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(46) a debate, I believe it was with a barber up there, as to who was one of the better violin players around. And when Angus Chis? holm' s name came up, this man from Antigon? ish didn't take him too seriously, saying, "I don't think he's half so good as he's rated." Father John Angus said, "I'm going to bring him to the house some night and we'll get some music out of him and you can judge for yourself." Sure enough, he arranged for Angus to visit. Father John pulled Angus aside and said, "Look, we got a fellow here tonight and I want you to really put on a show for him." Well, Angus played a medley or two; it still wasn't one of his best, he wasn't ready to get worked up. So Father John again pulled him aside and said, "There's a guy up here that thinks you're not necessarily the best violin player in this area--now I want you to really show him something." So Angus by this time had his dander up. He went out and he stood in the middle of the floor and he started. Father John remem? bers , he thinks the medley could have run as long as an hour, straight through. And in it, Angus ran through all the classics of fiddling, some of them with 12 and 14 variations with them. The farther he got into the medleys, this man that was such a critic started easing himself across the room, getting closer and closer to the fid? dle all the time, with his mouth open. Un? til finally Angus finished with a great display of the bow, and put her away then for the night. After that, the man said he had never heard fiddling like that in his whole life. But it took Angus being chal? lenged to do that sort of thing. I believe there was some competition be? tween fiddlers. That was a facet of our playing that wouldn't work any more, but it was very popular at one time--the fid? dling competitions. They tried to stage a competition in Port Hawkesbury a few years ago, and it was open to the fiddling pub? lic at large, and it didn't attract very many players at all. Working amongst the players, I realized that they all had the same comment, that they didn't think we should be judging Scottish violin--it was too complex, there was too much variety in the playing, styles are too diverse to ac? tually judge them, and it might create some bad feelings. But you look back in the '20s and '30s and even later than that--there were huge competitions held, more in the urban areas. It wasn't so pop? ular in the country areas. But at the same time, it was attracting rural violin play? ers , coming into town to try out their stuff. There were competitions in Boston, in which the better Cape Breton fiddlers would be selected in competitions here and sent down there to compete for trophies and medals, money in some cases. There was a competition in 1933 in Glengarry, Ontar? io. There were very few of the older gener? ation of players that I know, who weren't in a contest at some point or other, and lots who've been in many. But if they were still capable of playing today, I don't think they'd enter the contest now. There's a whole new point of view on that. Maybe in the older days, the money was ?? Mick MacInnis (1870-1946) and Trophies very important to them, or maybe there's just a whole new attitude. I've seen the medals, I've seen the cups, I've read the clippings. But you mention competitions to certain Scottish players today, and they get their backs up--they just don't think it's the right thing. Although they allow that there are



competitions, what we call Canadian fiddling, you won't find very many Scottish players get involved in that any more. And really, I think that's a healthy thing, not to pit the violin players against one another. I believe good playing should just stand on its own. To have players with chips on their backs because they've been defeated on a day when maybe they didn't play so well, or their violin was moody that particular day, or they could have been coming off a tear or something, and to be remembered forever and ever as being a lesser player on account of that. The variables are so many, you have such diverse styles. I remember Father Angus Morris saying, so much of what you feel that day comes out in your music. Determination or frustration, it can just bring the Gaelic out in the playing. I would think when a fellow was fired up or he had something to prove, he could really draw deep down inside him for something extra special to play. And if you were in a contemplative, maybe a down, mood, who knows what kind of music would come out--it may be gorgeous slow airs that seem to come out from the heart into your fingertips for some reason. You maybe would not want to play music that was contrary to your mood on that particular day. A number of fiddlers have said that--it not only vents their feelings, but it's a therapy for them in so many ways, and they capitalize on it. If you're feeling depressed, maybe you'd play lamentations and just get right into your sadness. "