

[Page 41 - "It is Wrong, Wrong to Dance"?? An Introduction to Cheticamp-Area Dance Prohibition with Folklorist Barbara LeBlanc](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 51](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1989/1/1

that. Or some people might do it in hiding, to be sure that no one would know about it. And of course you'd have a third group of people that really couldn't care less what the priest would say, you know, and would do whatever they thought, anyway. And the problem in talking with people today is their perception of how they were when that actually existed. Because, they want to be modern today. So they say, you know. Oh, they didn't really believe that, you know, that didn't bother them. Because of course they know today in 1980, no one would ever think of telling you not to dance. You'd look silly, almost, saying that you're not to dance because Father So- and-so told you not to dance, do you see? So, like, it's hard to really get the real truth, because people's perceptions--say the people we spoke with, who are in their 60's and 70's and 80's--the perceptions of that period, they have different memories than the reality sometimes. I don't know if that makes sense. So it's hard to really know, in effect, how much effect that had on their lives. (Except that you do have some evidences. You have the evidences of songs.) Yes, yes. There's two songs that we found in Cheticamp. One, we have the music to, and the other, unfortunately, we were unable to find the music to. But see, this was something--it was like something parallel happening. There would have been really two controls, okay? There would have been the church control. And then there would have been the group control. And so the group control would have been through these type of folklore expressions, which would have been song and legend. Because we know that legends also existed in French-Canadian communities that were telling the people. "If you dance, this is a bad thing and you will go to Hell." There are versions of that legend, which have been found. But unfortunately there was only one person in Cheticamp to whom I spoke that remembered a legend like that, but it was really vague. He remembered kind of the basic elements, and that was--he's dead now--Lubie Chiasson. And he remembered that, yes, there'd been a legend--and basically the story's always the same. There's this young, pretty girl, but she's a bit coquettish. And she wants to go to a dance, and her parents aren't too thrilled about that. In some versions they probably say no, but she goes anyway. (In another version) she's just a pretty girl, she's at the dance, and everyone's at the dance. But this stranger--it's always a stranger -- comes in. And he's handsome, and of course everybody's looking at him and. Oh, who's going to dance with him? And he asks the pretty girl to dance. And in some versions, say if he walks near a baby, the baby cries. Or in some versions the older people--the grandmothers of the village, you know--they just don't feel that the right vibrations are coming from this stranger. So it's always either the really young, like the babies, or the older ones, that sense that there's something not right about this stranger. And then something happens, that he's discovered. Or, he's not discovered, and he leaves. And, like, the snow has melted where he passed, or where his carriage passed. You know, some kind of phenomena that's not normal. And in some versions he takes away the girl, and in some versions he doesn't. But that's kind of



the basic story line of the legend. And so that is the legend according to Lu? bie-  
 -and that was kind of the basic story line he told me. Oh, there was this girl who  
 danced, and this handsome stranger "??"? SHOOTERS LOUNGE FAMILY DINING  
 Featuring Fresh '??' • ?(cl and Homestyle Cooking \$1.99 Truckers' Special  
 Breakfast Every Morning Live Entertainment! Thursday, Friday, and Saturday WE  
 OPEN AT 7 A. M. Monday to Saturday 9 A. M. Sunday RESTAURANT OPEN till 11 P.  
 M LOUNGE OPEN till 2 A. M. J) Old-Fashioned Ceilidh Every Saturday at 2 P. M.! '  
 CAPE BRETON SHOPPING PLAZA 539-5247 Brian alheXgrave SYDNEY  
 RIVER Stores To Serve You CAPE BRETON SHOPPING PLAZA SYDNEYRIVER rnH'  
 Featuring 'W?? 1 Daily OCrAMTMiMT BTONU The Crossroads of Cape Breton'  
 Sobeys & Shopper's Drug Mart "\*\*\*\*\* \* ??'" = ParUna