

[Page 18 - The Day the Men Went to Town](#)ISSUE : [Issue 65](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1994/1/1

an end all because you didn't open the road. Tell them about Silver. They'll not think it's your fault...." "NO! They'll know damn well it IS my fault. Where's me mitts? It would have to be on MY stretch of road. Hurry! 'Fore they'll be telling everyone I sat in the house and wouldn't give them a hand!" It was only last week that Silver had buried herself in a drift. I had never seen a frightened animal before. I watched the little mare writhe, her body covered with foam. I saw the spasms that shook her withers and her eyes full of tears. We took Silver home and led her into her stall. Billows of steam rose from her body; her eyes rolled with hysterics as Jim tenderly rubbed her down. I stood beside her talking gently into her ear as I stroked her foaming neck. It seemed hours before the drops of saliva that tumbled to ice pellets before reaching the ground stopped flowing. Then we covered her with a blanket and bedded her down. Ever since that day I knew Jim would be reluctant to take Silver out after a storm. Jim was ranning down the yard. Harold had calmed the mare with his petting. Jim started shovelling like a madman. In a few minutes the mare was free, and the litde procession tumbled up the short road into the yard. Harold Beaton came first leading his pigeon-toed Queenie, straining at the huge stump hooked to the "swing" that packed the snow down hard and cleared a wid? er path than a log would have done. Queenie was the best snow horse on the Settlement Road because she was wise enough to stop and wait for Harold to shovel her out when the snow was too deep. Close behind her came Jennie, Joe Beaton's much- loved mare. Small, black, swayedbacked, she drew a long log wrapped in logging chains. Last of aU came Laughie's big grey mare. Head up, nostrils flaring, proud and haughty, as though she pulled the fanciest of carriages instead of a homemade wood sleigh. "Them wood-sleds! Coldest things on earth. I'd be warmer walkin' in me shirt sleeves than bundled up riding on one o' them," Jim always said. Cape Breton Auto Radiator co RADIATOR HOSES • REPAIRING • CLEANING • RECORING 'M" ' COMPLETE CYLINDER HEAD SERVICE _ . 518 Grand auto * truck * industrial Sydney Lake Road Complete Line of Gas Tanks 564-6362 • NOW DOING AUTOMOBILE AIR CONDITIONING • over175titles FOR AND ABOUT ! NOVA SCOTIANS '11 • AGRICULTURE. BOOKS for CHILDREN- • BUSINESS/ECONOMY • CRAFTS • EDUCATION • ??ENVIROMENT-FISHERIES-FORESTRY • - HEALTH & NUTRITION - HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY - IE OWNERSHIPS HOUSES-MAPS- L GEOLOGY-MUNICIPALITIES-NATURAL For a FREE copy of our NEW catalogue CALL TOLL FREE 1 -424-7580 (within Nova Scotia) or write to: Nova Scotia Government Bookstore One Government Place, 1700 Granville Street Nova Scotia 'r'' Government "" Bookstore The men would be looking for tea! I prodded and tumbled the damp sticks in the range, trying to coax them to bum. I put out the cups and saucers and cut the bread. They were putting Jen? nie in the stable. Laughie and Harold Beaton took their horses to the fence, tied and blanketed them there. "They must be tak? ing two sleighs today," I said to myself. The men pushed open the door and lumbered over to the stove. They took off their mitts and stood rubbing



their hands in what little warmth they could find. There was little to distinguish the three men. Their long biUed caps with the fur-lined ear flaps hung over the collars of their jackets and their heavy woolen trousers ballooned out over their tightly laced boots like sausages. "Devil take this place," said Jim as he closed the door behind him. "No phone, no lights, no plow, no nothin'.... Nova Scotia, the place God forgot!" Jim clasped his lips together as if he dared anyone to defy him. "That's not true, Jim! The place God REMEMBERS is more like it. Next winter we'll have the plow. I've written to the Minister and to the engineer, and we'll have electric light and a telephone too, you'll see." "That'll be the day!" said Jim, throwing off his coat. "Breaking roads, now that all them farms is empty," said Lau? ghie, trying to cover up for my breach of good manners in "an? swering back" my husband. "Takes all a man's time in winter." "They have to be opened," said Harold. "A single track any-way's, else it's 'good-bye.'" "Going to town is an all-day job, all right," added Joe Beaton, taking his place at the table. "Even when there is a track." The men ate and drank in silence. "Thank ye for the tea, Mary," said Laughie pushing back his chair and crossing over to the back door where their dripping jackets hung on a row of nails. He turned to Joe Beaton. "Ye be after going on my sleigh, Joe?" "Me? Naw, I'll wait down at Dougall's, Harold'11 be needin' a hand when he gets back. Thought I'd wait there." Jim stopped and mmed to me as he buttoned up his coat. "I don't know when we'll be back. Never mind the stables." Then he fol? lowed the men out and closed the door behind him. Jim knew, and I knew, that the stables would be cleaned before he returned. ?? COMPLETE MACHINE SHOP SERVICES Sid's Machine Shop in BRAS D'OR • ;, • Diesel & Hydraulic Repairs :: • Millwrighting Services fv*v>vv-s-s-v Box758, RR1 736-9118 General Welding: Aluminum & Stainless Itsacrime what an amateur will do to a perfectly simple print job. Get the pros touch TED 02-564-8245 or 902-53M666 Fax 902-539-2040