

[Page 59 - From Visits with John A. MacIsaac](#)ISSUE : [Issue 54](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1990/6/1

From Visits with John A. MacIsaac John A. MacIsaac of Sugarloaf: I was fish? ing down at Spanish Brook. I and my father took down some traps, a load of traps, and landed them at Spanish Brook, so they'd be handy for the day we set. So all right, the motorboat was out there. We anchored her out, and we were taking the traps ashore. So when we took them all ashore, we just pulled the boat up, and we were lugging the traps up. So, with everything--paying no attention to the little boat that we left on the shore. So, come to look. Here she was, she was halfway out to the motorboat! No way for us to get there. And the ice outside of us there. So all I could do was make the swim. I stripped some. I believe I left my underclothes on. But my top clothes, I think I did (take them off). I'd be thinking of that just as I got to the water. I said, "In the name of God, what'll I do? If I'll ever make it." So I just pulled them off, and I threw them up. And I told Papa, if anything happens, he knows the road up the shore. "You know that. And don't do nothing." That's if anything happened to me. (Don't come out for you, you mean.) No, dear, no, no. And I could swim. But the water was so plained cold. So all right. I made a dash out, and plunk into the water, and I swam out to the boat. I got ahold of her. And I got into her. And then I only had one oar. The other oar, when we were hauling her up, we put it under her for to pull her up on it. So there was only one oar. So it took me a good little while for to paddle in with one oar. So I paddled in, and got ashore. And then got--I wrung my clothes. Put the other ones on, and I wrung the other ones. So we went out, and then went home. Ah gee, that was tough. That would be in April. (You didn't make a fire first and warm yourself up?) No, no, dear. There was nothing there much to make a fire. You'd have to go up in the woods. But I never, never even caught a cold or anything. Never did. (How did you learn how to fish?) Oh, dear, I had to do that myself. My father wasn't much of a fisherman. He had done some fishing, but not enough to show us, no. So I had to learn that myself. (No books.) No. Get a little boat and go at it myself. (Nobody took you out.) No. (And did you make your own gear?) Yeah, oh yes, made our own. We couldn't do then like they're doing today--buy all their gear--holy cripes! Oh no, you had to make all your own gear. Go to the woods and get the stuff, and get it sawed, get the sills and the laths sawed. That's all. You did the rest. Today they don't do any of that. I usually fished late. Probably it was the last of September. I tried to go away and get a job away somewheres. At working in the woods, or working at something-- construction work, or something. I'd do some fishing after haymaking. Some. But then, I'd let it go, go away somewheres. New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, or up in St. Ann's (Victoria County, in the lumber- woods) . Pretty well every year. (And did your parents mind your going?) No. Oh no, my goodness gracious, we all couldn't stay home doing nothing. No. And my father couldn't get horseshoeing enough in order to earn a living. He was a good horseshoer. But he couldn't get enough, so.... My father, when he was young and growing up, he went to Minnesota. He did black? smith work there. (How did he get a job in Minnesota?) Then, that place was opening up. So, it called for men. So there was a bunch from home that went. There was a



bunch of the MacDougalls, my father, and his brother Angus, and quite a lot, quite a few from The Bay here. And ones from Cape North. Then, there was a few of them that stayed there. (In Minnesota.) Father and Angus--both of them came home. He'd be earning. They were good to work, both of them, him and Angus. And he didn't care anything for alcohol or anything, no. (Yes, that matters.) Yeah, that matters a