



BOO!

see page 62

The Standard

COMICS
NOVEL
10 CENTS

weekend

VOL. 15, No. 44

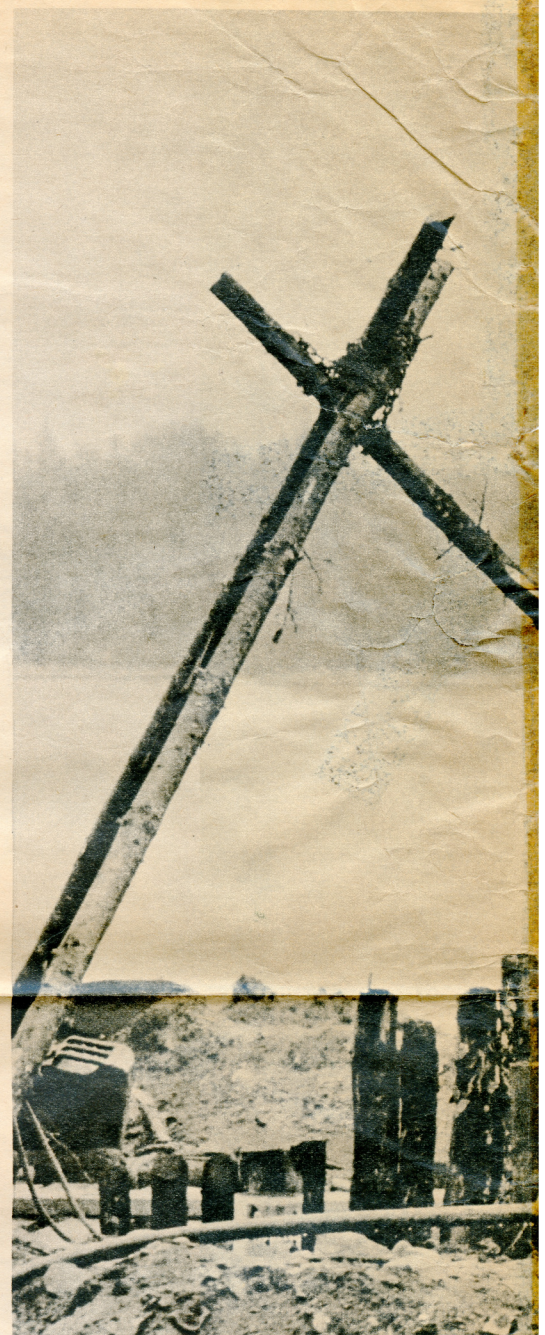
MAGAZINE

OCT. 30, 1968
Montreal, Nov. 6



Louis Jaques — Weekend Magazine

Belief that he was close to fabled treasure of Oak Island, off Nova Scotia coast, kept Restall digging. The above picture shows son Rickey, wife Mildred, Restall and other son Bobbie in 1961 Carnie, their pet, waits (R) near hole where hunt ended in death.



DEATH ON TREASURE ISLAND

Robert Restall, his son Bobbie and two helpers went down into the hole for gold. They didn't come back

By Mildred Restall
as told to Cyril Robinson
Weekend Magazine

ON TUESDAY, Aug 17, 1965 Robert Restall's six-year hunt for the treasure of Oak Island ended. The 59-year-old Restall, his son, Bobbie, 24, and two helpers were overcome by fumes and died in the water-filled bottom of a 27-foot deep pit they were digging to help draw water from the main treasure shaft. At the time, according to his wife, Mildred, Restall felt he was very close to the fabled \$30 million pirate treasure people had been seeking for 170 years.

Mildred Restall joined her husband on the lonely island off the Nova Scotia coast in 1960. With her husband and sons Bobbie and Rickey, 14, she endured the primitive conditions of the long years of hunting. This is her story

THE EDITORS

THE SUMMER I settled on Oak Island, N.S., the last of the oak trees died. And surprisingly enough, this was the occasion for a small celebration, because legend had it that when all the oak trees died this small island would give up its hidden hoard of pirate treasure.

But that was five years ago. Five years of living in a 16-by-16-foot cabin with no running water and few conveniences. Five years of living on a small island with no neighbors — and with no other woman to talk to. Five years of watching my husband and oldest boy dig for a treasure they never found.

Now it is all over. My husband and my older son are dead. They died at the bottom of a gas- and water-filled shaft they thought would finally lead them to the pirate gold supposedly buried here. They died, in fact, just when my husband was convinced that another few days would see him find this treasure.



Frank Prazak — Weekend Magazine

It all began innocently enough. In fact, when my husband, Bob, first told me that he was going to Oak Island to hunt for the treasure that Captain Kidd (or some other pirate) was supposed to have buried there, I thought it was a gag. That was in 1955 and we were living in Hamilton. We were very comfortable there. Bob had a good job in the pipe-and-drain business and we had two boys, Bobbie, 14, and Rickey, four, and a daughter, Lee. After a lifetime of wandering it seemed that at last we had settled down.

