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Charlie MacDonald: Cab Driver Tales More Stories from 58 Years Behind the Wheel (As we said in Issue 52. "vis? iting with Charlie MacDonald is like riding in the back seat of his cab as he takes you around his world." During our conver? sation, we asked Charlie. "Do you call it a cab driver? taxi driver? Do you call yourself a cabbie? a cabman? a driver?" And Charlie said: Cab driver. Have you seen the little song that someone had out? "The cabbie, he sits in his car/ And waits for the calls from near and afar." I forget the rest of it. I think I have the yarn somewheres. I got it from, I don't know was it New York or Montreal. "The Cab Driver's Song." And it started out, "He sits in the cab/ and waits for his calls/ from near and afar./ to make his pay/ for the rest of the day." Oh, it was a nice little song. I must look it up some day. (Most of your work, I take it, was here on Cape Breton Island.) Sixty per cent of it. 'Cause I had 19 trips to New York. I had 17 trips to Montreal, Seven Islands, and Ot? tawa. And I had--it was mostly in the early years, you know--(meeting) ships. See, you'd get them from Sydney to Seven Islands. You'd get them from Sydney to Saint John. You'd get them from Sydney to Halifax. And one of the nicest trips was, I drove a French diplomat that came over from St. Pierre. And came up on the boat, and he came to the hotel. He stayed there a day and a night, I think. And then he was booked for the World's Fair in New York, for Sunday at the big hotel there--it was a big-name--for 2:30. And he told me when I left the hotel--him and his wife and two children--he said, "Govern yourself to pull into the Astoria Hotel in New York at 2:30." She had no English and the children had no English. So, I did that. I put two nights on the road. And I judged--Sunday I pulled into New York, the hotel--it wasn't hard to find; you know, the streets were good--2:30. Bellhops came out--they had his name and everything. He was a French diplomat that, he was one of the big owners of St. Pierre. (Now the first time somebody ever said to you, "Let's go for one of these long drives," did you have any reluctance or were you ready to go?) No. Ready to go. Well, during the war, I was on the airport. The flight couldn't get into Halifax, that I was out to meet. It came from St. John's. All right. There were 6 people, they be? longed to Halifax. So Trans-Canada Airlines said, "Take those people to Halifax, Char? lie. And charge it up to Trans-Canada Air? lines." I just loaded them in the car and took off for Halifax. I dropped them off in Halifax. I let two of them off at Trans- Canada Airlines office. And the girl came running out of the office on the gallop. "Driver, you're a Sydney driver, Sydney driver!" She said, "I've got a load for you back to Sydney." I said, "Okay." I took them back here. They were Sydney people. I got back here and pulled up at the ho- • tel. That was the time I used three wake- up tablets. And there were 12 people at the hotel waiting for the two limousines to take them back to Halifax. I went back to Halifax again. Two round trips. But ' that double-header that we went up, we came back alone. (Nobody to bring back.) No. The weather cleared. (What was the longest trip you ever took?) Sydney Airport, May 16th, '46. There were 6 boys came down (from) Labrador and Lap? land- -Americans . Up



there, radar technicians, for the American airlines. When the flights left Gander, they were the next to give the weather and mileage and air conditions, in order for them to get into London. So they were up there 4 and 5 and 6 years, and never got home. Well all right, they left home--I didn't know it at the time, but I had an idea, 'cause I drove them (around) here 5 days before they made up their mind. (What does that mean? They came to Sydney first?) Yeah. The American planes put them into Gander. They had to make their way