

LETTERS

Voice of The Semiahmoo Peninsula

FAX: 531-7977
Internet Email: pa_news@uniserve.com

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 75149, Surrey, British Columbia V4A 9M4

TO THE EDITOR

Where has your art and soul gone?

As long time readers of the Peace Arch News, we are concerned about changes in your coverage of community activity. We wonder if you are truly living up to your mission statement..."to serve as the voice of the Semiahmoo Peninsula."

The change is most apparent in your treatment of the arts, where your mid-week coverage of home-spun activity seems to have been passed over in favor of the mass blah of entertainment in the city at large.

If anyone plans to go downtown for entertainment, their source of information is the Sun or Province or the Internet. We need to be able to turn to the Peace Arch News to find out about events happening right here in White Rock and South Surrey, yet these days, trying to ferret out local events from the morass of your new city-wide entertainment pages is virtually impossible.

Consider two significant events that you overlooked entirely last month. On Feb. 20 there was a recital by a musical giant, which would have received feature attention had it taken place in the downtown core of Vancouver. Anton Kuerti performed for a packed house of 800 people at the Baptist Church. There was no mention of this in the calendar. There was no advance write-up. There was no review, despite the fact that you have on your staff - just about the last in captivity in Western Canada - one of the finest arts reporters and critics in the person of Alex Browne.

From Feb. 16 - 26 the Surrey Music Festival played host to nearly 750 area music students, under the scrutiny of six visiting adjudicators, and culminating in a series of gala recitals. No calendar mention. No advance write-up, no coverage of any one of the six gala concerts, let alone of the festival adjudications which continued on a daily basis for nearly three weeks.

We are surprised that you chose to ignore such major

musical events. From your own viewpoint of enlightened self-interest, any event that involves 800 people (nearly five per cent of the official population, after all!) is surely worth reporting.

The presenting organizations weren't looking for publicity. The Kuerti concert was sold-out and there were no tickets at the door. The festival served primarily as a teaching function while the Galas played to a large number of admiring parents and grand-parents. So in neither of these instances was this an issue of support for a commercial box office.

The two possible explanations for your oversight are equally disturbing. Either you packed editorial perception and awareness of these important artistic events, or you have a new policy in place, based on the mistaken belief that events downtown are of more interest to your readership than those which take place right here in White Rock and South Surrey.

It will be sad, indeed, if this is a true reflection of changing priorities at the Peace Arch News. Over the years you have maintained a significant identity as our "local" newspaper. You remained a proud hold-out among suburban newspapers. We surely don't need you to duplicate news and entertainment coverage which is readily available in the major metropolitan press. In your battle for the advertising dollars are you trying to appear as brash and cheap as "The Now"?

Before you succumb entirely to the homogenization of the bi-weekly suburban press, think carefully that you may eventually be eliminating those unique features and differences which kept us loyal to the PA News in the first place.

*George Zukerman,
South Surrey*