



It's All Over Now  
**Front St. Beat  
 Loses Old Friend**

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Another Front Street institution disappeared Sunday night.

No, there wasn't a fire. In fact, when the city hall clock struck midnight, this fixture was swiftly replaced with hardly a soul aware of the difference.

But merchants throughout the downtown area knew there had been a change to-day when Elmer "Pops" Minaker, 28-year constable with

the Belleville Police Department, did not show up on his daily rounds.

Last night was Constable Minaker's final shift on duty. He still has a month to go before he's officially retired but he'll spend the time at home enjoying a well-earned holiday.

There's no question that he'll be missed by Front Street regulars. Since being pulled out of a cruiser 10 years ago, he has been walking the sidewalks, directing traffic, checking doors and

chatting with passers-by and merchants, all the while practising his brand of law enforcement.

On the eve of his departure, he explained the philosophy that made him such a popular figure with all he met.

"There's nothing like friendship," he said. It's better than everything else in the world. When I came over from Prince Edward County, I was a total stranger. But I've had a wonderful 28 years in Belleville."

Born in Wellington, Constable Minaker was an orphan at the age of six — a fact that explains, perhaps, his outgoing approach to society.

With only a grade four education, he left his grandparents to work on a farm when he was 12. Two years later, he decided to run away and join the merchant marine.

"I met a man with Canada Steamship Lines," he recalled. "He treated me like a son. I was back in Picton when I was 16 and he said to me 'I guess you're alright'. I said yeah and that's the way I've

carried on through my career."

Looking for work, he enlisted in the Hastings-Prince Edward Regiment only to find himself, 12 years later, among the first contingent heading overseas at the outbreak of World War II.

He was made platoon sergeant while training in Aldershot, Eng., and remained in the post until his discharge later in 1945. Meanwhile, he did stretches in France, Italy, North Africa and Holland.

One of his companions was Col. Angus Duffy, the familiar Emergency Measures Organization coordinator who also fought with the Hasty-Pees. Although both were "39ers," Col. Duffy was sent home from Italy after the German fall while Sgt. Minaker found himself marching north.

"I guess I was just overlooked," he says now, "so I kept carrying on."

Even at war, he retained his affable attitude toward life.

"As a sergeant, I told the boys if they were going to drink, to do it where I couldn't see them, just so they didn't take advantage of me," he said. "It's just an understanding you have to have with people. Live and let live."

Tired of the military and wanting to work among people, he signed on with the Belleville police force on Nov. 3, 1945, when he was 37 years old.

At the end of his career, he found one of his biggest concerns was young people who habituated his beat. Despite the obvious confrontations of age and youth, policeman's uniform versus long hair and blue jeans, he still made his point.

"I get along well with them," he said of his relationship. "Maybe their parents haven't given them the same opportunity, so I would try to make them understand that friendship is a wonderful thing, that life's all right after all."

Talking to the downtown crowd confirms his statement. Most report there were "no hassles" with Pops Minaker.

Chief Douglas Crosbie calls Constable Minaker a "good public relations man."

"While he was on the beat, he was concerned with people and property. He's going to be missed."

To Ted McKnight, long-time friend and business acquaintance, Pops was "one hundred per cent." Downtown merchant Ald. Ben Corke calls him "a credit to the police force."

For now, Constable Minaker will relax at his Farley Avenue home with his wife Marion. He may head north to Tweed where his daughter and son-in-law own a farm.

There's also the possibility of a court officer's job in Belleville Provincial Court some day. Whatever direction he chooses, Pops Minaker's sociable style is certain to bring smiles to the faces of everyone he meets.