

[Page 3 - Travels with Johnny "Butch" MacDonald](#)ISSUE : [Issue 36](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1984/6/1

have a cow or a bull there--something that wasn't giving any milk--they couldn't get it with calf or something. And maybe there's some other fault to find with it. And they'd sell it. It provided them with a little bit of money. The sheep used to pay the taxes in the fall of the year. (Your father was a butcher before you.) Oh yes, he was an old-timer. He was one of the best, I had two other brothers, and I was the oldest. So as soon as we were 8 or 9 or 10 years old, he had you out in the slaughterhouse working, you know. He worked hard himself and he made you work hard, too. Long hours. You'd go out after supper and kill a hundred lambs. Fifty or 60 or 100 lambs after supper. You'd do the whole bit. You'd dress them. Make them ready for the market. The old man and my? self, and have another fellow there. Do a hundred. Two fellows could do 10 an hour. We used to do that, no problem. See, there was no refrigeration then. So you couldn't kill in the heat of the day, like in the afternoon, like you can now. That time, you'd kill them after supper. In the morn? ing you would spread them around, sell them out. Deliver. You had your regular customers every week, then. Sold every? thing to the stores. Then when the brother next to me, when he got old enough, he had to get out and work. The same as I used to work, I was the old? est, so I was the first, (Was your father easy to work for?) Oh, he was tough, he was tough. All you ever heard was, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" So, that's tough enough, isn't it? He was a slave himself. My father used to send me out--13 and 14-- yes. He sent me to Iona. He said, "They'll be bringing the lambs into Iona a certain day. You go up and weigh them and load them." See, the merchants up through the country then, they used to do the business with the farmer. The storekeepers. So, he would contact this storekeeper, and say, "Make a day. Could you get 70 or 80 lambs for next week, a certain day?" Well, the storekeeper notifies all the farmers to bring their lambs in on this certain day. And you have a car there. Well, you weigh them and you pay them for them. (Does the merchant get anything for this?) No. It may seem unusual. But it was also a bene? fit to him. It was bringing money into the country. And that money was needed. Lots of the times, these farmers would owe the merchant money. And the merchant would be there with his hand out, I suppose, when I'd pay the farmer. So that's the way it was done then, you know. An average day, if it'd be a carload they'd have coming in, it could be any? wheres up to 100 lambs. But around Iona like that, I suppose it'd be around 80 lambs. There was work to do. You had to grab them, put a rope around them, and lift them up onto a beam scale and weigh them. The live lamb. And just don't grab the wool. If you grab the wool on the back, your hand mark is left right on the flesh. A big bruise goes right through. If your father ever saw you do that, holy God, you'd never be able to lift another one. You'd grab them by the neck. Just the neck. They're coming out, and you grab them by the wool of the side. You'd put the head between your legs, and you had a piece of rope, you just make like a sling. Put that under their belly. CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE
PIPER'S TRAILER COURT Featuring: Fully Licensed Dining Room * Guest House * Swimming Pool Ocean-Side Campsites * Laundromat * Mini-Mart Indian Brook on



the Cabot Trail Halfway Between Baddeck and Ingonish 929-2233

WHERE 'TOMORROW'S STYLES ARE FEATURED TODAY' Jacobson's Ladies'Wear
Hudson's Bay jackets and coats Hudson's Bay blankets Pure imported suits from
Scotland Imported cashmere coats Eskimo-made jackets All famous Canadian &
European designers 330 CHARLOTTE STREET * PHONE 564-6308 SYDNEY
Jacobson's Tweed & Hickory Tartan skirts and kilts (including C.B. & N.S. tartans)
Icelandic coats and sweaters Peter Scott lamb's wool and Shetland sweaters
Imported pure wool skirts, sweaters and pants 263 CHARLOTTE STREET * PHONE
564-6308