LEB/SAY-Ac-14

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Interview with Peter Mackay, July 13, 1986
Scottsville, 258-2824

000- Peter Mackay, Scottsville, 1908.

009- Prompting.
I started at a very young age. It was on account of my voice. I had such a strong voice. There was no P.A. systems in them days. It was just...So I could call and people could hear me. I started at about the age of 17, I started to call the sets. I was calling wherever there was a dance. There wasn't too many dances in them days. Right now I have called in Port Hood, Glendale, Baddeck, Scottsville, Southwest Margaree for 20 years, I called in East Margaree, once I called in Inverness, and I'm still in demand to call.

029- Occassions.
Halls, Weddings or whatever. I called in the houseparties too. There used to be quite a few houseparties in them days, but not anymore.

038- Calls for the Saratoga Lancers.
It'd be better with the music, but we haven't got the music so:

All join hands and forward all
First two couples on the head
Lead up to the couples on your right
And swing four hands around
Side couple divide
Head couples go through the centre and outside
Returning
Balance and turn with your corner lady
Give 'er a twist and twist 'er around
All up in the centre and forward all

Second two on the sides
Lead up to your couples on the right
And swing four hands around
Head couple divide
Side couples go through the centre and outside
Returning and
Balance and turn with your corner ladies
Swing 'er around and swing 'er around
Up in the centre and forward all.

Third two on the head
Lead up to your couples on the right
And swing four hands around
Side couple divide
Head couples go through the centre and outside

Returning and
Balance and turn with your corner lady
Give 'er a swing and swing 'er around
Up in the centre and forward all.

For the last two on the side
Lead up to your couples on the right
And swing four hands around
Head couple divide and
Side couples go throught the centre and outside
Returning and
Balance and turn with your corner lady
Swing 'er around and swing 'er around
Up in the centre and forward all and that'll be all.

069-
Four hands around means the hands are held straight. Holding hands with your opposide when you do that. The first figure is danced to a jig.

095- The second figure.

All join hands and forward all
Lead your ladies in the centre and
To the right you go
Back the other way
And all swing with your partner
Turn your partner 'round
Swing 'er around and swing 'er around
And march away to the right.

And all join hands and forward all
Lead your ladies in the centre and
To the right you go
Back the other way
And all turn with your own
Turn with your own and give 'er a swing
And swing 'er around
And march away to the left.

All join hands and forward all
Lead your ladies in the centre and
To the right you go
Now back the other way
All turn with your own
Give 'er a twist
Twist 'er around and around
And march away to the right, to the right.

And all join hands and forward all
Lead your ladies in the centre and

To the right you go
Now back the other way and
All turn with your own
And swing 'er around and swing 'er around
And march away to the left, to the left
And all join hands and forward all and that'll be all.

This is to a jig too.

122- Third figure.
This one is the fast. It is to a reel and it is the most tiring for the caller.

126-

Grand chain right hand to your honey and a
Left to the bunny and a grand right and left
And a grand right and a wrong and half the ways
And you wheel about turn
Give 'er a twist and twist 'er around and around and a
right and a left and a right and a wrong
And a grand chain and a...

First couple on the heads promenade in
Face the music and
Others fall in line
Take your ladies down through the centre
Ladies to the left and gents to the right
And all fall in line
Tamerbreaker?? down tamerbreaker down
All forward and back, forward and back
Forward and swing your honey and she'll swing you
Give 'er a twist and twist 'er around

Grand chain right hand to your honey and
A left to the bunny and a grand right and left
And a grand right wrong
Half the ways and you wheel about turn
When you meet you give 'er a twist
Twist 'er around and around and around and a
Right and a left and a right and a wrong
And a grand chain and a promenade away you go

Second two on the head promenade in
Face the back of the hall and
Others fall in line
Take your ladies down through the centre
Ladies to the left and gents to the right
And all fall in line
Forward and swing with your honey and she'll swing you
Swing 'er around and around and around

