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So how do you like this country? he wanted to know. He meant Cape Breton. I told him I liked it fine. People had been good to me. "Wonderful people on the North Shore," he said. "You're living next to Roddy Hector MacDonald. He's related to my wife Mary. She and Roddy Hector...." And while I listened I was trying to figure out how, in this magnificent living room, hardwood floor and Victorian lamps, I was going to learn about making rope from wood. And how was I going to turn Red Dan's conversation to that subject and how was I going to get to ask a question. And how was I going to do that while setting up my tape recorder fast enough so that once Red Dan was reminded of the subject that brought me there, I would not miss a word from him about wood rope, the tape would be going. And where would I plug in? And did I have batteries? And could he see this was one of my first interviews? And why did he hold me jammed against himself, knee to knee, shoulder to shoulder, his face in my face and eye to eye, telling me about interconnections of people along the North Shore. I was nervous. I was sweating. My mouth was dry. And I was glad he kept talking until I was able to get my tongue to work. Eventually, Red Dan came round to, "I built this house for Mary and me. Her mother has lived with us. She's not been well. She died." "Oh," I said, "when was that?" "About 15 minutes ago. Upstairs." I was on my feet. He came up with me, holding my arm. Now I could talk. I started to tell him that I would come again soon, but he pulled me back down beside him. There was no arguing with that grip. "It's all right," he said. "She's not been well. And she's an old woman." OWNED BY ATLANTIC SHOPPING CENTRES LTD. Congratulations on the 25th Anniversary of Cape Breton's MAGAZINE Sydney Shopping Centre is proud to be a longtime supporter of this valuable contribution to our community. SYDNEY SHOPPING CENTRE • HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. -10:00 p.m. I wanted to go home. "How did you find this part of the country?" "Just luck. I was looking to change my life. I followed another fellow here ' but he didn't stay. I wanted to try it." "You've got a family.' i'r' Ronald Caplan "A wife and a daughter." "And what does your wife think of this part of the country." "She likes it. She likes it fine. I really should go." "It's all right," he said. "Dr. MacMillan will be here soon." And soon Dr. MacMillan was there. He was one of the Cape Breton saints. Most of his life had been spent crawling through snowbanks from Middle River to Cape North, going wherever he was called, delivering babies, curing ills, getting there too late or getting there after the person got well but getting there • having crossed thin ice and driven through hail and the rest of the hell of Cape Breton winters. A brisk rounded man moving at a speed at which you'd think he couldn't possibly care, but as I learned over the years he cared deeply. Mary brought Dr. MacMillan in through the kitchen and directly up the stairs. I stood again to leave and again Red Dan pulled me down. He was telling me about trap fishing. Dr. MacMillan came down the stairs, now in his shirtsleeves, drying his hands. "Yes, yes," he was saying, "she's dead." "Well," I said, standing up. "I'm sorry to come at just this time but I am going to go now and I promise to come again soon."



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