

[Page 44 - Clive Doucet: Philibert Goes to Heaven](#)ISSUE : [Issue 60](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1992/6/1

When my cousin sees that he has shocked the young man, he explains, "I've met this woman. She can barely read. She was married at eighteen. She's had children like a rabbit. She's older than you are. Let her find someone more suitable to her station in life." The young man left the presbytery as if someone had shot him. Here was the man who had taught him catechism; the man he had served as an altar boy; whom he regarded as highly as his own father, telling him that the woman he wished to marry was not suitable to his station in life. I found the young man a day or so later in the most terrible despair. His parents did not know what to do. One minute, he was shedding tears of rage at Father Aucoin and the next he was feeling ashamed of himself for falling in love with a woman 'beneath his station in life.' After all, Father Aucoin was a man who knows. In those days I was sure that Father Aucoin did not know everything. So I told the lad as delicately as possible, for the young man was in an excited state, that my good cousin didn't know shit from shinola, and furthermore that the love-of-his-life was an exceptionally fine woman and he should get himself to Cheticamp as quickly as possible, marry the lady at St. Pierre, not here at de la Mer, and live happily ever after. Which is exactly what he did. They got married in Cheticamp and had three more children. A happier, more saintly family would be hard to find. That was one of my successes. Marcel Boudreau, on the other hand, I count as a failure. He eventually became a stone in my shoe. No matter what I said. No matter how many times I visited Marcel was determined to be inconsolable. He had decided that his wife's death was his fault and therefore he should be punished. In a way, he was right. Marie Boudreau died of T.B. and too many babies. She had eight children in eight years, six lived and two died. It wore her out. Yes, yes, I know it takes two people to make a baby, but there are ways to control how many babies you make and neither Marcel or Dr. Seveau had the guts to go against the Gospel according to Father Aucoin, that's the long and short of it. Sure, I blame Marcel. I blame Dr. Seveau too. He had about as much fibre as wet grass. Anyway, it was all very sad. Marie died at thirty-two. Thirty-two! And Marcel carried out his own trial, was his own prosecutor, judge and jury, convicted himself and never slept with another woman. That was his punishment. Two wrongs never make a right and they didn't this time either. After Marie died, I'm sure that the boy must have felt some of Suppliers of Commercial Recreational Fencing p. O. BOX98, King St., North Sydney, N. S. B2A3M1 794-4773 his father's anger at the church and himself I think the older boys understood, but not Daniel. When I took him to the presbytery to be the priest's boy, I thought he would grow out of it. I was sure he would get along with Father Aucoin just as his older brother had, but it didn't work out. The anger stayed and set down roots in the boy's soul. In the end we all get condemned for some crime or other. My cousin thought we all could be saints. I'm convinced we're all criminals. I don't know exactly what I've been convicted of, God knows there's enough to choose from, but I know what my punishment is, I've been condemned to glimpse heaven. Fortunately, it's not playing a harp somewhere beyond the clouds. Heaven was walking down the



mountainside with the young Scottish girl. The snow was brilliant, white and light cascading around us with every step. The sky was so blue that you could feel the colour. Lights sparkled in the auburn hair of the Scot? tish girl. Her voice was the most wonderful music I have ever heard. It was so courageous, so filled with cheery determination to make a great success of her life. I still dream about that day. I fell in love with the idea of life as it can be, but never is, as it is held out to us and is denied us. I was allowed for a few short moments to feel with my entire heart and then I was released to go back to my ordinary life. Yes, I fell in love with her, but not in the way you imagine, because I knew that it was as futile an affection as my cousin's infatuation with the Bible. I think my sainted cousin received the same punishment with his vocation. He never talked about it, but I am sure that when he was a young man, the door was opened for him and he was allowed for a few seconds to get a brief glimpse of heaven. And he spent the rest of his life scrambling to pry the door back open; the punishment for my cousin was the harder he pried, the harder he prayed, the farther away heaven got, until in the end his heart gave out with trying. I've never been quite sure whether he was magnificently stupid or just more courageous than I. He would not admit defeat, not for a second. He would have died first and in the end, I guess, he did. He was only fifty-three. So many people leaned on him that sometimes I think he did stupid things from nothing more than fatigue. He had no wife. No one to help sustain him except the circulars from the Bishop which always said the same thing, 'buck up, pray more and stay away from Credit Unions.' He felt remorse. I know that. He felt remorse about Ducline Le? blanc. He knew he'd done an evil thing, but he was trapped by his vision just as surely as I was trapped by mine. I miss my cousin. There's no one to go to war against now. End Our thanks to Black Moss Press for permission to print this sto? ry. The photograph of Clive Doucet by Robin Brass is taken from Olive's novel My Grandfather's Cape Breton. The Priest's Boy is available from your bookstore or from Black Moss Press, P. O. Box 143, Station A, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6K1, for \$14.95. HAVE OUR AUGER TRUCK DIG YOUR HOLES." Midway Motors Ltd. iHh Tw) Loc ' Now with Tw) Locattons: I HEAD OFFICE "

NEW OFFICE ' Middle River wSf Port Hastings c 295-2290 ""
 625-3641 'i 44 We've Been CHRYSLER Since 1926 KEDDY'S Sydney Hotel
 KEDDY'S 600 KING'S ROAD, SYDNEY, N.S. (902)539-1140 • Toll Free:
 1-800-561-7666 218 nUOMb Air Conditioned • Colour Cable TV Indoor Recreation
 Facility • ?Pool ? Sauna ? Whirlpool Bath Entertainment 0* Dancing at IUORV'S
 LOUNGE KEDDY'S FAMILY RESTAURANT 7 A.M. to 9 P.M. Licensed Dining • Daily
 Features