

Terrace Bay
Schreiber

News

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Editorial

Rec wreck

In case you missed reading about it on the front page of this week's News, Terrace Bay Recreation Co-ordinator Terry Bryson has submitted his resignation and will be leaving for a government job in Sault Ste. Marie next month. Of course, best wishes must be extended to him, as he has done a magnificent job in the four years that he has been living and working here in Terrace Bay.

The problem is, it will be very difficult to fill Bryson's shoes—not only because he was such a competent Co-ordinator, but also because of the changing economic conditions which now exist locally. There will be more than a few potential candidates unwilling to even apply here. On top of that, there is now a similar vacancy in Marathon.

Terrace Bay Council's task of finding a successor would be formidable in the best of times, but now they must get something beyond a simple replacement, since the role of recreation will become more important than ever before. Council must do a good selling job to find not only a qualified person, but also somebody top-notch, aware of the responsibilities such a job will entail now and in the future. Good luck, then, to both Council and Bryson.



Close To The Edge

By Conrad Felber

Why shouldn't we quarrel about a word? What is the good of words if they aren't important enough to quarrel over? (G.K. Chesterton)

English. Probably the hardest language to master. Even once you know it (or at least, once you think you know it) there are always new words that are cropping up which you have to learn. After all, it was only a few years ago that nouns and verbs like "bytes" and "interface" came into prominence. Also, existing words sometimes acquire new meanings—e.g., when my computer is "down," I don't really mean to say that the stupid thing has fallen off my desk (although such a terrible event is certainly a possibility).

Thing is, up until just recently I've been taking our language for granted.

What changed my perspective was this: I was typing a story here at the News office on the aforementioned computer, when one of my co-workers said she thought I had misspelled (or is it misspell?) the word "receive," until she remembered that the rule is "i before e except after c."

"That rule is a bunch of baloney" (or is it bologna?), I was proud to point out. "What about science?" I boasted, noting that in that word, the i does become before the e, even though it is after the c. "Or weird?" I added, showing that the i doesn't come before the e even following a w.

This only caused her to mumble something in return about "exceptions to the rule," all of which made me suddenly realize (or is it realize?) how silly English really is. After all,

unlike the famous saying about exceptions proving the rule, an exception actually disproves the rule (or is it disproves? unproves??), so why even have one? (A rule, that is.)

I mean, one could make a mockery of our lingo without even trying too hard. I've always found it odd, for example, that "monosyllable," which of course means "word of one syllable," has five syllables in it! And a monogram always has at least two letters in it, even though mono, as a prefix, means "one, alone, single" (which raises the question of the disease mononucleosis...usually at least two people wind up having it at the same time!).

Somebody once demonstrated how ridiculous the language is by using specific rules and traits of English to spell the word fish like this: ghoti.

How is this done, you ask? Simple: you use the "gh" of enough, the "o" as it is pronounced in women, and the "ti" as it is said in nation to spell ghoti, pronounced "fish." Weird (there's that word again!), but true.

While I believe this just goes to show that vowels are the most vexatious element in English (and I'll deal with them in my own way in just a moment), I must admit that consonants are a pain at times as well. After all, golly could actually be pronounced jolly if you use the g of "gem".

What we should do, then, is make a "g" a "g." If you want the "soft" g sound, use a nice j instead! Therefore, under my plan, it would be jypsy, not gypsy, and so on.



But it's those pesky vowels—a, e, i, o, and u (no, not you! u!)—which usually give us the most trouble. My solution? Delete them! Yes, that's right, just erase them from the alphabet altogether (but don't do it in the altogether)!

You don't think it'll work, do you? Well, try this on for size: y cn crtnly rd wht ths sys, rght? Thn why d w nd vwls fr nywy? Lt's jst gt rd f thm!

Wll, my rdrs, tht cnclds ths wk's clmn. Thnks! S y nxt wk.

Yrs trly, Cnrd Flbr.

