

Opinion/Letters

Barrett and Asimov: the passing of two 'heroes'



**NORTHERN
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders



On Saturday, April 11 a memorial service was held in Dorion for the late Millie Barrett. Millie's 68 years in the north as a community development worker, philosopher and advocate left an indelible mark on northwestern Ontario.

The memorial service included eloquent tributes from former MPP Jack Stokes, Archeologist Ken Dawson, Historian Tom Miller, MPP Gilles Pouliot, former Nipigon-Red Rock Gazette Editor Mary Gordon, and Marlene Pierre of the Ontario Native Women's Association.

Millie was also my personal friend. What follows is an edited version of my tribute to Millie, read at the memorial service in Dorion.

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Two of my heroes are gone.

Last Sunday morning, Millie's sister Norma phoned to tell me the news about Millie. The next morning, I woke up to the radio telling me that Isaac Asimov had died.

Two personal heroes lost in two days. Two people who have shaped my life with their morality—a morality demonstrated through thoughts, words and deeds.

I never had the honor to meet Isaac Asimov, but his life affected me in very similar ways to Millie.

Both spent their lives motivating us to visualize future universes and thus increasing our appetite to alter the status quo.

Asimov's work, like Millie's, reflects their high moral code. Asimov will likely most be remembered for his "three laws of robotics". These laws, programmed indelibly into the positronic brains of robots, transformed robots in literature from creatures of horror to extensions of human endeavor.

Three laws

The three laws are exquisite in their simplicity. The First Law says a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. The Second and Third Laws compel a robot to always obey the orders of human beings and protect its own existence, as long as that doesn't conflict with the First Law.

In the conclusion to one of his later works, *Foundation and Earth*, Asimov introduced a variation on the three laws by postulating a robot who had taken on the task of trying to save humanity from destroying itself.

The robot, Daneel Olivaw, re-programmed itself with another law called the *Zeroth Law*—one that comes before any of the first three. The *Zeroth Law* reads: "A robot may not injure humanity, or through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm."

Isaac Asimov and Millie Barrett shared a highly defied sense of morality—one that compelled them to transform the world. They both lived their lives as if they were programmed like Daneel Olivaw—to do everything in their power to stop humanity from destroying itself. For Millie, just like Daneel, inaction was not an acceptable choice.

Sense of duty

I had the honor to tape several interviews with Millie, and I have re-discovered in those transcripts a woman who's sense of duty to Earth started right here, where she was born.

This excerpt is from an interview I did with Millie for the Lake Nipigon Coalition—part of building the Coalition's case against the Jackfish River project:

Question: You talk about Lake Nipigon almost like a poet, why you live here and how you enjoy it. Because this environment isn't as nice as it was, how does that effect you?

Millie: It's not a question of "nice." And it's not a question of enjoyment, either. It's a question of living in reality, and the earth is the reality. Not what human beings want to do TO it for their own selfish ends. And the earth here is important to me.

I was raised here when it was really in its pristine condition. And it's in the last 50 years that we've done such tremendous damage here and I can see that that's happening all over the Earth.

To me, this area is absolutely essential to the survival of our country. It's not a question of whether its nice or whether its enjoyable, or whether its this or that. Its a question of the reality of the Earth itself as our Mother. And if we do any more damage to it, we can't survive in it.

And the thing that bothers me more than anything else is that it's not the

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Letters to the editor

Residents upset with Reeve

If Reeve Bob Krause were to render his resignation it would be no loss to some of the people that were foolish enough to vote for him back in November. He was full of promises before the election.

Since he's been in he's raised his and his Councillors' salaries. We have heard that the town is buying a street sweeper that needs \$10,000 repair before the township can use it. But when Mr. Krause was asked if he'd be paving our streets this year, he said the town was broke and couldn't do it.

We've been living here for three years and we don't even have a proper sewer system.

We do have all the culverts to put it in sitting on Peary Street—where all the children can go and get hurt.

We feel Mr. Krause is out blowing town money foolishly and we are being left in the cold. We also feel the Reeve should come down off of his cloud and start doing things for us taxpayers who elected him to his position.

Jocelyn Godin, Dan Davis, Jean Luc and M.J. Majeau, Laura Ray, Carmen Trapp, Kim Smith, Brenda Gameau, and Evelyn Schroeder,
The residents of Peary and Simon Streets

Blue Collar Bart and Bushwackers offensive

The cartoons published in your paper of April 28 disturbed me. Blue Collar Bart depicts family violence as humorous. I find it difficult to understand why you would publish this, especially right beside an excellent article about preventing family violence. The other cartoon, Bushwackers, pokes fun at religion. I find this offensive . . . not funny!

Sincerely,
Connie Elkin,
Schreiber

editor's note: a copy of this letter has been sent to cartoonist Keith Milne, author of both Blue Collar Bart and Bushwackers, along with a note asking him to respond to the concerns expressed above.

Forestry Critic marks the evolution of Forest Week

Liberal Forestry Critic Réginald Bélair, MP for Cochrane-Superior, is quoted in a press release as saying that "during the week of May 3-9, we will be celebrating National Forest Week."

The 1992 theme is "Take a closer look."

"We are all becoming more conscious of the rich resources that we have at our disposal," said Bélair.

"At the present time, approximately one million Canadian workers depend on the forest industry."

Mr. Bélair went on to give a brief history of the May 4, 1992, celebration.

"National Forest Week has a very long history," he said.

"It was originally known as 'Forest Fire Prevention Week' in the early 1920s. So National Forest Week continues a long tradition of encouraging greater public awareness of the forest resource. Much has changed since the 1920s when the forest was seen as a limitless resource, capable of sustaining vast and viable initiatives.

"At that time, forest fires were seen as a greater threat to the economic potential of our forests, rather than the lack of reforestation and maintenance of our precious resource.

"The title for Forestry Week has changed through the decades: from "Save the Forest Week" in the 1930s; "National Forest Conservation Week" in the 1940s and 1960s; and finally to the present title "National Forest Week", which was formally adopted in 1967. This title was chosen to emphasize and recognize the multiple needs—both human and environmental—which Canada's forests are expected to satisfy.

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Make your voice heard

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 and 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 ensure that this 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.