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HELEN BALLAH DUNN CONTINUES grave, is what they used to tell us. They'd get rides on a wagon, you know--and any? thing that would help them along the way. But that's the way they would do it, you know. It must have been quite a challenge for them, eh? (Sure. To start in a new place, and not know the language....) I know they used to tell us stories. Now, one of the first times they were out, and they went such a distance. And finally, they smelled from the road, food cooking. I know the two women, particularly. Whether the men, in? deed, even were with them, I don't know, on that particular day. Because the story in? volved them--Grammie used to tell it. That's Kieran's grandmother, and my grand? mother. They went together when they would go peddling those first years. (The women went as well?) Oh, I guess they did! Oh, yes. They were very strong, very determined women. And they were gonna work right with them. Those men weren't going to do it on their own. Talk aboift women's lib. They were never chained down, I can tell you, those women. So they picked up those big suitcases and away they went. (Would the two women have gone by them? selves?) They must have, because they told comical stories. This one, the first day they were supposed to have been out. And they were so hungry, because they had walked an awful distance. And from the road, they smelled food. And Kieran's grandmother, who had a little touch--while a strong woman--still had that little touch of softness. When they got to the door of the farmhouse, I guess she was--the tears were falling down her face, she was so hun? gry. And the two of them, not able to speak a word of English, but putting their fin? gers to their mouths, and trying to explain to them the best way they could that they were selling, and that they had come a long way, and they were very hungry--almost like playing a game of Charades, eh? They must have been good at it. Till they finally made the farm people, the people on the farm, realize that they were peddling and they were looking for a meal. (Of course, a lot of the people in the country at that time only spoke Gaelic.) Well, that's right. Aunt Emma said, you know, they learned a bit of Gaelic, and French, and English. And speaking the Ara? bic language--I guess they had a good little mixture, eh? (If the two women were out selling, what happened to the children at that--?) Well, the oldest one was always left to look af? ter. Oh, my dear, my Aunt Rose Astephen, she herself peddled the local area, from here to Florence, Bras d'Or--lots of times on foot. And that was not too damn long ago. She had a wonderful line of women's clothes. And she had a little shop beside the house. When she gave up big shops, that is, because she used to have shops in Syd? ney Mines. But when she gave up going to town to a big shop, she had a little shop beside the house. But then she used to say, "Well, the women out there in Florence, they've got to come all the way in." So she packed a big suitcase and used to go out there, and oh, my--she must have done that until about 25 years ago. She was getting older then--30 years ago, anyway.... Emma said they used to tell lots of wonder? ful stories about the first few years, when they were peddling through the country-- their strength. One of the funny stories they used to tell--and laugh about, for years and years after, when the two of



them, the two women, the two wives--Grandma and Auntie--got together. They would laugh about the time they were somewhere way up between here and Mulgrave. The farmer was going to give them a lift on the wagon. And he thought he was going to get fresh with Auntie, see. And with that, the two women tackled him, and they left him beat out on the side of the road! So he wasn't going to get the better of any two women that day. But Emma said they often laughed about that, you know. And then for years they told a story about Grammie. You know, our old home--on the back side of it, on the Pleasant Street side--it's a big house, huge thing. It's a duplex. And this big long stairway goes up to the verandah that's all glassed in. And the first time--Gil Willis was a man who had a horse and team and did a lot of de? liveries. He had a delivery business. And the first time Gil Willis was delivering a barrel of flour to Grandma, in this new house that she lived. It was her first, I guess, knowledge of Gil Willis. And she saw that he was a short, very short, small man--a little on the stout side. But he was nevertheless what she called a small man. And when she saw him coming up the yard, and saw him with a barrel of flour, she got quite excited. See, flour used to be deliv? ered in a big wooden barrel in those days. And she got that excited, she ran down over that long stairway. And, "Oh," she said, "you poor little man." And she picked up the barrel of flour and brought it up the stairs! And I suppose Gil Willis was rather floored. But they told that story for years, you know--Grandma and her strength. I guess they were very strong, very able. (And if they were carrying the cases and walking....) Full of merchandise. She used to talk about that when we were kids. (You'd go for miles and you wouldn't see anyone. And the roads weren't that good. They must have stayed at houses throughout that--) Oh yes. Oh, my grandmother for years talked about the people up through the country, how good they were to them, you know.