Black N' White

Newfie joke is on us: Black

There are several ways to enter the magical kingdom of Newfoundland. YOU can do it the easy way by hopping the C.N. ferry to Argentia or Port-aux-Basques. You can get there by buying a seat on an Air Canada flight and white-knuckling your way through the fog to land at St. John's. Occasionally, Russians and other disenfranchised fugitives from behind the Iron Curtain achieve entry by hiding in a washroom at Gander until their Aeroflot plane leaves without them. About a thousand years ago, Vikings did it in hide-covered sailing ships. Tamil refugees prefer the abandoned lifeboat routine. But it doesn't really matter if you arrive in a hot air balloon or hidden in the hold of a Portuguese cod trawler — any of those methods merely get you physically into Newfoundland. To experience the place spiritually, there's only one route.

You have to attend a Screech In.

Never heard of a Screech In? Well, sit back and pay attention, for you are reading the words of a man who has a certificate on his wall officially decreed that he is to be a member of

the Royal Order of Screechers.

And it's signed by a boyo with the name of Brian Peckford.

But perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself. Here we are jawing about Screech Ins and I haven't even talked about that celebrated Newfoundland institution called Screech.

Screech is rum. But that's rather like saying T.N.T. is a chemical compound. The origins of Screech are shrouded in myth and countermyth. Some trace it back to cheap, treacherous Guyana rum, shipped in by the bilgeful back in the early years of the century. Others insist the first Screech hailed from Jamaica. I've read that the name Screech comes from the word "screigh" — an old Scots dialect term for whiskey. I've also been told that it was a Yank who gave the stuff its name — some long-forgotten American G.I. serving in Newfoundland during the Second World War. The story goes that the grunt was offered a wee tot of the Newfie elixir and, following the example of his native host, he tossed the libation off in a single gulp.

Closely followed by a gasp, a sob and a single, mega-decibel, blood-curdling howl so loud it drew curious crowds,

sergeant who kicked in the door yelling "What the cripes was that ungodly screech?"

The unflappable Newfoundland host tut tutted the sergeant with: "Screech? Tis de rum, me son, tis de rum."

Or so the story goes. There may be little agreement on the origin of Screech but there's one characteristic on which all observers are unanimous.

It's deadly. Screech can knock off your socks. It possesses a bouquet that falls somewhere between molten lava and Janitor In A Drum.

I'm not saying that the act of drinking straight Screech is unduly painful, but given a choice between knocking back a wee jar of the stuff and, say, flossing my teeth with an oxy-acetyline torch... well, I'd have to mull it over.

So much for Screech the noun. As for the aforementioned Screech In, that's the brainchild of a clutch of very creative Islanders working for Newfoundland tourism. They decided that what they needed was some kind of official welcoming ceremony that would make an, ummmm, unforgettable impression on Visitors From Away.

And that's how the Screech In was born. It works like this: The Screechee (that's vou or me) kneels solemnly

before an officer of the Order who is dressed in the official Newfoundland ceremonial uniform — which is to say yellow oilskins. The Screechee is then required to ingest one "peppermint knob" (an inoffensive, indigenous candy); one mouthful of mummified capelin (a highly offensive, indigenous minnow)... and a mouthful of Screech to wash it all down.

When the Screechee regains consciousness he or she is required to respond to a question in authentic Newfanese. My reply was: "Hindeed oi am me pritty young maid, and long may yer big jib draw."

