

SENIOR SCAPE: I'm Forrest Gump

By **Jim L. Abram**

I have several favourite film and television actors.

I seem to like those actors that start out in comedic television roles or in stand-up comedy then add more dramatic film roles. Many such actors star in roles that resonate with seniors. A few that come to mind are Robin Williams whose repertoire spans everything from Mork and Mindy to more serious films like Dead Poets Society and Awakenings.

Jim Carrey is another such example who went from being Ace Ventura, a pet detective to more moving comedic-dramas like The Truman Show and the Man in the Moon, the story of the late stand-up comedian, Andy Kaufman. But by far, the actor I most enjoy is Tom Hanks.

Tom Hanks has acted in 71 movies, while also writing, directing and producing. Tom's body of work is far too vast to do it justice in this short column but I do want to reference a small cross-section of his career accomplishments in the context of how his work relates to the tastes, interests and lives of seniors in Aurora.

One of Tom Hanks' earliest films was Big. This is a story about the child that lives inside of all of us...of all ages. I'm sure we can all relate. This age-changing comedy reminds us of the youth we once had and reminds us that our youth is still there in body, mind and spirit.

Many seniors in Aurora are veterans of war. No actor has dedicated so much to the support of men and women who served and continue to serve than Tom Hanks. After his experience portraying a veteran in Saving Private Ryan, Hanks became active in the creation of a memorial to the men and women who fought during WWII.

Both he and Spielberg joined forces to produce Band of Brothers. Hanks also helped narrate The War, a stunning and comprehensive look at ordinary Americans fighting in World War II.

The actor vaulted into uncharted territory with his Oscar-winning performance in Philadelphia, playing a gay lawyer who is dying of AIDS while trying to win a discrimination suit after getting fired.

Despite the film being denounced by gay activists for being too soft on the issue, Hanks was nonetheless universally praised for a nuanced performance, in which he lost weight for the role. Most of us have watched loved ones pass away and can relate to this moving depiction of love, caring and support during such a difficult eventuality.

In Castaway, Hanks was alone and isolated on a deserted island with his only friend being 'Wilson', a Volleyball. Many seniors feel alone and friendless, but they need not feel like 'castaways'. Let it be known you have many friends and supporters at the Aurora Seniors' Centre and with organizations such as Chats, the Welcome Table, Victorian Order of Nurses and CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) to mention only a few. These groups, events and institutions, among others in Aurora and York Region, are there for you and are ready to reach out to any senior in need.

Forrest Gump is an epic romantic comedy-drama that depicts several decades in the life of Forrest Gump, a naïve and slow-witted yet athletically prodigious native of Alabama who witnesses, and in some cases influences, some of the defining events of the latter half of the 20th century in the United States; more specifically, the period between Forrest's birth in 1944 and 1982, a most memorable period of history to most all seniors.

Like many seniors I have had the privilege to meet, Forrest has an endearing character and shows devotion to his loved ones and duties, character traits which, like each of us, bring him into many life-changing situations. Along the way, he encounters many historical figures and events throughout his life.

Do you remember where you were when John F. Kennedy was shot? I do. The movie Forrest Gump is an anthology of our lives. One of my favourite movies. Mrs. Gump (Sally field): You have to do the best with what God gave you.

Tom Hanks has the qualities I like in a person. These qualities I see in seniors every day at our Aurora Seniors Centre and around town in Aurora. These qualities include having and sharing humour, intelligence, talent, wit, empathy, respect, shyness (and sort of a geek...), being responsible and, mostly, good. This is the short list.

Jimmy's last word: That's all I have to say about that. (Quote: Forrest Gump)

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, email auroraseniors@rogers.com or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.