

7-10-2024

Good afternoon. My name is David Ribick. I am the nephew of Eli Ribick whom you know as Lee Ribick. I live in Milford MI with my wife and have two daughters. I trust that all of you know Lee, are a friend of, a neighbor of and likely were taught by Lee in school growing up or on the basketball court. My intent here is not to tell you about a man you might already know or talk my way out of paying \$5000 for something that I hope you see as a privilege to represent as a community leader.

This is private and I don't wish it to be shared but I wanted you to know a little more about the man you may think you know and how he got to Alaska from Michigan and from Detroit to Petersburg. I'll try and keep this brief and hope my sometimes fuzzy 66 year old memory serves, that I will get the details 'mostly' right given my dad told me this many years ago as a young boy.

My uncle is from Hamtramck Michigan. He grew up there, went to school there and got his bachelors and master's degrees from Wayne State University - paid in large part by the government for military service. He also met and married my aunt Gail there as well. In 1967, he was serving in the national guard. 1967 was a terrible time in Detroit. Riots tore the city apart - geographically, figuratively and racially. My gentle uncle was witness to much of the horror that that time in Detroit served up nightly.

At an inflection point in his young life, he tried to chart a course for himself. He loved to read and most importantly write - poetry mostly and did so all his life. He loved teaching young people. He loved talking about reading and writing and encouraged me endlessly to write. He would tell me to read 'everything you can - even the back of a cereal box... that's how you get better' and when you write, 'remember the secret of good writing is to edit ruthlessly'. Upon graduating, he took the first 'out of town' teaching job he found on the board - Toksook Bay Alaska. From icy Toksook to Bethel to Nunivak and ultimately to Petersburg - he followed his passion to teach young people and to write about his adopted state of Alaska - from it's flora and fauna, outdoor life, salmon fishing, humpback whales and also to it's many challenges as well. Always upbeat, always smiling, always positive, always looking forward he was simply the best ambassador for Alaska and for Petersburg and the people he had come to love. Moving to Petersburg was the best decision he ever made. I, of course, was devastated when he left - it might have been Mars. But as I got older I was able to make several trips to Petersburg, first with my mom, dad, brother and sister and then as a guide for Green Rocks Lodge (across the way from Papke's) which my uncle owned for years and then was lucky enough to bring my wife and kids there. We still talk about these trips - Scandia house, crab pizza, wading tidepools with my girls - we've even been to the Petersburg Library! It looks fabulous today - truly - not sucking up here.

I learned to love Alaska through the eyes and writing of my uncle in the many years that followed. His work for the Petersburg Marine Mammal Society (I am also a benefactor) with Barry Bracken (sp?) is a great example of how he plowed passion into progress for the community. When I first heard about the requirement to donate 5K to the library - I must admit it felt unseemly. It felt like a 'fee' to be paid for **advertising** like "sponsored by Fred's cannery". That missed the whole point I was hoping to convey. Yes, I know my uncle's poetry is not Byron or Tennyson - he never used 7 words when 5 would do, he never used flowery language for the sake of vocabulary - his is more visceral than that and in that way perhaps more relatable especially to young people than a Tennyson. (Please forgive any equivocation between Lee Ribick's collected works and that of Lords' Tennyson/Byron!).

My request is, rather, as a 'tribute' or a dedication to a man that embodied goodness, teaching, writing (about his Petersburg community and family mostly). While I will find a way to pay the additional money if the board requires me to do so - it misses the entire point. I just want to somehow 'honor' the life of an honorable man - who has given so much to his community through his life's work. That is why I commissioned a local artist to create the sign hoping it can find it's way to a wall in the library next to his small poetry books that my uncle can see before he is gone. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, David Ribick