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The Ramblers on CHNS in Halifax, late 1930s: Winston "Scotty" with Joe Morgan (guitar), Joe Nightingale (singer and bones), Fred Brown (banjo). Missing is Al Slaunwhite. sicians, very good. So I got in with those fellows. We got to play for dances togeth? er. I'd spend weekends over there with them. We had our tunes very much alike. We blended in pretty well. Aw, we played for years, a lot, a lot together. And Angus Chisholm taught school in Sugar- loaf. So he got in with the MacDougalls there. He was very interested in music, An? gus, and he was a good player at that time, too,. He was coming up, you know, playing. And of course, they were picking up tunes from Angus. He used to go to Boston a lot. Some of his people were up there. And he'd pick up tunes from up there and bring them back. They'd learn them. And then of . course, when I got older, I was picking them up, too. And Archie Neil Chisholm, of course, you know Archie Neil, Angub's brother. Any place that they'd be playing, after I got big enough-to go out on my own, my dad would let me go to a dance alone--any place that they were playing, I'd be there. No question about it. I'd sit down and take it all in. I never watched anyone dancing. I was perched over in the corner somewhere, sitting down, taking the music in. 'Cause I was awfully interested in mu? sic. I was starting to come around, then, pretty good, you know. Getting a little cocky. Figured you were as good as the next fellow. (In those days, when you would get a tune-- of course, you were just learning it by ear.) That's exactly right. At that time there weren't too many books, so you were playing the tune as you heard somebody else play them, the old traditional style, some of the old fellows from up the coun? try. And theit grandfathers had taken the music over with them from Scotland. (Would you then turn around and try to play it exactly as that fellow had played it?) That's all you could do. Play it the way you learned it from him. (But) there's no two violin players in Cape Breton Is? land that play the same tune the same way. I don't care, you could pick any two out you want, and play the same tune, and not one of us will play it alike. After I got to learn music, I had good tunes out of books, you know. Cow's and O'Neill's and Fraser's, and all those good collections. The Gows--the music thieves--they'd steal tunes and put variations on it. And I fig? ured if they can do it and get away with it--well, hell--I can. So if I didn't like a tune the way it was in the book, I'm damned if I'd waste time and play it if I didn't like it. I would play it, but I wouldn't change it that much. Anybody that knew music would recog? nize the tune. So I'd probably shift a few notes there. And, oh, it seemed to sound a little better, I don't know. (Did you do this early on, before you had any music training, before you went to the books?) Not too much. Not too much. (But later on, that's when you began to put your flavour--is that a fair word?) Yes. Yeah, that's fair. (It's hard to describe what you do. I know that there's a kind of a clean line, that I don't hear in the older fiddlers.) No, that's right. (And I just wonder what you were trying to do.) Well, I'll tell you. I'll make it as clear as I can. If I told you a story, now, a joke story, and Allan MacDougall came in and told it, you probably wouldn't laugh at me, but you'd laugh your head off at him. He had it. You know--he had IT. To tell a story.



And like, old Duncan MacQuarrie was a very good violin player from Waterford. And Dun? can, he was a great fan of mine. And he'd say, "I don't know. But when you play, you seem to put the cream on it." Now that's how he described it. Like eating strawber? ries with no cream, I guess. (7)