

BROCK'S BANTER: Grounded Nutcrackers

By Brock Weir

I was often called 'nosy' when I was growing up. Usually, it was applied by the adult when a truth I was pressing for was a bit inconvenient or, admittedly, when it was a bit too personal. To those people, at least I can now say I am making a living out of being nosy.

Being nosy can still cause a certain degree of headaches.

I am writing the first portion of this week's column on a flight to the west coast. It is now 11.03 p.m. on December 28 (EST), and although there is no in-flight map on this particular plane, judging by the glint of unusually high civilization down below I'm estimating we are now somewhere above Colorado.

I've spent the first two hours of this flight ignoring the in-flight movie Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles nibbling away at a \$9 box of a few cheese slices, two 'gourmet crackers?', a handful of grapes, a single strawberry and an impenetrable packet supposedly containing a mix of almonds and walnuts. I know this because the still unbreakable bag reads 'Ingredients: Walnuts, Almonds.

Caution: May contain almonds and walnuts.'

So, as the fun of my own in-seat version of The Nutcracker wore off, I began to take a closer look at the people in my immediate vicinity 'and, truth be told, it is far more entertaining than that questionable choice of in-flight entertainment.

As I look around, I wonder where they are going and why. We're all in the same boat, as it were, so I know where they're landing, but where do they go from here? With the possible exception of the two guitar players sitting immediately to my right, I seem to be sitting smack-dab in a cluster of families excitedly looking forward to family reunions of their own somewhere along the Pacific Rim. There are families with parents, grandparents and young children, others whom I would hazard a guess are newlyweds, while others are a bit more inscrutable.

It is the newlyweds who have fascinated me the most. From what I have been able to gather 'as to ask outright would make me look like a weirdo ' they are en-route to Palm Springs. However, they have bought the middle seat in their aisle for some more elbow room. I guess if one wears an abnormally large real mink hat on board for the duration of a five hour flight that is anything but chilly, one has the resources to do those kinds of things.

And yet, they are sitting just two rows away from Business Class, that elusive place usually just tantalizingly out of sight obscured by a curtain. Only this time, however, the screen is a clear mesh. Everything is in plain sight. Tauntingly. I would suggest that American Airlines is simply trying to show us what the high life could be like if we were willing and able to pony up the extra dough to have a bit more leg room and more comfortable seats, but that would be 'well, that is exactly what I am suggesting.

Update: It is now 11.18, and apparently my guess was way off. The pilot has just announced we passed over Las Vegas with our final destination just about 40 minutes away. And yet, those of us in Economy Class are lined up at the clear curtain, waiting to use the bathroom in the Promised Land, but still having to wait to pass the curtain until summoned to do so.

So, with exorbitant amounts of money to use the in-board WiFi, I am taking this opportunity to write this week's Brock's Banter, using their own power to charge up my laptop, so the joke is on them.

BACK ON THE GROUND

In a move back to reality, there are exciting times ahead for Aurora as a community when everybody returns from wherever their holiday plans took them and get back down to business.

As The Auroran signed off for 2014, announcements were made on two key decisions which are bound to help shape local discourse in the year ahead.

The first of these, of course, is the deal between ClubLink and Geranium Homes for the future redevelopment of Highland Gate Golf Club. The deal between the landowner and the developer seemed to be the inevitability presented to ratepayers at the inaugural meeting of their new group at Town Hall last month, and now their intentions are confirmed.

It is a benefit that neighbours were able to respond and organize as quickly as they did to form a united voice to speak for their interests.

Last month there was still some uncertainty on just what options would be on the table for the future of that land, but now that that uncertainty is cleared up, the ratepayers' next task will be to develop just what that united voice will be fighting for. And, if that voice differs significantly from those who ultimately hold the cards, it could potentially become a united voice that is hoarse well beyond 2015.

Secondly, and of equal significance, was the landmark decision of Aurora United Church to rebuild on their historic Yonge Street location. Judging from the voices I heard not just from congregants themselves, but also from representatives from local service groups, charitable organizations and other like-minded collectives, I would imagine this decision will be greeted with a certain degree of relief.

The old saying goes that you don't know what you have until it is gone ? and that has certainly been the case with Aurora United Church. Whether you subscribe to any faith or not, it is clear that AUC was, during its last incarnation, much more than just a church. It was more than a community hub. It was a nerve centre for the best of Aurora, regardless of denomination, faith, or lack thereof.

I greatly look forward to seeing plans this spring for what will ultimately rise from the ashes of that painfully barren and lonely downtown corner.