

Hand in Oak Island 'possible'

By IVAN SHORTLIFFE
Staff Reporter

BRIDGEWATER — A Halifax pathologist has confirmed that it would be possible for human flesh to be preserved "over a very long period of time," buried in the moist clay below the surface of world-famous Oak Island.

The statement was made following the spotting of what was believed to be a human hand by a submarine television camera lowered 212 feet below the surface of the mystery-shrouded Mahone Bay Island.

Dr. Ian Maxwell said that under certain moist conditions, a process could take place which in time would change the fat into a wax, thereby preserving a human body.

In the meantime, Dan Blankenship, project manager for a group of Canadian and American business financiers know as Triton Alliance Ltd., who has been spending Christmas and New Year's with members of his family in Miami, is expected to return to Nova Scotia's South Shore late next week.

In a telephone conversation from Florida yesterday, Mrs. Blankenship said that her husband was ill with the flu, but that work on the Island will be resumed and carried on through the winter.

Before leaving for his holidays, Mr. Blankenship said that the search for the treasure would go on now that the television probe had proved to him that "Oak Island is no longer a myth."

Three chests, a pick, and hewn logs were spotted on the television monitor, he said.

This, plus other discoveries, has made the Miami contracting firm owner more determined than ever to carry on with the search.

It is not the money that he and his partners are striving for, he said. Their goal is to uncover the mystery which has attracted world-wide attention since 1795, when three hunters discovered a ship's block hanging from a tree limb above a depression in the earth surface.

Since then, dozens of expeditions have explored the 128-acre island, located 45

miles west of Halifax in Mahone Bay. Fortunes have been spent trying to unlock the reason for all the ancient, flooding tunnels and other workings which have tantalized adventure-seekers into believing that these could be for no less purpose than to protect a vast treasure hidden somewhere on the island.

Many wealthy and famous persons have invested in digging for pirates' treasure on Oak Island. One of these was the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, president of the United States.

Dr. Maxwell warns that there is no time to lose, if it was a hand which showed on the monitor at the 212-foot level. He is anxious, he said, to examine the hand and to determine its age, offering to do anything he can to assist Mr. Blankenship in its recovery.

There is a danger, the head pathologist of the Halifax Infirmary explains, that deterioration could take place now that it has been suspended in water.

It is believed that the hand was torn free of a human body by the drill used in sinking the 26-foot shaft.

The great problem is the silt in the water in the large cavern where the objects were seen on the monitor. Soon after the camera disturbs the area, dense silt makes viewing impossible.

Mr. Blankenship would like to go down and explore the cavern himself, but this cannot be done until the next phase, expected to cost \$40,000 has been carried out.

While one pump has been used drawing more than 1,000 gallons per minute has already been installed, Mr. Blankenship believes that another powerful pump could do the trick, making it possible to keep the underground cavern in the bedrock free to explore.

The current operations were moved last summer from the Money Pit area where most of the previous diggings had taken place. Mr. Blankenship did not give reasons for the shift.

Triton is investing \$500,000 for the Oak Island exploration, Mr. Blankenship said.