Grand chain
Right hand to your honey and a left to the bunny
And a grand right and left and a grand right wrong
And half the ways and you wheel about turn
Give 'er a twist and twist 'er around
And a right and a left and a right and a wrong
And a grand chain and a promenade
Promenade in
Face the music
Two on the heads promenade in
Face the music and take your ladies down
Through the centre
Ladies to the left and gents to the right and
All fall in line
Forward and swing with your honey and she'll swing you
Swing 'er around and around and around and
A right and a left and a right and a wrong
Grand chain chain 'em away and away and
A grand right and left and a grand right wrong
And a half the ways
And you wheel about turn
When you meet her give 'er a twist
Twist 'er around and around and around
Right and left and a right and a wrong
And a grand chain and a promenade and away you go
For the last on the heads all promenade in
And face the back of the hall
And others fall in line
Take your ladies down through the centre
Ladies to the left and gents to the right
And all fall in line
Forward and swing with your honey
And she'll swing you
Grand chain, chain 'em away and away and a
Grand right and left and a grand right and wrong
All around the hall
Salut your honey as you pass her by
When you meet, you promenade away, promenade away
And that'll be all.

175- Now you can add another one to it.

Grand chain, right hand to your honey and a left to the bunny and a grand right and left and a grand right and wrong
All around the hall
Up in the centre and forward all
Salute your right
Turn with the left

And a promenade
Away you go
Up in the centre and forward all
Salute your right and turn with the left
Give 'er a twist and twist 'er around and around and
around and a promenade and away you go
Up in the centre and forward all
Up in the centre and forward all
Salute your right and turn your left and
Give 'er a twist, twist 'er around and around and around
Promenade and away you go
Up in the centre and forward all
Salute your right and turn with your honey and swing 'er
around and around and around and a promenade and away two
three.

198- Books.
Never seen a book, I just picked it up.

200- Learned from.
I don't know. It's so far back that. I learned it anyway in no time. But there weren't many good prompters. They didn't have the voice that I have. I didn't need a P.A. system at all.

207- When he prompts.
Last fall I prompted at St. Andrews day at the firehall here in Scotsville. And I don't think I ever prompted better. Even at my age.

211- Prompting at house parties.
I was dancing and calling at the same time. Well I still called up to a couple of years ago and danced.

224- Houseparties.
They used to put those houseparties on and they only had, they had no P.A. system, which was a good thing, they'd have a good fiddler in the corridor, or two of them, and they'd play to beat the devil and drink a little rum, probably. You went to dance and you'd have four couples just in the kitchen and you could watch everyone in the dining room. They'd be step-dancing some of them who could step-dance. Kicking their feet anyway, in the set. There'd be quite a few sets called in a night at one of these houseparties, probably ten or twelve sets. They'd be going to 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. There wasn't that many, there used to be one a couple of houses around here that'd be having houseparties. The people who weren't dancing in the set, they'd sit back, sometimes they'd have two sets. There wouldn't be that many at a houseparty. There would be the few invited in. They ruined it so bad that they...they ruined it.

247- Changes in the sets.
They wouldn't keep time to the music. They don't know what they're doing. They're just out there stupid and they don't want to learn. And

it's a shame. Why? It's just that, I don't know, they don't know and they don't want to learn. It's simple enough to learn if you listen to the caller.

255- Church picnics.
He never called at church picnics. I called at school picnincs.

258- Box socials.
The lady would make up a box and decorate it. And I'd be auctioneer. I still auction. Our men's brotherhood have an auction every fall for our church and I'm the auctioneer for four hours I was doing that. As I get older, I have to get help now. A box social, you see, you'd get up and say here's a beautiful box put up by one of the most beautiful women. You didn't know who owned the box, you know. One of the most beautiful women in the hall. How much am I offering? And if you had a crush on a girl, and you wanted to get ahold of her box, you'd start bidding on it. So I hear 50 cents and 50 cents, 75 cents and the fellow who had the crush on the girl, he'd say one dollar. And they'd bid him up. One fellow paid 21.00 dollars for a box one night, 'cause he had a crush on the girl. The girl, well she probably gave the guy a hint as to which box was hers. There used to be quite a few of them. The boxes were decorated with flowers and ribbons and tartans. They'd get a cardboard box, like a shoe box or something like that and decorate it up and put sandwiches and cookies. They put paper flowers on the outside. Made them with kleenex and decorated it up. There would be dancing first. About 10 or 11 o'clock, they'd start auctioning off the boxes. Then that'd be their evening lunch. And they'd eat with the girl who had decorated the box. It would be crowded. the last time I auctioned for a box social was down at Southwest here. That's only about 6 years ago. This was for older people. There were alot of boxes there. They were going high too---4,5,6 dollars. I'd get the money out of them. (Talks about auction in Whycoc.--- everything was donated for the church.)

