

The National Film Board of Canada and Milestone Film & Video present

# WHITE THUNDER

The Story of Varick Frissell and The Viking Disaster

A film by Victoria King



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## Victoria King, Director



Photo credit: Kent Martin

An independent filmmaker based in St. John's, Victoria King studied film theory and new media at Concordia University. *White Thunder* is her first documentary. She is currently developing film projects on the Churchill River hydroelectric operation, the largest on the continent, and the social impact of the Newfoundland fishery crisis.

## Annette Clarke, Producer. Factory Lane Productions

Annette Clarke's credits include the NFB releases *Democracy à la Maude*, *When Women Kill*, and the series *The Way We Were*. In 1999 she started Ruby Line Productions, a Newfoundland-based company responsible for *Jailhouse Romance* and the upcoming releases *Starring.nf* and *Confidential Tracks*.

## Kent Martin, Producer

Kent Martin has produced and directed some 50 films for the NFB over the last 25 years. Current releases produced by Martin include *Westray* (2001), nominated for a 2002 Genie award, an innovative documentary that re-creates some of the *Westray* coal mine disaster's most harrowing moments; *Tommy...A Family Portrait* (2001), a moving (and hilarious!) tribute to the late Newfoundland comic genius Tommy Sexton; and *Waging Peace* (2001), the story of one school's dramatic transformation.

## Varick Frissell (1903-1931)



Born in 1903, Frissell grew up on Manhattan's moneyed Upper East Side and studied at Yale. Caught up in the early fad for home-movies and mentored by renowned documentarian Robert Flaherty, the inquisitive Frissell quickly grasped the potential of the emerging documentary form.

But what would a dashing New Yorker be doing in Newfoundland in the 1920s? In 1921 he heard a lecture by Dr Wilfred Grenfell, who had established medical outposts along the isolated Labrador coast. The young filmmaker was drawn to visit the mission and to explore the northern wilderness. The trip left a lasting impression.

Frissell was overwhelmed by the stark beauty of the landscape - and particularly struck by the dangerous labors of the Newfoundland seal hunt. He successfully sought the backing of Paramount Pictures to make a feature film, tentatively titled *White Thunder*, hauling a large crew and heavy equipment to the rolling ice floes of the North Atlantic.

Captain Bob Bartlett himself played the ship's captain, working alongside local sealers and American actors. The Hollywood melodrama marked movie history - and eventually claimed Frissell's own life.

Capitalizing on the international news of the disaster, the US distributor released the film as *The Viking* to an enthusiastic public. Seventy years later, Victoria King respectfully revives Frissell's quest to record the stunning grandeur of the land that romanced him.

For today's audiences - reared on the illusions of special effects - the sheer naturalness of Frissell's footage is breathtaking. Frissell did not live to show his film, but fortunately for us his spectacular images endure.

*White Thunder* extends Frissell's legacy, integrating astonishing footage from *The Viking* as well as his earlier documentaries, presenting evidence of a remarkable era and a remarkable land. *White Thunder* pays homage to a fascinating figure in early cinema and the age that fired his lively imagination.

## CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND OTHER ACCOUNTS OF THE DISASTER



### St. John's [NF] Daily News March 17, 1931

Feared Twenty Perished in Viking Disaster

#### FIFTY SURVIVORS REACH HORSE ISLAND

Whole Stern Blown off Ship by Explosion and those in Cabin Killed or Injured—Survivors With Injuries making Slow progress Over rough Ice—Steamers on Front Advise Would take Two Day Reach Scene

#### TWO RESCUE SHIPS ARE NOW WELL ON THE WAY

At 7.30 p.m. last night fifty survivors had landed in Horse Island report Captain Kean Jr., the steward and cook badly injured and wireless operator Clayton King, of Brigus, navigator William Kennedy, of St. John's, and the doctor druggist John Roche, of St. John's were missing. Survivors say the magazine exploded blowing the whole stern off the ship while the rest caught fire and is still burning. Men reaching the Island in absolutely exhausted condition and unable to give a coherent account of the disaster. Residents of the Island state there is insufficient food to supply the needs of the influx and no medical supplies of any kind are available. Many disabled men are being brought along over the ice by comrades and making fair progress towards Island. It is indicated that twenty is likely to cover the total death list but the number of injured is not known. The fate of the three American picture men is not known but the owners of the ship believe they would be in the saloon at that hour, which was forward of where the explosion occurred.

## LATEST MESSAGES RECEIVED 7.30 p.m. HORSE ISLAND

To minister Mines and fisheries:—

March 16th— fifty or more men landed , others making fair progress towards Island. Explosion as yet unaccounted for. Two crowds have landed and others in sight. Later crowds bringing disabled men. Moderate north-north-west wind, temperature moderately cold, clear, ice conditions very rough and uneven. Men cannot account for what are dead as yet. Operator, navigator and doctor missing. Terribly hard to get information from men.  
—(Sgd.) OPERATOR

## TWENTY KNOWN DEAD

A message received about 4 p.m. yesterday from the operator at Horse Island stated: "men continually arriving at Island. Twenty men are known to be dead."

## LEFT PORT MARCH 9

The Viking left port at 2 p.m. on March 9th. The ship did not report on Monday. On Tuesday the ship reported 20 miles east-southeast Cabot Island in heavy gale. No report was received on Wednesday. Thursday she was at Pool's Island in heavy weather; Friday night the ship passed Snap Rock at 6 p.m. in clear water. Saturday the Viking reported off Horse Harbor. No report received Sunday.

