

Editorial Mary Rogal-Black

In memory of Betty Lou Vincent Lee



Betty Lou Vincent Lee

In a week defined by fatigue, never-ending snow and petty office politics, there was one bright spot. On Tuesday, I got to talk to Jackie Webster, local writer, UNB alumni and friend of Betty Lou Vincent Lee.

Betty Lou Vincent Lee was the second female Editor-in-chief of *The Brunswickan*, a determined and talented woman who went on to become an award-winning journalist and one of Canada's leading medical writers. She worked at *The Daily Gleaner* and *The Globe and Mail* before settling at the *Hamilton Spectator*, where she stayed until her retirement. Vincent Lee was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from McMaster University because, according to Dr. Bienenstock of McMaster, "She was one of those rare people who had tremendous ability to speak to people about very complicated thoughts and ideas and to communicate them to lay people."

Following her death in 1990 at the age of 58, Vincent Lee left a bequest to establish a scholarship for women students working at *The Brunswickan* who are planning a career in journalism. I was honoured to receive the Betty Lou Vincent award this year and, although the financial assistance is always welcome, talking to her friend Jackie this week and learning more about Betty Lou gave me inspiration I can't put a price on. My sincerest thanks to both of these wonderful ladies.

Mudwump

Joseph W.J. FitzPatrick₃

Fee fight!

It's hard to believe that anything beyond simple greed would motivate UNB to change its fee structure to a per course system. But this sort of greed is far from simple.

Actually, UNB should be congratulated for finally finding a way to use its abysmal student retention stats to its own advantage. And with nothing simpler than good old arithmetic.

The proposed course fee was calculated by dividing the number of courses taken, into the revenue generated by tuition fees. The result is \$294 per course. A simple, elegant solution.

But the elegance is only skin deep. By assigning an average fee to the panoply of courses available, UNB is disguising the fact that some courses cost much more to deliver than others. A directed reading course in Political Science, for example, costs much less, per student, than a virology lab. Yet UNB would like to charge the same fee for both.

As a result, the fee for the cheaper courses subsidizes the cost of the more expensive ones. That seems only fair, until one looks at the distribution of the cheap courses. Obviously, the least expensive courses are the lower-level courses, and since UNB has a first-year failure rate of nearly 30%, (50% if you live in Residence) there are many more students taking the overpriced first year courses, and substantially fewer taking more expensive upper level courses.

No longer will UNB be accused of Arts subsidizing Science, they will now be accused of pitting the average frosh against honours students. Is this really better?

Of course, all this may be a moot point. The real barrier to the implementation of a per course fee is the internal administration of the university, which hangs over this proposal more ominously than the specter of the "oops, no student on the committee" snafu.

It is inevitable that faculty and students will begin to demand more services and better facilities for the sharply increased tuition in certain faculties. However, because the University is run as a single entity, more or less, it would require a complete revision of the internal finances to allow this to occur. Every student pays an equal share for the library system, for example, even though some students may use it less.

The urge to move to per course fees comes from the perceived marketability of degrees. As UNBSU Computer Science Representative Rodney Chiasson pointed out, there is a generally held belief that a more marketable degree should cost more. This relationship, however, should not become causal. While it is easy to classify degrees such as Medicine and Law as "professional" degrees, the distinction becomes murky when talking about Arts versus Kinesiology. It would be difficult in the extreme to quantify the employability of the average Forestry graduate, for example, and to relate that, in a timely fashion, to the cost of the degree. The only fair way to limit enrollment is through academics.

I know that programs in certain faculties cost more to deliver than programs in others. But a common tuition performs two basic functions: it forces the University to justify all expenses before the entire University community, and it prevents the University from rapidly changing program delivery.

Both of these functions have a positive and negative effect. Justifying an electron microscope to a committee of Arts professors is as enjoyable as Arts profs asking for books and journals from Computer Science profs. But the heart of a good democracy is the adversarial system. The proposals that are accepted will be better.

True, limiting the University's flexibility slows the introduction of new, expensive and "sexy" programs like multi-media studies. But it also prevents UNB from setting up a faculty devoted to a new technology which may no longer be hiring by the time UNB's first graduates roll off the assembly line.

