

# Editorial

The Terrace Bay - Schreiber News is published every Tuesday by Laurentian Publishing Limited, Box 579, 13 Simcoe Plaza, Terrace Bay, Ont., P0T-2W0 Tel.: 807-825-3747. Second class mailing permit 0867. Member of the Ontario Community Newspaper Association and the Canadian Community Newspaper Association.

Single copies 50 cents.  
Subs. rates: \$18 per year.  
Seniors \$12 (local); \$29 per year (out of 40 mile radius); \$38 in U.S. Add GST to yearly subs.

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## Make sure your voice is heard before decisions are made

Getting involved in community planning is not most people's idea of fun. Mention municipal planning and schedules to most people and their eyes tend to glaze over. It takes time to find out what's being planned and why before you can form an opinion, and many people don't make the time to do that.

And that's really too bad, because with all the development going on around here, some people may find that the towns are changing in a way they don't like. But by the time they realize it, it will be too late to do anything about it.

For example, most of the Councillors at last week's inaugural Council meeting in Schreiber mentioned a new recreation centre as a priority for the new council. How much would a new rec. centre cost? When would construction begin? Where would it be located? What's going to be done with the current one?

These are the kinds of questions Council will have to answer before too long, so now's the time for people to let them know how they think things should be done.

Choosing a theme for Terrace Bay is another good example. Right now, it's difficult to see just how choosing a theme will affect the look of the place.

But once the theme is chosen, it would be difficult to change, particularly if the Contemporary/Civic theme is chosen, which would involve quite a bit of construction. If you can't stand the thought of cement and metal structures, speak up now. Or if you think cottage country is the wrong look for the town, let the members of the Corridor Subcommittee know before they pick a theme. They want to know what you think and, after all, you live here too.

But once the lighting and the signs for the Gorge development go up, the pattern for future development will be more or less set.

One of the great things I've noticed since I moved here is the virtually unlimited access people have to their elected representatives. In big cities, politicians can hide from people they want to avoid — or from people in general — between elections. But here, you can see your councillors and reeves virtually every day.

So why not take advantage of the opportunity? Find out what's being planned, attend a Council meeting or two, and bend the ear of a politician and let them know what you think.

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## A place for poetry

*How beautifully useless,  
how deliciously defiant  
a poem is!*

- Raymond Souster

Tell the truth, now -- when's the last time you picked up a book of poetry?

Yeah. Me too. I manage to wade through Macleans, Saturday Night, the Globe and Mail, my local paper -- even a novel or two each week, but poetry? Sorry, no time.

Part of the reason is of course that much modern poetry is so infuriatingly inaccessible. Here, for instance, is the last gasp of the final stanza of a Joe Rosenblatt poem:

BUZZZZZZ  
BUZZZZZZ  
BUZZZZZ  
BUZZZZ  
BUZZZ  
BUZZ  
BUZ  
ZZ

That may be tremendously meaningful to Joe Rosenblatt. It may even be kinda fun to watch him "perform" it in front of, say, the Hamilton Steelworkers Annual Christmas Party.

But Shakespeare it ain't.