S. S. Viking signed a crew of 150 men, but twelve apparently did not go. Captain Abram Kean , Jr. wired the owners leaving port that he had 138 men on board, two stowaways, Edward Cronin, Plymouth Road, and Michael Gardner, Fleming Street. as well as Varrick Frissel, re-taking scenes for the picture "White Thunder", accompanied by A. E. Penrod and Harry Sargent of New York.

## HELP DESPATCHED

Arrangements were made by the government to dispatch the ocean-going tug "Foundation Franklin" and that ship left about 1.30 with Captain Burgess as pilot, taking Dr. Blackler and Nurse Bartlett.

At 6 p.m. S. S. Sagona, Captain Jacob Kean, left taking Dr. Paterson, Dr. Moores, Dr. Stanley martin, and Nurse Paton and Rose Berrigan.

The following are the official messages received and sent yesterday morning:—

Horse Islands, March 16,— at 9 p.m. last night heard, terrible explosion. Early this morning wreckage of burning steamer sighted about eight miles east of here. Also men traveling on ice towards island. No particulars at hand yet. Ice in bad condition. Heavy sea.. Wind blowing off shore. First crowd men may reach Island, others have little chance. Making very slow progress. People only have sufficient supplies for selves. Also no medical assistance here; no chance getting to main land.

H. B. C. Lake.

## FIRST LOSS IN OVER HALF CENTURY

The Viking is the first sealing ship Bowring Brothers, Ltd. have lost in over half a century, when the Hawk, Captain Arthur Jackman, was lost off Cape John on May 14th 1876, without loss of lives.

## DISASTER CAME WITH DRAMATIC SWIFTNESS IN UNSUSPECTING SHIP

Peaceful quiet of Sunday Evening on Shipboard turned in Seconds Into Scene of Terror and Destruction—Food on Horse Island Insufficient but Sagona Has Good supply.

The peaceful Sunday night of hundred and forty men on board of the little sealer Viking, 276 tons, snugly ensconced in the ice fields off the peninsula between White Bay and Green Bay to the south of the Horse Island was broken at nine o'clock by a terrific blast heard on the sparsely settled Horse Island, eight miles away, a blast that shattered the steamer and set it on fire and took a toll of at least twenty men, maiming many others and turning the whole ship's crew adrift on the heavy ice to escape the flames of their burning vessel. The first word was received in St. John's Monday morning, a gruesome telegram describing the scene of the disaster while the scattered band of survivors were slowly and toilsomely making their way over the heaving ice filed, tossed by a heaving sea, to the Horse Islands. Up to the fall of darkness Monday night fifty survivors had landed on the Island.

## GOVERNMENT SEND AID

As soon as word of the disaster was received the Government dispatched the ocean going tug Foundation Franklin harboring here to the scene. Dr. Blackler and nurse Bartlett were sent away on her and before darkness the steamer Sagona, was got away, with Drs. Paterson, Moore and Martin and nurses Paton and Merrigan with supplies of food and clothing for the survivors.

The crew of the Viking consisted of one hundred and thirty eight men, two boys - stowaways from St. John's, and three Americans, Varrick Frissell who was retaking some scenes for a picture made from the same ship last season, A. E. Penrod and Harry Sargent all of New York and a local man. The ship carried three engineers and six firemen all from St. John's.

## SUPPOSED MAGAZINE EXPLODED

It is customary to carry supplies of blasting powder to loosen the ice and clear a channel for the ship and this would be of considerable quantity, but whether the explosion came from this source or the boilers is not clearly indicated. That the detonation was heard eight miles distant on the Horse Islands would indicate. however, a blast of explosives rather than a boiler burst.

## FIRST DISASTER FOR 17 YEARS

The last bad sealing disaster occurred on March 31st 1914 when seventy-eight men from the steamer "Newfoundland" lost their ship in a blizzard and froze to death on the ice flows. while on the very day that year the steamer "Southern Cross" on her way home deeply laden

with seal pelts foundered at sea with loss of her whole crew of 173. Since the introduction of wireless there has been no serious disasters up till this one.

The Viking came to Newfoundland in 1904 and was owned by Bowring Brothers. Incidentally she is the first of that sealing fleet to meet disaster in fifty-two years. The Viking was the smallest of the fleet; on the front to undertake the voyage this season. Due to difficulties in the oil market all crew were reduced this year, the total reduction amounting to six hundred men in past years, the Viking has carried as many as 276 men.

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT

The Following Official Bulletin was Issued by the Government Last Night and Sent to all Telegraph Offices in the Country.

St. John's, March 16—This Monday morning at eleven o'clock the Department of Mines and Fisheries received a wireless message from Horse Islands that there had been an explosion in an unknown steamer about eight miles eastward of Horse Island, and that the steamer was in flames. Later wireless messages reported men walking towards the island. A later message stated that some men had reached the Horse islands and reported that the steamer Viking, and that the magazine had exploded rear of the ship immediately sunk and that the rest of the ship started burning. A later message stated that Captain A. Kean Jr. was seriously injured, the cook, wireless operator, steward, navigator and doctor were missing. Impossible to wire further particulars as men who arrived on the island up to that hour were in such an exhausted condition that they could give no coherent story as to what had happened. Latest message received indicated probability of twenty being dead. Promptly on receipt of first telegram the Department of Marine and Fisheries arranged for the steamer "Foundation Franklin" to leave with doctor, nurse and medical supplies, which ship sailed at two-thirty, followed at six o'clock by the "Sagona" with three doctors and two nurses and complete equipment of medical and surgical supplies, also food and clothing supplies. Necessary telegraph officers are being kept open all night and all day tomorrow. Wireless operator at Horse Islands has been asked to telegraph names of all persons saved, injured, missing or dead, with full particulars of disaster. No reply received up to seven o'clock.

