

By the WAY #3

by W. Andrew York
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Commentary

Already to issue #3, this might just get to be a habit. I appreciate everyone who has continued in the "By Popular Demand" game and welcome those who would like to join in at any time. And those that missed getting an entry in this time, please consider rejoining the fun. This is definitely a game where the "more the merrier" holds true!

I enjoyed watching the Oscar broadcast more this year than most. I'd actually seen a few number of the nominated movies rather than only one or two. I'd even seen three of "Best Picture" nominees and "Best Actor" pictures, though only one of the "Best Actress" flicks. Jon Stewart did an admirable job, taking pot shots at both the left and the right. However, the best comedic bit was the opening - Whoopi was right in form with her "...Hell, no!" [slam the door].

Last week, my father and step-mother stopped by for a visit, driving down from Michigan. It was a good chance to play tourist in my town and see places that I'd not visited in many years. The Ransom Center, with a copy of the Gutenberg Bible and many literary archives was the morning of the first day followed by a Poetry Reading (see the observation below). The afternoon was taken up touring the LBJ Presidential Library.

The next day was a day trip to Fredericksburg in the Hill Country. Lots of boutique shops, handicraft stores and local products available. My step-mother went shopping while my father and I went to visit the Nimitz Museum - which had grown quite a bit since I'd last been there 20 years ago. The original museum was undergoing renovation and was to focus on Nimitz himself. The new museum inherited much of the WWII exhibits along with considerable additional material.

The museum is very well done and leads the visitor from the pre-war years through the battles and campaigns of the Pacific. On the other hand, there is a large amount of material to see and absorb - especially for someone with only a passing background of the war. One highlight is the Japanese mini-sub captured at Pearl Harbor.

They also have an outdoor annex with static displays of guns, tanks, a bunker complex and recreations of a PT launching dock and carrier deck. At various times during the year, they stage mock landings and demonstrations of equipment including a functioning M-3 tank.

The trip back was through backroads and included a stop at one of the many wineries in the area. A pleasant, scenic drive.

Friday was a visit to our large independent bookseller, BookPeople and to the flagship store of Whole Foods that recently opened. That afternoon, my step-mother shopped while dad and I took in "Capote" at one of the Alamo Drafthouses.

Saturday we went to the Farmer's Market and then they rested in the afternoon to get ready for a drive to the south of Florida.

Of course, we sampled a variety of foods while they were here. The first night, I prepared Beef Satay and Crab Rangoon as appetizers followed by Egg Drop Soup. The main course was Shrimp Pad Thai with a spicy cucumber salad. Dessert was vanilla bean ice cream (from the store, mine didn't freeze) with a strawberry coulis. At restaurants, we had a Korean dinner, Vietnamese Pho for lunch, pizza and pulled pork sandwiches at the movies, subs at a signature Austin sandwich shop, tex-mex for breakfast, ate at a bistro in Fredericksburg with Italian one night and fresh seafood another.

It was a good break from work, good food and a chance to revisit places I'd neglected for far too long.

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Feature: A friend, Jim Benes, from Chicago publishes a weekly Email zine that I've read for a good many years. I first found it when he was a print Diplomacy GM, running games in the subzine called "Dippy". Sadly, he no longer runs Dip; but he still publishes a mix of commentary, happenings, humor and the events of tabletop baseball and basketball leagues he and his friends enjoy.

As part of this zine, every so often, he or one of the other readers arrange golf outings or dinner gatherings for those in the Chicago area. Recently, their gathering centered around the closing of "The Berghoff" - a Chicago institution for 107 years serving German food, their own brands of beer and many memories for people of the City.

After one of the San Francisco readers made arrangements for he and some of his friends to join the party, it crossed my mind to see what it would take for me to fly to Chicago for dinner. American had a decently priced direct flight Saturday morning with a return Sunday around dinner time. A check of hotels found a great price at the Chicago Hilton only a few blocks away (after a AAA discount). Reservations made, and then Jim had to close the attendee list as it was at 34 people! Any more and the restaurant was going to shuttle us to a side room as a "private party" (read - more expensive with an apparently limited menu and less atmosphere).

So, on February 4 I took off from Austin on a smooth flight to the chilly north country (when I was Emailing Jim about this trip, I was setting in shorts with the windows open for a nice breeze - not quite what Chicago was experiencing). Upon arrival, and after a lengthy trek through the airport, I finally reached the commuter train and tried to purchase a 2-day pass (\$9). They only had automated booths, which didn't accept any coins and wouldn't give any change in return. Of course, I didn't have exactly \$9 in bills. Not relishing a trek back to the terminal with my luggage, one of the transit officers directed me to the nearby Airport Hilton where I was able to get change and get the pass in short order.

