

RenéHuard

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Or...is he an antique hunter who happens
to be an accomplished musician? Difficult
to say, as he is a master of both!

BY GRETCHEN HARRIS



Although René's talent on the blues harp is heard in the catchy theme song of the 'antique hunter', unexpectedly he might add a Gallic soupçon of syncopation in a spontaneous jam session with guest antique collectors. This delightful serendipity always ensures his antiques will never be dusty or boring.

There are few celebrations as quintessentially Canadian as an authentic French Canadian Réveillon. After midnight mass on a frosty frigid Christmas Eve, the entire extended family gathers in the golden warmth of the cosy kitchen 'chez Granmère'. The musky fragrance of lard-flaky tourtière wafting from the oven, the sweet vapours of communion wine mingling with the clove scent of mulled hard cider, the incomparable melting joy of Tante Marie's 'vrai tarte au sucre' are all the heady counterpoints to the proper observance of the 'waking' of Christmas morn.

This is the rich tapestry of tradition which is woven into the soul of TV's *Antique Hunter*, René Huard.

After the midnight feast, the table and chairs are pushed back against the walls, and the real celebration begins. Every person present, from the oldest to the youngest, must entertain the assemblage – jokes and stories, favourite folk songs and carols, accompanied by clicking spoons, fiddle and guitar – lively jigs and dances, vibrant revelry whirling into the early hours of the morning; all of these honed the musical, acting and storytelling talents of Huard.

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Born in Arvida, Quebec and transplanted at an early age to Fort Erie, Ontario, René divided his spare time as a teenager between his two passions – perfecting his version of the twangy Louisiana guitar phrasing style of his idol Jimmy 'Cajun' Newman; and fishing with his Dad and Grandad.

The world of sport fishing gave René a lifelong appreciation for the fine art of duck decoy wood-working and painting, vintage examples of which

became his first 'antique' love. This passion was further refined by the example of his thrifty mother's trawling of flea markets and garage sales for household furnishings to restore, or pretty pieces of china to decorate the family home.

Under this fond family tutelage, René became an antiques collector, dealer and appraiser of consequence. His *Tilley*-hatted presence is recognized across the country as the bearer of great enthusiasm and knowledge about collectibles, and he is frequently a 'featured attraction' at consumer trade shows and antiques fairs.

René has toured extensively in North America as a front man for blues and rock band *The Meteors* and has been a show opener for; John Hammond Junior, *Down Child Blues Band*, and James Cotton to name a few. With over twenty years' experience writing and singing his own songs to René's credit, it is no surprise that a music CD of original compositions is currently being recorded for release.

It was René's love of fishing that first brought him to Northumberland County. After several seasons of exploring the area's abundant trout streams and rolling countryside, René and his wife Debbie decided to settle here. They have built a rambling farmhouse on the shores of Lake Ontario, happily shared with their two Labrador retrievers, Tilley and her son Sir Duke (Ellington - naturally!).

A modern day troubadour and raconteur true to his 'lights', René Huard is a sought-after master of ceremonies and after-dinner speaker – his stories are told with gentle humour and toe-tapping music. Throughout November and December René will be performing on Tuesday nights at Cobourg's North Side Grill. 