## VIKING BUILT IN 1881

S. S. Viking was built at Arendal, Norway, in 1881 and has been continuously engaged each season at the seal hunt since then. Last year the same ship made special trip at the conclusion of sealing voyage for the purpose of taking scenes for a movie picture illustrative of the sealing fleet and a hundred and twenty miles further north in the Straits of Belle Isle. The owners have not instructed them to proceed to the scene of the disaster. The Sagona has food supplies for a hundred and twenty men for fifteen days.

## MEN ADRIFT ON OCEAN

Miraculous Rescue Off Stern Wreckage.

Three Men Found Drifting on Wreckage of Stern of Viking fifteen Miles Off the Land Are Doing Well —Sagona's Captain Considers Most fortunate Chance— A Few Survivors Still Landing on Island—Five Men in Tragic Position.



PUBLIC DISPATCH  
Minister Marine & Fisheries  
St. John's

S. S Sagona, March 17—10.53 p.m.— Present condition of Kennedy, burnt about face, scalp wounds not serious. Sargent has eye affected but not in serious condition, best off of three. King has simple fracture of left leg, both feet frozen, shocked doing well, will advise to-morrow. Captain most fortunate in locating the three men as they were 22 miles from the scene of the accident. Captain says no chance of reaching Horse Island to-night as ice tight and heavy swells. Anxious to know casualties at the Horse Island so we may take necessary supplies ashore.

—Dr. Moore.

FIVE IN DIRE DISTRESS

To S. S. Ungava sent by Captain Kean of S.S. Viking, and picked up by Minister.

"Three men , second hand; and an-other sailor (five altogether?) About five or six miles east by south from center of the Island. Have been two nights and two days without food or water. Locate as quickly as possible. Men have legs broken.

— CAPTAIN ABRAM KEAN S.S. VIKING.

PUBLIC DISPATCH  
Minister Marine Fisheries.

SEALING SHIPS SEARCHING

Postal, March 17—

to steamers Ungava, Beothic, Neptune, Eagle, Bowring and Job's wiring all their ships tonight to make through search for victims Viking disaster tomorrow. Presume you heard that Sagona rescued three men from Viking wreckage. Capt Kean of Viking states that five disabled men still on ice five miles east by south Horse Islands. Suggest you keep out search parties all night tonight with food and water as men must now be nearly exhausted. Presumed all steamers in touch with each other keep me fully advised.

CREW AS APPEARING IN SHIP ARTICLES.

Captain Abram Kean Jr., Brookfield, Master; Alfred Kean, Brookfield, Second Hand; David Winter, Valleyfield, Master Watch; J. J. Wheeler, Lower Island Cove, 1st Master Watch; W. G. Johnstone, Job's Cove, Master Watch; George Day, Little Harbor, P. B., Bridgemaster; Henry Brown, 17 MullockStreet, Galleyman; William Goodwin, Trinity Bay, First Cook; Alfred Butt, Freshwater, Bridgemaster; Charles Fry, Brigus, Second Cook; John Austin , Cook;

Sealers—Patrick Gushue, Conception Hr.; John Lambert, 79 King's Road; Robert Cole, Conception Hr.; Michael Martin, Flatrock; Alphonsus Doyle, Gull Island; Isreal Foley,

