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Mary Laben: The day we moved in here was November the 27th, '1938 • and we came in first so the Eastern Light and Power Company would connect the lights, so the rest of the men could work evenings by light instead of by lamp. The day that I came in we had to wait for them to put down the floor to put the stove up. I knew we were moving • it was slushy • so day before I made a great big pot of stew and a pile of homemade bread • and all the men were working here to get the floor down. They had two wooden horses and they put a sheet of gyprock on it and put the stew in the middle of it and passed the plates all around and everybody had the first meal on a sheet of gyprock • homemade stew and apple pie and homemade bread. Joe Laben added: A completed home in Tompkinsville Looking back, I think one of the mistakes we've made is that we did not spread the co-op movement to our younger people, in our schools. Today they don't know about the movement • it's not as active educationally as what it was when we started the movement. Children do not know enough about it. We could hardly believe ourselves, that we could build those houses. Yet it wasn't hard. We had a lot of fun. We were all together. Fine days our wives would come out and make tea. We had a little picnic in the field and that was a great thing for us. We got the women organized. We had gardens and all had our own vegetables. We had cows and we had pigs and chickens • and quite often almost everything on the table would come off our little plots of land. And that went on for years. It was an eye-opener to us, considering that we were coal miners. And the knowledge that we gained from that was an education in itself. ?? This story of Father Tompkins grew out of an entry to the Cape Breton's Magazine Contest in Local History, submitted by students of the 1974 Grade Six class at Tompkins Memorial School, Reserve Mines. This entry won the Third Prize of \$25.00. Their Jean MacDonald, told us that the students decided to donate the money to teacher, the William Syms Memorial Fund, a high school scholarship fund. Besides considerable research, the students interviewed James Marsh, Joe and Mary Laben, and Mickey Connors. The students are Sherry Murray, Danette MacInnes, Michelle Doucette, Karen Murphy, Ann Trenchard, Dorothy Scrymgeour, Donald MacDonald; front row: Curtii Roach. Dwight Syms. Kenny Pickford. Ronnie O'Brien. • Ideas have hands and feet, they will work for you. Have faith. Work together. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. But lobstermen are not dogs. They are men. And men can read and think and learn new ways so long as they live." • Father Jimmy Tompkins CAPE BRETON SHOPPING PLAZA f SnjmAu 1 SYDNBT RIVBR • OBBN DAILY 'TIL 10 F. M. 1 WflllOnlUIIUII I GIUmUIIEBI I A IMLirision of the F.ir?lfooteostli Co\* Liated