

Editorial

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The disabled's minority rights

While council in Terrace Bay debated the merits of making the \$340,000 gorge development accessible to the disabled, something happened that summed up the problems the disabled face in our society.

A representative of the Disability Action Group was unable to attend the Sept. 23 meeting. Not because she was sick, or because she was busy, but because the entrance to the Council chambers is inaccessible to people in wheelchairs.

Council shouldn't be blamed for not having a wheelchair ramp outside their doors. After all, how many of us really gave much thought to the difficulties the disabled have in getting around until very recently?

But this example highlights the fact that many of the activities we take for granted are out of the question for a large segment of our population. And if things are ever going to change, we, as a society, have to stop thinking of disabled accessibility as a luxury.

Modifying the gorge development with the disabled in mind is a sacrifice of sorts. It means a less spectacular design, with less facilities and frills. It also means sacrificing an observation deck, and making the remaining one smaller.

And just how many disabled people would take advantage of the facility? Hiking is not a activity one usually associates with someone in a wheelchair. So are the modifications worthwhile considering how many people are going to benefit?

Yes. It's a cliché now, but societies really are judged by the way they treat their minorities. When something is built without consideration being given to the needs of the disabled, you could easily put up signs reading "No disabled persons allowed", or perhaps a picture of a wheelchair with a red line through it.

Whether or not making the gorge disabled accessible makes economic sense is beside the point. Many things in Canadian society — things we now consider a birthright — make no economic sense. Just look at our social safety net.

And thanks to the compromise proposal from Moore/George Associates, modifying the gorge development is economically possible.

Someone who can walk can already make it up to the gorge, whether its developed or not. All the development will do is make it easier for people to enjoy it.

And since this is the purpose, making it possible for everyone to enjoy the area should be the first priority of any development. It should be considered the point, not a luxury.

By amending the development, council has acknowledged its responsibility to all of the voters, and has made the right decision. Now, if they just could do something about a ramp outside their front door...



Excelling in failure

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
-Old blues refrain

It has not been a good week so far, friends. For one thing, my trusty four-wheeled rustbucket has come down with an asthmatic and expensive sounding rasp in its carburetored throat. Then there's that phone message from the bank asking me to call back ASAP. Plus the envelope from Revenue Canada that I've been shuffling to the bottom of the In Basket since last Thursday. And those shooting stars I see every time I bend over to tie my shoes...

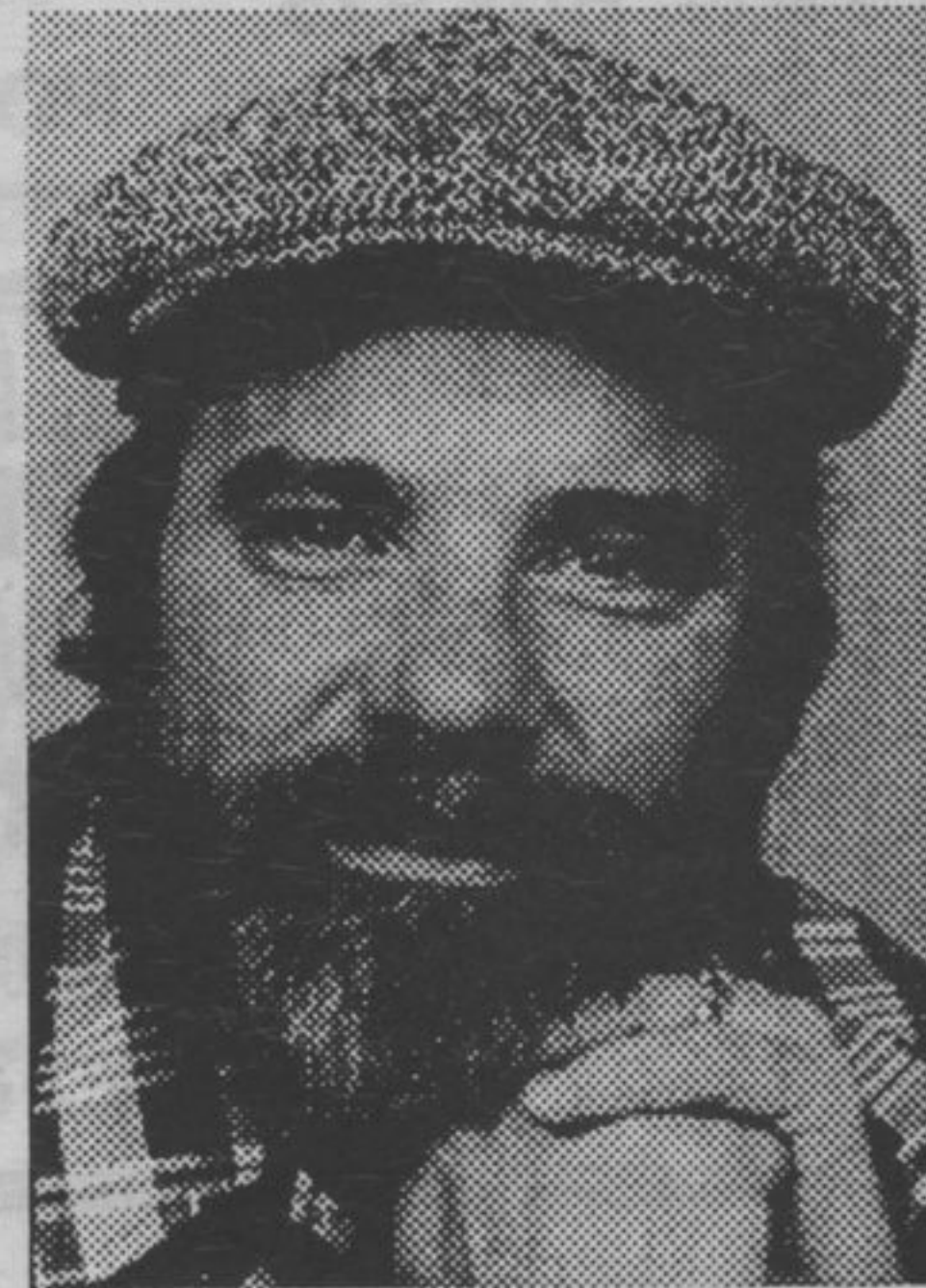
Know what I like to do when my troubles start to pile up - besides writing a whiny column about it, I mean? I like to dig out a tome called The Book of Failures by Stephen Pile. It is subtitled "A Splendid Panorama of Non-Achievement" - and indeed it is. Chronicled on the pages of The Book of Failures are the non-quite-feats and close-but no-Panarella attempts of dozens upon dozens of fellow schlemiels whose run of bad luck makes me feel like changing my name to Leif the Lucky.

