



## Our Senior Citizen On The Hill

### Mr. Fred Neville

by KEVIN MCKINNEY

Situated snugly between Neill and Neville House residences is a white clapboard abode which clashes distinctly with the overpowering facades of the surrounding buildings. This is the home of Fred Neville, an interesting and congenial old man of eighty-eight years. The house was erected in 1876, the same year the top storey was placed on the Old Arts Building. Mr. Neville's grandparents emigrated here from Ireland, and his parents were both born in Canada. His sister Annie died sixteen years ago, and his sister Catherine passed away five years ago, so he now lives alone in the house with his cat, Toody.

Toody is a rather frolicsome feline, and from time to time when Mr. Neville inadvertently leaves a container of milk on the kitchen table, Toody takes advantage by knocking over the container and lapping up its spilled contents. He is otherwise, however, an impeccably clean and well behaved animal, reputed by his master to be sixteen years of age.

The alert Mr. Neville, with a sparkle in his blue eyes, recalled for me many interesting episodes from his forty-two years in the employ of the University. The most interesting concerned the now extinct tradition of the firing of a cannon shot for each of the members of the Senior class on the eve of their graduation from the University. This had become a hazardous event since the students, with complete disregard for their personal safety, stuffed the barrel of the old cannon with mud and sod in order to make the effects of the salutary blasts more realistic. This practice led, not infrequently, to the complete demolition of the field piece at hand, and necessitated the acquisition of a replacement. These cannons were acquired deviously, and actually quite illegally, from various sources such as an armed ship in the port of St. John or the RCMP headquarters in Fredericton. Mr. Neville kept these cannons in a shed on his property until the designated night each year. The University Senate decided, after a student from Woodstock had lost an eye and University buildings had been repeatedly damaged, to do away with the traditional cannon fire. There was dissension among the ranks of the students, and a band of them decided to fire the canon in spite of the University ruling. Mr. Neville got wind of this ruse, and so on the morning of the appointed day he arose early, hitched his team of horses to the wagon, and returned the cannon from the shed to its former place in front of RCMP Headquarters.

Mr. Neville never did smoke. He used to chew tobacco but gave it up as a bad habit in 1930. He was drunk on two different occasions and likes to recall the circumstances involved. In 1938 there was a janitor at UNB named Bailey who had recently been married. It was a particularly cold winter day, and Mr. Neville had been working outside. Bailey invited him into his house to meet the new Mrs. and he produced a gallon jug of wine. After more than a few toasts Mr. Neville made his way home and found that he was having problems with his navigation. He arrived in high spirits and it was some time before his sisters realized that he was really quite drunk.

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