

Superpowers and Full Circle Moments

by BROCK WEIR

If you could pick one superpower, just one out of an entire menu, one that's only limited to the barriers of your own imagination, what would you pick?

While a magic wand to wave in a new era of world peace and usher in a reality where everybody is fed and nobody is unhoused would be the ideal, superpowers aren't necessarily required to achieve those goals; just equity, effort, determination and collaboration, albeit in a scale that can often be hard to fathom.

It doesn't take superpowers, just existing power pointed in the right direction.

No, I'm talking about the powers that are truly out of this world.

Maybe it's the power to take to the skies and fly like a bird, or the ability to teleport at will to wherever you want in the blink of an eye. Perhaps its super-human strength to save someone from a perilous situation, the ability to move with the speed of lightning, or even x-ray vision to see beyond what was previously impenetrable.

While the ability to fly, teleport, or get things done in a fraction of the time would be pretty cool, I've always had the same answer: time travel.

I'm not sure when the very concept of time travel first captured my imagination, but it's been there for as long as I can remember. Being able to bear witness to pivotal moments in our collective history, however large or small the incident, and see what really happened versus the generally accepted narrative has always been intriguing ? after all, history is almost invariably written by the victors.

But it doesn't have to be the big stuff.

Growing up in Newmarket, the first house I called home was one of about two dozen built on former farmland in the equally former village of Bogarttown, and there were some remnants of the agricultural operation that was 20, 50, 100 years before a going concern ? if you knew where to look. I always tried to imagine what the farm looked like when it was in full swing, the people who worked the land, and the impact it might have had on the surrounding area.

This fascination didn't subside when we moved.

With my mom, we moved westward in Newmarket to a newer subdivision in the former village of Armitage ? and, at that time, there were actually some landmarks, since demolished or moved, that were part of one of this area's most bustling early settlements. With my dad, we eventually moved to a pre-Victorian home with a woman's tombstone in the back yard. As you can imagine, both provided no shortage of fuel for my imagination.

Eventually, I learned there were these groovy places called museums that one could go and actually learn about all this and more ? with no time travel required, no matter how cool that might be.

It didn't take much time to exhaust Newmarket's Elman W. Campbell Museum as my school was only a short walk away and a regular destination for field trips, so I eventually turned southward to Aurora.

There, on the second floor behind the honey-hued walls of the historic Church Street School, was the Aurora Museum. I'd been to that building once before to pick up my Beavers uniform, but had no idea there was a bustling museum upstairs ? but, once this

revelation was, well, revealed, I had to see what it was all about.

My mom and I made the short trip one weekend and I tried to take everything in like a sponge. Amid the artefacts on the walls and in display cases were recreated scenes of what life of yore was like, and this rather static history was soon brought to life by curator Jacqueline Stuart who had the unique ability to make an otherwise mundane school desk as interesting as a war relic.

This experience played no small part in stoking a love of history, whether it's history around the corner or around the world.

On Monday, I was back behind those honey-hued walls of the Church Street School, which now forms the historic heart of the Aurora Town Square complex. While the Aurora Museum remains a vital component of the whole, albeit in a much smaller configuration compared to my first visit, the building has evolved, changed, and grown over time.

Things may have changed, but Monday night's Community Recognition Awards offered something of a full circle moment.

There, a few steps away from the former museum space, I was once again with my mother and, once again, with the lovely Jackie Stuart, more than 30 years after I first crossed that threshold.

I was honoured to be on hand not just to cover the event itself for our newspapers, but to also receive the Community Leadership Award, while Stuart received the Town of Aurora's Heritage Award ? an annual award I was surprised to learn has not caused Jackie to have to invest in a second mantle to hold ?em all. Long overdue!

The Community Recognition Awards is always one of my favourite events of the year. Not only does it give this writer a chance to shine a further light on the people that make communities like ours tick, but in a world that can often feel increasingly dispiriting and challenging, there's nothing quite as encouraging as learning about the wonderful things people do to give back and make the world around them, local or further afield, that much better.

It's hard to leave the event without feeling like you have a bit of extra wind in your sails and inspired to take on whatever lies ahead.

Truth be told, however, after covering this event each year for almost 15 years in various capacities, this year's ceremony was decidedly different as I was actually on the receiving end of one of these things and on the other side of the camera. In fact, being on the ?other side? for a change was remarked upon more than once in the evening.

But no matter how odd it felt, it was truly an honour to be, as the Town of Aurora's slogan suggests, in the best of company.

Being in this job, many of the evening's honourees were already familiar to me, and I've had the privilege of writing about the good they do before ? but there were plenty more whom I was able to meet for the first time, and learn more about what drives them to make a difference.

These community superheroes are driven by a passion to make a difference rather than any superpower, and that's always worth a reminder.

It was a wonderful evening, and one that left me even more buoyed than it usually does, and I thank those who nominated me for the award and to everyone at the Town who came together to truly put on a night to remember.

And, for this historian-at-heart, helping make that 30-plus-years-in-the-making full-circle moment possible.