We must never forget that resilience comes from diversity. For every time that a faculty or department was at its pinnacle, there was a time when the other departments had to support it. UNB won't stay around for another century through a series of rapid changes. Slow and steady may not win the race, but at least we won't become roadkill on the information superhighway.



A farmer from Tekoa

Tekoa was an ancient city situated between Jerusalem and Hebron. On the surrounding hills shepherds cared for their sheep and farmers cultivated their crops. The Hebrew prophet Amos, a tender of mulberry figs, came from this region in the 8th Century BC.

When Amos spoke his "words of the Lord," the entire region of Israel was exceedingly prosperous. Jeroboam II (782-753 BCE), king of Israel, was an empire builder. Extended territory brought immense commercial wealth; to a decadent aristocracy swash in luxury.

As ancient as the story of Amos is, there is a surprising contemporary sense about it. Social, economic and cultural developments of his day have a striking parallel to our own. His subsequent judgement upon them are instructive in evaluating our own situation. It is not that we do not see what is around us today; the concern is how we evaluate what we see. By what standard do we evaluate and judge?

Amos was not well liked by the ruling elite of his day. Prophetic minds speaking truthfully tend to be offputting to those with much to lose. Politicians and economists

today also dislike dissenting voices, which is why they so readily dismiss, for example, the annual Catholic Bishops' Statement on the Economy.

Amos spoke with the words "Thus says the Lord." It gave his message a particular authority. Yet, many dismissed it as ludicrous and rather silly. So either Amos was a fanatic, overindulging perhaps in fermented mulberry figs, or he spoke a language demanding serious response.

Amos' words hit hard against the actions of the king, temple hierarchy and aristocracy. In the midst of considerable material prosperity, he exposed rampant social inequality, economic imbalance, cultural decadence, and religious corruption. How much of this mirrors our day?

What was it that so angered the Lord in the days of Amos. God was angry at the excessive brutality in war. We are reminded today of the Somalia inquiry, of the Gulf War, Zaire and Rwanda. Moral values are perverted, and military ones exalted. Strength of character is abandoned in favour of military weaponry.

God was angry at wholesale slave-trading operations. We are reminded today of sweat shops, impoverished workers, and high unemployment. Today, as down-sizing increases, so do the salaries of top corporate executives. Individuals become pawns to commercial interests, people become commodities, and everything is subordinated to the profit motive.

God was angry at human rights violations. We are reminded today of gross social inequality, abuse of women and children, killing of the unborn and the lowering of moral standards. As the number and clientele of foodbanks, emergency shelters and community kitchens increase, so do those of luxury resorts, expensive cars, monster homes and designer clothes. Further, individual control and discipline gives way to social degradation. Community standards give way to unrestricted individual freedoms.

God was angry at legal injustices and bribery. We are reminded today that the wealthy are easily acquitted, while jails bulge with the underclass. Justice becomes a matter of high-priced lawyers, and those who understand the law are advantaged by it.

God was angry that social and moral decadence had become the new religion. We are reminded today of society's new "high priests": sports heroes, Hollywood filmmakers and Bay Street CEO's. Modern temples are the sports arenas, cinemas and banking towers. Sacred literature is sports pages, celluloid magazines and glossy investment reports. Covetousness, greed and unrestricted freedom is the new religion.

Prophets are disliked because they put matters starkly. They refrain from nuance. They delivered stern warnings when the economy was booming, and people were feeling good about themselves. But, the political, economic and cultural leaders were not interested in railings against greed and decadence, or speeches revealing wealth and power attained through injustice and corruption. Least of all did they take stock in predictions that their glass bubble was about to break.

But alas, the prophetic predictions did come true. Empires collapsed, and individual wealth built on greed imploded. But what of the powerless victims, those of the past, the present and the future. Where lies their hope?

The message of Amos was not all 'doom and gloom.' The mighty fall because of the will of God, states Amos. The will of God is also that honesty, justice and real prosperity, not greed, injustice and corruption, endures forever. Therein lies our hope!

