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Margaret Neil James • A Love Story From Margaret's Conversations with Ed Binns and Cape Breton's Magazine Margaret Neil James MacNeil . Gillis Point: I was born in Scotch Lake to Neil and Isabel Beaton. And there were 12 children in the family. From what I've been told, when I was very, very young, we were fairly well set. My father worked in the quarry. He went to work in the quarry when he was only 11 years old, as a water carrier. And my mother was a great worker, and they got along great. Until 1939. My father got hurt in the quarry. He broke one hip and he fractured the other one, and as a result of it, he got a piece of steel in his eye, and he went blind. There were 12 of us--4 boys and 8 girls. There was Katherine and Angus and Duncan and Annie and Martin and Mary Sarah and Mary Florence. And then came my self. Then there was Mary, Elizabeth, and Florence, and John David. My most vivid memory is in 1939 when my father got hurt. I'll never forget that evening. One of the neighbours came to the house and told us that my father was hurt and they were taking him to North Sydney. And my mother always had a pair of clean socks when he came home from work because his feet would be always wet from sweating and working. She grabbed the socks off the clothesline that was hanging over the stove in the kitchen, and she took off. And we all stayed home and prayed. And the next thing we heard was my father was in the hospital. And of course, this was a real tragedy as far as we were concerned, because Daddy was so precious to us, you know. He never came home from work in the quarry, that I can remember--now, I was only about 8 years old at this time-- but before that I can remember, the 5 younger girls would always go to meet him. And he'd always leave something in the lunchcan. Today I'd get it and tomorrow another one would get it. But he always had some little thing to give us. And I can remember, every time we would meet him in the road, he'd open the lunchcan for whatever was in there, and give it to us. And he never ever treated one of us different to the other. We were his, and--he was great. He was a great person. Affectionate, very affectionate father. And you could see the love between him and my mother so clearly. I still remember-- one of the things he always did was brought my mother a cup of tea in bed in The advertisement in the Victoria-Inverness Bulletin read: "We are Francis 3 1/2, Mary 2 1/2, and Michael 1 1/2. We would like someone to help Daddy take care of us.... You will get a good home and wages. Apply Neil James MacNeil, Gillis Point." Cape Breton's MAGAZINE Number Sixty Wreck Cove, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia BOC IHO Publications Mail Registration Number 3014