

BROCK'S BANTER: On the hordes of a dilemma

By Brock Weir

In a world of Felixes and Oscars, I'm most decidedly an Oscar with a Felix rising.

I like a place to look lived in. If a workplace, for instance, doesn't have at least a handful of papers strewn about the desk I find myself focusing on how spotless the work area is rather than on the task at hand. That being said ? and I'll say it with apologies to Raptors fans everywhere ? I would much rather go to the theatre than watch most sports on television. It's a mix that makes life interesting and, if anyone complains, they can send a letter directly to Tony Randall and Jack Klugman, although the correspondent might have quite a wait for a reply.

Things inevitably, however, come to a head and there is just one paper, pen, or seemingly useless tchotchke that is the straw that broke the camel's back and becomes just one ?thing? too many.

When that happens, I'm bitten by a cleaning frenzy and everything must go and become spotless. Sometimes the results can be alarming. The ?keep? pile is often dwarfed by the garbage pile which is, in turn, dwarfed by the pile of mystery, populated by papers, widgets, and assorted junk which seems to be useless.

The problem then becomes what to do with them. Objects might appear to be useless at the moment, but it stands to reason they once had a purpose. Cables and power cords seem to multiply on their own accord, leaving little to no clue as to the appliance ? obsolete or otherwise ? they once belonged to but, as my luck goes, the moment I take a deep breath and consign whatever it is to the garbage can or blue box and carted away on Thursday afternoon by GFL, only then will I realise why I was hanging onto the item, or what the cord powered up and inevitably the time will come a few days later when I will need whatever it is to get through the day.

Perhaps that's why when I need a laugh to perk up a dreary afternoon, I log onto YouTube and take a gander at the hilarious video, courtesy of the Punchy Players, entitled ?Hollywood Hoarder: Judy to the Rescue.? I got a kick out of the new movie Hello, My Name Is Doris, featuring a tour-de-force performance from Sally Field as a lovelorn office drone dealing not only with an office crush but with the death of her mother, which has left her engulfed in ?stuff? from her life and no direction on what to do with it. She earns the wrath of her brother and sister-in-law, for instance, for keeping a pair of skis in the kitchen, countering that she still has time in her life to take up skiing and, besides, they had sentimental value because they were gifted to the family by long-departed neighbours. A reasonable argument, perhaps, as their use is easily identifiable. The problem, however, is there is only one ski left, the other long since lost to time and trash.

While I occasionally have the last laugh in my family come Christmas time as I usually have just the right size of cardboard box for that hard-to-wrap Christmas present, I have been thinking a lot about this phenomenon over the past week, courtesy of some remarks made around the Council table from Councillor Harold Kim.

?Did any of the structures seem to you like ?Holy Smokes! Why would I want to save this structure??" he asked of consultant Arthur Diamond. ?I find in my house there are a lot of things we keep for sentimental value.?

Councillor Kim was responding to a formal presentation from Mr. Diamond who was outlining his company's findings on ways to repurpose a number of community amenities including the buildings on Library Square, the Aurora Armoury, and Petch House.

The report highlighted a number of ways Aurora could breathe new life into the relatively underused spaces, including a ?clubhouse? for myriad service groups, such as the Optimists, Lions and Rotarians in the old Library building.

This is a value that was already made clear at the podium over the last year by the President of the Aurora Lions Club who said they would love to have club space in the old library after selling up the Lions hall and taking their meetings to the Royal Canadian Legion.

Their argument was the Lions Club worked tirelessly to help the Town pay off the debt from the building's construction in the first place and, in a nutshell, having some space would be a good return on investment.

Councillor Kim was right in his assessment, however, when he noted that buildings and amenities like these often provide a community with a sense of heritage and a ?sense of home? but can sometimes veer close to ?trying to force a structure to be something that it isn't? ? all in the name of sentimental value.

Over the numerous ? and I do mean numerous ? public consultation sessions that have been held to answer the now-age-old question of what to do with Library Square, arguments in favour of the buildings' retention often circle back to that sense of sentiment. While it must be said there are very few advocates in favour of keeping the old seniors' centre next door (with the possible exception of the building's current tenants), those speaking out in favour of keeping the old Library usually point to the fact the Library was Aurora's centennial gift to itself, events that have taken place in there, and memories they have of studying in there or learning a new skill

which proved very valuable later in life.

They are valid points, particularly for a heritage-conscious community like Aurora, but a balance must be struck.

At the last Library Square meeting, I took off my Auroran hat and posed a question as a resident wondering whether parts of the existing buildings, such as a façade, cornerstone, or plaqued wall could be incorporated into a new structure on the site if that is what is ultimately decided. That suggestion did not make it into the resulting report before Council, but perhaps that is a way to satisfy both parties: those valuing sentiment and those who are as mad as hell and aren't prepared to take it anymore.

That, however, is not likely to pass.

Despite some Councillors fully galvanized to make a decision and clear the deck, as it were, when it comes to Library Square, I fear sentiment will ultimately win the day. After all, this is a Council table that can get caught up in hours of debate over whether home owners in heritage districts should be able to build a new porch or whether an owner of a new home should be able to remove three dying trees from his back yard to prevent his house from flooding.

If all else fails, a hoarding intervention might be in order and ?Judy to the Rescue? and ?Hello, My Name Is Doris? provide plenty of tips on where to start.