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Pleasant Bay Fire CONTINUED FROM OUTSIDE BACK COVER

Rod Fraser: The fire started here in Au- 1947. Mary: It had been simmering gust, out on the mountain there for a couple weeks. Rod, hadn't it? Rod: Yes, it was burning on MacKenzie Mountain way out for a week and a half before it came down here. I don't think it's ever been known how it started. It was no hunting season at all. It started out MacKenzie River a good two miles from where you cross the bridge, in a place it was almost impossible to get to. And if it had been down at the river? bed, you would say it was some tourist was out there fishing or something, that started it. But it started way up on the side of the mountain. Well, a mountain goat might get up there, I know the spot. There were a lot of old pine trees out there that had fallen down, old dry stumps. And I know we had a light? ning storm just a few days before that, I was the first one that saw the fire. I was coming over from Cheticamp--but of course, they didn't pay much attention to it first. You saw the smoke, but there were no trails then, no way to get at it. They couldn't fight it. They were just' praying for rain. Instead of that, it was gradual? ly getting worse. Of course, when it came down close, they started fighting it with water. They had pumps, the Park Department, they were over here from Ingonish--they had all their fighting equipment and everything over here. But you couldn't do anything with that fire. I'll tell you now how fast it travelled. You've been by the church down there, haven't you? We lived up here on the hill, just above here. And our house went afire--I wasn't here at the time--I'd taken the wife and daughter up to Cheti? camp- -everybody was ordered out of here. But the superintendent of the park told me j)ur house, when it caught, and before the roof fell in, the church was afire down there, Mary: You know, there was an awful gale of wind, and the fire was just going through the air. It had wind and hot sun. Rod: It was just one of those days when there was a gale of west wind. The ocean was right white. And there hadn't been a drop of rain for over two months, Every? thing was just dry and scorching. It had everything that a fire needed, everything that it needed to burn. Mary: And you know, it didn't matter where it dropped, it burned--except down there at the cemetery. There was a fire started there--a tree in there that bumt--and then went out. Wasn't that fortunate? It didn't burn the cemetery. But ever3rwhere else burnt • Rod: The grass in the cemetery didn't burn at all. Change of wind, I guess. Mary: Oh, God knows what it was. And there were some woods, where the woods are down there now, they didn't burn, none of that on that little point down there-- burned around it. Rod: So we left here when everybody was or- dered out, you know, I imagine there were 35 or 40 families left. Mostly everybody that could go, went. Of course, there were a few of the men stayed here, but all the womenfolks went out, I think we were the second last car that left here. And it was so hot going up MacKenzie Mountain that I had to keep the windows up to keep the heat out of the car, Mary: Well, I'll tell you, that the fire then was just coming out of the river when we drove through, and it was coming so fast up the river, it just looked like the train was coming up there. So fast. Rod: When I started to take the wife and daughter through, I started with the idea of



getting back here again, but I couldn't CO-OP DO-IT- YOURSELF Home Improvement Centre e Complete stocks of lumber, building supplies. Plumbing, Heating and Electrical materials. We cater to the building public. • Component Homes & Cottages • e CXD-OP Building Supplies Sydney Port Hawkesbury 539-6410 625-2600 Atomic Energy of Canada ped Chemical Company Public Information Centre Glace Bay Heavy Water Plant, South Street An insight into tite atomic age through MODELS FILMS EXHIBITS Visits By Groups From High Schools, Service Qubs, Church Organisations Can Be Arranged At Any Time Of The Year OPEN DAILY, JUNE TO SEPTEMBER (15)