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that I grew up hearing as a kid. They'll hear a few little tapes or something. But I really feel that the music is changing. Like everything else, you know. And the younger people, they know what they want. Which is good. I followed tradition. I figured this is the way to play, the way the older people played. But the younger people today, they're more open to variety-- and I don't know if television, you know, has played a big part in it. Well, the Irish has a big influence here. They're going a lot for Irish music today. So they're getting away from the old traditional style of playing, of Cape Breton. (Sometimes we talk about the creativity of a fiddler who takes a tune and when he plays it, he goes through, but he's not exactly repeating himself.) You mean, he has a variation on it each time? (Yes.) The Irish are known for that. Like Johnny Wilmot now, for instance--he could take a tune, a clog or a hornpipe, it doesn't matter what. And he might be copying the Michael Coleman style. And every time that the Irish go over a tune, they're putting more frills and more variations in the tune, on purpose. And they're sort of improvising as they go along. So it's really not written that way. (But you don't incorporate that in your playing.) No, not in Scottish music. Now, on my last record, I did "The Mason's Apron" with many of Sean MacGuire's variations. But I learned that and I memorized that. If I was to play the whole thing through again, I would play it the same way, note for note. (The only comparison I have is jazz. And I wonder how jazzy you permit Doug MacPhee to be.) More so, more free today than I would be years ago. I'm more open-minded, too! (You're free enough to learn a variation that you admire.) Yes. (But you don't feel free enough to do Doug MacPhee's variations.) I wouldn't try to compose something myself into a tune, put something extra into a tune. Maybe a little run or something I'll throw in here or there, or a little cutting, you know. But that's really not altering the tune. Instead of a single note, I might put the 3 or 4 quick notes. Just throw that in. Maybe put a little frill. But the actual note, no, I would never take it upon myself--because I think that's another talent. (Your mother both chorded and played melody. Was she involved in trying to put the fiddler's cuts into the tunes?) No. No, no. She would just follow the melody along. In fact, none of the older piano players that I know of bothered with cuttings or so forth. I try to play, and accent my music as the Cape Breton fiddler would accent his music. And I try to put everything into the music that they're putting, the cuttings and so forth. I go in more for solo piano playing than my mother did. Most piano players play like piano players. And I do feel I'm unique. I was told years ago--20 years ago--that I don't play like a piano player, I play like a fiddler. And that was a compliment to me. The (method of) cuttings that I do (on the piano)--I was probably the first to introduce it here in Cape Breton. There are a few using it today. But I learned that from two accordion players, actually: John Carmichael from Scotland and Jimmy Kelly from Boston. (They were doing the fiddle cuts on the accordion?) Yes, with the technique that I use to do it today. I knew that cuttings were lacking in my music years ago. I could get them in with one finger. But that's the way most piano players try to do it. And it's very difficult,



unless you're very quick. Maybelie Chisholm's very quick. She's very, very good on cut? ting with the one finger. (That would be hitting the same note....) Four times. Da dadada. In time. (Instead of using one finger, what do you do?) I use the thumb. And the finger next to the little finger, I come back--these three here. (If the thumb is 1 and the fingers are 2 3 4 5, you go: Thumb 4 3 2?) Right. And then sometimes, depending what way the cutting is, or where the notes are ar? ranged, sometimes I use my little finger for doing the cut backwards. And that s very tricky. I start (with) the little fin? ger (5)--so I go 5, then 4 3 2. But it's usually the thiimb, and then 4 3 2. (And is it striking on the same note?) Yes, same note. All on the one note, (And you have to use four fingers on the beat.) And then get on to the next note. It takes practice. (Is it all right hand?) Oh yeah, the right hand, the melody. The melody's the right hand. So, I started to play when I was 12%. I never went to the piano, and I was never asked to try it, never forced. I just went on my own one day. I sat down, and I tried to pick out a little jig or something that I heard Duncan MacQuarrie play. My mother came in and helped me finish it. And then she gave me a little lesson on bassing the tune, you know, with my left hand, just a couple of basic chords. Then she showed me how to chord, and to count the beats for a jig and a strathspey and march and so forth. So then I used to practice that a little. Then after a couple of months or (37)