Bonavista; Chesley Martin, Bonavista. James Street, Bonavista; Yetman Moulard, Bonavista; Wm. Bartlett of John, Georgetown, Brigus; Wm. Cole, Colliers; Walter Batten, Bareneed; Herbert Ryan, Port Rexton; Michael Martin, Torbay; Jacob Bradbury, (Thom.), Torbay; Nicholas Roache, Middle Cove; Dan Fleming, Spillar's Cove; Isaac Bradbury, Brigus; Michael Kinsella, Outer Cove; Edward Spracklin, Brigus; James Coady, Outer Cove; George Cross, Badger's Quay, John Soper, Carbonear; Fred Percey, Brigus; Arthur Richards, Brigus; Abram Dyke, 22 Beaumont Street; Albon Oakley, Wesleyville; Walter Power, Flatrock; Stephen Lush, Georgetown, Brigus; James Linthorne, Georgetown, Brigus; John Whitty, Georgetown, Brigus; John Ryan, Logy Bay; Malcolm Webber, Cupids; Jerry Quinian, Red Head Cove; Frank Dawe, Bay Roberts; George Linthorne, Georgetown, Brigus; Arch Linthorne, Georgetown, Brigus; John Breaker, Brigus; Roland LeGrow, Bauline; James Burke, Colliers; Benj. Ganey, Colliers; Ernest Newell, Burnt Head; Richard Conway, Colliers; Alfred Fifield, Trinity; Henry Sparkes, Georgetown, Brigus; Robert Bartlett, Marysvale; Harold Bishop, Burnt Head; James Dawe, Burnt Head; Richard Fowler, Burnt Head; William Fowler, Burnt Head; John Newell, Georgetown, Brigus; John Boland, Calvert; James White Greenspond; Joseph Kelly, Brigus; James Fey, Brigus; Sydney Burry, Greenspond; John Gosse, Torbay; Patrick Brown, colliers; Charles McGrath, Colliers; Joseph Cole, Colliers, Patrick Burke, Colliers; Joseph Brown, Colliers; Albert Sparkes, Sibley's, T. B. ; Joseph Lambert, King's Bridge Road; Edward Conway, Colliers; Jacob Ralph, Barsil's Square; Harold Batten, Bareneed; Wm. R. Boones, Bareneed; William Fleming, Bonavista; James Murray, Pouch Cove; Jacob Newell, Pouch Cove; Tom Fleming, Bonavista; Isreal Pearce, Bonavista; David Chaulk, Catalina; Gordon Loveys, Western Bay; Stanly Johnston, Job's Cove; Eli Garland, Caplin Cove, C.B. ; Simeon Garland, Caplin Cove, C. B. ; Edward Oliver, Gull Island, C. B. James Oliver, Gull Island, C. B. ; Joesph Oliver, Gull Island, C. B. ; Michael Martin, Flatrock; Nanshi Tippett, Catalina; Isaac Efford, Bareneed, C. B. ; Vincent Hewco, Torbay, Henry Codner, Torbay; Peter Berg, Wesleyville; Joseph Stockley, Brookfield, B. B. ; Victor Hicks, Bonavista; Albert Spracklin, Brigus; George Efford, North River; Zack Thistle, Pouch Cove; Walter Bursey, Lower Island Cove, C. B. ; Frank Flynn, Brigus, Ira Percy Brigus; Thomas Kennedy, Brigus; Simon S. Spracklin, Brigus; Noah Way, Bonavista, Alfred Way, Bonavista; Wilson Kennedy, Western Bay; Ernest Spracklin, Brigus; Edward Dalton, Western Bay; Paddy Spracklin, Brigus; Walter Crew, Flatrock; William John Doyle, Gull Island, C. B. Dan Brown, Brigus; John Roberts, Brigus; Fred Payne, Brigus, George Adams, Brigus, Edward Bragg, Pouch Cove; Ronald Gushue, Brigus; John Kenndy, Brigus; George H Youden, Brigus; Richard Walker, Brigus; John Doyle, Gull Island, C. B.; Ben Antle, Brigus; Patrick Bartlett, Brigus; Samuel Morgan, Seal Cove, Henry Sparkes, Brigus; George Spracklin, Brigus; Thomas Spracklin, Brigus; Charles Spracklin, Brigus;

William Kennedy, Job Street, Navigator; John J Roche, Top Battery Road, Doctor; Clayton King, Brigus, Marconi Operator; A James Young 26 McNeil Street, Food Inspector; Stephen Mullett, Wesleyville, Store Keeper; Ronald Carter, Pleasant Street, Boatswain; Joseph Murphy, 29 Cabot Street, Chief Engineer; Fred Carnell, Quidi Vidi Road, Second Engineer; H. Hansford, Shaw's Lane, Third Engineer;

Firemen— P. Whalen, 18 Spencer Street; Patrick Breen, 45 Flower John Burke, 18 Spencer Street; Richard Adams, 19 Brennan Street; Harold Wiseman, St. West, Anthony Taylor, MacFarlane Street .

Movie men— Varrick Frissell, A. E. Penrod, Harry Sargent, and helper (probably Noseworthy)

## PUBLIC DISPATCH

### Dept. Marine and Fisheries

March 18, 1931

#### ALWAYS HOPE FROM THE SEA

In the sad story that is gradually unfolding concerning the disaster to S. S. Viking on Sunday night, there are picked out, here and there, silver linings to the overshadowing cloud of sorrow. Of suffering, hardship and trials there was, unfortunately, a brimming cup. But outstanding among them all, and something that will appeal as well to popular imagination, is the story of the rescue of three injured men from the drifting wreckage of what was one the stern of a staunch steamer.

It requires no stretch of imagination to appreciate the feeling of these three survivors as they drifted steadily to sea on the shattered wreckage that at first proved their salvation, but threatened to become their deathbed from privation and exposure.

It requires, also, no vivid imagination to understand what must have been their feelings as, benumbed with exposure and weak from lack of food, they watched the smoke of the oncoming steamer.

Out of all the incidents, and when the full tale is told it will not be lacking in incidents of endurance and rescue, this rescue of men far out at sea on a fragment of wreckage will form an historic chapter in the annals of an industry that is packed full of outstanding incidents.

Apparently the list of survivors is slowly growing and there is yet hope that others may be located. Especially do we all hope that five men on the ice suffering from broken limbs and exposure and privation may be rescued as quickly as possible.

The rescue ships have no simple and easy task. While heavy ice impedes them, young ice also makes the progress of boats sent out difficult, and handicaps searchers in walking on the ice.

