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A Talk with Donald Johnny Murdock: The Blind Man's Seventh Son Edited from Conversations with Leonard MacLellan, Judique INTRODUCTION BY LEONARD MacLELLAN: Daniel Alexander MacDonald, better known locally as Donald Johnny Murdock (a name styled after his father Johnny, and grandfather Murdock), resides in West Mabou with Alma (Hodges), his English war bride of fifty years. Sitting comfortably in their cosy living room, we carefully savour an assortment of home-made rhubarb, plum, and blueberry wines • a demanding task indeed. The night has thrown its thick blanket over the century-old home, concealing the frozen harbour below, and the rolling highlands beyond. Donald Johnny Murdock: My given name is Daniel Alexander MacDonald, but people around here know me as Donald Johnny Murdock. My people (the MacDonalds) came from the Isle of Canna, in Scotland. The first fellow to come over was Alexander, my great-grandfather, and he settled at Foot Cape sometime between 1800 and 1810. Alexander's father Duncan (my great-great grandfather) and his father Rory remained in Scotland. My grandfather Murdock was born at Foot Cape (in 1832) , and my father Johnny was born on (July 8) 1874, here in West Mabou. (Leonard: How did your father and grandfather make a living? Were they farmers?) No, they were mostly tradespeople, like my uncles, but there were farmers too. There were carpenters. My grandfather Murdock was a tailor, and I believe there were a few millers back in the older days. (Where did your grandfather do his tailoring?) Mostly in West Mabou, because from what I hear, he did some suits for people getting married. (Was your father Johnny also a tailor like his father?) At the age of around twenty, my father went for a trade. A blacksmith's trade. However, he became blind. People said that he concentrated on the fire too much, looked into it too much. It was too hard on his eyes, and he was blinded. So after that, after he was blinded, he built a house, built a barn, had a little farm. He did some work on the highways and other places. Most of the stories I know about him, I heard from my mother, Catherine (MacIsaac). She died the year I joined the army, in 1941. (It must have been difficult back then, for your father to make a living once he was blinded.) Though my father was blind, he could do a lot of things. He went for a trade at the blind school in Truro. He was a piano tuner, he could make brooms, and a number of things. There was many a time when the LeBlanc Siding Ltd. Island Vinyl Siding Ltd. Authorized Dealer for fCA YUAN Aluminum & Vinyl Siding Aluminum Windows & Doors Shutters / Softfit / Fascia / Awnings Heavy Duty Vinyl Replacement Windows 109 Reservoir Road SYDNEY Professional installation of Aluminum & Vinyl Siding in Cape Breton for over 18 years. FREE ESTIMATES, and any siding inquiries, Call Collect: BRUCE or SONNY MacPHERSON 539-3665 & 539-4626