

Readers Write

A move in the right direction

To the Editor:

The design proposal/status report on 19 Civic Ave. given at council was well done. I noticed the consultants' sales pitch was in keeping with that of most pitchmen: round up (to the nearest hundred thousand) on the income estimates and round down on the expenses.

The decision to keep the second floor is a wise move that ensures the structural integrity of the outer walls. I would think the cost of creating what they called the "great hall" including seating, acoustics, lighting, sound, and any number of peripheral requirements represents a significant amount of money. In addition, the structural integrity requirement to upgrade the load-carrying capacity from 80 to 100 pounds per square foot would further increase the cost of creating the "great hall".

The consultants upped the seating capacity of the "great hall" from 120 to 140 printed in their handout to 125 to 145 or 150 in their verbal presentation. They identified eight types of potential user groups in the Whitchurch-Stouffville market. I would challenge the consultants to justify, and council's willingness to accept, the possibility of coming close to the estimated \$97,378 revenue in the first year, based on the identified potential Stouffville user groups. Councillors who may still be in office six years from now (2013) can expect to see much more than the municipal \$27,210 revenue contribution estimated by the consultants.

I think the overall proposal for the renovation is a good one. I think it could be a real focal point in town. I agree it would blend in well with the proposed adjustments to Memorial Park.

The proposal to include a "great hall" on the second floor is a mistake and not cost effective. Better that the money be spent planning and then building or buying a proper theatre. All in all the proposal was very appealing as a place to be proud to have in the downtown core. I expect it will add a very small amount to our property tax. Nevertheless it is the right way to go, if now, we could raise the bar and go for a proper building that would accommodate a large audience.

Bob Lewis • Stouffville

Who are they?

Staff at Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum are interested in finding out the identity of the people pictured here and on page 8.

If you can help, please contact the Stouffville Free Press at 905-640-FREE or email us at withwrinkles@hotmail.com.



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Vintage Whine

Down to the wireless



By Kate Gilderdale

During a recent trip to Florida I was obliged to spend a lot of time offline.

When the family got together and bought Mr. Wallethead a MacBook for his birthday, I confess that my plan was not entirely altruistic. If he had a laptop, I reasoned, we could take it on trips so that I could avoid going cold turkey on email. He, on the other hand, couldn't care less whether or not he is connected, an attitude I share only in theory.

My mistake was to believe all the hype insisting we live in a wired world. Our first stop was to friends who are on sweet, old fashioned dial-up. I'd forgotten the unique sounds of connecting; the boing-boing of ancient bedsprings followed by a prolonged static hiss, like something out of an early Dr. Who episode, accompanied by the knowledge that it could be eons (read, several minutes) before you were communicating with the outside world.

Our next move was to a sort of Floridian Fawltly Towers. We had unwisely decided that since Florida was full of tourist accommodation, there was no need to book ahead: We ended up in a place where motels were scarce and desperation lent enchantment to the one we eventually found. The receptionist barely looked up when I asked whether a room was available. Yes, she said, with laconic indifference. If I was interested I could take a look. Last door on the left.

According to the blurb at the front desk, our guest suite included a fully-equipped kitchen, which turned out to comprise one bar fridge in a closet with no light. Not only was our accommodation internet free; we didn't even have a phone in the room. There was a broken standard lamp, a faded paint by numbers picture on the wall, and an outside light which looked as if it

had been shot up in the early sixties.

Our heating and air conditioning unit groaned and rattled without making a discernible difference to the temperature, and the walls were so thin you could have conducted a whispered conversation with the neighbours, who had invited friends over for the evening. Fortunately they were even older than us, so their raucous gathering ended around 9 p.m., allowing Mr. Wallethead to watch television and me to read a book on the lopsided sofa, my drink on the floor, since side tables were not included.

On our last night we decided to find a nice hotel in Tampa to avoid the horrendous traffic en route to the airport. Images of a comfortable, fully wired room began to fade as soon as we arrived in the city. Much of it appeared to have been flattened for reconstruction and we couldn't find anything approaching a vibrant downtown.

At the tourist centre we learned that hotel rooms were about as easy to come by as an American pardon for Maher Arar because the ACC was in town, which meant a huge influx of college basketball teams and fans. After much searching, we ended up in a smoking room of a chain hotel on the other side of town.

The complimentary breakfast consisted of Frosted Flakes or Fruit Loops, doorstep sized white toast and a greasy fry up. On the plus side, there was unlimited wireless internet access, as long as you didn't mind inhaling the great wafts of stale tobacco which had permeated every nook and cranny.

What I learned from my trip was that you can keep in touch or go on vacation. Maybe next year I'll stay home and take a virtual tour.

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