

Comment

A Modern David

By RITA K. FARRELLY

Imagine someone as formidable as Goliath, with the heart, focus and surefire aim of David. A force to be reckoned with! Had Sister Mary David Barry, S.C., been on "Survivor," the hit TV program, she'd have won easily.

"David," as she was fondly known, died on New Year's Day.

As president of the College of Mount St. Vincent from 1963 to 1973, she enabled a small Catholic women's school not just to survive, but to grow.

In a decade of tumultuous social change, Mount St. Vincent saw the creation of new buildings and programs, more participative ways of governing, and even males (one) in class. The "old girls" soon got used to them.

For thousands of Mounties, though, her greatest legacy was as a gifted teacher—of English literature, of speech, of life. You learned to think for yourself, not regurgitate a professor's lectures. And small stuff like sneeling (resting your backside on the pew bench in chapel) did count. It was the mark of indifference.

As a forensics coach, David was Henry Higgins to thousands of Eliza Doolittles. Appearance was as important as content and delivery. In corporate life, I gave myself a "David" inspection before board presentations. A hanging slip, unbuttoned blazer, or messy hairdo? No way! And lint? "Out, out, damned spot...!"

In the end, health and memory failed her. No matter. We "Elizas" will do the remembering—of a scholarly Renaissance woman who changed with the times, who always gave life her best shot, and taught us to do it, too.

To this day, one Eliza never sneels.