310- Slipper dance.
Never heard of that.

312- Round-dancing.
Well today, they generally have round and square dancing. This came in after the fifties up into the sixties and seventies that they started the round-dancing.

318- The swing.
In any square set, they shouldn't be waltzing. They should all swing. They started the round-dancing in the set years back. This started in the fifties I guess. They are supposed to swing. The swung in open social position. I know a couple of friends of mine that went up to the States, and that started down here and they put a stop to them. They were dancing square sets and the caller came down and told them, they're not to do that. You're supposed to swing. This is a square set and he's right.

337- Dance prohibition.

Some clergy in the olden days were pretty tough. They didn't approve of the go ahead. They weren't against dancing. More or less they were against the drinking. It could lead to fighting. And many a fight there was at those dances, years gone by. But now our Minister, he dances. We generally have a last meeting and we have a ladies night and a lobster do. We have salad and buscuits and rolls and all kinds of lobsters to eat. And we have an orchestra. So, we have a square set, a few square sets and the like of that. It's a social evening. That's in the Cameron Hall in Whycoc.

353- Scotch Four.

Oh, that's just step-dancing. In olden times, there used to be two couples who'd get up and dance scotch fours. They'd be arranged, like her and I are dancing together and do a scotch four and then parade around a little and then dance some more. They'd go around in a circle and then they'd start step-dancing again. That's what they call a scotch four. They take whoever was a good step-dancer. You dance right through with your partner while they played the right tunes for Scotch four. They would be opposite one another and they'd start step-dancing botht the woman and the man. (The never danced with their opposites and they never formed a line). It was in a square formation, then a circle (for the parade around), then a square and then a circle...

368- Wedding Reel.

There are so many different dances, there are about a hundred different dances and different callers for those dances. That originated from down southern Nova Scotia and out west right through. This Scottish tradition, it used to be thr sqaure lancers here first. Then they started the Saratoga lancers here. The square lancers, that's just like the old-time figure:

Up in the centre and forward all.
First tow on the heads lead up and
Swing four hands around.

You're only one going. You see the two--- you swing four hands around (like in Cheticamp) and you'd go back with your partner and they'd go back to their partner. But like the one I gave you there, they are all dancing.

Second two on the heads
Lead up to your opposite partner and
Swing four hands around.

That's all there is to it. That was the first figure of the square lancers. And then the next one was (389)

First two on the heads
Lead up and cross over
Jessie right and Jessie left.

And then you'd cross back to your own.
(The head and the lady'd go back to hers)

This is like a right and left through. Jessie right and Jessie left---well you'd cross over and you'd go back to your opposite lady and cross over. You'd come right back and you'd turn with your corner lady. The third figure was pretty much the same as that other one.

Forward and lead the ladies in the centre.

That's the one I think Jessie right and jessie left was in the third figure. I forget what the second one would be. Of course, I speak Gaelic too you know.

409- Gaelic song-dances.
He didn't know about that. But he sings a song in Gaelic. In the song---He was looking far away to see the boat that would bring his girlfriend home. That's a song, it's got nothing to do with dancing.

422- Lancers.
In the saratoga lancers, everybody dances at the same time but in the plain lancers, it is just one of each couple active at a time. (Just the opposites) so in the head couples it would a lady from one couple and the man from another couple.

428-
I called the plain lancers first. That was in the 1930's around. The saratoga lancers got introduced here not too long after that. I don't know how the saratoga lancers got introduced here, I can't tell you. But the idea of the Saratoga lancers is that nobody is standing. He learned this one after. They liked the saratoga lancers better because it was a better dance because everyone was dancing. There was four figures in the plain lancers too. The last one was pretty much the same as the other. There is nothing written down that I know of. It may be someplace, but not here anyway.