There is always hope from the sea, however and we are still of the belief that the first toll may be reduced. For the sake of mothers and children, sisters and wives we would say in all sincerity, "God Grant It"

#### PILOT HAS HAD MUCH ARCTIC FLYING EXPERIENCE.

New York, March 18.—(C.P.)— Dr. Lewis Frissell, father of Varick Frissell, has announced that Bernt Balchen noted flyer, would take off from Boston early to-day in an effort to reach Horse Island to get new of younger Frissell's fate. The big Sikorsky amphibian will carry food and medical supplies. Mechanics flew from Roosevelt filed early this morning to condition the plane at Boston. Bernt, who has extensive Arctic flying experience, will take the veteran birdmen, Randy Enslow, and Barney Barbin.

## DOCTORS TO MAKE ATTEMPT TO WALK TO HORSE ISLAND.

Crew of Imogene and Beothic will assist medical men—Survivors advised to walk to meet them and get injured to ship.

S S. Sagona, March 19—At 8 p.m. am making arrangements for doctors walk to Horse Islands to-morrow morning weather permitting. Ship now 5 miles east of Island, Imogene about mile west of us. Impossible to penetrate ice, Imogene and Beothic crew will assist in getting doctors on shore. Wind light, east by south.  
—Sgd KEAN

## BEOTHIC PICKS UP THREE SURVIVORS

At 10.15 yesterday morning the Minister of Marine and Fisheries has a message from S.S. Beothic via Fogo, stating that three survivors, named William Johnson, master watch; Alfred Kean, second hand and Frederick Bent, movie helper, had been rescued for a dory. All three were suffering from slight injuries by their condition was otherwise good.

It is presumed that this explains the statement previously made that some men were in a dory.

## PLANE TO SEARCH FOR FRISSELL

Mr. E. M. LeMessurier, secretary of the International Grenfell Association at St. John's had a message yesterday from the New England Grenfell Association as follows, "Frissell's family planning air search Thursday."

Mr. Varrick Frissel is a director of the Grenfell Association of America in New York.

About the same time Mr. Eric Bowring, director of Bowring Bros. Ltd. received a message from his brother, Mr. Charles W. Bowring, from New York, asking him to investigate the facilities for an airplane landing at Harbor Grace. The result of his enquiries were cabled to New York.

Mr. T. J. Meaney, correspondent of the United Press, last night received a message from his principals stating the Mr. Seth Low, chairman of the board of directors of Roosevelt Flying Field had been asked to try and get a plane to search, on behalf of relatives, for those missing, in the Viking disaster, but officials considered that under all the circumstances, the risks were too great.

Americans Seated at Table When Explosion Occurred  
Sargent Has Not Seen Them Since— Captain Winsor Thinks Missing Men  
Went down with Wreck

## PUBLIC DISPATCH

Minister of Marine and Fisheries:

*Sagona*. via Fogo, March 18, 6.56 p.m.—Frissell and Penrod were sitting at table with me when the explosion occurred. Did not see them again. Have notified my family of my safety.—(Sgd. ) Sargent.

## PUBLIC DISPATCH

### Minister of Marine and Fisheries:

St. John's, March 18—Ask Sargent to wireless me any definite information he has regarding Frissell and Penrod as we have no report of them whatever and I am anxious to communicate Sargent's report to their relatives. One hundred and twenty-one still on Island. Have advised as many as are physically fit to walk to nearest ship, preferably *Sagona*. Keep me fully advised of any men which reach your ship, also their condition as I will need all detail and information so as to make hospital and there arrangements.— H. B. C. Lake.

## PUBLIC DISPATCH

### Minister of Marine and Fisheries

*S.S. Ungava*, via Fogo, March 129, 9.34 p.m.— Gave up search at 4 p.m. Only one body around wreckage. *Eagle*, *Neptune*, *Ungava* gave it a complete search. Only the one body to be found. Considering the way the hull was blown up think the remainder of the missing must have gone down. Started searching yesterday at 4 p.m. 7 miles east of Horse Islands, finished to-day 28 miles south-southeast Gull Island. East wind now. Think men will have no trouble to get aboard ships in the morning.—(Sgd. WINSOR)

## Wife of One Movie Party in New York on Verge of Collapse— Usually Accompanied her Husband

New York, March 18—(C.P.)—Mrs. Arthur G. Penrod in on the verge of collapse after three days of uncertainty as to her husband's fate following the *Viking* Explosion. She and her children, Alpha, eighteen , and John, sixteen, are still hoping that he may be found. Mrs. Penrod usually accompanied her husband, but it is stated, did not go with the *Viking* owing to a sealer's superstition that a woman would jinx the ship.

## ALL SURVIVORS NOW ON BOARD SAGONA

Ship Hopeful of Getting Clear of Ice To-day— Had Lights of *Prospero* in Sight Last Night — Latter Has Crew of Auxiliary Aboard — Provisions Needed at Horse Island

## TWO PLANES ARRIVE

All the survivors of the *Viking* disaster now on board (save only Gardner, the stowaway on *Beothic*) numbering 126 souls, the *Sagona* should likely get free from ice pack this morning and begin her homeward voyage. Sunday night the *Beothic* and *Imogene* were reported alongside her and the ships hope to follow in the wake of the more powerful ships as they force out of the ice Monday.

The *Prospero* forced in through one mile of ice Sunday afternoon and reached the *Eagle* transferring on board from the latter ship 28 men, crew of "*Sir William*" in good health. Sunday night the *Sagona* reported the *Prospero's* lights were in sight about four miles off and today the latter ship should be able to reach the Horse Islands and land provisions which must be badly needed there now because of the influx of the *Viking* survivors.

