

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., May 18, 1962

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Rare Operation Restores Sight

BY NEIL A. MATHESON  
Provincial-Farm Editor

I VISITED yesterday with Mr. And Mrs. Joseph Gaudin and their son, Lionel, at North Rustico to hear the near-miracle story of Lionel's recovery from permanent blindness that had threatened one of the most promising young students in the province.

Lionel had just returned the previous night from Montreal General Hospital where he had undergone a type of brain surgery that is still so unusual it can be termed "rare". The family was kind enough to share their joy with me for the half-hour or so that my visit lasted.

Lionel is a brilliant young student who is heading for a career in medicine. He topped the Island in provincial examinations in Grade 10, in Maritime Board examinations in Grade 12 and has topped his class as a Freshman and Sophomore at St. Dunstan's, before his father had to take him out of college on March 12 this year because he was losing his sight from complications caused by diabetes.

AT THAT time the father had been told there was a very slight chance of saving the boy's sight, if he stopped studying altogether. Later he was told by Montreal specialists the sight would be lost permanently, unless the operation could be performed.

Medical experts will pardon me, I hope, if I'm not letter perfect on the very few technical terms I'll use. Lionel had a Pituitary Hypophysotomy which removed the pituitary gland in a delicate brain operation, and has now been sent home to allow the recovering sight to develop. He's been asked to return in the fall, before the college term begins, because the medical and surgical experts there are interested in the development of sight restoration.

Lionel Can Read Easily Now

HIS SIGHT has been restored already to the point where he can read easily although his eyes naturally tire, if he reads for a long period. His doctors have told him it will continue to improve for sometime. The treatment is still so new that nobody could tell him just how long it may take. He was unable to read at all before the operation was performed

But I understand that when the change in his vision is completed, he can be fitted with glasses to help him further, if that is necessary.

It was by accident that I met Joe Gaudin in Charlottetown the morning of March 12, and for the first time since I first met him back in 1954, the smile was gone and the face was wrapped in gloom. That was the day he took his son out of University.

BUT IT was a happy Joe Gaudin who greeted me yesterday, along with his smiling wife, as we chatted in their living room about the miracle of healing that has set this brilliant young student back on the way to his cherished dream.

I believe the Gaudins heard first of the operation possibility from a nationally known magazine which said in part the eye disease "Diabetic retinopathy, a serious complication that may occur eight years after the onset of diabetes . . . can be slowed and even halted entirely and loss of vision prevented," by the pituitary gland operation.

THE MAGAZINE published in March this year said 'of the first nine patients on whom the operation was performed by Boston surgeons, eight are doing well.'

Dr. Guy Goron, a diabetes specialist in Montreal, is the man who took over Lionel's case. A Dr. Sampson ( the initials are not available) who had been a post-graduate student of the incomparable Dr. Wilder Pennfield, performed the surgery.

But there were prolonged and exhaustive tests and examinations before the decision to operate was made. It can only be performed successfully in one person out of 200, Dr. Goron told the father in late March.

#### Exhaustive Tests Were Made

UPWARDS OF a score of specialists of various kinds examined Lionel and discussed the case, before the decision to operate was made 16 days later. The operation was performed on April 12 and Lionel arrived home Wednesday night.

There are many reasons why the operation so often cannot be performed. Dr. Goron told the father, for example, that in many cases where the eyes would be gone completely, say in six months time, the kidneys may be similarly affected. And although one can live without eyes, despite the handicap, he cannot live without kidneys.

LIKE SOME other medical discoveries - Penicillin is an example - the Pituitary gland operation technique was discovered more or less by good fortune.

Passing along the information he had been given in Montreal, Mr. Gaudin told me a woman had been rapidly going blind from the same diabetic condition. Then the sight deterioration stopped and the eyes started to improve. It was found her pituitary gland had ceased to function, so the gland removal operation idea was developed.

#### School Building Project Recalled

MY OWN interest in the Gaudin family goes back to the opening of the new Stella Maris high school in 1954. Joseph was secretary of the building committee that constructed the school and completely furnished it for \$76,000. Independent cost estimates had run to at least \$100,000, and others were even higher.

I know that other people must have put a lot of effective effort into it, but I recall that one speaker after another praised Mr. Gaudin for the "splendid part he had played in co-ordinating a laudable community effort."

Also recalled is the time he came to me with a problem that affected the fishermen's unemployment insurance. He presented the problem so vividly and effectively that I asked him to put his thoughts on paper, so I could pass them on to the responsible people at Ottawa.

THE SITUATION was corrected very soon afterwards, for similar complaints had come from other fishing areas, but I gathered from some of the people to whom I talked, that the presentation that Mr. Gaudin had prepared ranked with the best.

I hope my friend will forgive me for this reference to him, but I feel it is so well merited, that I can't refrain. Incidentally another school construction job is facing the people there, although this time it's a Regional High School project.

Four new classrooms and an auditorium is needed this time and Joseph Gaudin, I find without any surprise at all, is the chairman of the board that will be looking after the development.