445- Contacts.
John R. Gillis, Barrie Fraser, Wesley MacLean, Hugh Cameron and his wife, for the dancing and John MacDougal, fiddler and Willie MacDonald (works at inverness hospital) for the piano.

452- End.

Side B- Joe "Tack" MacDougal, July 14, 1986.
Box 423
Port Hawksbury, B0E 2B0 625-1231

004- Joe MacDougal, born in Judique, August 16, 1922.

008- Prompting experience.

I began at the age of 16 in the Judique area. It was in the Judique Hall and at houseparties and at barn dances. They danced in "outhouses", that's what they called them (the barns), this was a place they kept machinery. They'd clear it out and hvae a dance. When I first got interested, I was probably very young, going to dances in Judique. There was a very very good caller from Port Hawksbury whose ancestors were from Judique too. He was the best caller I ever heard. His name was Alan MacDonald. He's dead. So, I got very interested in him and of course I started dancing when I was only about 14 years old, when I started dancing square sets. It just came kind of easy to me. I remembered it and kept at it. And I started getting the time of the music and it all seemed to come natural to me. I never practiced at home, because you have to have music. (He doesn't know where Alan MacDonald learned them from) In them days, there were many people who could call. (He believes that these callers may have seen books or calling cards and thinks they came from Scotland).

062- The Lancers.

Our set is called the Saratoga Lancer. Then there is the Plain Lancer which is the one they dance around St. Peters. There is more difference between the Margaree set and the Saratoga Lancers than there is between the Margaree set and this one (the plain lancers---the people from Sydney on the other cassette) When you get into Richmonmd County, it is the Plain Lancers that they dance right through to Sydney all around Baddeck and those places, with a few variations. Our set is varied too. I go down to Valley Mills alot (about 3 years ago) and I'd always get up and call a set for the prompter. Archie Thomas is his name and he's from Sydney. He plays the guitar. I call the same calls as Archie, with a little variation. But there's no problem for me to change to suit them. For instance the first and second figures are a little different. The third figure is the same exactly and they are still dancing the fourth figure which I can call too.

100- Changes.

But I don't call this in Judique anymore. I quit it. Well, they ruined the square set. Well, I can't recall that there was too much of this four figure set after I come home after the war, I was away from here for six and a half years in Halifax. I went to Halifax in 1941 and we moved back to Judique in June, 1947. Before I wnet away, they were dancing the four figures and when I came back they were dancing three in Judique. It might have been the odd place they were dancing four but they were still dancing the four couples to a set. (116) This I'd say, this started in Judique. This big set business and I'll tell you what brought it on. When I was young, my wife and Robert Gillis and the rest of us, when we first started going to dances, we wouldn't get in a set together, we'd get in with the older people who knew how to dance. That's how we learned to dance. They'd be glad to get a young fellow in. And after a few sets you could do it. Course, there was none of this rock 'n roll, there was only this one type of dance to do. So it wa no bi effort to learn it but you did have to learn. Unfortunately, there was kind of a

clique went to a high school in Judique, they must have figured when they got up to high, they had more education, they had or something, I don't know what the stink was, but anyway, they wouldn't get in sets with us. They'd go off by themselves. It didn't matter to them if there was 4, 5, or 6 couples, of course they were just geeing and hwaing and they weren't doing the set properly anyway. Consequently, in Judique, another thing in Judique too, of course when I grew up as a young fellow, nobody got paid for prompting. I did prompting both in the set and up on the stage. In my early days in prompting, it didn't really matter that much, 'cause there was no mikes. I was dancing in the set and calling, especially in the smaller places, what we call little barn dances (150) and houseparties or kitchen rackets. This was very easy, when you knew yourself and everybody else knew how it was just a matter of keeping everybody in line with the music. If there was three or even four sets, well there was no sounding system and none on the fiddle then either. Probably there would be 2 fiddles and a piano. Or 1 fiddle and a piano

160- Glencoe Mills.

