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Mary Ryan: a Woman's Account Interviewed by Sr. Helene Comeau I was born in Can- so, Nova Scotia-- Guysborough Coun? ty- -in the year 1895. I went to school in Canso until--I was only 15 when I had to leave school, and help my parents. Then I went to work--just housework--for a few months. I tried to go back to school, but it was impossible. At that time there was no compulsion. So I kept house then for a lady who was sick all the time, for 3 years, in the vil? lage called Hazel Hill--just 3 1/2 miles from home. Then I decided I wanted a change. So I went to Antigonish. Got in with the Sisters from Notre Dame. Then I asked questions about entering a convent. And they sent me to Sisters of St. Martha. So in October of that year, I got ready to enter. Sister sent me home for more prepa? ration. And on December 8th I entered the convent. I received the holy habit. And I hadn't been sick a day until 8 days after I received the holy habit. I broke down with some kind of rheumatism. And I was crippled in bed for two months, and for nine months i couldn't walk very well. So then I got sort of discouraged with my? self, and I asked to leave. I went home with my parents, and then, looked for a j ob. So. there was a widower, whose wife had died two years before that. The children were alone. So I went up to see what help I could be to him. I stayed around with them and worked with them: looked after them, cleaned them up. And after awhile, things got happening. And the priest asked me if I would stay home instead of going back to the convent. I had permission to go back to the convent again, if my health got better. But then I told Fr. Michael McCormack that I would stay and look after the children. So after awhile, the Love Bug came along. So I married the widow(er) with five chil? dren. One year afterwards. I had a child of my own. Then we fostered a couple or three. So. the Depression was coming on, and we decided to move to Cape Breton. So we moved to Cape Breton--a place called Plaster Mines, just outside of Baddeck. We bought a farm, and we started farming. And my hus? band started a little fishing--lobster fishing. So we got along very well, until our house burned in 1938. And at that time we were in quarantine with scarlet fever, and we couldn't go anjrwhere to live with other people. So a lady from Sydney Mines--they got in contact with this lady. And she told us to go live in her summer house, and use any? thing that was there. So we spent the night in that house that had been vacant for 3 years. We didn't have any. beds--only just the beds that had been, and they're all damp and soiled. So. a man came along--we did find a place for the children to lie dovm. But a man came along at dark with a mattress on his back. We threw it on the floor and we spent the night there--my hus? band and I. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE- (51)