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RECOLLECTIONS OF GRANDPA BROWN

Grandpa Brown comes on stage, sits in chair and lights his pipe:

GRANDPA BROWN: Jumpins!! I don't know what ails me -- me bones feel tired as if I'd hauled half a dozen loads of wood---- and about the hardest thing I did today was eat. Not much of that I did either-----

(Slide of woman washing clothes today)

Wash day she says. Why! I minds when Bessie hauled out the tub to start wakhing. We had to get up at five o'clock to make sure we had the water hauled and the wood chopped. Course we also had to make our own soap, too. By jumpins!! that was awful stuff en the hands and what a smell!

(Actors act out scene of woman making soap and washing clothes in the past)

BESSIE: (to Hattie who is stirring the pot) Stir the fire and keep the pot boiling or we'll never get the soap done.

HATTIE. O.K. Mom -- Make Lizzie bring in some more wood. By the way are we going to use that modern lye stuff or are we going to use ashes?

BESSIE: We're going to use lye -- I think we have some here somewhere.

BESSIE: Lizzie! Lizzie! ---Where have you got yenself now? Go bring in some dry wood.

(Enter Lizzie with an armful of wood.)

BESSIE: (sees Lizzie enter and shouts at her)
No you goose! Not that wet stuff!! The dry wood is on the right hand side by the door.

BESSIE: (Mops her forehead and says)

Hattie, come here now girl and help me make the soap. If you're gonna marry up with a man someday this is the one thing you will need to know how to do.

HATTIE: O.K. Ma. I already got the fat in the boiler. What do we do next.

BESSIE: Next we put in the lye. We have to be careful with this. It's cruel stuff, if it touches ye/
Now we have to let that boil. Will you watch it and let me know when it starts to boil?

HATTIE: Mom! It's boiling! It's boiling!

BESSIE: Good! Now we'll have to add water and let it boil again until it gets thick and sticky.

(Later)

I think the soap has been boiling long enough. Now, we take it off the stove and let it cook. Then, we cut it into squares and it is ready to use.

BESSIE: Hattie, the soap is ready now, so let's start washing.

(Children then act at washing clothes)

(When the washing scene is over the girls move off stage.
Lights on Grandpa again)

GRANDPA: What in thunderation is all that racket? That blasted thing Juddie calls a saw is enough to drive you mad. And the smell -- he says he's just gassin her up, but I think he's trying to poison me.

(Slide of chainsaw)

GRANDPA: Junpins! Sawing wood wasn't quite so easy back when I was boy. It was good work then. We used the old cross cut saw back then. I remembers now -- me ~~and~~ on one side of the odl saw and Uncle Jim on the other end. Pull - rest - push - pull - rest - **push**.

(Boys act out sawing wood with crosscut saw.)

We sure knew haw to work. (Scratches his chin and reminisces for a minute -- whistles a little bit)

GRANDPA: It wasn't all work though!! We sure enjoyed our few dances. We had real dances back then, not these excuses they have for dances today. You call that dancin!!!

(Slide of modern dance)

Looks to me like everyone had ants crawling allover them and they are trying to pull them off!!

It was all square dances then, reels, cuts and sets. None of these jazzin' dances them days. Oh I can hear the accordian now.

(Children dance square dance)

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GRANDPA: We also had lots of fun playin' games too. We ~~never~~ had any of those store bought games they have these days.

(Slide of children playing modern games)

We got pretty good with the spin tops and the cat's cradle too. We was always coming up with something to do. I remembers other games we used to play too--- poor Pussy -- Blind Bucky Davy --- Sir Roger is Dead and lies in his Grave----

(Children play games of the past) (Poor Pussy Sir Roger is Dead and Blind Bucky Davy)

Frankie Enters

FRANKIE: Don't know what's wrong with the mail. My pictures haven't come from Tootons yet!! (Sees Grandpa) Howdy Grandpa! What are you doing sitting all by yourself? (Frankie looks out the window) Oh! Action on the harbour -- Maybe the mail has come at last.

(Show slide of plane on ice)

Exit Frankie.

GRANDPA: I remembers when we used to get the mail. Uncle Butler Martin used to be the mailman then. He used to come from South on dogteam. The mail used to come from Battle Harbour then. Sometimes he'd come down wit' messages, no sendin' messages like it is now. There'd be no parcels then, either. I remembers now, he'd have his komatic piled right up with bags of mail. He'd have to go through the hard and the soft wit' it.

(Children act out scene of mailman bringing mail)

GRANDPA: Schoolin' is quite different today, too. Open houses! Education Week! Parent interviews! Kids talkin' out loud in class! I don't know where tis all gonna end. We used to get our learnin' in a few years. Now, Frankie's been goin' to school for ten or 'leven years and he still ain't learned it all. Now they're even talkin' about Grade 12! Either there's a lot more to learn or the children are slower than we wuz.

Things are all so different! I mind when we went to school to Mrs. Buckley. Boy! was she ever strict! Not much like I saw last week when I went to Frankie's school for Open House.

(Children act out school scenes, Health Inspection, Spelling Lesson and Tables)

After old time school scene Grandpa shakes his head and says:

GRANDPA: 9 There was no nonsense in them days bout keepin' youngsters entertained.

JUDY ENTERS: Grandpa, you're missing a good educational T.V. show Premier Peckford is on talking about offshore mineral rights and Hydro developpment in Labrador.

GRANDPA: T.V.! That blamed thing lets you hear news before yer're ready for it. Why, in the central elections the other day, folkks out on the prairies knew who the new Prime Minister was before they got a chance to vote-- Just the same I watches a lot of it.....

(Show slide of T.V.)

GRANDPA: Now I minds the time when it would take months to get news from far away.

Family seated at the table hears a dog team approaching.
Dogs barking off stage.

JUDY: Why, I believe, 'tis young Edgar Williams from over to West Bay.

(Newcomer enters. Family Greetts him.)

BESSIE: Good evenin' Edgar, I hope there's no mishap at home.

EDGAR: No, No -- I was just fetchin' some furs over to the Bay and pickin' up a few supplies.

BESSIE: What's new up you way, Edgar? How's Aunt Emmie?

EDGAR: Oh, Aunt Emmie's fine now. Her arem that was broke, works almost as good as new.....

We heard a bit of news by way of John Michelin; we met him in the country on his traplines. Seems last summer a couple of American fellers named Hubbard and Wallace, set off from North West lookin' for some lake -- Mic Michigamoo, or something, anyways, they took an Indian guide with them and they toiled away at it all summer. Caught sight of the lake, too, but winter set in and they had to hike it out agin. But they had the Devil's own time-----food ran out and they were down to boilin' their moccasins for grub. Anyway, two of them made it out-----skin and bones they were though. This feller Hubbard, didn't make it though and his buddy is going to take the corpse down the coast to St. Anthony by dogteam afore the spring breakup.

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BESSIE: Well, this is late February, he should be coming down past here any day now----'tis a sorry way for the young man to be going home.

(Switch to Grandpa)

GRANDPA: Yes, that's how it was-----we got all our news the slow way then. Sure, I could go on recollectin' for hours. Hmmmmmm, If I was the scholarly type, I would write it down and turn it into a book-----or maybe a play.

Well----it must be time for me to go to bed. No wood to bring in. No fire to bank down for the night don't even have to wind up the clock, cause she's 'lectric. Boy!! How times change!!!!

END