How the "farmer from Tekoa" analyzed events in his day, and how we analyze them in ours, makes all the difference in the world. More important than what we see around us is how we analyze and evaluate what we see.

BLOOD & THUNDER

Letters to the Editor

Ready to protest tuition changes

To the Editor:

After reading the articles in the *Brunswickan* about the impending increase in tuition, I felt compelled to write and express my disappointment in the university and their lack of concern for students. In my five years here at UNB, I have not once been upset enough to criticize the university, but they've crossed the line this time. As a Forest Engineer, I feel somewhat lucky compared to some science students, but all students are getting a raw deal with this 'pay for extra courses' scheme. I need around six or seven courses per term next year to graduate, so I'll need to shell out a pile of extra money plus the inflated tuition to do so.

The university has made a pathetic attempt to cover their tracks by setting up this joke of a Task Force—composed entirely of faculty members, university employees and a long list of various cats who stand to lose what from all of this? "NOTHING AT ALL!" Of course, all students' concerns will be addressed through written submissions which will be conveniently filed in the garbage can. The entire process reminds me a lot of the NB government getting rid of school

boards, and giving parents this false sense of being able to enforce change. C'mon guys, at least tell us you're giving us the shaft, don't mock us by saying we can have input that will enforce change.

It sounds like the Student Union is on the right track, but perhaps the time is past for these bloody written submissions and trying to play their games. I've never been one for protesting, but it's time students stopped accepting the steady stream of bullshit sent our way by the university Board of Governors and others with over-inflated salaries. They claim to have no money, but what about the fact that they pay

security guards day after day to write reams and reams of tickets to people who could care less, while ignoring the fact that there might be a parking problem at UNB? What about that incredibly efficient heating system that forces resident students to keep their windows open year round to keep from being roasted, and melts the sidewalks year round above the heat tunnels. No money being wasted there. I could go on, but hopefully my point has been made.

Fed up FE,
Geoff Peters

Thanks to Amnesty Intl. supporters

To the Editor:

We would like to thank the following bands for generously volunteering their talents in last Friday's Amnesty International Benefit Concert at The Cellar pub.

Thanks to: *Alderknott* (John Whalen, Mike Brophy, Pete Loviza, Mike Love); *3 Foot 7* (Joe Viennau, Gary Hashie, Jim Sproull, John Sproull);

Smiley (Jeff Wheaton, Shawn Poirier, Alex Madsen); and the *Brent Mason Band* (Brent Mason, Mike Dougherty, John Brown, Lloyd Hanson).

Special thanks to Darryl Kent, the manager of The Cellar, for his contribution and support. The event was a great success and we appreciate the turnout.

Amnesty International, UNB.

Dear Me! How do you deal with people who assume that a scooter lowers your IQ?

"Are you sure you're in the right bank?" was the first thing the teller said to me. It was the first question she asked before my name or account number.

I was neatly, though casually, dressed. My hair was combed, my face washed. I had made no untoward sounds, nor any menacing glances. Why would she think perhaps I had wandered, mentally and physically, and ended up in a bank I had no business in?

The only obvious difference between me and the other clients in the bank was that I was using a scooter to get from place to place, while they were using legs.

I was once in a shoe store with a friend. Although I was the one who asked to see a certain size, the clerk addressed all her questions to my friend, without so much as a glance in my direction-as in, "Would she like to try this on in black?" I was sitting on my scooter; my friend was standing. Our ability to communicate was the same. I can buy shoes with the best of them!

I have just started using a scooter in public, and was not prepared for the consequences that suddenly strangers would assume I am less competent. I don't know how to demonstrate quickly my normal intelligence. How do I convince a stranger I'm mentally alert (even though my legs are weak)?

The more I want to show people I'm an intelligent adult, the more idiotic I sound, even to myself. On my feet I'm treated like everyone else, with no assumptions made about my IQ that I notice. But sitting on my scooter, I am suddenly treated like a child-innocent, naive and unable to cope without the assistance of strangers. Suddenly I'm "dear" to just about everyone, and suspected of being hard of hearing and/or mentally slow. Why, I wonder? Neither my brains nor my ears are in my legs. I use a scooter because walking is difficult.

