, but he has courage and means well. We wish him the best.

I was born when St. Pius X was pope. I do not remember him much. He died just before the First World War and Benedict XV ruled the church until the middle twenties. I do not remember him either. But Pius XI, the pope of the Missions and the Third World, I remember well. He ruled the Church with a strong hand but he had diplomacy, too. Since 1870, the pope was prisoner in the Vatican. The Italians were anxious for reconciliation. The question was settled by Pius XI and his helpers on one side and Mussolini for the Italian government. He consecrated 11 Chinese bishops but he was too late to save the Chinese Catholics from the Red domination. Pius XII came after him. He was firm and holy, but he asked more than his helpers were willing to give. John XXIII, the good Pope John who called the Second Vatican Council and invited the non-Catholics to send representatives, did all he could to break the barriers of nationalism and reunited the Christian world. But he did start a revolution in the Church whose consequences may last a hundred years. His successor, Pope Paul VI did his best to pacify and unite, but there is still much to be done. There always was, and probably the end of the world will come before men learn to live together like loving brothers. His successor, John Paul I lived only a few months. He would have worked wonders. Now we have the first non-Italian pope in more than 200 years. He is Polish, the fruit of sacrifices Poland had to live with during World War II. He has not much chance to realize all the good he wishes to do, (nobody ever had), but he is loved and we wish him well. Our prayers and sacrifices are with him.

In the world of science and progress, I have seen the coming of the radio, the television, the jet plane and atomic power. I have seen the workers go from the cross-cut saw to the chainsaw and the skill saw:

From the oxen and the horses to the skidders, the trucks and mechanical loaders. The steam locomotives have given place to the diesel on the railroads, but it looks as if we may have to go back to steam because of the shortage of oil.

People being more educated now, it seems that they take a more active part in the activities of their church, but religion is not studied as much. People don't know enough about the spiritual. There may be more praying in church, but not so much in the home. People may have more money and give more to charities but depend more on the government for their own needs. We depend too much on the government for the care of

our old people and our sick, not to mention the education of the young. Self-supporting and self-sufficient are a thing of the past. A lot is said about inflation these days, but not too many are willing to do much about it. When I was young the rich were very few. The workers could not afford cars, telephones, running water and central heating in their homes. They knew how to be happy with little. Sure, the companies were making profits but the workers had enough to survive. With wisdom and thrift they could even save enough to send some of their children to college. The unions have given their members a voice in the way the companies are doing business. Their members wanted more of the profits and got what they wanted. The results: The companies have asked more for their products so that what you could get for \$35.00 will cost you \$100.00 today. That is what I call inflation. Will the worker accept to work for less and the company bring their prices down? Our rulers depend too much on the votes of the workers to dare ask them that much. We would have to love our country much more than we do to accept such financial sacrifices. We are a commercial nation. We produce for sale but now more and more people have something for sale and many can produce as good as we do for less. So we are losing the world market. Our automobile industry is in trouble because foreign cars cost less. We have lost the electronic market because the Japanese can produce the goods at a better price than we. We still live in comfort but the families are smaller (less children), workers retire when they could still do a good job. Taxes are going up because the needs are there and there are less workers. We may forget that the real wealth of a country is the people. Of course, a few may manage to control too much of the wealth like in many underdeveloped countries but that can be remedied as it is done in South America now. We should never forget the principles and the way of life that have made us prosperous and peaceful. If we do we will go down like so many nations in the past. God prevent

Well, it seems that having lived in such a progressive period of time, I have souvenirs, something to write about. The following pages I hope will prove me right and also those who have suggested this undertaking. I know I am not too good a writer, and I have reasons to believe that I might have done better in French, but most of the people I am writing for do not read French. I hope the quality of the subject will help you forget the way I am treating it and you too, dear reader,

