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Interview with Hughie Livingstone, July 23, 1986
Orangedale, BOE 2K0

003- Hugh Livingstone, born in Sydney Mines in 1911 and I lived there and we moved up to the Orangedale area when I was about 5 years old. I've been here most of my life for the exception of a few years I was away in the service and I worked in the mines out in Ontario and in Quebec. I worked in Windsor.

031- The figures.

As I remember it, we used to start off with

Up in the centre and join your hands.
Head couples turn to your right and
Swing four hands around
Head couples through the sides
Outside returning
Turn with your corner lady
Head couple turn to your left
And swing four hands around
Side couples divide
And head couples through the centre
Outside returning
And turn with your corner lady
Third and fourth couple turn to your right
Side couples divide and
Head couples through the centre
Outside returning
Turn with your corner lady
Sides couples turn to your right
Head couples divide
Side couples outside returning
Join your hands and
Turn with your own.

076- The second figure we usually used was:

Join your hands in the centre
Head couples advance
Chasse right and chasse left
Promenade with your partner

094- The third figure we mostly always used was:

Grand right and left
All the way around
When you meet your partner, promenade

Head couple, promenade in and face the music
Side couples fall in behind
Head couples down the centre
Outside returning
Partners to dance all in a line
When you meet your partner
Turn with your own

You done that four times and they usually finished off with promenade all the way around. And the next one they usually done half the way and when you meet your partner, promenade and the next time you turn with the left hand lady and you promenade with the left-hand lady. Then you'd turn again with the left-hand lady until you went around with all four partners, until you got home to your own partner. This was usually used for the fourth figure. There was a fifth one but I can't remember it. Originally when I got those cards, there was six figures on it.

143- Calling cards.

I seen them advertised in a newspaper and I think there was five cards for 25 cents. So I sent for the cards and I got them. And I was so anxious to learn what was on them cards. There was six figures on this particular one we used in this area. This is what they used in this area and that's why I remember there was six figures in it. I think they were only using five at the time I got the cards. I sent for them when I was about 14 years old. So that'd be 61 years ago. They were just little slits of glossy paper. It was a little longer than a playing card, but about the same width as a playing card. There was writing on one side. It was a yellowish brownish color. About the only papers that we were getting around here at that time, where we lived, we were not getting a daily paper, the only papers that we might have been getting was the Family Herald, printed in Montreal. My father used to get this North Sydney Herald. It might have been through that. I cannot be sure where I got it from. I don't remember if anyone else had them. I think most of them just picked up by word of mouth, from an older generation. There was one fellow in particular, Lochy MacEachern. He's been dead since forty years. I remember him calling. He used to rprompt half in English and half in Gaelic. He had alot of words that he used to say in Gaelic. I remember one (205) expression he had when he would say the grand right and left, all the way he used to say Grand right and left, all the way machurst? (210). I can speak a few words of Gaelic but not very much.

219- Calling cards.

I don't have them any more. There was only really one that applied to what they were using around here. The figures were different. I never introduced these figures into the dances. I just went along with what they were using here. I don't remeber any of the ones that were on those cards. I did learn them at the time, but after all, 60 years is a long time.

230- Prompting experiences.

We used to go all around the community here and there but there was a whole bunch that was at home. There was seven in the family and everybody used to go to the dances. I was the oldest of the seven and my brother Roddy was next and he and I started off first and there used to be dances in Whycoc. We started at the Masonic Hall in Whycoc., and we went there for a number of years. And we used to go to dances in the schoolhouses around, in the old country schoolhouses. They almost always needed somebody to prompt for them at the dances. I didn't do it all the time. We'd take turns 'cause there'd probably be two or three fellows who'd take a turn. At the same time you were dancing you were prompting. You were in a set yourself because there was no P.A. systems at that time and you yelled as hard as you could. Then there was a fellow by the name of Jack MacIntyre and he used to run a dance in Whycoc., a long time and he had an old hall over there. He lived here. I used to go to that dance over there. I used to get in and he wouldn't charge me admission and I'd go in and I'd have to fill up the sets and see that they were getting full and enough couples to make the sets. And prompt for them.

264- Number of couples to a set.

We usually tried to keep four couples to a set. Some times they used to try to get six in them but if they had six in one set and four in another, it would mix the thing and it would take longer for them to go through it, the ones with six, they'd be behind and it would mix up the set. It was hard to keep them straight if you had more than four in a set. Around here they try to dance four couples to a set.

277- The scotch four.

I don't know that really. I've seen it danced but I don't really know anything about it.

280- Eight-handed reel.

That's something the same but it was different. I never did learn to call that one. It was called. I believe they did. It was four couples, just the same. I believe it was danced before the square sets were popular. Up in other parts of Nova Scotia, they do a polka quadrille. Anna May used to talk about that. They do a Caledonian Quadrille too. They do that in Pictou.

295- Margaret Dunbar and I was born in Hopedale? August 20, 1914.

