



Lone Wolf Theatre Company

HIGHLIGHTS

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Lone Wolf Howl: TRUMPING THE DUMP, REDISCOVERING COMMUNITY

(Originally published in [Cochrane Times](#): April 13, 2005)

Cochrane Times — There used to be a breakfast joint in Calgary where you could order spring rolls and eggs at 6:00 a.m.

The coffee was terrible, the chairs were worn and torn beyond repair, and the carpet was so threadbare and stained with grease, jam, and smoke, you had to wonder why anyone would step inside, let alone eat the food.

It was owned and operated by a Korean woman named Kim, who never remembered my name but always knew who I was.

The menu was written on the wall and nothing was ever more than five bucks (the spring rolls and eggs were \$4.25). It had survived in the same location for 42 years, and served the best tasting omelets you've ever sliced with the blade of a fork. I took everyone I ever knew and loved there regularly for a bacon/mushroom/cheese with brown toast.

I don't recall ever taking a journalist there (not because I haven't known and loved a few). If I had taken a journalist — one gifted with a keen eye and a knack for wordsmithing that had won him the respect of thousands of readers over the years — I'd bet my last bite he'd see it for what it was: a dump. Good for nothing more than kindling.

And this esteemed and frightfully eloquent journalist would be right. The place was a dump. But I loved it with a fondness and a reverence I reserve for very few things in my life. There was just no place like it anywhere.

I went in the other day and discovered it had changed hands well over a year ago. Kim sold it, retired, and the new owner had replaced the floor and the chairs and had added — mon dieu! — laminated menus.

If I had been there a year ago, could I have stopped Kim from selling it? Not a chance. She had a love/hate relationship with that place for as long as I had been going there, but she'd been in the western world long enough to understand one of the fundamental truths we live by: change is inevitable.

And yet Kim still had enough of her Oriental heritage to recognize the opposite is also true: change is illusion.

The new waitress laughed at me when I expressed my remorse at the change of ownership. 'If you loved the place so much' she said 'then where have you been this past year?'

She was right. Just as the editors and reporters and town councilors are right when they ask the group trying to save the dumpy old Community Hall the same question: 'where were you guys a year ago?'

I'm one of that group trying to save the hall, and very proud to be so. Where was I a year ago? Telling a story at the Farewell Tea — an event specifically coordinated by the F.C.S.S. to help the community pay their last respects to the hall — and I have to say I was very proud to be a part of that as well.

I see no conflict here. Back then the proposed change seemed inevitable. Today, it seems like an illusion. Same change, different truth. The two opposites of East and West come together like spring rolls and eggs.

I miss my bacon/mushroom/cheese with brown toast. No one ever served an omelet quite like Kim and no one ever will. That dump of a diner is gone forever. After all, change is inevitable.

If the change awaiting that dump of a community hall is equally inevitable, then a small group like us won't be able to stop it. But change is also an illusion. Both truths can exist simultaneously. It's called a paradox and it's one of the things that makes life interesting. Here's another paradox: should anything stand in the way of the affordable housing project? Absolutely not. Should everything be done — even at this admittedly late hour — to save the community hall from being reduced to kindling? Absolutely. Again, I see no conflict here.

We can have both. It just takes a bit of thinking and some open communication, cooperation, and respect. And I'm happy to say that all of the above are starting to happen. As they should.

These are the essential ingredients of community, after all, and the hour is never too late to re-discover those.

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