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Following dreams is tough work

Sure you could be an astronaut, but it's a hell of a lot easier to major in Psych



PAUL
OWEN

When I was younger, I wanted to grow up to be a garbage truck. No, not a garbage truck man—just a truck. I'm still convinced that the most difficult man-to-man conversation my father ever had to deliver was trying to explain to a six-year-old why he couldn't get wheels surgically grafted onto his arms.

The other kids in my second-grade class had more practical futures planned out for themselves: some wanted to be doctors, other policemen. A vast majority wanted to be astronauts—especially the girls, since this was about the time that Roberta Bondar became the first Canadian woman in space. Apparently it was a big deal.

But now that we've all grown up, very few of us stay on that course—I didn't even bother to take shop in high school, and not just because it would have been too hard to resist welding a hydraulic garbage-crushing device to my spine. Sure, plenty of eager Science students still want to be doctors, but not many of those other popular elementary vocations are thrown around these days.

Eventually, the realization that doing so could result in death dawns on many youngsters who dreamed of fighting fires or policing the streets, and those folk choose other paths.

Thinking that going into space would be cool is almost universal among postsecondary students, but how many of them are actually willing to take the two undergraduate degrees or earn the PhD required to do so?

Sure, it's nearly impossible to pigeon-hole your future interests when you're still getting crayons with your menu at Earls, but that doesn't mean that the answer is becoming a civil engineer because your dad was.

Hell, most won't even bother with the almost mandatory military service. The fact remains that while astronaut is still probably the coolest job on (or should I say off?) the planet, the work to become one strikes fear into just about everyone.

In the end, people end up being engineers, or computer programmers,

or bankers, and there's nothing wrong with that: roads must be built, software written, and interest rates calculated. But at some point, people stop dreaming. They stop wanting a cool job and start wanting one that will pay well or is accompanied by high social status.

People start settling for careers instead of striving for them, and that's why you see so many majors change in university every year: either these people knew what they wanted to do and didn't, or they didn't know, but found out what they didn't want.

Sure, it's nearly impossible to pigeon-hole your future interests when you're still getting crayons with your menu at Earls, but that doesn't mean that the answer is becoming a civil engineer because your dad was, or not taking a couple of drama courses because you're a chemistry major—especially when you consider that doing so may keep you involved in local theatre after your shifts at the Dow plant.

And when multi-billionaires try to spend their way into a seat on NASA's next shuttle flight, it raises the question of why they just didn't become astronauts in the first place. It's much cheaper, and you actually get to play with the buttons in the cockpit.

After all, wanting to be worthy of a descriptive robot moniker like "Crusher" may not be possible in the physical sense, but kicking it with some Martians just might be.

Poor city planning saw our creeks paved over, but as always, nature finds a way



BRIAN
GOULD

If you live in northwest Edmonton, last week's closure of Groat Road southbound probably affected your commute. A sinkhole formed in the curb lane and was blamed on rainfall and an old pipe. However, both explanations only gloss over what is really going on: Groat Creek is trying to escape.

What, never heard of Groat Creek? Sure, it's not as majestic as it once was, but it still flows nonetheless.

Carrying the combined flow from a network of pipes, the fully culverted Groat Creek now unceremoniously dumps a potent mix of rainwater and sewage into the river through a non-descript outfall with a viewing platform nearby—just in case you didn't get enough of the seagulls and pungent smell already.

Named after Malcolm Groat, former owner of the ravine—who is, no doubt, rolling in his grave now—Groat Creek flowed from Westmount to the river. As Glenora grew in the early 1900s, the developer donated the ravine to the city in exchange for a wider bridge at 102 Avenue for horse carts and an eventual streetcar extension.

The city initially took good care of one of the most scenic ravines in Edmonton, planting trees and building paths and footbridges. Groat

Ravine was both a promenade and host to a variety of recreational activities.

After World War II, however, Edmonton succumbed to the same dark thoughts as other North American cities. Prisoner to the freeway mentality sweeping the continent and slave to the automobile, 1950s Edmonton was faced with 80 000 car owners and only four bridges.

There's not much we can be do for the north section of Groat Creek while our auto addiction continues to grip us, but the former freeway roadbed doesn't need to continue to scar the city.

To meet this demand, the city eventually turned to its greatest resource: therivervalleyandravines. Groat Creek was culverted, levelled, and paved over—just like Fulton, Kennedale, Mill, and Rat creeks—and entire lakes disappeared as Edmonton sprawled.

