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Allan MacLeod: Stories & Gaelic Songs Edited from Conversations with Beth I/MacNeil and Cape Breton's Magazine Allan MacLeod, Catalone: Another fellow who could compose songs was this Neil Mac? Lennan. He's dead now. You had to watch what you did in front of Neil. (Because he'd make a song....) Yes, he would com? pose a song for you. Not to hurt you or anything, but.... And he'd add onto it. And it was just enough to drive you wild for a little while because he'd have all kinds of stuff in it that you didn't do at all. You'd done one little thing, he'd stretch it! You wouldn't believe it. And good songs. I mean, if he made a song, he made a good song. They might not be that long, but they'd be good, boy. (You'd have to have a good sense of humour.) Oh, that's what he had. And he'd laugh at any? thing. He was never married or anything. But he'd make up songs. You just--if you were walking, even walking with him, or tell him anything--you had to watch what you told him, (about) yourself in any way at all. First thing you know, you'd go somewhere and he'd start singing this song. Yeah, he'd start singing it. {Laugh? ter.) And they'd be singing it for a while. And then you'd catch on, boy, you're the one that did that. Then the laugh would be on.... But he was full of those little songs, little things. He'd, oh, he was--every little move. Or anything you got. I know we got a horse one time. And, oh, he was a fast little horse. A good little horse. The day after we got him--there was no shoes--! bought him out in French Road, I think. And I walked him in across the Old French Road, between walking and horseback riding. Oh golly, I was only a young fellow then, maybe twelve, thirteen. And the next day I had to go out Trout Brook to get shoes put on him. Hitch him to the riding wagon. (Neil) saw me going. A PORTION OF Oran an Eich / The Horse Song Air fonn/To the tune of "Mo nighean donn an t-siigraidh" Chaidh Ailean suas 'ga chruidheadh 'S cha dean e bheinn a dh'leadh, Dh'aithnich mi air a chuinnlean Gun robh e caoidh na h-analach. Mun d'thainig e dhan tIrl seo Gn robh e muigh 's na h-Innsean; Is ionnadh fear a chruidh e Nach eil a chaoidh air thalamh seo. Gun robh e'n Labrador ann, Bliadhn' aig Sandy Glaus ann; Dh'aithnich mi air a dh'bighean Gur iomadh l6d a tharruing e. Gun robh e'n Caiaddnaidh Bliadhna na "h-explosion."... Allan went up to have him shod, But he can't climb the hill; I knew by his nostril That he was out of breath. Before he came to this land He was out in the Indies; Many a man who shod him Is no longer on this earth. He was there in Labrador For a year with Santa Glaus there; I knew by his ways That he had dragged many a load. He was in Caledonia, The year of the explosion.... Well, he knew we got him, anyway. He com? posed a song for that. I used to know a couple of verses of it. The horse was supposed to be so old.... Santa Claus was supposed to have him for a year, in Labrador, and he knew, the way he was pulling against the load--he was sup? posed to be that old! {Laughs.) Yeah, he made that. Oh, yeah, and when the explo? sion in the mines--that's back before my time. He's that old, he's been around that long. Oh, I don't know how that went. But he was supposed to be there. Santa Claus was supposed to have had him for a year, hauling around. Just by me going up to get him shod. (And you were a young fellow



then.) Oh, just a kid then, yeah. (He sees you going by.) Yeah. (Isn't that something?) Yeah, and he composed that song. He had a lot of it, too, and he could remember it, if he did it, too. I don't know if he could write it down or what, but...and you wouldn't know a thing about it till • a party at the house or some? thing, a bunch there singing,... Allan MacLeod Continues on Page 78