

The ill-fated TRANSLAKE NO. 3 departed Owen Sound at 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday, September 16, 1958, bound for the Point Pelee area of Lake Erie. The rig was towed by the fishtug E. D. M. PURVIS, owned by C. W. Lougheed and Son Fisheries, of Owen Sound.

E. D. M. PURVIS (C.130226), originally steam-powered, was built by James Purvis at Gore Bay, on Manitoulin Island, in 1918, and was named for his daughters Edith, Dorothy and Maude. She was a composite tug (71.0 feet x 18.0 x 8.6, 89 Gross and 68 Net Tons) with steel frames covered by three-inch white oak planking. The tug was mainly used to transport fish twice weekly from the Purvis fishery at Quebec Harbour (on the south shore of Michipicoten Island, Lake Superior) to Sault Ste. Marie. The tug remained in the Purvis family until sold in July 1956 to Clemens Warren Lougheed to replace his fish tug G & L, which had sunk.

In October of 1957, the PURVIS had stranded on Griffith's Island in Georgian Bay. She was taken off by the tug HELEN HINDMAN and brought to the Russel-Hipwell yard in Owen Sound for repairs. HELEN HINDMAN was featured in "The Scanner", Vol. XXXI, No. 9, as Ship of the Month No. 250 (Mid-Summer 1999 issue), but at the time of that writing, the author was unaware of the 1957 salvage job and the 1958 TRANSLAKE NO. 2 tow.

It was expected that the 250-mile trip to Lake Erie with TRANSLAKE NO. 3 in tow would require seven days, since the towing speed was only expected to be two miles per hour or less, depending upon the weather. Veteran Owen Sound mariner, Capt. Jack McKay, was in charge of the E. D. M. PURVIS, with owner, Capt. Clem Lougheed, aboard for the delivery along with crew members Jack Edmonstone, Dalton Lang and Eddie Robinson, all of Owen Sound. The weather turned against them.

"The Owen Sound Sun-Times" reported on Wednesday, September 17, 1958, that Peter Horn, 35, of Edmonton, Alberta, an employee of Translake Drilling Company, lost his life, while Clifford Wilson, of 5th Avenue East, Owen Sound, an employee of Russel-Hipwell Engines Ltd., escaped a similar fate about 8 o'clock the previous evening when TRANSLAKE NO. 3 went over on its side north of Cape Croker and subsequently sank. Peter Horn had only been working with Translake Drilling for the previous three weeks.

Patrick Bazett, President and General Manager of Translake Drilling, in a statement to the "Sun-Times", said the cause of the drilling rig overturning was unknown. He stated that the rig had been double-checked by the best authorities in Canada, and that there was every reason to believe it was safe in every way. Mr. Bazett stressed that Russel-Hipwell was in no way responsible, and he pointed out that the first rig, built by the same firm, had withstood 40 m.p.h. winds on Lake Erie while being moved. TRANSLAKE NO. 2 had proven entirely satisfactory in every way.

The survivor, Clifford Wilson, told the "Sun-Times" that in the last minutes before the rig overturned, there was so much water coming in on the starboard side of the rig that the bilge pump was unable to keep up with the intake. He and Peter Horn decided to head for the tug E. D. M. PURVIS to fetch another pump in the 30-foot aluminum cabin cruiser CAROL ANN (also reported as CAROLYN, but most likely named for Norval Hipwell's daughter CAROL), which was tied to the drilling rig and was being used to take men between the rig and the tug when necessary while the rig was being towed to Lake Erie.

At the last minute, Peter Horn called out for Wilson to wait for him so that he could go down to the rig's galley to retrieve his personal effects. Meanwhile, Wilson had the CAROL ANN's 140-h.p. engine running. When he saw the drilling rig suddenly list, he cast off and made for the PURVIS, which was some 500 feet distant. As the rig overturned, the 50-foot-long spuds whipped into the air. Had one hit or come close to the CAROL ANN, Clifford Wilson would also have been a casualty.