

Why 'Harriet Irving'?

By PETER F. KUITENBROUWER
Brunswickan Staff

Where did the Harriet Irving Library get its name? The late wife of New Brunswick industrialist K.C. Irving was not publicly recognized as an influential student of literature. Thus, there must have been financial reasons for the decision.

The school, under President Colin B. Mackay, decided in the early '60s they needed a fund-raising drive to afford new buildings on the growing campus. On April 3, 1965, they appointed Irving as head of a 10 million dollar capital gifts campaign. The campaign staff solicited contributions from alumni, businesses, and governments all over Canada and the world.

The campaign progressed, and at Encaenia, May 20, 1965, Irving turned the sod for the new UNB library. Though the alumni news of that spring contains a colorful description of the coming facility, the building was still un-named.

In the spring of 1966, with their new library partly built, the school was running into financial problems. In an interview published in the spring 1966 Alumni News, President Mackay said the campaign was behind its target amount for that date.

"We have to reach our goal," he said. "If we can't we will be seriously short of funds to complete our buildings."

"1966 finds UNB way behind. The new library is an example of a building we needed years ago," Mackay said. "Construction is just getting well under way and it won't be ready for at least another year, during which time our present library facilities are hopelessly inadequate for our present numbers."

At Encaenia of the same year, the school announced the facility's new name: the Harriet Irving Library. Mrs. Irving was dully there to lay the first stone, a formality having nothing to do with the commencement of construction.

Explaining the name, at that ceremony, Mackay said Irving had been "a source of great encouragement to all of us" in planning the new buildings.

"But, if you are working on any project with Mr. Irving and you are fortunate enough to carry on your discussions at his home, then almost certainly you will have an opportunity to talk about your plans with Mrs. Irving," Mackay said. "When Mr. Irving was called to the telephone...then I would turn to Mrs. Irving to talk about the university, its past problems and high hopes for the future. I began to realize that Mrs. Irving had an equally keen interest (as her husband) in the developments taking place here."

Enough to justify the name? Not so, says UNB Political Science professor Sava D. Bosnitch.

Bosnitch said in an interview the school named the library for Irving, hoping to get a sizeable contribution from the businessman. "But Mr. Irving came, and said a polite, 'Thank You,' and left," he said.

The professor said he had been unable to confirm with the administration whether this was true. "I asked them 'If Irving didn't contribute to the library, then why name it for his first wife? Why not call it the Morning Glory Library or anything?' But they did not respond."

Unearthing the Library's financing is almost impossible, since most of the money came from the capital gifts campaign, handled by a private

fund-raising firm from Halifax which is now non-existent.

The other likely place for the financial evidence is the Board of Governors' minutes for the period. However, these documents are kept confidential for 30 years following the meeting they record.

Asked if the university named the library in order to get a donation they didn't receive, University Secretary James Woodfield said "I'm a little apprehensive at bringing up this issue at this particular time."

The conversation that followed is perhaps a little more enlightening: Woodfield: "Let's say you were a prominent industrialist and you had a building named after you wife, and you hadn't given any money to the construction, how would you feel a few years later?" Brunswickan: "If you had any conscience, you would feel guilty." Woodfield: "Then what would be your course of action?" Brunswickan: "You could go to the university and suggest they re-name the library after someone who had actually contributed to the academic progress of the province." Woodfield: "Exactly. But you would have another option, wouldn't you? You see what I'm getting at?"

James O'Sullivan, UNB's vice-president for finance, and Dr. Gertrude Gunn, head librarian, would not comment on the building's funding. Former President Mackay was travelling to New York and Kenya, so could not be reached for comment.

Perhaps the school will have to wait until the early 1990s, when Board of Governors minutes for the period are declassified, to find out whether there really is a good reason for the Harriet Irving Library's name.

WUSC cornucopia

How many times have you dropped a penny on the ground and left it there? No, it just worth the time or effort spent bending over to pick it up. Soon, its worth will become very clear to you because your refugee from Ethiopia will be arriving in several weeks to study at STU. Unfortunately, he has been delayed thus far due to medical problems.

Raising money to support the refugee in his first year of school is one of the undertakings of the WUSC local committee. We would appreciate it if you would take the time to save those "little-thought-of" but valuable pennies for our upcoming penny drive Wednesday, January 28.

All interested students are reminded of the annual study day put on by Development and Peace, Saturday, Jan 24th at the Villa Madonna Retreat House, Saint John. This year, in keeping with its theme, "Militarization and the Third World", the guest speaker will be Ernie Regehr - director for Project Ploughshares, an inter-group which monitors the arms race.

If you're not attending the Annual Alumni Student Leadership Conference scheduled for Sunday, Jan 25 in the Faculty Club, then come out to Mactaquac for some skating, tobogganing or skiing. We will be leaving from Mrs. Kissick's office in the STUD at 2 p.m., Jan 25th. Bring your car if you own one. All are welcome.

For further information on the above events contact Herb Mahood (455-9017) or Ron Bulmer (457-2361).

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