She is from the Pictou area. I didn't go to dances. I did not believe in dances. I went to Church and Sunday school. My sister went to dances but they danced the Caladonian quadrille and the polka. They did the polka quadrille. The Lancers is danced in Pictou too. I never went to them. She learned some calls though. She learned these in the U.S. when I went to the United States. They were prompting Lancers there. I didn't go to dances there for a long time after I had gone to the U.S. I was the secretary to the president of the young people at the church. It was things like that that I was more interested in than going to dances. When I'd come home on vacation, they all used to go to dances and sometimes I went with them. We went home on vacation to Pictou.

329- Dances in Massachusetts.

They had them in Brookline and at the "Y" in Boston. They had a Pictou County dance in Cambridge, MA. Jack Macallen, he just died recently. He ran the Pictou County dance in Cambridge. In Somerville, MA at Circle Hall, it used to be an old Presb. Church. That was the old kind I was talking about, the quadrilles and the lancers and all those old types. In Cambridge, it was right in Central Square. Joe Martin had one in Brookline Village. He was from P.E.I. He had an old time dance. But Jack Mac?? was from Pictou Landing and his wife was from Westview. She's living there now. He died about a year ago but he had a dance every Saturday night. They closed at 11:30. Not like Smith Hall here. It closes Saturday night at 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. There was a fellow called Malcolm Murray from Margaree he ran a dance at the Rose Crowley Hall in Boston for years and years. His wife is living in the Senior Citizens in Baddeck. People come back from the Boston area in the summer and hundreds of them go to dances.

365- Dances in the summer.

There were more dances in the summer. There was hardly ever any dances in the winter. We had no transportation then. It was only horse and sleigh. You didn't feel like travelling too far in the winter. Dances were rare in the winter in Cape Breton at that time, unless it was just a houseparty---a small party a few of the neighbours would get together and somebody would have a violin and they'd play and they'd have a little houseparty.

375- Picnics.

A time that used to be a great place for dancing was at picnics in the summertime. They were good. They used to build a stage outside and there was lots of room to stand around and watch but the stage would be crowded. You'd have to stand in line to get your chance to get in to dance. Usually they charged you 10 cents a set for each set that you danced in. They got 40 cents per set. Most of the time they had more than four couples on a stage. There would be 12 or 16 couples if you had a big stage, there would be 16 couples dancing at the same time. Even then, there would be a big crowd there and you'd have to stand in line to get in.

388- The stage.

Sometimes they used to be hardwood trees overhead for shade if they were dancing in the daytime. Sometimes they'd have two fiddlers and sometimes they had a piano or an organ if it was available. There was no bands as such or no P.A. system.

398- Length of picnic.

It was usually a one day affair. One place we used to go was in Glendale. We couldn't go there until we got cars. Before the cars, I remember we had one in Orangedale, it was the only picnic ever in Orangedale and I don't think there was any dancing there. I was too young

to dance at that time anyway. It was an Orangeman's picnic---it is an order. There's none here today. There used to be picnics in different places. I remember going to a picnic in Matagawatch. They had one over there one time to raise money to build a church. There was picnics in River Denys and Little narrows and Whycoc. There was several areas around the country where we used to have picnics. They still have them at some places at certain times. There is alot of different things today. Instead of picnics, they call them different things---the Ceidihlds, they are pretty much the same. They don't have stages but they have Halls. There are so many halls. They didn't have halls in them times that was big enough to accomodate the crowds. So they used to put those outdoor stages for them to dance on. They used to build stages for different things besides dancing. They'd build a kind of a stage for them to sell food and serve lunch. They also had some of those games where you throw a ring and win prizes...etc. Fish ponds. Dunk tanks weren't as popular as they are now. There's one down here on Saturday for two days. There are two dances, one on Friday and one on Saturday.

He reads the ad from The Reporter that we were going to video tape the dance at Valley Mills, July 23, 1986.

464- End of interview.

Side B

Interview with Dan Hughie MacKinnon, July 24, 1986
R.R. 1 Little Narrows, Victoria County, BDE ITD

006- Ann MacKinnon from Little Narrows, Sept. 14, 1933. Maiden name is Ellis. Dan MacKinnon born in Ashville, on July 3, 1928.

025- Dances different from place to place.

They dance different in three areas here. You go to Valley Mills and they have their own style; Iona has theirs; Baddeck has theirs. You have to learn three different dances. There's alot of differences and it's hard to explain them. In Valley Mills there are four figures; Iona, three and three in Baddeck. It's the same kind of music. Valley Mills first two are slow and then two fast. In Iona first is slow, the second a little faster and the third is wide open. In Baddeck is pretty well the same. They don't even have a slow one there. It's pretty well three fast ones. There are prompters at these three places. Baddeck has their own---Charlie MacPhee. He lives in Baddeck. Bernie Campbell used to be there but now I don't know. He lives in New Waterford or Glace Bay now. Sometimes they dance without a prompter. At Valley Mills they have Archie Thomas, Freddie Smith from Margaree. They have a Ross fellow from West Bay. He's good. They always have a prompter at Valley Mills. Four couples to a set in these three places. At one time in Baddeck I guess there was 75 couples in a set. The last couple of times I was down, they had four couples. They have a ceidhl there once a month. On ceidhl night, it is a square dance---round and square. They have different ones in playing.

