

[Page 74 - My Meeting with Red Dan Smith](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 71](#)

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And Mary said: "No one goes until we've had tea." Tea! And that's what we did. We gathered around the kitchen table in orange afternoon light, my new friend Red Dan Smith and the great doctor who was actually in retirement but would come out for moments like this, Mary Red Dan serving us a full meal that she called "tea" • biscuits and bannock and two kinds of bread, slices of cheese and jam, and wonderful strong black tea. And Dr. Mac? Millan wanted to know what I thought about this country • meaning the North Shore, Victoria County • and Mary wanted to know what my wife thought of living here. And when we finished tea I stood to leave, and no one stopped me. Mary took me to the door and said, "You'll come again." And I told her I was sorry about her mother and she told me that she was old and had not been well. And I was outside, heading for the car, the tape recorder still in the bag. In any case, I did go back. Instead of suit- pants and a vest and tie. Red Dan had on coveralls. We spent the visit in the basement workshop, until it was time for tea. He showed me his tools and the well in the basement and the way he stripped slice after slice of wood from long pieces of yellow birch, then demonstrated twisting them into one another, making rope. He'd work so many feet in one direction, turn and twist it back against itself, and then turn it and twist it again, ending up with what looked like the common three- strands of entwined hemp rope. This was the way to end up with powerful hands. "I call this curiosity work," Red Dan said. "When Father made it, it was not made for curiosity as this is made. I made a lot of it with Father. Every Spring we made rope moorings for the nets. March and April. Ten, fifteen fathoms for the harbour. Outside, they made them twenty-five fathoms long." Making rope from wood, Red Dan Smith twists thin strips of birch into a single strand, then (top left) doubles back and twists the strand together, then (middle left) doubles back again, twisting all the time, ending up with rope like the piece at left. By the time I met him, Red Dan made rope for a pasttime, selling chunks of it for fifty cents a foot. He said he was willing to make one up to a hundred feet. "Length doesn't matter," he said. "Only time." I let the tape recorder run and snapped photos, roll after roll. It became a story in the first issue of Cape Breton's Magazine. 2 Dandy Books of Our Music! The Night in the Kitchen Collection Compiled and Edited by Matthew Patrick Cook A songbook of new music by Cape Breton and Nova Scotia musicians, for piano, guitar, fiddle, mandolin, bagpipe, and voice. 56 songs plus photos and biographies. Ringbound. The East Coast Ceilidh: A Look at Atlantic Canada's Music Scene by John R. Zinck Celebrating over 40 of Atlantic Canada's hottest entertainers, including The Rankins, Ashley, The Barras and Great Big Sea. Profiles, photos, discographies, festivals and shows. In touch! To order... phone 902-425-2699 or 902-567-5124 fax 902-429-4936 • e-mail: vanpub@fox.nstii.ca web site: <https://www.chatsubo.com/vanpub/> or send \$19.95 + 2.50 S&H + 7% GST (in Canada) + 11% PST (in Nova Scotia) to Vanmarkin Publications, PO Box 315, Dominion, NS BOA IEO Cheque - Money Order - MasterCard - American Express - VISA • Preserving the Music of Cape Breton Red Dan and Mary Smith appeared



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