

# The Newfie Bullet

Christmas, 1958, I was just 15 and had made it home to South Branch from the Christian Brothers boarding school in St. John's, a 22 hr bump and grind ride by train, the 'Newfie Bullet'. Boy was I ever glad to get home. After 4 months of hustle and bustle in the city, it was so nice to be with my mom and dad and family and friends. Pure heaven...

Then came the dreaded time to go back on a Saturday, Jan 03. I had an \$8. upper berth reserved in a sleeper car but opted to go a day early instead, in coach class because of a pending snow storm. I didn't want to get stuck in snow on the famous Gaff Topsail. I climbed aboard the train at 10 am on a Friday along with two of my sisters. One was going to nursing school and the other for a joy ride, coach class all the way. You see, we had free train rides because our old man worked with the railway.

Now all went well until we got to Corner Brook. The train was losing time and filling up fast. My sisters were seated together across and just back from me while I had to share my seat with an old lady about 45 yrs old.

During the night we passed by Gaff Topsail OK, then at Buchan's Jct. a men's hockey team barged on board, on their way to Grand Falls. What a racket, there were players, hockey sticks, hockey bags and all kinds of stuff strung on the floor along the aisles, cigarette smoke everywhere. My sisters were in heaven, all happy and giggley, while I cowered by the window next to that old lady who was all 'powdered up'.

Grand Falls came and went, along with the hockey team, and the train losing time all the while. Our bologna sandwiches were long gone by now!

During the night we stopped in the middle of nowhere, piles of snow all around. Another passenger train was stuck in snow up ahead they said. By this time there was no heat, lights or water. Not nice. A lot of people snuggled up, but not me.... too much powder!!! Early in the morning a helicopter came by with some water and sandwiches for the couple of hundred of us on board.

We arrived in Clarendville early Sunday morning, where food, water and fuel was loaded aboard. Then we were told we could have one free meal each, sleeping car passengers first. A lineup of about 3 coaches long was formed and I stuck close behind my sisters. When I made it to the dining car door the man said, "filled up", leaving me next in line. I thought I was doomed, but I finally got my meal... A choice of fish or bologna with two potatoes. Nothing ever tasted as good.

Still stopped that evening we were told we could walk to a hotel nearby for a free meal. No such luck. But at least we could buy sandwiches. Meanwhile the train behind caught up to us, what a jumble of hungry people. Oh dear. That evening we headed east again and got as far as Goobies. Stopped again, train up ahead. A small store was close by and I watched some passengers head through the snow towards it. One fellow came back and said "lard Jesus, by time I got der, all was lef was ball point pens and pocket combs".

We finally arrived in St. John's at 8am on Monday, 70 hrs by train, coach class. Believe it or not I think I was happy to be there, back to boarding school for another few months. Oh, but I just couldn't wait to get back home again on that Newfie Bullet.