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it gave them a start at precenting in pub? lic. One of them, I believe, would be Mal? colm Angus MacLeod. And I believe Kenny, Sandy's father. And there was one of Mal? colm's sisters, although she never pre? cented in public, you know. But they learned how to read the music of the tunes. (Women didn't precent in public?) Well, they were too shy to do so. (But there was no rule against it?) No, no, no. And there were a lot of men who did it anyway--same as myself. I didn't learn to read the music of it, but I had most of the tunes. I knew them by heart. (What actually happens when people pre? cent?) One man sings the line of a psalm, then everybody brings in the follow-off with the tune, more or less like a dirge. Well in the first place, the fellow that's going to do the lead, the precentor actu? ally, he lines out--he has to start the first line of the psalm he's going to pre? cent. He starts just reading and singing it out. That goes for the first and second lines. And then the next line he lines it out, and then all the choir falls in pre? centing it. The precentor sings one of the tunes--perhaps "St. David's" or "Bangor" or "Colsell," or perhaps "Dundee." He sings two lines using one of the psalms, any of the psalms--doesn't matter. Then he sings it out. Like, I'd start the 23rd Psalm: "Is e Dia fein as buachaill dhomh,/ cha bhi mi ann an dith." ("The Lord's my shepherd,/ I'll not want.")--that's two ' verses, you lead it up. Then the third verse, you rhyme it out: "Bheir e fainear gu'n luidhinn sios" ("He makes me down to lie")--and all the rest fall in, repeating "Bheir e fainear gu'n luidhinn sios." (When they fall in, they are repeating the line that you've sung.) Oh, yes. And I'm repeating the words, too. I line it out and then I sing it out. (What is lining it out? In answer. Tommy sings it out very directly.) And precenting I repeat it. (And now he sings the same words in a slow? er, more expansive way.) (So, you line out two verses.) That's right. (Those two verses won't be repeated by the others.) That's right. (Then you line out the third line....) Singing to one of those tunes. (Then everyone repeats that third line, but now they are precent? ing it.) Yes. When you line it out, it's faster. In some places--in Scotland--it's quite fast. And then when you're precent? ing, you slow the tempo. And the others follow. And when they're precenting, there's a kind of hum to it. (To my ear, it sounds like the choir is deliberately twisting and turning the tune.) Aw, yes. (Is that what's happening?) Yes. It seems, by doing that, the up and down, to put more music in it. (It's hard to put into words.) Yes. (Per? haps it has to be heard.) It's not a strange sound to me because I've been hear? ing it since I was a kid. But I often thought it must sound funny to a stranger, the way they stretch the words out. (Where does precenting come from? Is it called for in the Bible?) No. Just the old folks took it from Scotland. That's what they used to claim, that the way it orig? inated there in Scotland--it was during the Reformation--in some cases they burnt all of the Bibles--there were only some saved. They claim that's the reason this precenting took place. That's what started it. They only had one Bible perhaps, and that was kept under wraps when there'd be danger of it being discovered. So they claim the precenting originated that way: one man could line it out of his Bible and the rest follow, sort of sing it back to him. (Would you practice alone?) Oh yeah. Just more or less from force of



habit, hearing the old fellows precenting--perhaps I'd be out in the woods or hauling wood or some- thing--I would start precenting a psalm, just alone. I'd have it on my mind, a lot of the tunes. And, well, the psalms I'd have memorized anyhow. But today, kids wouldn't know the psalms. And the tunes would be all Dutch to them. (Do you know of any young person learning precenting today?) No. And I think there is little precenting today because usually there isn't enough to give you a lift on it, it's tiresome unless you have 3 or 4 good fellows to pick up the tune as you precent the line. I remember when I was a kid-- French River Church, it's fairly big, it would be pretty well filled up--and I'll bet you 3/4 of everyone in it helped with the precenting. Today you wouldn't get any more than a dozen to join in. S A L M XL Dh'fheith mi le fioghid mhaith ri Dia, chrom thugam, dh'eisd mo ghuth: Is thug se a slochd uamhuinn mi, a clabar criadha tiugh: Air carraig chomhnaird chuir mo chos; mo cheuman shocruich e. Is 6ran nuadh chuir e a'm'bheul, gu b'e sud moladh Dhe: S A L M XXIII s A L M cm 0 m'anam, beannaich thusa nis an Dia lehobhah m6r: Moladh gach ni an taobh stigh dhìom 'ainm naomha mar is coir. 0 m'anam, beannaich fein a nis lehobhah mor do Dhia: Na dichuimhnich na tiodhlacan a dheonuich dhuit an Triath. These are the portions from Psalms that are precented on the Soundsheet included in this issue. See the Inside Back Cover for more about that Sound- sheet and precenting. (46)' Is e Dia fein a's buachaill dhomh, cha bhi mi ann an dith. Bheir e fainear gu'n luidhinn sios air cluainibh glas' le sith: Is fos ri taobh nan aimhnichean theid seachad sios gu mall, A ta e ga mo threorachadh, gu min reidh anns gach ball. On the Soundsheet, Malcolm Angus MacLeod precent's Psalm 40 to the tune Martyrdom; John Alex John X. Mac? Donald precent's 103 to Bangor; Thomas A. Mac- Donald precent's 23 to the tune Dundee.