

## Opinion/Letters

# Gunilda also raises many local concerns



**NORTHERN  
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders



Last week, I began telling you about the escalating debate about the plans to raise the *Gunilda*, a luxury steamship that sank off Rosspoint in 1911.

I explained how the company that owns the salvage rights, Kabro Marine of Thunder Bay, wants to convert the *Gunilda* into a floating tourism attraction, capable of touring the Great Lakes, Miami, New York, or even Japan.

The story of the *Gunilda*, according to promoter John Henderson, will advertise the idea that Northern Ontario is a great place to live, or at least visit. He says the story of the rich New York family that owned the *Gunilda* just has to be retold, to promote the north:

"Here we have the richest people in the United States with the world's most expensive yacht at the time, choosing the north shore of Lake Superior as their destination. Wherever the ship is, that message is a very powerful one."

But this idea is being strongly opposed by the Rosspoint Islands Management Board, a citizen-run association advising the Ministry of Natural Resources on crown land issues on the Rosspoint Islands, the *Gunilda's* current resting place.

### Left where it is

Ryan LeBlanc, a diver with considerable experience on the *Gunilda*, represents the township council of Schreiber on the Board. LeBlanc wants to see the *Gunilda* left where it is, on the bottom. He predicts disaster for the group considering bringing it to the surface.

"Beyond any shadow of a doubt," LeBlanc says, "it would spell the end of *Gunilda*. There just isn't the technology or the monies available to see that this thing is properly conserved. It's in a state of equilibrium right now. It's been stabilized by the elements. The second it's exposed to the air, you're just going to see a steady deterioration."

"There's just no way on earth any local firm can raise enough money to see that this thing's properly conserved. It's just going to turn into a rusting heap." The formal statement issued by the Rosspoint Islands Management Board adds that they don't have any jurisdiction to formally block the effort to raise the ship, but they have decided to publicly question whether it's going to be done properly.

But Fred Broennle of Kabro Marine doesn't have any time for the opponents. "If you want to show respect, you bring her up and clean her up and let people see the only vessel left in the world like it. Sure, there's always a few bleeding hearts who say leave it down there. For who? For another diver to risk his life?"

Peter Englebert, marine archeologist with the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, says no application has been made to raise or restore the wreck.

### Application to the province

He's also not sure whether any application from Kabro Marine for a permit under the Ontario Heritage Act would be approved. "I can't get any straight information on whether Kabro's claim to own the rights to the *Gunilda* are legally valid, and whether the plans for raising it satisfy heritage legislation."

The next step will likely come in March, when Kabro makes an application to the province to take small core samples from the wood on the wreck for analysis. The core samples are necessary to determine what kinds of wood are on the *Gunilda*, and what state they're in.

Lorne Murdock, senior archeological conservator with the Historic Resources Conservation Branch of Parks Canada in Ottawa, says that kind of information might deter the entrepreneurs from raising and restoring the *Gunilda*, since they'll find that each piece of the ship will require special treatment.

"I've been in this game for 23 years, and I've never seen one piece of wood react like another one. What happens is there's structural forces, dimensional changes, that take place as a result of the water evaporating off the surface of the wood."

"The cells collapse inwards and when the cells collapse, who knows what the wood is going to do. It could warp, it could crack, it could check."

"And then if you're talking about an entire hull, all those pieces are working against each other. Then you've got the iron in there which will certainly start spalling (flaking off). It's not like you can dry it off and slap a coat of paint on it. That just doesn't work."

Henderson replies to such charges by saying the criticisms are "premature. As long as we prove (to the Ontario government) that we are going to do a restoration that is comparable to, or exceeds, anything they have in mind, we

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## Sustainable development: a lifeline to the future

*"We act as we do because we can get away with it: future generations do not vote; they have no political or financial power; they cannot challenge our decision."*

When Gro Harlem Brundtland wrote these words as chair of the United Nation's Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, she had in mind much more than the rights of the unborn. She was talking about the very survivability of the human species.

If there is to be a future, Madame Brundtland argued, we must leave our children a world in which they can provide for their needs. We owe them the same abundant opportunities which have been available to us.

This concept of intergenerational equity is the fundamental principle underlying sustainable development. It places a very real responsibility on the current inhabitants of the earth. It means that we must strive to leave an undiminished planet in which all things are possible—rather than an exhausted and polluted ecosystem incapable of supporting life.

Our instinct for survival is as old as time itself. Since the earliest cave dweller, humans have concerned themselves with protecting their offspring. While the threats of extinction were frequent and immediate, they were able to establish a claim to the future.

What's different today is the complexity of our society, our reliance on institutions, and the incredible difficulty we have in recognizing—let alone addressing—the manifold dangers.

The threats are now largely invisible. They take the form of underground contaminants, toxics and a changing atmosphere. And where we can see them, they seem remote. They are images on the seven o'clock news—clear-cut land which was once lush forest, acid precipitation, and oil slick washing ashore, a dry river bed, the extinction of wildlife.

Unlike dinosaurs and sabre-tooth tigers, these modern dangers do not appear to be immediately life-threatening. And so we save for our children's college education, we guide them through troubles, and we fret over their first dates.

And we go on pretty much as we always have.

## Letter to the editor

### Council starting year off on "wrong foot"

Dear editor,

Here it is, the beginning of a new year and a new Council has been elected to run our small town of Schreiber in a fair manner. I would like to bring to everyone's attention the fact that our new Council has been established because we, the people of Schreiber, voted to elect this council to term. Any individual on council who has the attitude that they have the power to do as they like without regard to the needs and wants of the majority should perhaps take a closer look at Brian Mulroney's infamy in Canada. But even Brian Mulroney implements controls on wages, prices, rents, etc., which brings us to the issue of the preposterous 1992 Fees posted for Dog Licences. These fees have *more than doubled*.

I have to say hooray for Wally Richardson on his letter to the editor in the Terrace Bay-Schreiber News, Jan. 21 edition. His letter says it all, but I will quote him by saying we are being penalized for the irresponsible individuals who allow their dogs to run at large, and if you look out your door it's usually always the same dogs. Substantial fines issued to the owners enough times should clear our streets of the "Dogs Running at Large" issue.

It would be interesting to take a survey to find out how many dogs there are in Schreiber and multiply the result by the 1992 dog tag rates. It should make for a very nice profit indeed. Schreiber Town Council, shame on you, with our country in such dire straits and people's morale so low, how can you impose a licence that has more than doubled on citizens who choose to keep a dog on their own personal premises? This issue raises another question: why are licences not mandatory for cats or any other pet that people prefer to keep in the privacy of their own homes? What's mandatory for one should be mandatory for the other.

I personally feel that our trusted Town Council is starting the new year on the wrong foot. I hope the new 1992 dog licence rates will be reversed and that there are no more surprises in store for us.

Mariann Madge,  
Schreiber

## 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 may be edited for length or clarity.

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, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.