

BROCK'S BANTER: Fragments

Piecing the Fragments Together

By Brock Weir

?3.1.? Never would have guessed. ?3.2.? Wow, we're getting closer. ?3.5.? Now we're talking! ?3.8.? Bam! We're closing in on four!
?3.6.? Damn?

This is what was going through my mind on Friday morning, teeth chattering, on my way to cover an event.

The countdown came not from a clock, but an electronic sign installed outside the Target-Sobey's plaza heralding the current weather conditions every four seconds or so.

A great idea to be sure, but as the snow was flying ? AT THE END OF MAY! ? I got the distinct impression this sign was mocking me and me alone as my teeth chattered away.

Not wanting to give it the satisfaction of a sigh or a dirty look as it contemptuously began to count backwards, I turned to the news.

Flipping through a few articles on my phone, one that caught my eye was from a Toronto doctor (by way of NBC news) reporting on the fragile memories of toddlers as they develop.

The Doctor, Paul Frankland, a research scientist at Sick Kids, called the phenomenon of not truly being able to retain memories until hitting the age of four, or so, ?infantile amnesia.? This can, he said, be attributed to the rapid growth of cells in the brain and until they are fully mature, they are unstable and can be rapidly reset, almost like a computer that doesn't quite save ?all the way.?

Dr. Frankland was quoted as saying, ?They can't form stable memories of what happens in the first few years. I have a daughter who is 4 years old and because we were working on this study, I would always ask her questions. [and] it's clear that she can form memories with quite some detail. But four years from now she won't remember anything.?

It was unusual that this article appeared on Friday as a number of us were discussing our earliest memories just a few days before in the context of the importance of getting down and recording memories for posterity, not just in Aurora's Sesquicentennial Year through ?Virtual Memory Books?, but also in the light of this digital age.

Now you're less likely to leave a paper trail to guide you back down memory lane like Hansel and Gretel's breadcrumbs.

We discovered in the process that our memories aren't just limited to what happened after hitting the grand old age of four, but some memory fragments from the earlier days remained. I am one of those people who have fragments; clear, but fragmented memories of things I'm fairly certain happened before the age of four?but, oddly enough, most seem confined to events that happened in the evening. In the winter. Paging Dr. Frankland.

LIBRARY SQUARE

I relived one of these fragments on Thursday evening during the public consultation session at the old Aurora Public Library building to determine its fate, as you have seen on this week's front page. I was late to the first session this winter, so I didn't have a chance to go on the tour.

After last week's meeting broke, I took the opportunity to go exploring on my own in a building I had not truly explored in about 17 years.

Coming down the stairs into the main lobby area, one of these fragments popped into my head: A vague recollection of something terrible happening to me on the stairs, either tripping down them or my foot going through their open backs on the way down. I have yet to locate the rest of that memory fragment, but it did not in any way influence my view that the building should come down, making way for something new.

That also seemed to be the general consensus of the 20-or-so people who were in attendance that evening. Most would like to see the Old Library and Seniors' Centre buildings demolished in favour of (a) a new multipurpose building, (b) a multi-use building with parking, or (c) parking, full stop.

These seem like logical conclusions. Those who want a building, want one in place of the Library with parking to go on the site of Blue Balloon in between the new building site and Victoria Hall.

The venerable Victoria Hall seems to be one of the sticking points in this process. A designated building, some view it as an integral part of Library Square, but in my view it is getting in the way of a longer-term vision.

This is not to suggest it is time to tear the building down. Quite the contrary. It would seem most logical to me that the old Library and Seniors' Centre should finally, mercifully, meet their maker, but parking (multi-level or otherwise) should be built dead-centre on the site surrounded by the Aurora Cultural Centre to the South, the current Library to the West, and the new multipurpose

building to the north, with access from Victoria Street.

This would give all three institutions an equal crack at alleviating their shared parking problems.

As for the new building, it should be built all the way to the corner of Mosley Street and, I believe looking at incorporating Victoria Hall's facades into the new building, or completely encompassing it within the lower two floors of a new, multi-storey, multi-purpose building is an opportunity worth exploring.

A potentially costly option, but an option nonetheless, to maximise the space.