I've been going out there since I was 14 years old. It's not very big now, but it was alot smaller then. You'd probably get about 4 or 5 sets on the floor. In order to get in, they started a dance, we used to go with horse and buggy, I seen me getting there, it wasn't dark yet, get there at maybe 8:00 in the evening, feed the old horse, go in and when we come out after the dance was over the sun would be getting up again. This would be 3:00 or 4:00 (No day lights saving time then). There'd probably be about 6 or 8 fiddlers. And they'd play in two's. They'd play and play and play and play and there was no sounding system so there was no problem for a prompter to prompt in or out of the set, everybody would hera you anyway. Everybody followed the call. There was about four or five sets going at one ime, 15 people standing around and others outside taking a drink of moonshine. If you wanted to get into the next set, you got your partner and you stood behind somebody. So as soon as the set was over, you took the place because in 5 seconds, the 4 or 5 sets was full again ready for another one. They never danced the set properly in Glencoe Mills, because the dances in Glencoe Mills were out for years and years. I don't know when they stopped, but it was during my time away. Then the school wasn't a school anymore. This would be only a few outside dances (197), you see in the summer months to raise a little money to pay the teachers, that's really what those dances would be for. (When he was speaking of Glencoe Mills, he's speaking of the time it was a school house). They turned it into a community hall and made it bigger. Two pieces---a back part for the canteen and the little porch. It started up again in the 60's or something like that. When it restarted, they never did the 4 couples to a set. There were lots of problems out there too. I prompted out there for about 10 years when they restarted. I got into all kinds of arguments. I got lots of insults too. I didn't care, I was just as stubborn as they were. Finally, they started complaining about me that I was spoiling their dance trying to get them to do the dance right. So they quit asking me to go anymore, which I wasn't sorry for. (211) I was fed up. I refused to go one year completely and Robert Gillis went. He

wouldn't go anymore. It was the same problem. But I went for one more year after that and I tried to straighten them out and I got into arguments with them. It was this clique, if there was 5 or 6 couples that knew one another, they wanted to get in the same set. And say if you and I and her and another man and they didn't know us, well, they it was like if we smelt or something. They didn't want to come dance with us.

223- Step-dancing in sets in the past.

There wasn't as much step-dancing in the square dancing as there is now. This is part of this big-set deal. One tried to outdo the other. There's a bit of competition going on between the different areas.

231- Round-dancing.

There's a long time since that started. Alot of people found this easier. I do myself. I'm not a great swinger. Swinging gets your head dizzy and alot of people just---so there's nothing wrong with that. That's o.k. The people have their choice. They can either swing or waltz. That started right after the war years. People went away and learned how to do some round-dancing and brought them back and introduced them into the sets. That wasn't what spoiled the sets at all.

245- Alternation of squares and rounds.

That has gotten fairly popular about 10 years ago. Before that it was either a round dance or a square dance. (In Creignish or Judique or Glencoe or whatever, it was a square dance).

253- Church picnics.

There'd be a stage and they'd dance all afternoon. I would prompt there. He went to them in Judique and there was one dance stage. The dancing would start around 12:00 or 1:00. And they'd dance right up until sometimes they'd end up in the Hall in Judique---it was one of the nicest and largest halls in the area at that time. The Hall has been there since I can remember. It's probably 50 years old. He called both on the stage and in the set. It was the same way, just a piano. But when I came home after the war, Alexander Lewis MacDonald, he was one of the good fiddlers in his time for square dancing. (He's dead now). He was a left-hand fiddler and very lively and he was one of the first fellows that I heard sounding systems in Halifax. I never heard them here until after I came home after the war. This fellow was the first guy to have one. He prompted in the set depending if he wanted to dance or not or if head a partner or if the sets were filled or not. If I wanted to dance a couple of sets, well I just got in and danced. As a rule, it was 10 cents a set per couple. The fiddler always got paid. He wouldn't get a big pay but he'd probably get 4 or 5 bucks for playing all afternoon. But there'd probably be a couple of fiddlers. The piano player would get something too, a couple of bucks. The prompter did not get paid. This is another thing that happened in Judique, there was a fellow, Alan MacDonald, he's still living. He was one of the parish prompters and he used to prompt in the parish hall and at picnics and that's about it. He didn't go out to prompt like I did. He was good---he kept time with the music and all

