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Ray Phillips, Celebrated Hermit Of Maine Coast Island, Is Dead

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MANANA ISLAND, Me., May 10—Ray Phillips, who left the hustle and bustle of New York City more than 40 years ago to become the state of Maine's most celebrated hermit, died yesterday morning in his driftwood home on this island. He was 83 years old.

After having graduated from the University of Maine, Mr. Phillips became a food inspector in New York in the nineteen-twenties. He stayed there until 1931, when he returned to Maine and began his solitary life.

After a few years of fishing on nearby Monhegan Island he bought one-sixth of Manana Island, just across the channel.

"In practice I own it all," he once said, "because the other owners never bother to come."

Mr. Phillips built a 12 foot by 15 foot dwelling out of drift-wood on the side of the cliff facing Monhegan. He would row to the larger island to buy provisions on his \$109 a month veteran's pension and \$77 a month social security check. Occasionally he went to Rockland, 11 miles away, for a haircut and shave, a hotel bedroom and what he called "a night on the town."

He never married. "I wasn't skillful enough," he told an interviewer in 1973.

Built Driftwood Dwelling

His dwelling had no electricity, but he had a batterypowered television set and radio—which he preferred.

Machinist Technician Ray Gray, one of four men who tend the Coast Guard station on Manana island, discovered the body of Mr. Phillips on the floor of the driftwood dwelling. Mr. Gray had received a telephone call from a resident of Monhegan Island, who reported the recluse's kerosene lantern was not burning the night before, as it usually was.

Mr. Gray said he had talked with Mr. Phillips a couple of days ago and that he had appeared ill, from the flu or a bad cold. But he would not go to a doctor, the Coast Guardsman added.

In recent years, Mr. Gray reported, the hermit still fished quite regularly, and his pet goose, “an all-white, good-sized honker, was really his watch-dog.”

The Coast Guardsman said Mr. Phillips's sister, Elvira Rivers of Framingham, Mass., called the station today and “asked us to keep the goose.”

A memorial service will be held for Mr. Phillips following cremation, and his ashes will be buried on the island.

Goose Was His Watchdog

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