Amby Thomas, now a resident of Sydney, comes from Deep Cove, Cape Breton Island. Ronnie MacEachern is presently preparing a collection of some of the songs of Mr. Thomas. He can be reached at 2 Lynds Dr., Sydney River, N.S. B1R 1R6

AT: Oh, about the tea bags—that was an old remedy that I heard the old people had long ago. In the spring of the year, you know, with the bright sun on the snow, your eyes would get sore. At that time there was no such thing as tea bags, but they had loose tea. After it would blend in the tea pot there’d be just leaves, and they’d take that and they’d put it in a cloth and they’d just put it on your eyes and tie the handkerchief, or whatever it was, behind your head and you’d go like that and rest for a while, lie down, and this—whatever it was in the tea—would take all the soreness and everything out of your eyes.

RM: How long would you leave it on?

AT: Well, probably an hour or a couple of hours, maybe. Yeah, that was an old cure they had and it proved very effective.

RM: Who showed you how to do it?

AT: Well, I’ve seen them doing it at home—my mother used to do it.

RM: You were doing it today, when I came in.

AT: Oh yes, I had the teabags. They’re much handier than the loose tea, you know. They’re packed in bags and you just put one on each eye and put the glasses over it and that’ll hold it on. You don’t have to bandage over it at all. Take them out of the teapot, you know, and you press them—you don’t want them too wet. It takes the soreness out of them, the tiredness. You often hear tell of people getting snow blindness. They’re walking all day in the spring of the year, looking at the bright snow, and they claim now when they rest in the night they put those teabags on.

There was another cure I heard now for sore eyes. If you took the white spruce and peel the outer bark off, then there’s a pink bark inside next to the wood. You take that and you boil it, boil that bark and you bathe your eyes with that. That was supposed to be a good cure, too. Oh, there’s lots of cures the old people had that were really effective. Like stopping blood, for instance. Now if you got cobwebs—you get in a place, an old barn or an old house where there’s a lot of cobwebs, and gather them all up, you know, in a ball like that, make a pack of it, and just put it right over the part that’s bleeding and that’ll stop the blood.