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20 Years! A Look at Cape Breton's Magazine in 1990 Douglas How wrote an article called "The Voice of Cape Breton." It was published, with photographs by Cape Breton photographer Warren Gordon, in the April/May issue of Canadian Geographic. In celebration of our 20th year, we offer Mr. How's article. We have added a small portion from an interview Michael Taft did with Ronald Caplan. The Voice of Cape Breton By Douglas How Outsized Ronald Caplan is selling advertising space to a Sydney businessman for his outsized and improbable Cape Breton's Magazine. Their conversation reminds the businessman of someone Caplan should meet. Soon they are watching the man's 94-year-old grandmother do a stepdance with a touch of help from the back of a chair. At this point, Caplan switches from salesman to photographer. Then he records what the grandmother has to say about her life. When he leaves, he decides, as editor, that the story on tape is not yet something he can recommend to himself as publisher. But it is enough to make him come back for more. Meanwhile, he has sold an ad. Caplan has been doing these things for 18 years as proprietor, promoter and almost everything else for a magazine that tells about Cape Breton as it was and is, tells it as oral history straight from the mouths and memories of its people. It is an unlikely success story, but perhaps its most unlikely aspect is Caplan himself: an outsider in a clanish land, a towering American, six feet six inches tall • so big, as a friend put it, "that he sucks the oxygen out of a room." Yet Caplan consistently gets people to talk their heads off because he so obviously likes them. He keeps his own profile low, in the background of what he prints. "They know from the magazine that I won't make fun of them," he says. "I let them be seen as they want to be seen." In one issue, Annie MacDermid MacLeod talks about the days when she and her husband, George, ran the post office at Wreck Cove and the things it did to their lives. In winter, the mail carriers would come by horse and sleigh from two directions and put up for the night. Sometimes they had passengers and they would stay too. They slept on the floor, anywhere, and Annie would be up half the night baking because they had to be fed. "We had good board," she says. "People would say, 'There's always a good supper when we get to MacLeods.'" On the biggest night of all she had 24 guests, most of them going to a wake. Ronald Caplan with Dan Murdock and Donald Morrison, Wreck Cove Cape Breton and its people have captivated Caplan since he drifted to this physically magnificent, economically harassed island in 1971 at age 29. He was unhappy, he says, and looking for a new meaning in life. He found it in a coastal straggle of houses called Wreck Cove, in the kindness of his neighbours, and in the tales and songs and folklore he heard around him. He still lives there, in a renovated old white farmhouse with wooden shingles and a massive stone chimney. It was built about 1850 on a hill overlooking the sea. Now, at 47, Caplan has become a Cape Breton insti- 849-4505 16 Reserve SL'GLACE BAY ' . J. McQiCCivray 'untrai'otm Lid. FUNERAL DIRECTORS & EMBALMERS Established Since 1938 Complete Funeral Arrangements Including Pre-Arranged Funeral Services All Pre Paid Funeral Accounts Are Deposited "In



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