I was very happy in Hamilton. I had met and married Bob in England when I was 18. I was a dancer and Bob drove a motorcycle in an act called the Wall of Death. After we were married I became his partner in the act. We changed the name of the act to the Globe of Death because we rode our motorcycles inside a huge steel ball. Bob drove his motorcycle up from the bottom around the top of the globe. I drove mine horizontally along the curved sides—to keep from falling from the top or from the sides we had to drive at about 65 miles per hour.

We travelled all over Europe, and then came to Canada, where we worked with circuses and carnivals. Finally we settled in Hamilton and I believed we would live there forever.

But then Bob heard about Oak Island and the fabulous treasure supposedly buried here. He read everything he could find about the place, which is 45 miles down the south shore coast from Halifax and a little more than three

miles offshore from the vacation resort of Chester. Bob realized that the treasure would not be easy to find. After all, people had been looking for it for 170 years. Once, I learned, Franklin D. Roosevelt joined a group (in 1909) to hunt for this hoard of pirate gold. Even so, Bob was convinced that the treasure was actually there. So in October, 1959, after getting a contract with the owner of the island, he went with Bobbie to Oak Island and began the hunt that was to end in death for them both.

I came here in June, 1960, with Rickey, who was then nine. Lee was married by this time, so she did not come with me.

When I joined Bob on the island he was very excited. The digging had been going well and he was more convinced than ever that he would eventually find the treasure. I must admit that all I could see were some holes in the ground.

People always ask me if I really believed that there was a treasure buried here. Well, I always felt there *could* be a treasure here. But really, my faith was in my husband, Bob. I felt that if there was a treasure, he would find it. That's all I cared about.

Actually, once I was on the island I saw little point in debating about the treasure. Bob was convinced he was right and we all became bound up in the business of looking for it.

For most of my years here I had plenty to do. When I got to the island my

Continued on next page



DEATH ON TREASURE ISLAND

Continued from preceding page

home was a 16-by-16 foot cabin made of rough unfinished boards.

Inside there was one big room, lined with plywood and insulated against the cold. Heat was supplied by a space heater and I did the cooking on a propane-gas stove. Later, Bob built an extension where I could do my washing.

We all ate together in this cabin — and in the evenings we gathered there. The boys had another cabin, about the same size, close by where they slept.

These cabins had no electricity at first, but the biggest hardship was the lack of running water. Our cabin was at the top of the island, near the Money Pit. This was the shaft which was supposed to lead to the treasure. I learned that it was first started in 1795 when a young man named Daniel MacInnis and two companions landed here. They saw some giant oaks, and noticed that one of them — growing apart from the others — had one of its limbs cut off square, with the end charred. Underneath this limb was a circular depression in the ground which looked as though someone had buried something there.

Over the years they dug down about 95 feet, uncovering layers of planks at regular 10-foot intervals. But eventually the Atlantic waters flooded in through underground passages and they had to give up.

Later other people, using drills, probed even deeper and brought up small links from a solid gold chain.

Down there was where the pirate gold was supposed to be hidden. And while it was covered or guarded by tons of surging Atlantic water — water my husband was attempting to block off by sinking a series of other shafts around the Money Pit — we had none that we could use.

But close by was a hole in the ground, obviously the result of a dynamite explosion set off by an earlier treasure hunter and about 50 feet across and 45 feet deep. This served as our well, as the seepage from the rain and melting snow gathered there. We carried the water in pails to the cabin, a distance of about 300 feet. Then, before we dared use it, we boiled and strained this water.

Naturally, under these conditions, we had no indoor plumbing.

To give you some idea of how primitive the living conditions were, I should mention that moment about two years ago when we got electricity in the cabin. Bob had brought in a diesel engine to hasten the work in the shafts. We also used this power to generate electricity. And when it first became available we all sat around and made toast on an electric toaster. We made toast, buttered it and ate it. We simply couldn't get enough.

Of course, even with this power we had no TV. But I didn't mind this as I would prefer a good book any time.

I never said anything about it, but I never did get accustomed to the winters. Then work stopped in the shafts and we were on our own in the cabin. We would read, listen to the radio, play cards, chess, checkers and Monopoly. Rickey made model airplanes and Bobbie read about racing cars.

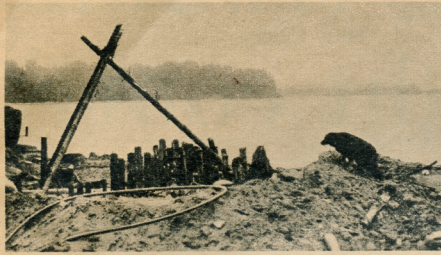
But even then, we got bored. At those times Bobbie would say: "Let's spend the money we are going to get from the treasure."