Sandy MacInnis' orchestra was up there one night so we were up for that. Carl MacKenzie from Sydney, he played there. All three of these places have both round and square. Glencoe has just square dancing.

115- Prompting experience.

I prompted 35 years ago. He prompted the ones we dance now in Valley Mills. I always called four figures. He doesn't recall ever having danced five figures. My father called too. He was out in Ontario for a few years before he got married and he came back home. When he'd come back home, he used to call the Ontario sets. There was one of them---the birdy in the cage. One was form a star with the right hand, cross and the left hand back. Then there was the Ontario Lancer. I danced them at schoolhouse parties and houseparties and that. He used to prompt them Ontario sets. The Ontario Lancer is pretty well the same thing as the Cobalt set. He prompted that for a few years (his father). He prompted this in schoolhouses. Every little schoolhouse had a dance three or four times a year. At that time, schoolhouses were every six or eight miles apart. There was a dance in each one maybe two or three times a year. We followed the dances in all the schoolhouses. That was just you'd get a fiddler and maybe a guitar player and that was it. That was enough orchestra. There was no sound system. There was a kerosene lamp in the corner. Most of the schools at that time, there was no power. We are talking back 45 years---1941.

179- Electricity.

In 1946, the power, they had it in Whycoc. it came through from Mabou. From there, there was no power over. In 1946, the power line went through from Stewartdale over through the Indian Reserve in Whycoc. and into Orangedale and down to Stoney Point and a mile down. After that, it'd be 2 or 3 years later, close to the fifties when they came down here to Iona and the same to where I was born and brought up, it was in 1953. (Ashville)

203- Recreation. (no electricity)

So people would have parties. They were houseparties with dances and card games. The winter time was slack time, they didn't have plowed roads and there was no schoolhouse dances during the winter. There was a Christmas concert in every little school. Once that was over, the school parties were over until spring. When spring came, the schoolhouse dances started. They didn't have plowed roads and horse and sleigh was the means of travelling. So they didn't have them in the wintertime. There was card games but they were in the houses. They played forty-fives or four hand auction.

225- Houseparties.

Some little thing would be occasion enough to have a party. It could be a birthday, anniversary or it could be just a party. Any reason was good for a party in them days. One would tell the other. They'd all get there anyway.

236- Milling Frollicks.

They used to have milling frollicks in the houses. We'd have them blankets and they'd mill them. They'd have a milling frollick and a dance afterwards. They still have them here, but not in the houses. They do it at concerts. The old days of milling is gone. I went to numbers of them but not since thirty years or more. You'd sing and the blanket and they'd keep time with the song and they'd do that for three or four hours. The songs were only in Gaelic. The English ones didn't have the right swing. They did the old-fashioned square dance after the milling frollick. That's what I call Valley Mills. In Baddeck it's one they made up somewhere.

271- Prompting cards.

He never saw them. Sandy MacInnis' wife has a book. She said her uncle had it in the States.

280- Eight handed reels.

They did this at the houseparties. They do it here in Mabou but they do it altogether different than the old 8-hand reel they used to do then. The old eight hand reel was, you were kind of in the form of an eight. There was two on the heads and one on each side. They had six couples. One on each side and double on the heads. So it went like an eight. They danced all together different. In Mabou they do a figure of the square set but they step her off all the way through. They call that the eight hand reel but before it was different. I can't remember too much about it.

316- The scotch four.

That was just four step-dancers. They'd dance opposite and then they'd change. They'd change form the head and move to the side. Then they'd dance opposite and they'd keep that up until they danced on the four sides and got back to where they started and they'd dance with their own partner then. They'd first dance with their opposites. Then we'd do the four sides and you'd come back to where you started. You had to be pretty good to dance to do that. They all did it when they got drunk enough. They step-danced and they held hands and danced in a circle. The first time it was with your opposite and then with your own.

(364) Two couples are standing opposite one another. They hold hands and dance to each side of the square, they stop at each side of the square facing their opposites and step-dance. They let their hands go each time they get to the side of the square after they've step-danced there for a while, they take hands again and they move to the next side of the square. Then they dance opposite the opposite couples there. They do this until they get home. Once they get home, they face their respective partners and step-dance there. That was pretty near the end of the thing. They may just dance off. They started off with the strathspey and then to a reel. The dance lasted about ten minutes. They changed sides according to the bars in the music. For the reel, they stayed pretty much at home. They did different steps for it.

398- Elizabeth MacKinnon, Feb. 8, 1963. She never saw the Scotch four. She step dances.

402- Reel part of the scotch four, I just forget what they used to dance it. This was 35 or 45 years ago. I never danced it but I've seen it danced. The same with the 8-hand reel. I'm sure there was 6 couples in this in the schoolhouse parties. They had a caller for the eight hand reel. His father called the 8-hand reel.

433- Maude MacKenzie was active in everything that went on in the community, dance and milling frolics and prayer etc...

463- End of Interview.