

Choose Your Own Adventure

by BROCK WEIR

I was never one for Choose Your Own Adventure books.

Don't get me wrong, they were entertaining enough at the time, but even as a kid I gravitated towards the more linear of stories. I wanted to know what adventure the author had in mind when they set pen to paper ? or, more realistically, fingers to keys ? rather than having to wind my way through and past all manner of forks in the road they dithered over through the writing process but weren't quite ready for prime time.

Okay, I'm being slightly facetious here. I know there was an audience for them, an audience who enjoyed them for a bit of mental exercise, but I wasn't that key demographic.

In the interests of full transparency, however, my interest in the Choose Your Own Adventure series was heightened when they were more recently translated into board game format ? so maybe there's hope for me yet.

But, looking back, perhaps the greatest value these stories held was laying a foundation and desire within the average reader to keep or stay in control of your destiny.

I was thinking about this on Monday morning on the way to work for two reasons.

First, as someone who regularly takes transit between home and office, I'm now in a corner of York Region where there are multiple paths and bus routes between Point A and Point B.

The initial leg of the journey is pretty straightforward with two possible busses to catch, each bound for the same destination ? Major Mackenzie West Station near Canada's Wonderland. The next leg takes out all of the guesswork with only one outbound bus going in the direction I need ? at least for a bit. Things get a bit more complicated the closer one gets to Yonge with two ?adventures? to choose from.

You can either keep going through that intersection to a more direct and faster route to Yonge Street, albeit significantly busier, which you then connect to a northbound bus up Yonge Street to just outside the office door. Or, you can hop out at Keele, connect to a more scenic route through King that drops you at your destination without a further transfer, but might be slightly longer.

The primary problem with this last option is it's a bit of a crap shoot if you're going to save time taking Option B, as, despite the myriad apps out there to help you navigate the transit journey, estimated times vary wildly with no rhyme or reason.

That, if anything, adds some extra adventure to the day ? and, indeed, some extra stress when you're working on a deadline and need to be at your desk by a specific time!

The second reason these Choose Your Owns came to mind was reading several articles on Monday's commute on this week's Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Throughout the weeks ? and, granted, it seems like months ? since President Joe Biden abandoned his bid for re-election and handed the party's baton to Vice President Kamala Harris, the presumed upcoming nominee has been dogged at several campaign stops by individuals and groups on either side, well, predominantly one side of the Israel-Hamas War.

Protestors have been demanding to know just where Harris stands on calls for a ceasefire in this tragically ongoing conflict should she be elected this fall and installed in the White House in January. It's a fair question, and one that is very much in the minds of

voters this election cycle, but it's curious that events hosted by her most prominent opponent aren't demanding the same of him.

Perhaps it's because he's made his position very clear over the campaign thus far, and it's a position that is very much out of alignment with those of the demonstrators, but one hasn't seen, at least not yet, these same individuals following him from place to place trying to persuade and win the hearts and minds of the Republican nominee.

It's curious indeed, and one can't help consider whether there are other motives at play, but what's baffling is that those who want a resolution here are encouraging those to either refrain from voting or vote against the candidate who is closest aligned with their views just to spite? well, I can only think of themselves? and tip the balance in favour of the candidate who is waving at them from clear on the other side of their philosophical canyon.

I'm reminded me of a quote that has been said, revised and paraphrased much over the years, and has previously appeared in this column in a different context, and bear with me as I paraphrase once again: If you're going somewhere and there isn't a bus to get you directly to where you want to go, don't watch dozens of buses go by in the vain hope that a unicorn of a bus will just happen by and drop you off. No, you take the route that is going to get you closest to your destination.

This mindset can apply in so many spheres of life, but in this day and age it's particularly fitting in politics.

In a time where rhetoric is so heated and political schools of thought are increasingly divisive and polarized, I doubt we will ever see a candidate again with that mythic and magic touch to please all of the people all of the time. You might not agree with a candidate on every single point, but surely with careful examination of their platform you'll find one that resonates with you the most and helps move things further in the direction you want.

But that assumes people will take the time to exercise that careful examination.

It's incumbent on all of us to figure out where we want to be, where we want to go, where we want the world to be, and our best routes to get there. Otherwise, the choice of 'adventure' will no longer be yours alone.

It might not get you dropped off at the end of your proverbial driveway, but a stone's throw away is better than nothing.