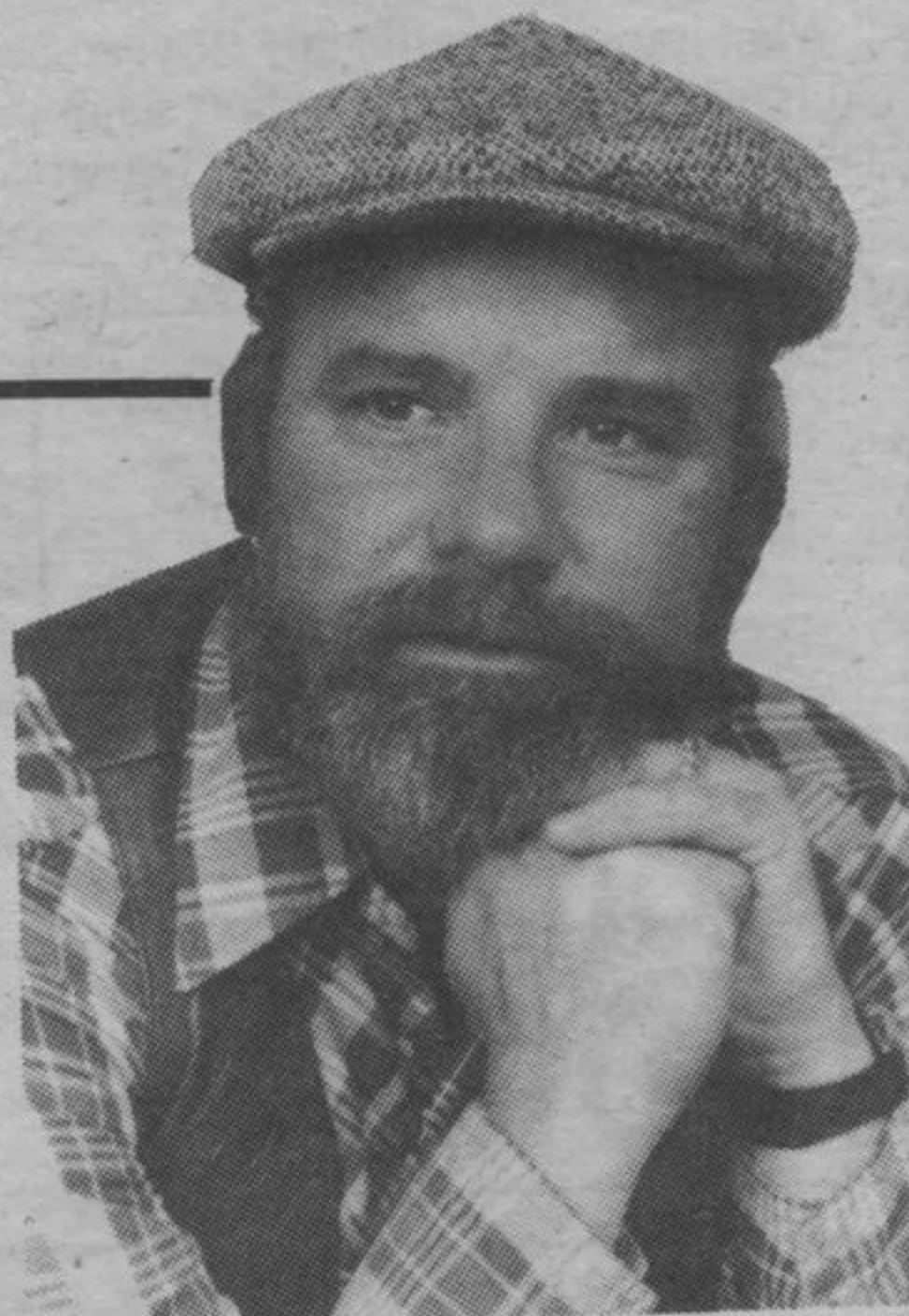
I never did quite catch the question.

Get through all that and you are well on your way to becoming a member of the Royal Order of Screechers. There is just one tiny final demonstration of commitment that you must make.

You have to Kiss the Cod.

Yup. As a final surprise they unwrap a great, slimy, odiferous, glassy-eyed, blubber-lipped, fresh-from-the-North Atlantic codfish and you have to kiss it, smack on the lips.

That is whay you call getting well and truly Screeched In and visitors to Newfoundland love it. They line up to endure it at fairs and receptions, conven-



tions and hotel lobbies all around the province. Screech dsIns have been wrought on everyone from ordinary tourists to an entire trade delegation from Peking.

Picture if you will, the sight of a couple of dozen solemn Chinese businessmen on their knees, solemnly planting big smooches on a couple of dozen dead and dripping cod.

The most amazing thing is that the Newfoundlanders who perform the ceremony are so disciplined that not so much as a shadow of a smirk ever crosses their lips.

Islanders have finally got revenge for all those stupid Newfie jokes the rest of us used to tell about them.

They've invented the Ultimate Newfie Joke. And it's on us.