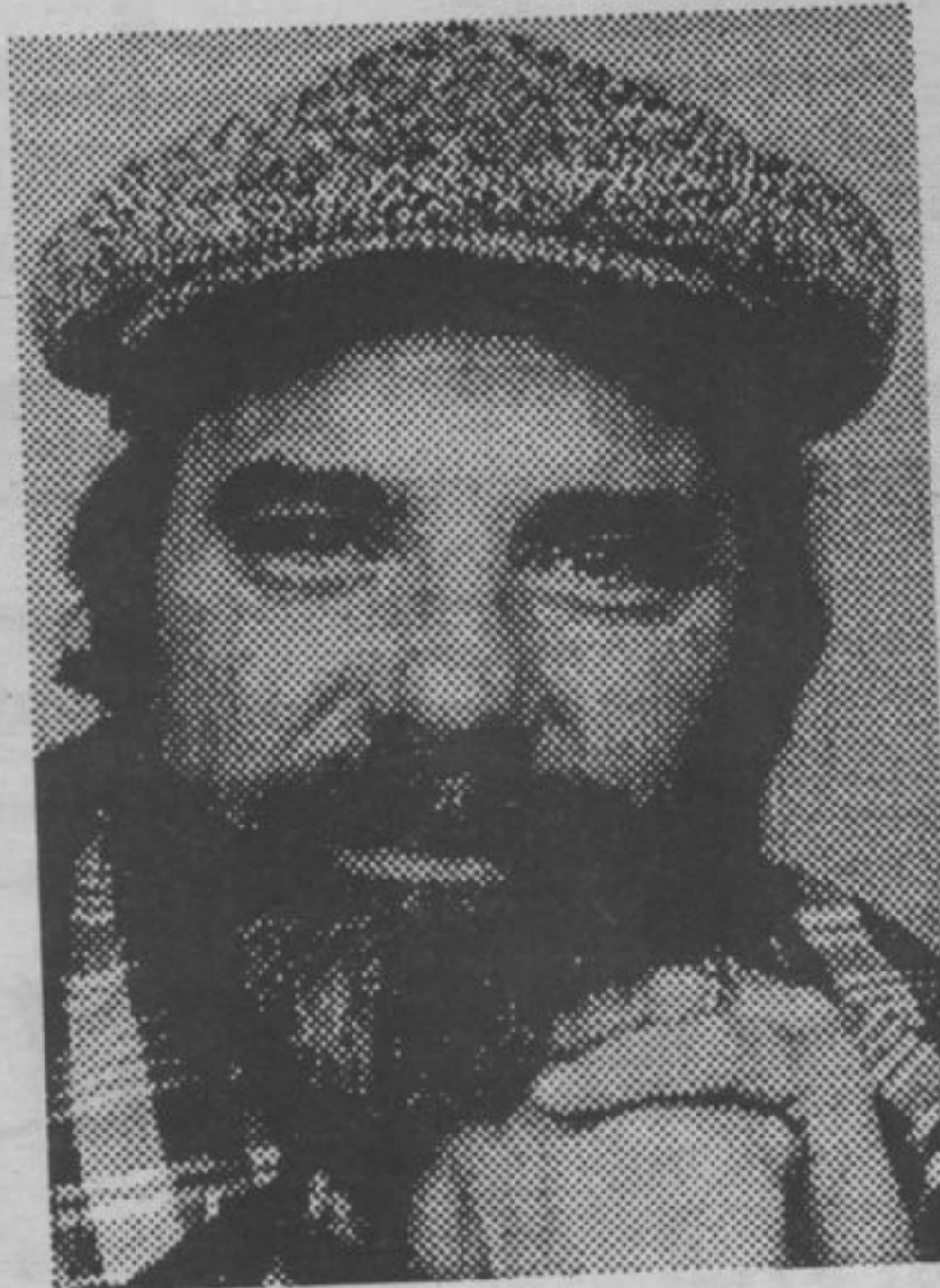
A lot of modern poetry seems to be little more than cerebral foreplay between the author and his or her own consciousness. Too bad. As Robertson Davies says "Poetry is undoubtedly a serious business...but the world also needs its entertainers, its bards, who remind us that poetry was not always a question of printed pages, hidden meanings, and dismal intellectual gropings; there was a time when poetry was for everybody, and had some fun in it."

I think Joseph Brodsky would second that. Mister Brodsky is a Soviet emigre who was kicked out of the U.S.S.R. twenty years ago because his poems infuriated the Politburo. Brodsky picked himself up, dusted himself off and moved to the U.S. Last summer the U.S. honoured him with the title of U.S.

Poet Laureate.

Brodsky is an old-style poet. The kind who thinks poems ought to be read by everyone, not just weedy academics and neo-Beatnik wannabes.

And he just might do something about it. Brodsky told a Washington audience recently that poetry ought to be sold in supermarkets and left in every motel room, right next to the Gideon Bible. "The Bible won't mind this" he explained. "It doesn't mind being next to the telephone book."



Arthur Black

He'd also like to see racks of poetry books available at the corner drug store. "Poems are cheaper than tranquilizers and reading them may reduce the bill from your shrink." Rising to the moment, Brodsky declared "Poetry is perhaps the only insurance we've got against the vulgarity of the human heart, and it should be

available to everyone at low cost."

Well, it's not an entirely original thought. One of our own poets, Irving Layton, once wrote: "If the walls that separate people from people are ever pulled down, it will not be done by politicians or dictators. It will be done by poets."

I don't think it would hurt if we broadened our definition of 'poet' either. Bruce Cockburn is a Canadian poet. So is k d lang, Gordon Lightfoot, Rita MacNeil...and Wayne Gretzky.

That's not an original thought either. One of Brodsky's excompatriots, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, once visited these shores and announced: "I say the best Canadian poet is Phil Esposito." Then he added thoughtfully "And that is not a joke."

I say: Stompin Tom Connors for Canadian Poet Laureate.

And I'm only joking a little bit.