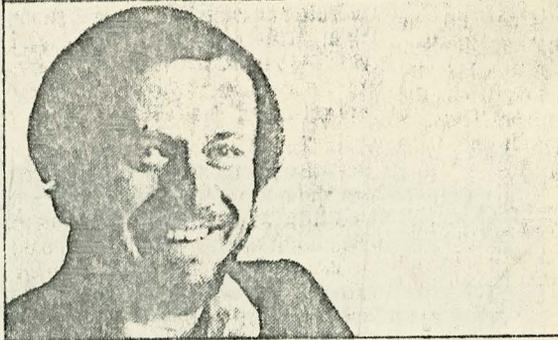


Dwight Chapin

P. H. —



A deep loss closer to home

THE DUKE IS DEAD and I guess his passing rates all that attention and all those words and tears. In many ways, John Wayne was an admirable man.

But there was a woman who lost a battle with cancer in the last few weeks, too, a woman who might be even more admirable than our Ultimate Movie Cowboy. She wasn't as visible as he was, but the foes she fought were much more enduring than any found on celluloid. Ann Bzik, however, never had any press agents to get her into Photoplay or People.

The picture that appears with this column came off her passport.

So she won't be remembered around the world, and her bravery in the face of death won't be held up — except by a handful of close friends — as a symbol of what's good and right. But she will be remembered on Potrero Hill, where she did so many things for so many people, a good share of whom might not have realized they were being helped. And, as our current energy sources dry up and we have to turn to solar power, the thoughts, plans and dreams of Ann Bzik will live even though she no longer does.

Ann Bzik died, at 63, on May 8. About four months ago, she sat on the front porch of the home she and Edith Winter shared on Arkansas Street and taped a remarkable interview. Edith Winter played me a portion of that interview yesterday.



Ann Bzik

ANN BZIK, IN a still-strong voice, said. "The two prime motivations of my life have been to know everything about everything — and to live forever.

"I've sort of given up on both. I've found knowledge is inexhaustible, and although I'm still looking for the ultimate reality, I'm not in a hurry, because if I found it, what would I do next?"

"As for living forever, I suppose I have a fear of dying because of the unfinished business, the unfinished knowledge I need to know. I think I may have wasted most of my life trying to find out what the meaning of life is. But I have accepted the fact I may be born again. I want to perfect myself to the utmost of my ability now, and if I can develop an inner strength, too, some of that may carry over into my next life."

When the tape stopped playing Edith Winter, slowly, painfully coping with Ann Bzik's death, said. "I think she really was trying to create a paradise on earth. She was always doing things for other people. She'd tutor kids in reading and mathematics, help find new jobs, try to sell and educate city officials on the need for conservation and appropriate technology.

"Not long before she died, she said she wished she had been able to accept the help of others. She didn't take adequate care of herself. She should have had more chemotherapy, but didn't want it because of the toxic substances involved. She thought her mind was strong enough to conquer the cancer. Apparently it wasn't, but this was the first time she lost. She could do anything."

Ann Bzik was born the oldest of eight children into a Ukrainian miner's family in Pennsylvania. Her father died of black-lung disease. Her social conscience was shaped by poverty long before that.

She was a weaver and an artist in her early years, but later, and for the rest of her life, she was involved in what she called "men's work." Architecture, engineering, things like that. She'd check out eight or 10 books at a time, books on different subjects, and absorb every bit of information in every one of them. "Her life," Edith Winter said, "was one adventure after another."

THREE YEARS AGO, she began doing volunteer work for the Potrero Hill Community Development Corp., and last year was hired as an economic analyst by that group.

P. H. - Art + Artists

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POTRERO BRANCH
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

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"She had incredible energy and an incredible mind," executive director Jim Queen said. "She was way out in front of anyone I know on solar energy and other new technologies. She was even responsible for us getting office space at I.M. Scott School, which had been shut down for years because of fire damage. We have it on a 12-year lease for \$1 a year and moved in last week. I only wish Ann could have been here to see it."

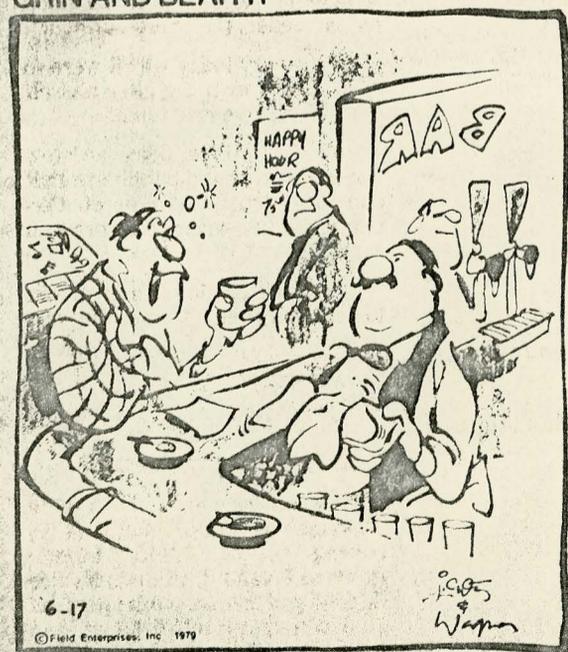
A library at I.M. Scott will be named in Ann Bzik's memory, and Queen and others are trying to start an appropriate technology scholarship in her name. Today, at 3 p.m., friends will hold a memorial service for her at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, 953 De Haro St.

"To me," Jim Queen says, "Ann represented the true liberated woman. She gave so much to this community and didn't ask much of anything back. She never gave up her principles, either, never sold out.

"She just kept on fighting the bureaucracy, windmills, whatever was there, right to the end. Even when she was so sick, it was nothing for her to work 15 or 20 hours a day. She would cry sometimes, worry, but she never lost her spirit."

Jim Queen paused. The next words were choked and he looked away. "I don't think anyone really knows yet what a total loss her death was for us," he said. "She was a beautiful lady, man. She was a beautiful lady ..."

GRIN AND BEAR IT



'I'm on the wagon today, Muldoon, so I'll need a couple more for the road.'