

[Page 19 - Fr. Rod MacSween's Memories of Ironville](#)ISSUE : [Issue 67](#)

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named Minnie. To a child like myself she was very imposing • so slow and deliberate, so powerful, and so aloof from humans. The last point may have been a delusion since animals generally show little emotion except when aroused by fear. In any case, Minnie did move around the farm in a very impressive manner. When I reached the period of memory, Minnie had a lovely colt, a thing of beauty. I can recall both of them being released into the open meadow in the spring. Minnie walked slowly forward to sniff the fresh grass, but the colt went into a series of rapid circles around its mother, at the same time breaking wind like a machine gun. My father and mother laughed and called to each other in Gaelic as they watched the colt. Gaelic was their citadel behind which they could joke to their hearts' content. One day I wandered into what could be called our parlor and found my father lying on a couch, one of his legs exposed, while my mother put a hot compress on his thigh. With my camera mind I stood and gazed and discovered that he had been kicked by Minnie while they were plowing. Days later he and Minnie were still working together as though nothing had occurred. When I was much older, he told me what had happened. The large harness had broken and he had put poor Minnie, a huge horse, into a smaller harness • which could not contain her. Again and again he was forced to stop in order to lift one of Minnie's huge hoofs within the chain. Once when she would not move, he kicked her with the side of his boot just above the hoof. Like lightning she kicked him on the thigh, and left him groaning on the grass. He made his way slowly and painfully to the house where my mother cared for him. Minnie had the better case and he knew it, and he never made that mistake again.... I asked (my father, years later) if Minnie ever struck him again. "No," he said, "but I was more careful after that." And then he told me about a cow that he had mistreated in a moment of impatient, a cow that never forgave him. He was only a boy at the time and one of his duties was shoveling the manure out of the trough behind the cows. It was hard work at best and was made much harder by that certain cow who persisted in keeping her hind feet in the manure. One day in exasperation he struck her with the shovel behind the hoof. From that day on she made life miserable for him. As he worked his way towards her, he could see her head turn and her eyes glare at him. And when he got close to her, she kicked at him swiftly and accurately. "Many's the day I ran or jumped by, hoping I could make it safely." Instances of this kind were rare. My father loved the animals and they responded to him in their turn. I remember his irritation when, during the Second World War, he heard of the sale of horse meat. "How can anyone eat it?" he asked. "When a man works in the fields with a horse, he feels towards it like a Dagmar's

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BLUNDON IRVING I ' ' .. 567-3000 "'5J' r'satr' i brother or a friend and wouldn't dream of eating it." His brother Stephen, who lived on the next farm, had the same affection for horses. I didn't know this when I was young, but later I had strong evidence of it. I was living in New Waterford, my mind far away from Ironville, when Uncle Stephen arrived in my room. I was pleased to see him but could not understand why he had come. We were not close friends and not in the habit of visiting each other. "Are you in town on business?" I asked. He looked embarrassed and twisted in his chair. He said, "No," and looked even more embarrassed. Then he said, like a little child, "I came to see our horse. I sold him to a man from town and today I called in to see how he was faring." He didn't have to say more. My father and he had the same spirit. Whenever I think of the farm, I see in my mind's eye my father leading Minnie out of the bam. Sometimes he waters and feeds her; sometimes he puts harness on her, and then backs her into a buggy or a wagon of some sort. Sometimes she goes out to plow; sometimes she drags in huge wagonloads of hay. And then I might run behind the hay, my bare feet almost pierced by the sharp stubble, but I don't want to stay behind. What a relief it was when they would lift me up on top of the hay! How thrilled - "We're people you can talk to" Dealers for: Electronic Keyboards Guitars • Church OrganS' Quality Brand Name Pianos • PA Rentals • n Piano & Guitar Instruction , Boutilliers' Music Shops instruments and accessories. Visit our she oom and try the products for yourself. Y(m like the variety and price. Layaway pi; available. No interest for 3 months. OPEN MONDAY through SATURDAY Music Keyboards Guitars Reeds Strings Horns Violins Chanters Amplifiers PA Systems All Supplies Cape Breton Shopping Centre 39 Keltic Drive Sydney River, N. S. B1S1P4 ""562-0018 TIT'mfHniHmH!!!!!!tlt!!miri!!! ~ Cape Breton's Finest Locally-Owned Musical Outlet

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