

Reeve Arch Ostrom
Box 500
Delta, Ont.
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Dear Sir,

I have been deeply shocked to hear that the Township of Bastard and South Burgess is unwilling to pay the proper financial support to its libraries in Portland and Delta.

I am in complete agreement with the articles written by Jose Mann and Bill Cutfield, and recently published in The Lantern. Everyone is, or should be, aware of the growing levels of illiteracy in Canada - our papers are increasingly full of these alarming statistics. Are we, then, about to return to the Nineteenth Century, where any number of concerned and responsible people were forced to start and support the "Beggars' Schools," so that children, born in poverty and ignorance, could at least learn the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic?

And now, toward the end of our so-called enlightened Twentieth Century, a very strange thing is happening. Numerous high-level firms are finding it harder and harder to select suitable candidates for the jobs they are offering. Why? Because too many graduates of either high school or university are being found incapable of intelligent reading or intelligent writing.

I am myself a writer and an editor. When I moved to Portland, five years ago, one of its main attractions was its delightful little library, only a few yards from my door (I live on Perth Street). The librarians I met there - from Joyce Gunnewiek to Lois Braidwood - have been consistently wonderful in finding me the books I needed, either for my reading pleasure or for professional research. This is the obvious result of their own efficiency, combined with the excellent exchange system set up by the Rideau Lakes Union Library. And an endless supply of volunteers have been the back bone of the libraries since their inception.

I have also taken great pleasure in watching the school children pouring into the library on Thursday afternoons. Bringing books back, asking for new ones, asking for advice and assistance from the ever-helpful librarian. On their very last visit, at the end of the school year, they were crowding around Mrs. Braidwood anxiously. "Can I come back in the summer, Miss?" "Will the library still be open in the summer?" "Can I get more books?"

Well, can they? Can I? Of course, I should simply move away. I could not live without a library. Neither, I imagine, could many of the new inhabitants of this area, as well as the summer visitors who also take great pleasure in our library and its resources. Reading is not a foolish luxury, Mr. Ostrom. For a great number of people it is still the basic food of learning, discovery, and delight.

Pamela Fry
(cc The Lantern)



In memory of Dan Pitts, his family and friends have donated to Rideau Lakes Union Libraries a new selection of children's tapes. And what a wonderful week I've had previewing (pre-listening?) them. Youngsters of any age will delight in them as much as I have.

Lionel Jeffries reads A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh in a most un-Disney-like voice. More grumbly than syrupy. Beatrix Potter's tales receive loving treatment by Claire Bloom and Meryl Streep. I especially enjoyed Streep's The Tailor of Gloucester; not so much for her voices, but for the lovely background music by the Chieftains. The story ends before the tape does, so the music used is repeated. A lovely introduction to Celtic themes for anyone.

A lullaby, a musical friend told me, is the one song a tin voice sings beautifully because it is always sung with love. Maureen Forrester has a tape, Lullabies, for those of us whose repertoire consists of "Rock-a-bye Baby". Her selection includes traditional English and French songs (including my favourites, "Pretty Little Pony" and "C'est la Poulette Grise") as well as one from Porgy and Bess and others from different cultures. Lovely, gentle lullabies, soothing to both child and parent.

Tom Chapin's tunes in Family Tree are much livelier. There's a beautiful one on "Rounds". And he must have known my brother when he was young because "Long Way Home" is full of excuses one can use for coming home late. By the way, the bees in "Big Rock Candy Mountain" no longer hum in cigarette trees but in bubble-gum trees.

My very favourite of all the music tapes is Mr. Bach Comes to Call. This Canadian produced introduction to Johann Sebastian Bach is a marvel of humour, information and instruction. Susan Hammond, the producer, has visited CBC's "Morningside" with this and her new tape on Beethoven (which won this year's Juno for Best Children's Recording), so those of us who have heard her and excerpts know how lovely these are. Tapes for parent and child to listen to together.

For older children, T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats (the non-Webber production - "Cats") has the music of John Gielgud and Irene Worth. Try listening to "The Naming of Cats" and "Macavity: the Mystery Cat" without smiling. I dare you!

A personal Christmas tradition is the reading of A Child's Christmas in Wales. Dylan Thomas' reading is not bad, but my very much preferred one is done by the American Theatre of the Deaf. And Daniel Massey does a fair job calling up the imagery

of Heathcliff and Cathy on the Moors near Wuthering Heights.