Mind you, none of us had any way of knowing how much this treasure would amount to. But all of us had read that the Oak Island treasure was supposed to be worth \$30 million — although how anyone could know how much something no one had



The widow, clad in black, leaves cemetery after burial of her husband and son who, with two other men, were overcome by fumes and died in pit. Her other son, Rickey, 14, is at far left.

Continued on page 6



ever seen might be worth I couldn't tell you. So this gave a lot of scope to our game. My husband always started off the "let's spend the money" game by saying that the first thing we would buy would be "His and Her" yachts. Bobbie would then talk about the racing cars he would build.

Now that I think back, I don't think I ever said very much during these times. Perhaps all I really wanted was that Bob would get what he wanted. If he did that, then all the rest of us would be all right. I knew that.

These were the times, too, when I felt most lonely. All I heard was the male point of view. It was like being in a play with no lines to say I would have given anything—or almost anything—to walk down a familiar street, see a familiar face. To have another woman to talk to. Or just be walking along and have someone say, "Hello, Mildred."

It is true that Halifax is not too far away, and places like Chester and Bridgewater are just a few miles across the water. But it didn't seem right that I should go away on pleasure trips when Bob was working so hard, and was putting all his money into this thing. Eventually, of course, he found partners who helped him with financing the work. But he put everything he had into this venture, so I very seldom left the island.

There was also the worry about storms. In the winter, when we did have some free time, the weather was unpredictable and the bay treacherous. I remember one Christmas when Bob and I went to Bridgewater to buy presents for the boys.

We had arranged for Bobbie to pick us up later that night on the mainland shore in our 16-foot motorboat. In the evening, the storm hit, a real blizzard. In the bay the water can be like glass. Then you see the dark blue come along and then the surface ripples. Within minutes whitecaps start to appear and then heavy seas roll in.

Unknown to us at this moment Bobbie was in serious trouble. He had left the island to pick us up as planned. He was well outside the sheltered cove when the storm struck. Then his engine quit, and the boat began to run with the heavy seas. He put out



Adventurous couple toured Europe and North America in a death-defying motorcycle act. They rode their motorcycles in circuses and carnivals inside a huge steel ball at speeds up to 65 m.p.h.

DEATH ON TREASURE ISLAND

Continued from page 4

an anchor, but the seas were so heavy the line holding the anchor snapped.

Pushed by wind and waves, the boat headed for the rocky shore where the breakers were boiling. Bobbie grabbed an oar to hold the boat away from the rocks and, drenched by icy seas and with aching arms, gradually pushed and shoved his way to a sheltered cove.

Naturally, we were overjoyed when we found him. But we were also aware that Rickey was on the island alone and it was a very wild night. So, after fixing the engine, we headed back. Normally the trip takes about 10 minutes, but this terrible night it took 4½ hours.

The early spring was actually the worst time of all. The grass was brown and the trees were rusty and a cold, bleak wind blew and blew and blew. But we were never ill. I had only two colds in the five years.

I should mention, however, that Rickey loved the island, particularly in the summer. He said he wanted to take it back to Hamilton with him when he left. He felt this way even though he had no companions his own age to play with—he couldn't even attend a school and kept up his schooling with correspondence courses from the Nova Scotia government. He became an avid bird watcher and once, when he discovered that a bird had made its nest in a path, he fenced off the area so no one could walk there until the eggs had hatched.

His one constant companion was Carnie, a Belgian sheep dog. Carnie never left his side and if Rickey went to the mainland with the men he would never budge from the shore until he came back. Even if it snowed or rained, Carnie would just curl up on the beach and stay there until Rickey returned.

But even while I recall all these things so clearly, I must admit that there was always something unreal about the whole experience. This feeling persisted right up to the very end, which was Tuesday, Aug. 17.

On that day Bob went to work at 6 A.M. in one of the shafts on the beach. Bobbie joined him at 7 A.M. Bob at this time felt that he was close to finishing his quest—he would find the treasure very shortly.

At 2 o'clock that afternoon Bob came up from the shaft to tell me. "Don't forget, dear, I'm going to Halifax today. I'll be leaving at 3:30, so I'll be up a few minutes before 3 to wash and change."

That was the last time I saw him alive. I was wandering around that day as I didn't have much to do, so about 10 minutes before 3 o'clock I walked toward the shaft on the beach. And I saw one of the men who had been working with Bob in the shaft. He was soaking wet and shaking.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "What is it?"

He told me straight. Bob and Bobbie were gone.

I just couldn't believe it. Not then. Or the next day. Never. But I did realize that it was all over. Finished. That was it.

My daughter came from Oakville, Ont., the next day and I realized I had wonderful friends along the mainland shore. They were unbelievably good to me.

Even so, now I feel that I would like to leave the island. But my friends are here now, and this is where Bob and Bobbie are buried. I'll have to take each step one at a time.

Those in the treasure-hunting venture—Bob's partners—still have faith in the project and will continue the hunt. That's what Bob would have wanted. But my heart is no longer in it. ◀