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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1988/6/1

Helen Ballah Dunn: Kieran's grandfather, and his father, they lived over here for years after they came. (In North Sydney.) Yes. They lived here, now, must have been quite a while. Because Uncle Mose--see Uncle Mose was not really our uncle. Kieran's father, Mose Ballah--he was not really my uncle. But the two fami? lies were so close, we called him "uncle." And Kieran and all his family, they call my father "Uncle Dave." And the amusing is, they were always looked upon by their peer group...as being brothers. Whereas, they weren't. But they were very very close. Both of them were singers. They did an aw? ful lot of singing, in Cape Breton. Right in our own area, in Sydney, and in North Sydney, and in Louisbourg, I suppose--some, to a certain extent--not too much in Louis? bourg, I don't think. Most of it was in Sydney. In the days of Professor Liscombe.... I know Dad and Uncle Mose and their peer group--when Uncle Mose lived here (North Sydney)--now, they were very young. They would--a lot of friends that they had--they would go to homes of friends. They had a great time doing double male quartets-- quartets, double male quartets, harmoniz? ing- -at the beach, wherever. I got a fla? vour of that when I was very young, when I would come home from college and work in the store, help in the store. Toots MacDo? nald, who was running a pop business--a so? da-pop business--he'd come in the store. and he must have been part of it, you know. He'd strike up a note. And maybe Johnny Farr would come running, because he used to get together with them. And they had a lot of old names--Johnny MacKinnon, he used to sing with them, and different ones, you know. What was the other man--he had an Irish name--Dougie O'Handley--he was anoth? er part of it. They'd go around making mu? sic, harmonizing, singing. They'd go to friends' homes at night and spend the evening. I remember I was very young one day when-- what was his name?... Anyway, he had come home. I think at that time he was living in the States. And he came home, and went to the store to see Dad. And Dad got that ex? cited. So he came home and he said, "Mother, so-and-so is home."... I was very young. My grandmother was still alive, and she's dead a long, long time. He said, "Can you throw some food together? 'Cause I'm calling them all!" So he notified Uncle Mose, and he notified Dougie O'Handley, and he notified Toots. It was about an hour and a half to get them from Sydney or wherever. And they were in the living room. "And what they did all day was get around in a circle and do double male quartets. You know, "Skeeters am a- humming on the honeysuckle vine," and--it was just wonderful, because--it was an op? portunity for them all to get together, which they hadn't done for a long, long time. I was very young when that happened. I couldn't have been much more than 15. KIERAN BALLAH CONTINUES When I was growing up. Uncle Dave's son, Lloyd, had a beautiful tenor voice. And I had a voice--similar tone or pitch to Dad's. They were determined we were going to sing together. We sang together, and had a lot of fun practicing together. I'd go to North Sydney, go to his house. And the fa? thers got more fun out of it, because they could see themselves, I guess, in us. And they thought that was just great. 'Cause even every time I would decide--if I'd put on a



show or anything--did a couple of shows in Antigonish. Dad thought, boy, that was something else. You know, he'd do any? thing to help me. I came home one time, and I said, "I need some material for a minstrel show." I just had to say the word, and he popped me in the car and took me down to Herb Fogarty's place, who was an old minstrel man himself. Opened up the trunk--and it literally was a trunk in those days--and he said, "What do you want?" "Oh, this young fellow's going to put a show on in Antigonish. What are we going to do for him?" I had more darn material than you could shake a stick at. Whole shows that were prepared and done years ago, with music. The jokes--jokes that no one had heard, you know, today. A lot of fun. KIERAN CONTINUES NEXT PAGE Same Old Gift Shop Located on the Cabot Trail (Petit Etang, N. S. 902-224-2916) | OPEN: 9 A.M. TO 10 P.M. | ALL CAPE BRETON HANDCRAFTS \* Bookshop \* Handmade Quilts \* Ice \* Hooked Rugs \* Souvenirs \* Film \* Ice Cream U. S. Currency at Bank Rate \* All Major Credit Cards Accepted See the Head Bones of the Great Fin Whale Gas Tank Replacements & Repairs For Personal Efficient Service: Call 539-2122 Sydney Radiator 120 Years a Family Business [ 2 Years Warranty on All Parts \* We Accept VISA | 121 Prince Street, Sydney New Heaters & Radiators or Repairs We Service and Ship Anywhere on Cape Breton island 87