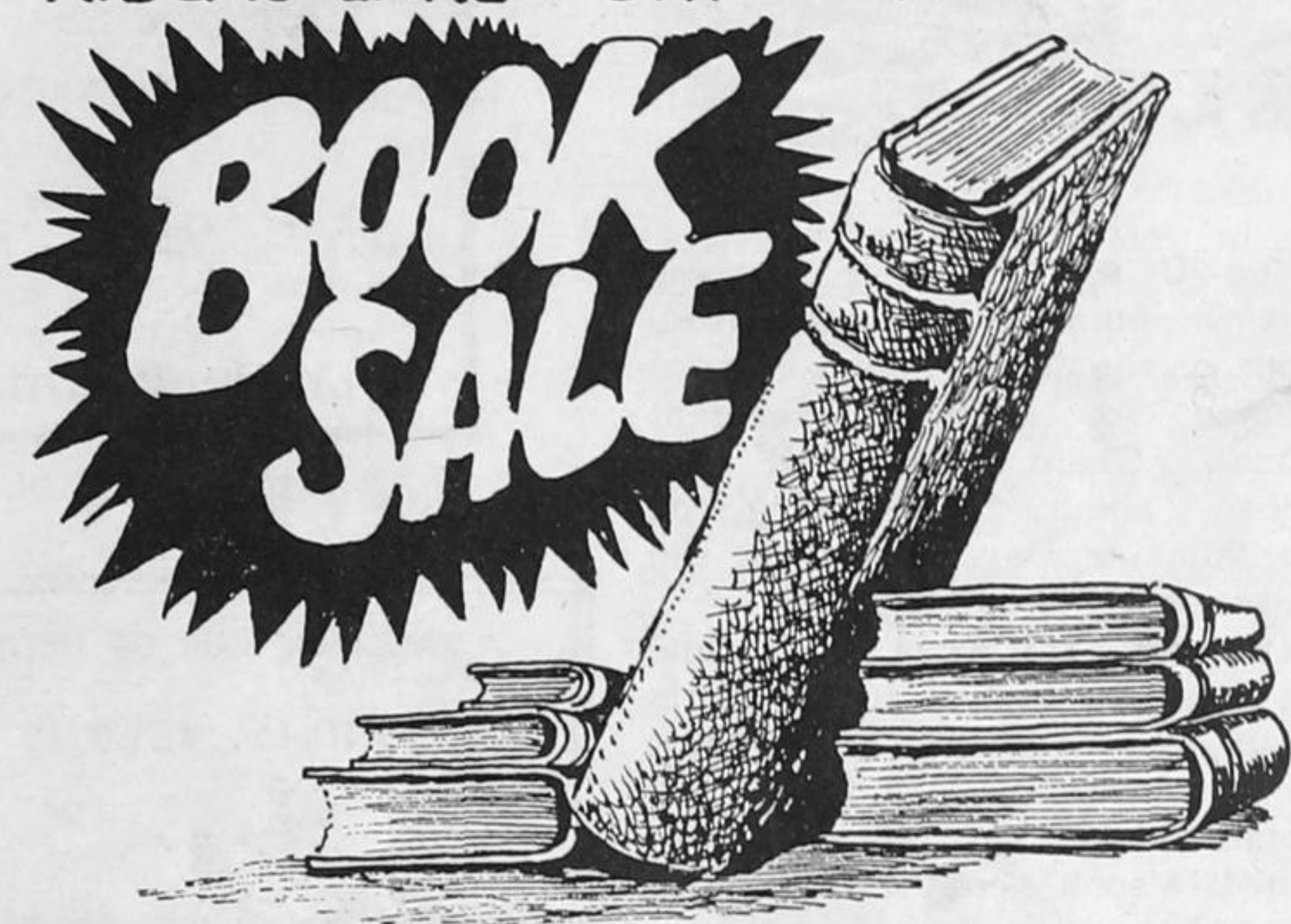
These and many more tapes can be found at our various libraries. Ask for them.

Have a great summer. See you in September.

Jose Mann



RIDEAU LAKES UNION LIBRARY



ELGIN COMMUNITY HALL

NEXT DOOR TO LIBRARY

JULY 14 9am. - 2pm.

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