



Rolling forward

Local playwright group wants to find out what happened to Seagram barrels

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It's been almost a year since the barrels from the Seagram Pyramid were rolled away, but a couple of local playwrights are looking to find out exactly where those barrels went.

Pat the Dog, a playwright development centre run out of the Button Factory in uptown Waterloo, is seeking out the stories of what people did with the famous barrels.

The pyramid, which stood outside the Centre for International Governance Innovation at the intersection of Erb and Caroline streets, was dismantled to make way for the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

The destruction of the Waterloo icon struck a chord with the community, who were invited to take a barrel to remember the pyramid.

There was a frenzy for barrels and they were gone fast.

Pat the Dog artistic director Lisa O'Connell was driving to work and was amazed by the crowd that showed up to get a piece of the pyramid.

She was impressed by the diversity of the crowd, too.

"It was all ages, all colours all shapes collecting barrels," she said. "And everyone was smiling."

That image stuck with O'Connell and started to germinate in her mind.

She eventually had the bright idea to turn the barrel drama into a real piece of drama.

Now O'Connell and Pat the Dog general manager Charmian Christie are working on a multimedia piece that will capture the spirit of the barrels.

It will include film, video and some sort of dramatic piece. And the connecting thread will be what happened to the barrels.

The barrels may have disappeared from the public prominence they once held, but the women behind Pat the Dog bet there's some good stories about what happened to them.

In fact, they've already heard a few.

"I've heard that some have turned into garden planters and one was even turned into a wagon," O'Connell said.

Perhaps the most interesting is that pieces of the barrels have been incorporated into stained glass.



Rachael Paterson gets some help from Luke, 5, and Gavin, 2, as she rolls away a barrel from the Seagram pyramid at CIGI. A local playwright centre is hoping to find out what happened to the barrels and dramatize the results.

O'Connell is hoping that she and Christie can find more interesting uses.

"People in this community are very creative," she said.

Pat the Dog is actively searching for the stories — they want the barrel owners to show them the cask's new homes.

"Where are they? We want to know," Christie said.

She's the head playwright for the project, but with more than 100 barrels out there, O'Connell knows she might have to call in reinforcements.

"We have playwrights across the province who can come in to help," said O'Connell, who said she'd be thrilled to be overwhelmed with barrel stories.

Not only were the barrels an aesthetic favourite for the citizenry of Waterloo, the frenzy for a barrel showed that they meant something deeper, she said.

"They were something that had a real value to people in the community — people wanted to preserve them," she said.

"We often don't recognize the value of something until it's gone."

But Pat the Dog hopes to keep the pyramid alive in a different way.

They'll present a working version of the play in late 2010 and are looking at touring the show.

While the project is interesting artistically and intellectually to the playwrights, it's also a work that will connect with virtually every person in Waterloo, O'Connell said.

And the people of Waterloo will be able to watch the project take shape.

Once they find barrels, Pat the Dog will update its website with photos and possibly film.

People will be able to see the barrels' new homes before the project is even complete.

Once the project is done, the photos will be on display at the Button Factory and could also become a travelling exhibit.

But before all that can take place, Christie and O'Connell need to find the barrels first.

"We need to get out there and talk to people," Christie said.

If you've got a barrel and want to be a part of the project, contact Pat the Dog at the Button Factory.

You can contact Christie at www.patthedog.org or e-mail charmian@patthedog.org .

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