## EIGHT HOSPITAL CASES

Of the sixteen injured, most were reported last night in fair condition, but eight would need hospital care on arrival. The wireless operator Clayton King who with Sargent the American, and **Capt. Kennedy**, was rescued from the shattered stern portion with broken leg and frozen feet, has so far escaped amputation of the limb, doctors may be able to save it. The lone American survivor was able to sit up Saturday and had regained his sight which was injured by the explosion. **Capt. Kennedy**, with pneumonia, was making fair progress.

The injured from the Island were brought off to the ship by the *Viking* survivors who went ashore from the *Sagona* Saturday afternoon. These were accompanied by 22 men from the Island and reached the *Sagona* at ten o'clock Sunday Morning.

The *Foundation Franklin* which was due Saturday night rode out a gale about fifty miles north of St. John's Saturday and Sunday. She will likely arrive this morning with the body of **Patrick Bartlett** of Brigus on board.

## TWO PLANES ARRIVE

Two planes reached Newfoundland yesterday from the Maritimes. The plane sent by Dr. Frissell to search the ice and shores in the vicinity of the *Viking* Disaster for bodies, landed at Humbermouth yesterday afternoon, and was later towed to Corner Brook as her motors were put out of action temporarily by dash of salt water when she alighted. Arrangements for gasoline supplies miscarried and the aviators must wait the arrival of a special train sent out at six last evening. The other plane landed at Hampden late yesterday afternoon. This is the plane and pilot which flew to Greenly Island and their purpose is solely to take pictures of the scene of the disaster it is understood.

## Latest Checkup on Those Still Missing

Mr. Clyde H. B. Lake, Minister of Marine and Fisheries has endeavored to make up an accurate statement of rescued and probable missing. There are now 121 men on the island and aboard the ships. The *Viking* had about 148 or 150 men on board, though owing to interchange of tickets and other fortuitous circumstances, it is well nigh impossible to exactly state the ship's complement. He therefore estimates that 27 or 28 men are missing. Latest check-ups indicate that some previously believed missing are safe, and the most accurate estimate at the moment shows the following as the list of those as yet unaccounted for.

Varrick Frissell, New York  
A. E. Penrod, New York  
E. Cronin (stowaway) St. John's.

David Winter, master-watch, Valleyfield.  
J. Wheeler, master-watch, Lower Island  
Cove

William Goodwin, cook, New  
Melbourne.  
Charles Fry, cook, Brigus.  
George Cross, Badgers Quay.  
Alban Oakley, Wesleyville  
James Linthorne, Georgetown, Brigus  
John Austin, Brownsdale  
Malcolm Webber, Cupids (may be on  
*Thetis*)  
John Breaker, Brigus  
Joseph Kelley, Brigus  
Joseph Stockley, Brookfield.

Zach Thistle, Pouch Cove.  
Patrick Bartlett, Brigus  
Henry Sparkes, Brigus.  
George Spracklin, Brigus.  
Stephen Mullett, Wesleyville.  
John J. Roche, St. John's.  
Roland Carter, Pleasant Street, St. John's  
Joseph Murphy, St. John's.  
Fred Carnell, St. John's.  
H. Hansford, St. John's.  
Harold Wiseman, St. John's.  
Anthony Taylor, St. John's

## SURVIVORS ON BOARD *SAGONA* SIX MUST BE MOVED TO SHIPS IN DORIES.

**Dr. Moore visits all Injured Men on Island— Hopes to be able to put the Remaining on  
Island Aboard *Sagona* To-day— All Rest Survivors Now Aboard.**

### THREE ON *SAGONA* IN POOR SHAPE

**Ample Food Supplies Landed by Imogene to Assist Families On Island for Present.**

To Clyde Lake, Esq., Minister Marine and Fisheries:

Horse Islands, March 19.—(7.42 p.m.)—Walked from *Sagona* to Horse Island. arrived 12  
a.m., five hours walk. Took one dory with supplies. Ice bad. Saw all injured on island.  
Captain Kean, cut head, not serious, left kidney injured, no fractures, good shape; Alfred  
Fifield, right leg injured, no fracture, otherwise normal; Patrick Whalen, cut eye, foot injury,  
not serious; Richard Adams, right arm injured, bruised face, could probably walk on board  
*Sagona*. Alphonso Doyle, frost bitten toe, bad right rib fracture, otherwise good; Richard  
King, ice blind, only, no fracture, normal, can walk around; Israel Bradbury, influenza, mild,  
otherwise good; Jerry Quinlon, face and head cut, slight injuries to back and right foot,  
cannot walk, in fair condition. These are six cases that have to be taken on board in dories. If  
weather suitable will try reach *Sagona* with cases to-morrow. None of the cases on the island  
is serious. Fred Best, Captain, Clayton King, on *Sagona* in poor shape.  
— (Sgd) DR. MOORES

## Thursday, March 19, 1931 THE *VIKING* DISASTER IN STORY FORM

Out of the welter of many messages which have come from the vicinity of the disaster, which  
must have left the public in somewhat of a confused state of mind, we are endeavoring to set  
down here a coherent and as nearly correct story as can be composed from the information at  
hand. Who the actual dead are it would be premature, perhaps, to yet state since they may  
still be a hope that others may yet be discovered. That three more men were found yesterday  
morning still lends a ray of hope, however faint, as the hours pass. Apparently 27 or 28 are  
still missing, according to the Minister's estimate.