this. But of course, as a parishioner, he did it for nothing. Well, then I come up and Robert Gillis and a few more, we'd go in and there was 2 or 3 of us at the dance. The first place I got paid for prompting, there's a museum in Harbourview, the Chestico, (it was an old school), that was a two classroom school, and that was only about 4 miles from home. I used to go to dances there when I was 16 or 17 or when I used to come home in the summertime. (307) Worked in Halifax. They had more dances than they had in Glencoe---more regularly. It was only a quarter to get in, so I'd go to pay and they'd say, you go on in and get the dance going---no money from you, once he got to know me. When the dance was over, Archie would get along side of me (the principal) he'd stick his hand in my pocket and he'd drop something, I wouldn't know how much it was---you know, we had a good dance tonight, you done o.k. It might be 1.50 or 2.00 dollars, which would be as good as 40.00 dollars for me.(322) The first summer I was home from being away out in Pictou County, from May until October, I went to 35 dances and I called at them all and it never cost me a nickel. I made a few bucks besides. Not alot of money but...It was a quarter at that time and some kids, they'd have to get it from their old man or something even a quarter to go to the dance. Money was scarce, it was just after the depression. Everybody could do these sets. But somebody starting out like myself when I started first, and we made sure we mixed in with the older people who knew how to dance. They'd always help us out. This is what happened in Judique when this crew wouldn't get in with us and learn how to dance. They started breaking out into the big sets. I think the fiddlers got kind of disgusted too. So rather than bothering to stop it, they'd just keep on playing. (338) So that's the story in Judique. They didn't want to pay a prompter. I was asked to go up there to prompt from here with the understanding I was going to get paid. When the dance was over, they wouldn't pay me, they said they didn't ask me. Whoever was in charge of the dance, somebody else asked me. There was alot of misunderstandings going on. That was the end of prompting in Judique for me. I prompted in Creignish. There was an old hall. I prompted there at least 10 years. When Father Donald Rankin was there, we had dances year-round except during advent and lent. It was once a week every Friday night. Buddy and I went there every Friday night and Buddy's sister would play the piano. By this time we had a sounding system and a mike and all that. But then the crew who ruined the dance in Judique started trickling into Creignish too. I said to Father Rankin, your dances are finished. And it wasn't too long other people wouldn't come that really wanted to dance. That was it. This was from 1950-1960 he called in Creignish.

364- Dances five nights of the week 1954-1959.

I prompted five nights a week. I started on Tueday night in Princeville, West Bay Road. We had different fiddlers there---Winston Fitzgerald Johnny MacLean. (1955-1956). Wednesday night---Glenville (the hall isn't there anymore) Thursday night---with Angus Chisholm, West Back a place called Black River. Friday night Creignish with Buddy. Saturday night at West Bay Road during four years (just outside of Port Hawksbury). All of these dances were well-attended. The five nights a week was just

in the summer months. There weren't too many other dances at this time. Brook Village had a dance. (He prompted there maybe once or twice) It is in the same parish as Glencoe. Five nihts a week lasted about 4 or 5 years. Then it disintegrated. The last place he prompted was in Glendale. He prompted there for 5 or 6 years. It went good for that period and then the crew from Judique showed up and ruined it. This would be in the late 60's. The dances were advertized on the radio not the newspapers. We had no local paper at the time so you'd get posters and you'd hear it on radio. (post office, service stations) Always announce for the next week. Word of mouth.

415- After the war.

Some settled in Halifax or Detroit. The Cobalt set was before his time. It wasn't a popular set around home. Maybe I heard once or twice. There was one fellow who could call that---Angus Joe MacCearn. He's dead now.

431- The Scotch Four.

That's only four peole step-dancing. There was no figures. It was the four corners---two girls and two guys and they faced one another. It was in a square. These scotch fours would be at a kitchen racket if you could get four good step-dancers. They wouldn't move too much. They might take a shoot around on way or another with the change of tune or something like that. They would go around in a circle. Today, the young people have a great chance, anybody who's musically inclined---stepping or piping or fiddle, they've got a great chance to learn. there are teachers for all these things. They can learn to read music. Al the old