

Memories of the Old Library: 56 Victoria Street comes down



By Brock Weir

Starting Thursday, Demolition crews made fast work of the former home of the Aurora Public Library at 56 Victoria Street. As the bricks fell and the metal beams were picked and sorted from the rubble, Aurora's first purpose-built library, the Town's centennial gift to itself, faded into history. Fading along with it were three generations' worth of memories dear to so many local families. .

Here, a long-time employee of the Aurora Public Library shares her favourite memories ? and some less than favourite recollections ? of the former landmark.

RECCIA MANDELCORN:

BATTLE OF THE BANDS: Over 100 teens from neighbouring high schools rocked it out on selected Friday nights. Supervision was provided by the one YA staff (me); stage (risers) provided by Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary, kindly transported by Jim Tree.

PROVINCIAL

ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING: The subject was education. Candidates were Sinclair Stevens, Greg Sobara and Keith Munro. The MA Hall (lower level) was packed with spill-out into the parking lot. Teachers brought their full classes in the evening and the level of the questions rivalled any I've heard since.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CLUB: After the York Region District School Board would not allow a Dungeons & Dragons Club in their high schools, two Grade 13 students approached APL and asked if we could run one out of the Library. We agreed on the condition that the senior students teach and supervise the younger students to keep the club going after they graduated. Several years later, we saw about 100 teens (Grades 9-13) pass through the club. Interestingly, only one young woman ever joined.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SEX: The Public Health Department was limited in display and subject content when they presented in local high schools, so we hosted a display and a panel discussion that included Cathy White, Public Health Department, Healthy Sexuality and Dr. Peter Hirsch OB/GYN, for teens and parents. Fabulous conversation together!

ANNUAL TEEN ART SHOW: For 12 years, we held an annual exhibit of art created by teens at APL's programs. This included watercolour, sketching, sculpture, printmaking, puppetry and mask making. The last year we also featured art from some of our past students who went on to professional careers in the Arts, including the textile artist, Heather Goodchild.

GORDON KORMAN'S VISIT: Gordon Korman was a hugely popular author and I really wanted to get him to visit APL. But I had no money and he had already moved to New York. I knew he was originally from Thornhill, so I called every Korman asking for Gordon's mom. When I finally reached Bernice, I told her how much kids in Aurora loved her son and asked if when he was next

coming to visit her, if he could do an author visit at the Library. As he was coming home for American Thanksgiving, we arranged for him and his mom to come to Aurora. (I have a scrap book with letters and pictures Regency Acres students put together of their experience meeting him.)

SCARY MEMORIES ? THE POLICE LOCKDOWN: One Sunday afternoon when a past Board member reported someone with a gun pointed at the Library. (Never did find out what happened after we received the "all clear").

MEMORIES I'M HAPPY TO SEE PASS ? ACCESSIBILITY: The elevator was too small to accommodate anything but a rather small wheelchair, so when one of our teen customers used a larger wheelchair, we removed the legs and arms so she could access the adult materials for her school assignment and reassembled the chair after we got her down to the main level.

MEMORIES I'LL TREASURE: Our community, especially the children who still come back to visit, even after all these years!