What happened as far as can be surmised after securing varied expert opinion thereon, is that the magazine on the *Viking* exploded at 9 o'clock Sunday night, blowing away the stern portion completely, which drifted off carrying with it H. J. Sargent, W. Kennedy, and Clayton King, who were picked up by the *Sagona* two days later, over 20 miles away from the scene of the accident.

Apparently most of those who are missing were men who were in the cabin, the engineers' mess, or had berths in that section of the ship. It is suggested (and a statement made by Mr. Charles W. Bowring and broadcast from WGY last night, says the explosion occurred while men were getting powder out of the magazine) that supplies of powder were being got out of that hour preparatory to the morning, as the ship after all day lying in the ice, would require blasting before she could be moved the next morning. Experienced men say that a boiler explosion was unlikely, since at that hour on Sunday night the ship would be carrying bars requirements of steam for the dynamo. The blast injured very many men about ten or more suffering from broken limbs, while it is likely many suffering bad burns and cuts in addition. A scene of great confusion must naturally have followed as the ship took fire and the men were left stranded on the rough ice fields, eight miles from the nearest land.

A message received by Mr. Lake from H. J. Sargent last evening stated that he, Frissell and Penrod were seated together at the table when the explosion took place, and that he had not seen any trace of them since.

By half-past seven Monday night fifty survivors had reached the Horse Islands over the pinnacled and heaving ice which separated them from the and. All were in an absolutely exhausted condition and unable to give any coherent account of what happened. By Tuesday night one hundred and eighteen survivors, had landed while others has been rescued, the *Sagona* finding three men on the wreckage of the ship's stern, three other disabled men being brought in by residents of Horse Island; a lone man, Richard King, arriving at half-past eight, while the sealing ships *Beothic*, *Ungava*, *Eagle*, *Imogene*, and the rescue ships *Sagona* and *Foundation Franklin*, combed the waters that lie to the eastward between Horse Island and Cape John.

About midnight Tuesday, a search party from the *Beothic* had seen a light which they followed to within a mile and half of Horse Island, returned to their ship without having secured any survivors. During yesterday morning, however a message for the *Beothic* stated they had been successful in finding three survivors. W. G. Johnson, master watch: Alfred Kean, second hand and Fred Best, who has been a helper with the movie party, who were rescued from a dory. All three of these were suffering from slight injuries but were not seriously disabled.

Shortly after mid-day reports were received by the Minister of Marines and Fisheries from the *Eagle* and *Neptune* which had reached the actual spot among the ice fields where the disaster took place, that ice field having then drifted to a point about twelve miles southeast of Cape Jon Gull island. Among this wreckage the *Eagle* found the body of one man bearing a paper in its package marked "P. Bartlett".

A scene of desolation presented itself as the ships steamed in among the ice fields that had harbored the *Viking* on Sunday night. Cabin fittings, canned goods, personal belongs, pieces



of timber, bits of the ship's wheel, life belts, cloths, water tank, ice flags, were strewn around the pans as well as the jacket belonging to Bosun Carter. The *Neptune* found no sign of bodies

The scene on the Horse Islands can only be faintly imagined. Some thirty-eight families occupy the eastern island of this group, and the influx of well over 120 men, many of them suffering from serious injuries and exposure, must have created a very serious problem for them. This problem has existed now for three days and continues to exist, for to yesterday afternoon at five o'clock, no ships had apparently actually reached the island while latest information was to the effect that none could reach there last night. At that time the nearest to land was the *Imogene*, which was still four miles from the island.

The inhabitants, therefore, are still compelled to feed the influx of men from their scanty stores, now much depleted after the winter, while the suffering men can as yet receive only such emergency treatment as those with knowledge of first aid could render.

Late messages indicate that the Minister of Marine and Fisheries has very wisely suggested that in view of the ships being stalled, the best procedure is for survivors to walk to the ships; and parties from the crew of the *Imogene*, *Beothic* and *Sagona* with the medical men will leave those ships at daybreak for the shore.

All wireless facilities on the island and through the sealing and rescue steamers are being monopolized by the Government in an endeavor to get an account of the whole situation and make all preparations for attention to injured men as soon as ships can land.

## CONDITION OF RESCUED MEN

S.S. *Sagona*, via Fogo, March 18 3.24 p.m.—Johnson good condition walked on board without help, Alfred Kean scalp wound and injured knee, not serious. Fred Best, both feet frozen, result indefinite at present. These were transferred from the *Beothic* at 12 a.m. Impossible to walk to the Island, ice bad, making slow progress. At present about 5 miles away.

THE END.

