

“On Saturday December 29, 1956 the following front page article appeared in the Portland Press Herald.

Hunter’s Body Recovered, 2 Companions Feared Dead

The body of a 34-year old lobsterman, believed to have been swept into the sea by a fast-running tide, was found by grapplers this afternoon.

No trace of two boys who were with Lawrence C. Estes Jr. on a duck-hunting expedition off Harpswell has been found. They were believed to have met a similar fate.

The missing boys are Estes’ son, Steven, 13, and Harry Jewell, 16, a nephew of Mrs. Estes. The three had planned to hunt between Eagle and Brown Cow Islands yesterday.

Their 37-foot lobster boat was found adrift and empty off the entrance to Portland Harbor this morning.

The Coast Guard found a small skiff, used as a tender for getting ashore, floating about a mile off Jewell Island. There were several ducks in the skiff which appeared to have been battered against rocks.

Coast Guard officials last night reported that three shot-guns used by the trio were found on the ledge of Mink Rocks, 300 yards from Brown Cow Island. Searchers theorized the three had been swept off the rock by a fast running tide which broke loose their skiff and left them stranded. Mink Rocks normally is covered by four to five feet of water at high tide and by 10 to 20 feet when the sea is running. Also found on Mink Rocks this afternoon were a boot and a sock.

Searchers said all the hunters’ shot-guns were empty, indicating all the hunters fired their guns in an effort to attract attention. The decoys were still where the hunters had set them.

Sanford Doughty of Chebeague (shuh-beeg’) said he heard shots about 5 p.m. yesterday.

Ronald LeClair, William H. Bibber, Jr. and Charles Bibber found Estes' body with grappling hooks. They were in a boat owned by Clifford Moody, Jr.

Estes' face was cut and bruised where it had smashed against rocks, but no other marks were found on the body. He was about 500 yards from Mink Rocks, officials said.

Medical Examiner Daniel F. Hanley of Brunswick said Estes was a victim of accidental drowning. Marks on the lobsterman's face were superficial scratches caused by scraping against rocks, Dr. Hanley said.

The sea was reported to reach depths of over 100 feet in the area.

Searchers numbered more than a score of fisherman: crews of three Coast Guard vessels; a Coast Guard airplane from Salem, Massachusetts and a helicopter from the Brunswick Naval Air station. The planes were forced to quit the search because of snow and fog, but officials said the helicopter will resume the search at daybreak tomorrow. Veteran fisherman expressed doubt that they would have another relatively calm day like today for another month, dimming hopes of immediate recovery of the two boys' bodies.

Everett Gatchell, a Basin Point lobsterman, went hunting with the group yesterday. Gatchell's skiff was towed by Estes to Eagle Island where Gatchell and Maurice Estes 12, another son of Estes, remained to hunt. Gatchell said that the sea was so rough he and Maurice Estes stayed in their skiff and did not go ashore.

Estes, his son Steven and nephew Harry Jewell continued to Brown Cow Island, about two miles from Eagle Island. Gatchell said that was the last time he saw them.

He became worried when it got dark and began snowing and decided that Estes probably had engine trouble. Gatchell and Maurice rowed about five miles back to Ash Cove, near Estes' home and told Mrs. Estes to notify the Coast Guard.

When word got out that the party was missing, friends began searching. Joseph Estes, of South Harpswell, father of the drowned man, was among those who searched throughout the night and morning.

Twelve fishing boats from Harpswell Neck, Orr's and Bailey Islands joined in the search this morning. Six fishermen in two boats with grappling irons left Station Point to drag the Mink Rocks area between Bates, Brown Cow, Eagle and Jewell Island.

Estes, scoutmaster of the Harpswell Neck Boy Scout troop and a former deputy sheriff was an experienced outdoorsman and could swim.

He was born at Harpswell June 6, 1922, son of Joseph and Edna Moody Estes, now of South Harpswell. He had been a lobsterman since he was graduated from Brunswick High School.

Survivors include his widow, the former Amy Stevens; a second son Maurice, 12, a third son, Theodore, 8, and a sister, Mrs. Ralph Lewis, of Groton, Connecticut.

Steven Estes was born in Bath, May 12, 1943. He attended South Harpswell School. Despite his youth he was an experienced lobsterman and last summer had 50 traps out.

Harry Jewell was born in Lewiston, Aug 24 1940, son of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Jewell. His father is a broiler-chicken farmer. His mother is recovering from an attack of polio. Other survivors include a brother Harold, 9, and two sisters, Nancy 12, and Beverly, 2.

Funeral services for Estes will be at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Brackett Funeral Home, Brunswick. Internment will be in West Harpswell Cemetery.