

Back to? the future?

by BROCK WEIR

In this job, there are certain questions one can pose that reveal a lot about a person.

One example I have previously written about in this space is the deceptively simple question of, 'Hepburns: Katharine or Audrey?'

Both remarkable in their own right, the women followed similar career paths, produced decades of award-winning performances, and both earned their rightful and respectful places in the pantheon of entertainment icons, but both also made significant strides to better our world, whether it was the furthering of democratic and civic causes, as was the case with Katharine, or the tireless humanitarian work that dominated the latter half of Audrey's life.

There are no wrong answers on the informal Hepburns questionnaire, but which one resonates with you, and why, can say a lot.

A similar telling question is also, 'If you could pick any superpower, what would it be?'

Sometimes the answers can be flippant - choosing x-ray vision for some nefarious purpose, for example - but answers can often be insightful on what makes an individual tick.

Recently we had our near-annual viewing of a silly little movie from 1988 called 'Vibes' with the unlikely cast of Jeff Goldblum, Cyndi Lauper and Peter Falk. It's not a 'good' movie by any stretch of the imagination, but, as much of a nonsense as it is, it's got that elusive 'It' factor that never fails to make me chuckle.

A catalyst in the story is an organization that wants to harness the various 'superpowers' of everyday people for anything but the greater good. Lauper's character specializes in astral projection and out-of-body experiences, while Goldblum's character has the ability to see the complete history of any object he touches.

As someone who grew up in a house that had a near-endless parade of antique furniture come and go over the years, this always seemed like a pretty neat power to have; after all, if you had a haunted dresser or sideboard, you should know about it! But, I suppose this goes hand-in-hand with the always imagination-capturing power of time travel.

Who wouldn't want the ability - or even a time machine to make it all possible - to observe one's forebears in their natural habitat or eavesdrop unnoticed on a particularly impactful episode in human history to get the real scoop? Well, some of you who watched Back to the Future in your formative years might be hesitant, but, come on, take that as a cautionary tale and forge ahead. What's the worst that could happen? This is all pie-in-the-sky fantasy.

To a point.

As much as the history buff in me loves the idea of hopping through time with a Samantha Stephens nose twitch, or with the aid of some type of vehicle, I'd be all too willing these days to consign said idea to the scrap heap because the 'Be Kind Rewind' era we're now living through is underscoring that turning back the hands of time is not all it's cracked up to be.

On Monday, Donald Trump returned to the White House in an expectedly-dramatic fashion.

Never one to take things humbly, the ushering in of this not-so-new and, in my view, not-so-kind era, was as garish as many expected. But it wasn't all the typical razzle-dazzle. He was quick to get down to business fulfilling campaign promises, even those that some of his more enthusiastic supporters insisted was mere rhetoric rather than policy that would come to pass.

Touting a familiar mantra of restoring 'common sense' to public life, he said a 'Golden Age of America begins right now.'

But what does this 'Golden Age' really mean? For those who cast their vote in the hopes he would somehow lower grocery prices with the stroke of a pen, there was precious little of that in his speech. Much time was devoted to settling scores, claiming American sovereignty would be 'reclaimed' and the nation would be 'liberated' and remain a 'free, sovereign and independent nation' and all of his greatest hits. But, in fairness, I think George Washington handily settled most of that some centuries ago.

'We have a public health system that does not deliver in times of disaster, yet more money is spent on it than any country anywhere in the world,' he said. 'And we have an education system that teaches our children to be ashamed of themselves, in many cases to hate our country despite the love that we try so desperately to provide to them. All of this will change starting today and will change very quickly'.

'This week, I will also end the government policy of trying to socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life. We will forge a society that is colorblind and merit based. As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female. This week I will reinstate any service members who were unjustly expelled from the military for objecting to the COVID vaccine mandate with full back pay. And I will sign an order to stop our warriors from being subjected to radical political theories and social experiments while on duty. It's going to end immediately.'

And quickly it came.

By the end of the day, the President had pulled the United States once again out of the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Accord, a deal designed to mitigate some of the biggest impacts of climate change. His Executive Orders reversed nearly 80 of President Biden's Executive Orders, including those related to racial equity and pushing back against discrimination faced by the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

It feels we've collectively regressed back to the 90s, at the very least, and it's not as pleasant as nostalgia would have one believe.

'Canada and the United States have the world's most successful economic partnership,' said the Prime Minister on Monday's Inauguration Day. 'We are each other's largest trade partners, with a relationship that creates millions of jobs, attracts billions of investment into the continent, and keeps our people safe'

'We are strongest when we work together, and I look forward to working with President Trump, his administration, members of the United States Congress, and officials at the state and local levels to deliver prosperity for our peoples ' while protecting and defending the interests of Canadians.'

As Monday ended with confirmation that tariffs will be coming our way, as promised, whoever succeeds Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister will have a long road ahead of them. As important as it is to work together ' and that includes all provinces and territories ' it's also important that we don't follow their lead in turning back the hands of time ' and the hands of progress.

And it will be incumbent on us to all do our part ' even if my dream time machine is left to moulder and rust away in that metaphorical scrap heap.