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Harold Hartley is Back; Here's What Happened

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Today in Business

CRANBERRY ISLES, Me.—The damp chill of night was rolling in from the purpling sea. Waves broke with a hushed and frothy boom over the wall of broken rocks.

I sat on a shelf at the top of a 30-foot cliff lost in the majesty of the creeping dusk. The sun's red ball had long since slid behind the mountains.

At my feet was a plate of half-finished deviled eggs, sandwiches and a thermos bottle. I was at the end of a shore picnic but at the beginning of an adventure I could not foresee and would never forget.

The others had gone on. Jeannie and Marjorie Kitchen, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. John Kitchen who live in Crow's Nest across from Holliday Park, were up from Cape Cod. Scampering over the damp rocks Jeannie had fallen and cut her chin. They had all gone to phone the doctor.

ALONE, I PICKED UP the picnic litter and started home along the top of the cliff. My foot struck the grassy edge of a pie wedge into the cliff. I curled, found myself turning in free air and landed on a rock in the ravine in the middle my back.

The lights went out all over s world. My breath was gone. The blow was right over the heart. I sucked hard at the air trying to get some into my lungs—even a little would help.

I prayed for strength. I had to get out. There was no one who could lift me. I rolled over and tried my legs. I got to my feet. The pain was beginning to come. But it was not bad. I crawled on all fours.

I walked about 100 yards through the woods to an old station wagon in which I was driven home where my wife poured me a little whisky. She wanted to call the doctor. On an island it is hard to get a doctor. I said to wait until morning.

In the morning I had my answer. I could not roll over or get out of bed without screaming pain. I had to get down a narrow stairs. My wife had a doctor on the phone, two, in fact.

THE FIRST was our summer neighbor, Dr. Douglas MacFarland, retired Philadelphia authority on child's hearing. He gave me a red pain capsule and said he would save the needle until later.

The other doctor was on the mainland. He got the Coast Guard to send a fast boat and got a room at the Mt. Desert Island Hospital in Bar Harbor about 15 miles away. I never saw this doctor. But later I saw his bill. It was \$30.

The Coast Guard showed up, marched into the living room and dropped a "basket" on the floor. It was a steel mesh affair the shape of a coffin. I had seen "baskets" before. Undertakers use them at grade-crossing accidents to pick up the pieces. I decided to stay out of the "basket."

Dr. MacFarland gave me the merciful needle and I made my way through the woods to the dock. One of the Coast Guardsmen, all trim youngsters in tight-fitting blue jeans, threw a canvas coat over my shoulders, then opened the throttle. The boat churned forward and drew an arc of white spray over the sea.

At the town dock of the quaint little seaside village of Southwest Harbor, the fire department ambulance met me. This time I got on the stretcher and we rolled through some of the most beautiful landscape in the world to the hospital where I met one of the most remarkable men I have ever known.

He and a technician were in the X-ray room. He was in wrinkled green operating-room clothes. He talked straight. I felt confident.

HE WAS A WORKING doctor. They rolled me on the X-ray table. He knew from long experience what was wrong.

He was Dr. Raymond E. Weymouth, chief of staff of the 150-bed hospital. He had been there 24 years. After he looked at the wet photo plates he said, "You have three breaks in your back. That happened to me 25 years ago.

"I was a state trooper chasing bootleggers over the gravel roads of Maine during prohibition. They used to let us catch up with them and come along side, then they would crowd us into the ditch. I still have about 10 or 15 of those men's 'corsets' at home which I wear once in awhile."

I asked if I would have to wear a plaster cast. He said, "No. I'll arch your back on a bed for something towards 21 days. Then I'll put you in a brace. After that you will be all right."

Then came the hypodermics. They kept coming, one about every four hours. At times even that was not enough. One night I had so many I went out of my head. When I came to there was an orderly and a nurse sitting beside my bed. They had put sideboards on it. A bad roll or fall and I could damage the spinal column and be paralyzed.

Every time I moved they grabbed me. The next day I learned I had made a few speeches during the night. The drug had acted like a "truth serum." And I still do not know what I told.

THE TROUBLE was the stretched abdomen. It "pocketed" gas and made a steady, stabbing pain. The doctor tried to push one of those rubber hoses into my stomach through my nose. He could get it into the back of my mouth but when he said, "Swallow it," I couldn't do it. He gave up. He started giving me deep muscle shots of thorozone, a tranquilizer, in the hip. These had a double-barreled effect. The jab was deep but when the nurse pulled the needle out I felt a cramp. It was a heavy load, enough to make me dreamy and the furniture would float around the room.

My good wife had already set up her daily schedule by boat and car, 24 miles both ways. One of the bad nights when the needle took over, she stayed all night and dozed in a chair beside my bed.

What overwhelmed me was the unfathomable kindness of friends. I was 1200 miles away from most of them. That they could reach me so quickly amazed me. Phone calls and telegrams, the parade of flowers and bundles of cards and letters. Books and jellies, too.

They are people you pass on the street at home, exchange a word or two and go on. But in trouble they were there. Their flow of words and wishes tightened my throat more than once.

When the cards began to come there was a big one from The Times staff, another with more than 100 names on it from the card room at the Columbia Club. And Mary Binford and Thelma Jones in the office of the Indianapolis Real Estate Board sent me a round robin with all the names in the office.

AFTER 12 DAYS my brace came. It was flown up from Florida. And when the doctor came in to put it on he looked like a tinsmith. He had a pair of ugly looking metal shears and a Phillips No. 2 screw driver.

Living in a steel jacket is something else. I could not bathe or feed myself although the food was as fine as anything you would get at the Waldorf.

I will tell you about that tomorrow, including one four-hour lunch in which I did not even open my mouth.