

Nobody has ever jumped off this

roof

It's five minutes before a first-year student's very first class, located on the fifth floor of the Life Sciences Centre.

And although everyone told her it might be a good idea to find all her classes the day before so she wouldn't get lost, she just wasn't able to spare the time. Besides, so far the LSC isn't the

impossible maze everyone says it is.

Feeling smug she climbs four flights of stairs, and at each landing on the staircase, there is a door marked with the number of the floor. This is easy. But at the very top of the stairs, there is no door with a number 5 on it, only a locked door with a No Smoking sign and a window giving a lovely view of the roof.

BY MARY KUNA

Anyone who has ever been in the Life Sciences Centre, the little bit of hell also known as the LSC, has probably got lost.

And many students have probably also heard the rumour that the architect who designed the building was so distressed with the way it turned out, he committed suicide.

"Yeah, he killed himself," said Allison Munro, a first-year student. "He jumped off the roof of the building."

And she thinks she knows why.

"The architecture sucks, it really does suck."

Level Chan, a fourth-year student, has heard it too, but he's not so sure it's true.

"I heard he committed suicide before the building was built — I don't know why. I guess he had his reasons," he said.

But Martin Perry, a fourth-year Math and Statistics major, compares it to another story floating around campus.

"It's like the pool on top of Fenwick," he said. "Everyone says there's no water... because its architect didn't allow for the weight."

"The building wouldn't be able to support it."

But a student union booklet states that the Fenwick pool has no water because Dal didn't want to have to pay for a working pool.

According to Martin Giddy, in charge of architectural services for the Department of Facilities Management, the suicide story is

only an urban myth. Giddy says the LSC was designed by Ray Affleck, who did not kill himself.

"[He's] quite a well known architect [who] died about four or five years ago of old age. I worked on the Life Sciences building. I knew Ray, I worked for him."

Affleck also designed the National Gallery of Canada, and the libraries of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the University of British Columbia.

He worked with an architectural firm which is now called Arcop, although at the time the LSC was built, it went by the name of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimokopoulos, Lebensold, Sise.

Based in Montreal the firm also has offices in Toronto, Boston and Pakistan.

"It definitely was not suicide," said Bruce Allan, a partner with Arcop. "He was sick for several years, and it was a long and painful death. He never had it properly diagnosed."

"He never wanted to determine exactly what his illness was. I don't know why — just one of his peculiarities."

Elaine Gilbert is a secretary who once worked for Affleck.

"He wasn't the [suicidal] type at all," she said, confirming that Affleck died in 1989.

So why the rumour about the suicide?

Martin Perry has his own theory.

"If you walk around in the LSC long enough, you'll figure that the person who designed it had to be nuts."

Or, the death could have been confused with another death around the same time.

The first year the LSC opened, Charles Brimer, the chairman of the Psychology Department, committed suicide in his office.

"It was December of 1971, just before Christmas," said Donald Mitchell, a psychology professor. "I think it was Christmas Eve."

The rumours that Affleck had killed himself never made it to Mitchell, but he says he did hear about other strange things that occurred while the LSC was being built.

"There were some shenanigans involving the contractors," he said. "Some of them took off with the money before they finished the work... vanished."

"JOB FAIR"

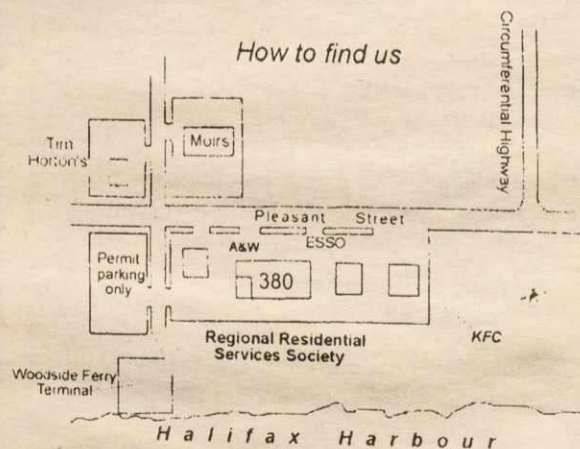
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