Who is the person I am mistaken for? People of lower intelligence don't necessarily use wheelchairs. Neither do many people who are deaf, as far as I know. Where did people get the

idea that those in wheelchairs and scooters are aurally and/or intellectually "challenged?" When was it ever like this?

And what do they say to Stephen Hawking, the world renowned physicist and author of bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, who has Lou Gehrig's disease? He can't walk or speak, but he can communicate better and think better than most, if not all, of us...Do they call him "dear?"

It seems I'm constantly either being underrated, or far exceeding people's expectations. Everyone likes to be praised- I'm no exception. But it's annoying when people's praise has no basis, like when my Auntie Margaret made such a big fuss out of everything I did: "You drew that all by yourself! Oh, my, that's wonderful! Can I keep it?" Unwarranted praise doesn't feel like patronizing crap, even to a seven year old.

Recently, I have been praised for doing my own shopping, acclaimed for driving my own car, positively lauded for having a profession. People are honestly surprised that the person in the scooter is independent, educated and quite competent (at least they are no longer surprised to find such characteristics in a woman!).

A friend who's paraplegic is mystified as to why people assume her arms are useless, that she cannot get things within her reach. The sensitive, sensible ones will ask if they can help: the well-meaning, misguided souls just grab things for her. This misplaced helpfulness is not uncommon.

Whenever we make assumptions about somebody's ability or lack thereof, without knowing or checking, we are demeaning the person. Children are quick to let us know when they are offended by complaining, "Mommom, I can do it!" No one likes people to assume they don't know, can't do or wouldn't understand something.

At the same time, most will appreciate assistance if given the chance to indicate whether or not it's needed or desired. My accountant often has to explain tax law to me, but I like when he asks first if I already understand it.

Attitudes are catching up with the reality of

people with disabilities. I cheered when I first saw an actor who was paraplegic on a TV drama being portrayed as a real heel. A wheelchair does not lower your IQ. Neither does it turn you into a saint. We know it really doesn't change who you are, or at least no more than any of life's challenges. Many people without disabilities still have that little discovery ahead of them.

It's not that long ago that people with disabilities stayed indoors and were not allowed to develop their full potential or to integrate with the able-bodied society. But that's all changed now. We demand to be treated equally, to have our disability ignored when it is not relevant, and to be the only one to determine our need for a stranger's assistance, just like anyone else. People with disabilities are no more homogeneous than any other group, so there's no universal response that will please us all. The best approach with the least likelihood of offense seems to be the simple question, "Would you like a hand?"

Even when people without disabilities know they could do it so much easier and faster, it's best for them to remember that self-respect is more important than speed. (In a burning building, however, I won't mind if one takes the time to ask permission- I hope they just pick me up and run.)

For now, I'm fairly new at this, so when someone says something offensive, I am still shocked to respond in any helpful way. I'm just as likely to stare dumbfounded at the speaker and confirm their worst suspicions ("Poor dear!").

But I have planned a strategy. First, I have the ability to stand up, and thus, regain my full intelligence. Having done that, I can ask any number of questions: "Have you heard the latest legislation on...?" "What do you think of the recent brouhaha over the repressed memory syndrome?" "Have you accessed anything interesting lately on the Internet?"

Maybe I'll find a way to attach a copy of my MA diploma to the back of the scooter. Or a picture of me in cap and gown with the caption, "Have you seen this woman?"

By Linda Ironside. Reprinted with permission from Abilities Magazine.



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Viewpoint Banner
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This issue is dedicated to:
Harrison Ford. He's young again!!!

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The opinions contained in this newspaper are those of the individual writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Brunswickan*.

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All copy submitted must be double spaced, on one side of the page only and must be legible. If we can't read it, we won't print it. You think that sounds obvious, but if you could see the horrors we've seen... *The Brunswickan* accepts copy on 3.5 inch disk, either Macintosh or MS-DOS format. Articles printed in *The Brunswickan* may be freely reprinted provided proper credit is given.

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