## BONUS FEATURES

### The Lure of Labrador (1926)

Photographed & Titled by .....Varick Frissell

Piano Score by .....David Drazin

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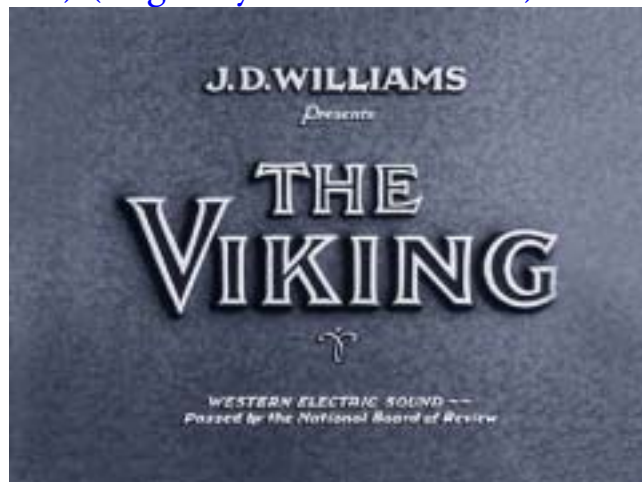
### The Swilin' Racket (aka: The Great Arctic Seal Hunt

Director.....Varick Frissell

Piano Score by .....David Drazin

Film courtesy of the National Library and Archives of Canada, through the permission of Varick Bacon. ©2004 Milestone Film & Video

### The Viking (1931) (originally White Thunder)



#### Credits

Directed by ..... Varick Frissell and George Melford

Writing credits ..... Garnett Weston

Produced by ..... Varick Frissell and Newfoundland-Labrador Film Company

Cinematography by ..... Alfred Gandolfi, Maurice Kellerman  
and Alexander G. Penrod

Distributed by ..... J.D. Williams [us]

#### Cast

Bob Bartlett..... Captain Barker

Wilfred Grenfell..... Prolog Voice

Louise Huntington ..... Mary Joe

Charles Starrett ..... Luke

Arthur Vinton..... Jed

Outtakes and Film courtesy of the National Library and Archives of Canada, through the permission of Varick Bacon. ©2004 Milestone Film & Video

# MILESTONE

With more than 14 years experience in art-house film distribution, Milestone has earned an unparalleled reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to the company's rediscovery, restoration and release of such important films as Mikhail Kalatozov's award-winning *I am Cuba*, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, the company now occupies an honored position as one of the most influential independent distributors in the industry. In 1999, the *L.A. Weekly* chose Milestone as "Indie Distributor of the Year."

Amy Heller and Dennis Doros started Milestone in 1990 to bring out the best films of yesterday *and* today. The company has released such remarkable new films as Manoel de Oliveira's *I'm Going Home*, Bae Yong-kyun's *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?*, Hirokazu Kore-eda's *Maborosi*, and Takeshi Kitano's *Fireworks (Hana-Bi)*.

Milestone's re-releases have included restored versions of Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers*, F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *Grass and Chang*, Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Mystery of Picasso*, and Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Milestone is also working with the Mary Pickford Foundation on a long-term project to preserve, re-score and release the best films of the legendary silent screen star. In recent years, Milestone has re-released beautifully restored versions of Frank Hurley's *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition*, Kevin Brownlow's *It Happened Here and Winstanley*, Lotte Reiniger's animation masterpiece, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, Michael Powell's *The Edge of the World* (a Martin Scorsese presentation), Jane Campion's *Two Friends*, Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Wide Blue Road* (a Jonathan Demme and Dustin Hoffman presentation), Conrad Rooks' *Siddhartha* and Rolando Klein's *Chac*. Milestone's newest classic film, E.A. Dupont's *Piccadilly* — starring the bewitching Anna May Wong in one of her finest roles — played at the 2003 New York Film Festival and is opening theatrically nationwide in 2004.

For 2004, Milestone will also be releasing *The Big Animal*, Jerzy Stuhr's wonderful film parable (based on a story by Krzysztof Kieslowski) Tareque and Catherine Masud's *The Clay Bird*.

Milestone has fruitful collaborations with some of the world's major archives, including the British Film Institute, UCLA Film & Television Archive, George Eastman House, Museum of Modern Art, Library of Congress, Nederlands Filmmuseum and the Norsk Filminstitut. In 2000 Milestone's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Retrospective was shown in venues nationwide and Milestone donated revenues from these screenings to four major archives in the United States and England to help restore films that might otherwise be lost.

In 2003, Milestone released an important series of great silent restorations including the horror classic *The Phantom of the Opera*; an early neorealist adaptation of Emile Zola's *La Terre*; and an historical epic of Polish independence, *The Chess Player*. Other video highlights for the year included Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and Buster Keaton's *The Cook & Other Treasures*, and three incredible animation releases: *Cut-Up: The Films of Grant Munro*; *Norman McLaren: The Collector's Edition*; and *Winsor McCay: The Master Edition*.

In 1995 Milestone received a Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I am Cuba*. Eight of the company's films — Charles

Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (to be released in 2004), F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Edward S. Curtis's *In the Land of the War Canoes*, Mary Pickford's *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Lon Chaney's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Clara Bow's *It*, Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur*, and Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison's *Grass* — are listed on the Library of Congress's National Film Registry. On January 2, 2004, the National Society of Film Critics awarded Milestone Film & Video their prestigious Film Heritage award for "its theatrical and DVD presentations of Michael Powell's *The Edge of the World*, E.A. Dupont's *Piccadilly*, André Antoine's *La Terre*, Rupert Julian's *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Mad Love: The Films of Evgeni Bauer*."

Cindi Rowell, director of acquisitions, has been with Milestone since 1999. In 2003 Nadja Tennstedt joined the company as director of international sales.

*"Since its birth the Milestone Film & Video Co. has steadily become the industry's foremost boutique distributor of classic and art films — and probably the only distributor in America whose name is actually a guarantee of some quality."*

— William Arnold, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*