Two artificial and depressingly manicured parks were built on the leveled surface in a mocking imitation of the ravine's former grandeur. One is unpleasantly located next to the 107 Avenue interchange, while the other is left over from abandoned riverbank freeway plans. Both are overwhelmed by roaring traffic and

devoid of any reason to visit.

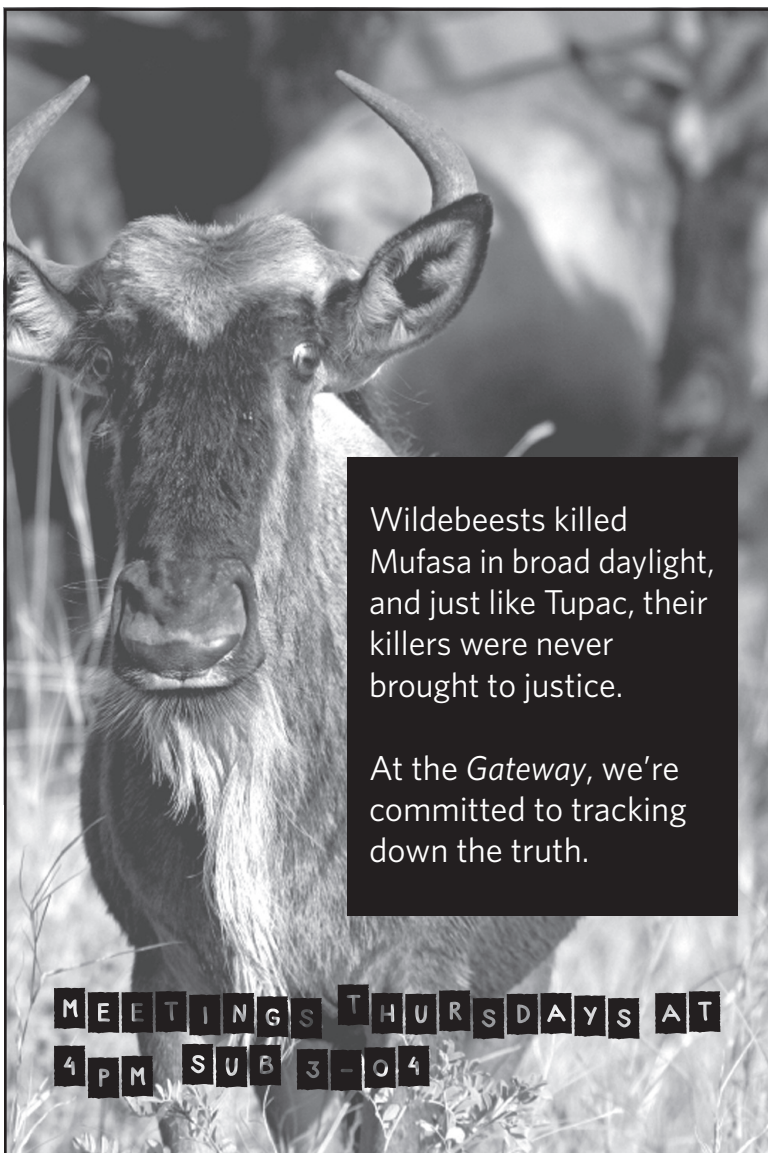
While the original plan to build a freeway was ultimately shelved due to protest, MacKinnon Creek suffered a similar fate, and is now barren and flat after construction stopped just short of paving. The relatively unspoiled Ramsay Creek is also gratuitously culverted for its last few dozen metres. Aerial photos show the scar, and the MacKinnon outfall also features a lovely broken metal sewer that spews rust and pollutants onto the riverbank.

So there's the reason for the sinkhole. What can you really expect when you try to pave over a creek? Water will continue to try to reclaim the original streambed for as long as the road remains.

There's not much we can do for the north section of Groat Creek while our auto addiction continues to grip us, but the former freeway roadbed doesn't have to continue to scar the city.

We could easily reclaim the last few dozen metres of Ramsay Creek by replacing the culvert with a decorative footbridge. Restoring MacKinnon Creek and the rest of the river bank up to Groat Creek would be more difficult, but allowing the area to remain in its current state as a testament to our obsession with the automobile is wholly unnecessary.

Groat Road will still be there, and we continue to repeat our mistakes elsewhere in the city. Whether it's the future Highway 2 through a provincial park next to St Albert, the twinning of 23 Avenue through the Whitemud Ravine, or Anthony Henday Drive, Edmonton's self-circumcision is bound to continue.



Wildebeests killed Mufasa in broad daylight, and just like Tupac, their killers were never brought to justice.

At the Gateway, we're committed to tracking down the truth.

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GATEWAY OPINION

Taking out hits on animals since 1910