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Neil A. MacKinnon of Rear Beaver Cove By Pam Newton and CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE Of course I left there--The Rear--in 1912. That's about 72 years ago. And I got work in Sydney. I was 15 then. I got work at the steel plant. That was two years before the War started. The reason that this sort of migration started from The Rear: when the railroad went through to Sydney, and the steelworks started there, there was a lot of work going on. They had to have extra mines to supply the steel plant, and there was a lot of activity. And those people in the country, the most of them started drifting into Sydney and the mining area. The way it happened--when the railroad went through, there was a certain number of the farmers along the railroad line that could work on the railroad. And some of them that had political clout, they got permanent jobs. They were like senators! Because if you got a permanent job at the time, well you had a steady income. Which was never known before by the farmer. And of course, that meant that those people in The Rear area where I was, and beyond, were only a sort of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the front people. Because they didn't come in on this activity along the railroad. And they had to work the farms for those that got steady work on the railroad. So the people--there was so much work going on in the mines and the steel plant-- they started drifting from The Rear--one or two families a year, until we were the last family leaving there. When I came back from the War, the First War, there were only two old families and our family. Well, our family, my father was gone years before that, and we were fairly active. But those two families that were there a mile from us, in two directions, they were all old. And they never married. So my brother made arrangements to get a place at Beaver Cove. That meant that there'd be nobody there, you know, to break the roads, and those people were too old to maintain them. At this time of the year there might be maybe 3 feet of snow out there, maybe more. And they'd be stranded. But they had a lot of relatives around Boisdale and Barachois and that. And they came out and took them away. That was around 1921, The Rear was totally abandoned. My father died in 1901. He was only 46 years old. That was a kind of disaster. Because we were all small, 7 of us, you know, to do the farm work and the plowing. The oldest was a girl--I think she was 13 or 14. The oldest boy was around 13. The next one was around 12, a little less than 12. And they had to do all the work as far as the outside work is concerned. Our uncles were gone to the States--that was my father's brothers. I was too small. I was only 4 at that time. It was a disaster when you lost your father. Those kind of farms out there were only a pile of rocks. And my god, you know, Story Continues on Page 58