

Every Canadian has the right to be able to read

by Rob Cotton
The News

Consider the number of times you are required to fill out a form. There are employment application forms - forms for dentists, doctors, drug plans and insurance benefits, just to name a few.

For those of us who can read, filling out forms is a matter of routine.

For those who can't read, filling out forms is only one of many activities that can be a real stumbling block in their lives.

Nell Stewart, of Terrace Bay, a volunteer with the Schreiber-Terrace Bay Adult Learning Program, provides confidential, one-to-one tutoring for adults who wish to improve their reading skills.

Many people who can't read, Stewart said, might be able to understand enough signage to pass their driver's license but they would not be able to go to Toronto and read the directions on the highway.

"Many can't go to the bank, to a restaurant or even go to the grocery store with a shopping list," she added.

"I think, for those who want to learn how to read," Stewart said, "the biggest step is being able to say to someone, 'I can't read'."

She explained that it is very important to these adults that no one know they can't read. They don't even tell their children.

"One thing that brings people to the adult learning programs is the desire to be able to read to their children," she said.

The Adult Learning Program also offers many free programs. Tutoring is available for those adults who wish to improve their writing and math skills. There are also referral and tutoring services for those wishing to do correspondence courses in English and math. There is also a Plain Writing consultation service that will help individuals write something in language that most people can read and understand.

The program began four years ago. That is when Stewart became involved as a tutor.

She had always wanted to do volunteer work of some kind but had never found anything that made her "just feel good about it all."

She feels good about helping people learn how to read.

Stewart is not a teacher and she does not view her work as teaching. For her, tutoring is a way to provide assistance to people to want to teach themselves how to read.

In her three years as tutor Stewart has helped two people.

Spending four hours a week with a tutor, an individual could be reading from an elementary school primer in about a month.

"They actually begin to learn in a week," Stewart said.

"You start by listening to them and asking them where they want to begin. A lot of time is spent figuring out where they want to begin - some of them begin with phonics."

However, adult learners do set their own pace and Stewart is willing to work with each individual as long as they want to be with a tutor.

"I will tell you that there is no one that is more eager to learn than someone who can't read."

Techniques used vary according to the needs of the individual being tutored.

Picture dictionaries, cue cards, tape programs, computers and, of course, dictionaries, books and newspapers are a few of the things tutors and learners can use.

However, Stewart believes that a good rapport



Filling out forms or doing the grocery shopping can be a real stumbling blocks in the lives of those who can't read.

between a tutor and a learner is an important element in the learning process.

Training for those wishing to be a volunteer tutor is provided by the Adult Learning Program before they are matched with someone who wants to learn how to read.

Individuals are not left with tutors if it is felt that a certain rapport is not developing.

"I couldn't tell you what makes it work," she said. "The two people I had were eager to learn and I think maybe they sensed how anxious I was for them to learn how to read."

Stewart described a successful tutor as one who has a keen interest in reading, is patient, understanding and sensitive to peoples' needs.

As far as a successful learner is concerned, she said, an adult who has taken the initiative to go for help - nothing is going to stop them.

Stewart believes every Canadian should have the right to read and hopes people who want to improve their reading skills will consider becoming involved with the learning program.

Mysterious deaths on the Lake -Part 2

Last week, I started to tell you the story of the mysterious diving death on August 12, 1989 of Reginald Barrett, from Brampton. Barrett died while diving in 300 feet of frigid Lake Superior water, examining the wreck of the luxury steamship, *The Gunilda*, on McGarvey Shoal, off shore from Rosport.

I told you how the OPP were called to the scene at 6:25 in the morning by someone claiming there was a diving death on the *Gunilda*. The police were told incorrectly at first, that someone from a group of eight Michigan divers had died. The Michigan group had been diving on the *Gunilda* at the same time as a smaller southern Ontario group, which included Barrett. Barrett's group was found on shore by the police that morning - not diving at the scene at all. That's only the first of several mysteries surrounding this incident, which could easily be made into a Hollywood blockbuster.

After settling that they were looking for Barrett, the police set up a search. They were not equipped to dive safely in 300 feet of water, and instead searched the area for five days with a remote-controlled video camera, finding nothing. Then, early on the morning of the sixth day of the police search, a local diver experienced with exploring the *Gunilda* got a call from the OPP. He expected them to

announce they had found Barrett's body with the camera, and wanted him to retrieve it. Instead, the police told him they were giving up their search and asked him to dive down and cut the many lines that ran up from the *Gunilda*, to discourage anyone from diving the wreck again.

This diver (who gave me an interview over a year ago on the condition that I not use his name) gave a full

statement to the police about what he found. Arriving over the *Gunilda*, he spotted two white flippers. On closer inspection, he found it was Barrett's body, tangled in cords. This diver is convinced to this day that the body had been deliberately brought to the surface, because Barrett's weight belt had been removed, and his inflatable diving vest had been "partially inflated" two actions that bring a diver to the surface, dead or alive. These two actions could have been performed by Barrett before he died, but if Barrett cut his own weight belt and inflated his own vest, why did his body not come to the surface sooner? Why did the body mysteriously appear on the surface the morning after the police announced that they were calling off the search?

If Barrett's body was deliberately brought to the surface, who did it? There are several reports of at least one boat leaving Rosport around midnight the night before Barrett's body was discovered. Is it possible that whoever went out that night had heard that the OPP were going to call off the search, and wanted the body discovered?

The mystery deepens when you realize that the *Gunilda* is public

property, protected by the Ontario Heritage Act. The stories about there being over two million dollars in jewels and other valuables in the *Gunilda's* safe are probably legends rather than fact. Nonetheless, the historic wreck is public property. Artifacts are not supposed to be removed. At least one Thunder Bay diver claims to have bought the salvage rights to the *Gunilda* from Lloyd's of London, but this claim is disputed by the province.

The diver who gave me an interview also claims to have seen a video tape, shot by the Michigan group after Barrett's group left the *Gunilda*. The tape apparently shows major artifacts missing from the *Gunilda*, including the ship's bell. Is this true? Who has these artifacts? If their claims to the property are in dispute, why is the Ministry of

Culture and Communications not investigating the apparent pilfering of a public resource?

In a small village like Rosport, stories and rumours are more plentiful than facts. But there are so many questions surrounding these events that only an inquest can set the rumours to rest. The questions I have about this incident include:

1. Was Barrett's diving party involved in illegally taking artifacts off the *Gunilda*? If they were, has some "secret deal" been made to keep the incident quiet, in exchange for safe return of the artifacts? Or has Barrett's death not been the subject of an inquest simply to avoid embarrassment of a deceased senior civil servant?
2. Why has the new NDP government not looked into this incident? There are rumours in Rosport that the chief of the municipal police force in Terrace Bay wants to investigate this death, but has been told to "keep his distance". Is that just petty jurisdictional jealousy by the OPP, or is there something else lurking in the depths?
3. An innkeeper on the north shore of Lake Superior is known to have close connections with Barrett's widow, and provided accommodations for the family during the futile police search. This innkeeper also is known to be

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NORTHERN INSIGHTS
by Larry Sanders