Such as? Well such as the members of a British scuba-diving club who decided to get themselves into the Guinness Book of World Records by taking the plunge into the most inaccessible body of water in the entire British Isles. Poring over maps, they found Scotland's remotest loch. They rented Land Rovers, Highland guides and mountain climbing gear. They drove 740 chassis-fracturing miles, clambered 7,000 feet up a mountainside. They found their loch, made camp, donned their scuba gear, took the icy plunge into the black, foreboding waters... And discovered that the loch was four feet deep.

A person could have worse luck. A person like Michael Fish, Michael Fish is a

possibly, was - a British television weatherman. Back in 1987, he took a call from some semi-hysterical viewer who had heard that a hurricane was on the way. "Nonsense!" snapped Mister Fish. "There will be sea breezes and some showery airflow" he promised. On national television.

Within the hour, Britain had lost 300 miles of power cables, all rail transportation, access to 200 roads and one-quarter of all the trees in Kent. Contrary to Mister Fish's assurances, it was a hurricane - the worst to hit the U.K. in three centuries.



Arthur Black

My last piece of bad news comes not from the The Book of Failures but the pages of last night's newspaper. It concerns the shoplifting trial of Florence Power of New Jersey. Ms. Powers' psychiatrist testified that his client should be found innocent

because she was under stress at the time of the incidents, due to a recent auto accident, a traffic ticket, a new-car purchase, overwork, husband's kidney stones, husband's asthma, hot flashes, vaginal itch, a bad rash, fear of cancer, fear of dental surgery, son's asthma, mother's illness, aunt's illness, pressure of organizing parents' 50th wedding anniversary, need to cook Thanksgiving dinner for 20 relatives, purchase of 200 gifts for Christmas and Hanukkah, stress of selling house without realtor, lawsuit against wallpaper cleaners, purchase of furniture that had to be returned, and a faulty toilet.

I don't know about you, but a litany of misery like that automatically makes me feel better.

Not Ms. Powers' though, I guess. She's got one new woe to add to her list.

Letters to the Editor

The Terrace Bay Schreiber News welcomes letters to the editor on any subject.

Letters must be signed and have the phone number and address of the author for verification. We will not knowingly print false libelous or anonymous comments.

Letters to the Editor are important to community newspapers. They serve to reflect opinions of members of the community we serve. However, we must insist on these rules to ensure that this very important forum is used responsibly.

Letters can be mailed to the News, Box 579, Terrace Bay, P0T 2W0, or dropped off at the News office, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.