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Lofty MacMillan: A Taste of His Life From His New Autobiography The Boy from Port Hood said, "She's coming through this very nicely." He said, "We'll go in the The Boy from Port Hood is "Lofty" MacMillan talking to us. With the help of Emery Hyslop and Peter McGahan, he has put together a vigorous autobiography of his life in the Cape Breton coal mines, as a policeman in Saint John, and always as a fighter for union and the rights of workers. What follows IS just a taste of his remarkable book. I DRANK TOO, and later also in the navy. It was something you had to wrestle with. My father loved it. He told me one time that when he had two or three drinks, when he was out on a construction job, he could see how it should be done completely. It just opened up everything to him. He told me that one time. He was never at his best without a drink. It was part of the culture. But I don't drink now. When I stopped was a major turning point in my life. In my first marriage after my daughter had been born, my wife had several miscarriages. It was quite evident that there were going to be no more children. One Sunday I was at mass in St. Peter's church in the North End of Saint John. I had always wanted a boy. It was a tradition to carry on the John name. All of a sudden I found myself making a promise to the Blessed Mother that if this pregnancy was carried through, I would never take a drink in my life again. After this happened sort of unconsciously during the mass, I said to myself, What did I do? I loved to drink. I said, What in the name of God have I done here? So the pregnancy was going on and going on, and nothing was happening. But I became worried and one day went over to St. Peter's. I wanted to see Father Johnson, just to talk about it, and see where I was spiritually. He was walking back and forth outside, reading his prayer book He stopped right away when he saw me. I said, "Can I talk to you Father?" He said, "Sure, Lofty." So, I told him what had happened. He said to me, "Lofty, to get something sometimes, you have to give something." He asked, "How's the wife?" I church and we'll say a prayer." We did, the two of us together. And he told me, "Don't go back on your promise." That was in the fall. John David was born in January during the worst snowstorm in the history of Saint John. My wife had to be taken to St Joseph's Hospital in the police wagon, and we had to have a city snowplough go in front. It was a patrol wagon in which normally they carried prisoners. I was on duty and got to the hospital about 20 minutes or so later. I walked in, and the doctor was coming out of the delivery room. The baby had just been born. "You've got a big one in there," the doctor said, "Another Lofty on the The Boy from Port Hood is on sale in bookstores everywhere, or you can order it directly from Breton Books. • See Order Form on page 71 • CAPE BRETON'S CENTRE for LIVE ENTERTAINMENT CALL FOR SCHEDULE & TICKETS: 842-1577 scene." The second baby boy was born two years later. When John David was two and a half years old, we were living on Chff Street. The kids used to play across by the convent. One day John David ran into the street. As he came up out of the driveway, he got hit by a car. The driver, a salesman for a drug company and from Campbellton, wasn't speeding. John David just ran right out



in front of him. I was on the police force at the time. That day I was sleeping because I was working on the night shift. The wife hollered, and everybody around the neighbourhood were all coming out. By that time, lucky enough two doctors had been coming down Cliff Street, and they jumped out and said, "Don't anybody touch him." They called for the ambulance right away. They took him to the Saint John General Hospital. When I arrived at the hospital, here was everything that I sacrificed for lying on the table there. He was all blood and saying, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy." He couldn't see me. Dr. Watts, who lived next door to me and was married to a nurse, a MacNeil from Cape Breton, said.