

<u>Page 63 - Charlie MacDonald: Cab Driver Tales, More Stories from 58 Years Behind</u> the Wheel

ISSUE: <u>Issue 53</u>

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1990/1/1

about an ounce and a half. And then you could swallow it in two mouthfuls. (And that would keep you awake.) That was good for 10 hours, 15 hours sometimes. Depending on what you had in sleep. (Do you think that helped keep you fit, as well?) Oh, and brighten you up. Cripes, you'd drive like a madman. (What about food? Was there special food that you thought you should eat?) Whatever you could grab. (Didn't matter.) No. What? ever you could grab. You couldn't depend on grub. Unless you had time and go in and an hour at a restaurant, or 40 minutes at a restaurant. Well, 40 minutes or an hour would take you a hundred miles. (I think that one of the last storytellers that a person can find any more would be a cab driver. Who else tells stories the way people did years ago, except cab drivers?) Except cab drivers.... (And they think you know where all the gambling is.) All the gambling, all the bootleggers. (All the women.) All the wom? en. (Although, I don't know--did we ever have women here?) Oh, plenty. Plenty! The Lords of London'used to come over here. The best women in North America were down at the coke ovens. And they wer? en't ashamed to tell you, the women. Yeah, they weren't ashamed. They were there from Japan--beautiful women. You'd admire them, boy, when you'd see them walking across, one girl friend's house to another. You'd admire them. And the way they dressed then, alongside of the Cape Bretoners and steelworkers, of the town, you know--you wore just good able shoes, and so forth. They had high heels and all that stuff-- rings on their fingers, and everything. And they used to fix their own hair. They had curlers or something, whatever the hell it was. (Were they mostly Japanese, or were they other kinds...?) No, they were--I'd say they were from the seven na- WELCOME TO THE FULLY LICENSED Harbour Restaurant A Good Selection of Seafood tions of the world, here. From Germany, Russia, England, Japan, United States • weren't so hot. When they'd ask--some? body 'd say, "Where're you from?" "Oh, I'm from California. I'm from New York." "Any Canadian girls around, or English girls?" Seems that they weren't too interested in American girls. Boy, oh boy, and the gamblers down there! Yeah. Then war broke out. They had the mil? itary, kind of rooted a lot out--I bet you there were a thousand down there--ruled a lot of them out to Halifax, because it was a bigger military city. Go to Halifax, that's where the military'd be landing. You see, and it was, too. So, after the war, they left here. That was the end of it. ('Cause we don't hear very much of it to? day.) No. nothing today--nothing since 20 years. (And was this the kind of situation where men would go to where the women were, or were you driving the women around?) Uh. hotels--they couldn't go in there. ("There" is where?) The Isle Roy- ale. Weren't allowed in there. He'd say to me. "Charlie, can you fix me up for to? night?" I had a list of numbers. I said. "Yeah. What type, and what do you want?" He'd tell me. "All right," he said, "I'll get a room over at the little hotel over here"--where he could walk in with her. But he said, "I'll go over and pay for the room and everything. All I've got to do is walk in." Well, I'd go down to the Pier and get--I'd call up and tell this one to be ready, or that one.

And I'd pick them OPEN ALL YEAR 'ROUND Dining Room Overlooking ChetIcamp Harbour Cheticamp, Cape Breton * 224-2042 EASTERN HEAT PUMPS LIMITED 102 REEVES STREET, SYDNEY 564-4141 Air Source Water Source Residential and Commercial Heat Pumps and Air Conditioning Systems -DESIGN¡'NGINEERING - INSTALLATION - SERVICE - FEATURING CARRIER HIGH-EFFICIENCY HEATING AND COOLING EQUIPMENT Kennetti'jonovan Ten new studies on the history of Cape Breton Island ranging from the North Atlantic world of the 18th century to the political and economic troubles of the 20th century. The book also has a comprehensive introduction ex? amining Cape Breton's vibrant cultural revival since the 1960's. Individual chapters consider the wreck of the Chameau in 1725, Scottish settlements and economic life in the early 19th century, the cultural awakening of the 1840's, the role of women in the Great War, the impact of immigration and industrialization on the urban centres, the fortunes of labour politics in the coal towns and the continuing crisis of public ownership in the steel industry. Contributors include Christopher Moore, Alex Storm, Stephen Hornsby, Rus? ty Bitterman, Ken Donovan, Michael Owen, Ron Crawley, A.J.B. Johnston, David Frank and Joan Bishop. A co-publication of University College of Cape Breton Press and Acadiensis Press. ISBN 0-919107-23-0 Paper SI 6.95 ISBN 0-919107-24-9 Cloth \$29.95 To order: Send cheque or money order to University College of Cape Breton Press, P.O. Box 5300, Sydney, N.S., BIP 6L2, Shipping included.