

BROCK'S BANTER: Wet Blankets

Wet Blankets & Flickering Curtains

By Brock Weir

After trudging through the rain and muck all Saturday morning, the last thing I wanted to do was spend the rest of the afternoon staying in the pouring rain.

Skies were not looking hopeful as I got back to Aurora within a couple of hours of the Community Cultural Celebration. Evidently many Aurora residents got the same impression.

After hunting around the house for something waterproof for Ada Johnson Park the heavens opened up just a little bit more. The small crowds watching the Celebration unfold were disappointing but not, however, surprising. Despite doing my best to mask being nearly as miserable as the weather, it soon became clear as the vast majority of Aurorans were snuggled up at home, they were something special.

Organizers wanted to celebrate multiculturalism, and that is just what they got in the tenacious crowd that wouldn't let rain stand in their way. As I arrived, neighbours on nearby streets stood on the sidelines overlooking the park, weighing whether or not to make the trip down the sloppy hill or the more secure footpath to join in the fun.

By this time, the Aboriginal Dance presentation was already underway. They were then followed by students from local Karate schools and by the time they came out with their dragons and intricate martial arts gears, the rain had slowed to a spit and, accordingly, the crowds grew. They may have been camera wielding parents of the entertainers, but it is the principle of the thing. Thankfully for all those aspiring to be the next Karate Kid, the rain waited until they had taken their bows before unleashing one last deluge before slowly but surely clearing up. Before then, however, Rick Hansen Public School, the building originally slated as the Celebration's rain location but for a last minute, unexpected (and unexplained) permit pull appeared all the more tempting.

As I am writing this, I sense I'm putting too much emphasis on the rain. That aside, the acts gave it their all and held people captivated by their offerings. Who, for instance, took note of the weather when the dozen dancers representing the cultural traditions of Crete took to the stage? Judging by the numbers of young children who broke away from their parents to get closer to the stage to take in the action and bust a few moves in unison with the energetic, proud, and meticulous dancers before them ? along with the adults each holding their breath as the dancers dangled perilously close to the stage's edge ? I would say very few.

Clouds broke, and brilliant sunshine finally came through as dancers, musicians and artists representing the Chinese community and, in particular, Falun Dafa, came out for their spiritual, meaningful, and unusually calming performances before the largest crowd of the day.

Not nearly as interesting as what was unfolding on the stage ? but interesting nonetheless ? was watching the curtains flickering in many of the homes surrounding Ada Johnson Park near the start of the celebration. Eventually these curtain flickers gave way to curtains being pulled up ? no shame, people! ? and individuals and families crowding into the living room to enjoy the celebrations from their own homes.

In talking to the people who did brave the weather, they were very impressed with what they saw and the event itself delivered nearly everything they were hoping for. Many commented to me that a multicultural celebration was a nice, and welcome, change from the kind of celebration Aurora regularly offers when there is indeed something to celebrate.

Needless to say, fiscal restraint is always paramount, but with an Aurora 150 Committee with well over \$100,000 left in their budget for the year, having a do-over ? indoors ? sometime this fall or closer to the holiday season, would be a nice and fitting way to truly cap Aurora's Sesquicentennial Year.

After all, Aurora is not going to celebrate its 150th anniversary again.

It deserves a finale to remember. For the brave souls that turned out on Saturday, that's exactly what they delivered ? but think of the curtain flickers.

MY LIFE IS AN OPEN BOOK

Well, not really, but it will be for at least two hours this Saturday as part of Aurora's Culture Day activities. After drying out on Saturday night, I was in Toronto on Sunday for the annual Word on the Street Festival where Queen's Park is shut down from College to Bloor and taken over by authors, publishers, and book lovers.

I couldn't help but chuckle as one author was joined at a table by her son who gingerly harangued and did his best TV Pitchman impression to move the last two copies of his mom's Governor General's Award-nominated book. While this was unfolding, the

mortifying thought went through my mind on whether I would actually need to bring my own carnival barker as a ?Human Book? at the Aurora Public Library between 2 and 4 p.m.

In lieu of making a pitch about myself, allow me to endorse my fellow books. In this job, I have had the pleasure of meeting Dierdre Tomlinson, Bonnie and Norbert Kraft, Gerry Fostaty and Theresa Cook and, having formally interviewed all but Teresa, I know firsthand each one has an incredible, moving, and impactful story to tell. If there is a lull, however, I might just have to check Teresa out of the Human Library to complete the set!

And I hope some of you do the same.