The trip downtown was uneventful and I chatted a bit with some folks who noticed my Longhorns T-shirt. There was quite a mix of people that got on and off the train. I guess if you use this type of transport frequently, it becomes second nature and a "part of life". Young children were traveling a few stops without any parental supervision, teens chatting with friends casually bumping into one another in response to the train's motion and businessmen intently carrying on conversations over their phones - all without regard to others around them.

Downtown, I went to the street level and dutifully waited for the bus that was the next part of the trip to the hotel (per their website). After about 20 minutes, I rooted around and discovered that the bus only runs on weekdays. Not knowing how far the hotel was, I ducked into a chain sandwich shop to get a bite to eat and figure out where the heck I was in relation to my accommodations. As it turned out, I was only a handful of blocks away.

The Chicago Hilton is an extremely nice historic hotel, well worth what I paid for the room. No surprising, I did get an odd reaction from the clerk checking me in. When she asked their routine question, "why are you in town", my response of "I'm here from Austin for dinner" wasn't what she was expecting!

After unpacking and checking the route to the Berghoff, I headed to the Field Museum. I'd been there as a youngster (nearly 40 years ago) and didn't remember much about it except the imposing T-Rex skeleton. Due to limited time, I skipped seeing (and paying for) the special exhibits, even though the Pompeii exhibit was tempting. That gave me time to see much of the regular exhibits without too much rushing, including the renowned Egyptian Pharaoh area. Overall, a good museum that, for the most part, is very much "old school" in presentation. By that, I mean lots of static displays with placards describing the presentation. though there was a docent giving a mini-tour of the mummies.

Back to the hotel to change and an early arrival to the restaurant - walking through a light snowfall that dusted the streets and sidewalks. As I went traveled there, I realized that I had a big first hurdle in joining the Benes group - I'd only met one person before and that was five years ago. I had no memory of what he looked like. So, following instructions, I bypassed a VERY long line standing along the sidewalk (mind you, it was below freezing and it was snowing) and approached the person at the door.

I mentioned to the gatekeeper that I was here to meet the Benes group and that we had reservations. He stated that they weren't taking any reservations, it was only first come, first served. But, after pressing, he checked and found out that we did indeed have reservations (how Jim managed that, I don't want to know). A number of folks in the line grumbled a bit as they couldn't get reservations themselves. Later, one of our group commented that as they walked along the line, it was discovered that they had reservation. They were offered \$200 if those folks could join our party!

The gatekeeper finally told me to go into the adjacent bar area and call out to see if anyone from the Benes party was there. Upon entering, I noticed the fire department's maximum occupancy notice was

51 persons (as I recall). It was actually holding well over twice that number and there was no chance of anyone outside of my immediate area hearing me if I hollered. So, it was to plan 'B' - look for a group of five or more people and hope that it was them.

Unfortunately, with so many people crammed into the bar, it was all but impossible to discern who was with who and the size of any group. Quickly, a desperate plan 'C' was devised - I'd mentioned to Jim I usually wear a baseball cap, so I put it back on. As luck would have it I'd worn my Longhorn T-shirt earlier in the day and I'd left my Texas State ballcap in Austin. So, I wouldn't get any extra help from my Babylon 5 themed cap.

The first group I approached wasn't the correct one and they quickly relocated to the other end of the bar. The second folk I talked with turned out to be an older couple, the husband having worked at the Berghoff decades before, soon after his arrival from Germany. They were there for one last dinner and had been standing in line for over two hours. They had just been put on the list and had been told to wait in the bar until called. They soon left to enjoy their dinner and memories.

After more fruitless searching, and one of the Berghoff's tasty seasonal beers, I stumbled across some members of the party I was looking for. Over the next 30-40 minutes, there were lots of introductions, sipping of drinks and chatting as the larger group gathered. Eventually, 26 of us showed including the San Francisco contingent. Ushered into the crowded main dining room, we had an area all to ourselves.

Once seating, the waiter had to announce that five dishes were already sold out for the evening, including the Jagerschnitzel that a number of folks were looking forward to having. After much hemming and hawing, I decided on the Geshnetzeltes (veal with sautéed mushrooms in white wine sauce) with spaetzle instead of the mashed potatoes and red cabbage. To drink, more of the tasty seasonal Berghoff beer. The rest of the table had a wide variety of dishes, from Sauerbraten to Bratwurst or one of the many other specialties of the restaurant. A few had appetizers or soups and most ended the meal with dessert. For me, the main course was more than enough to fill me up!

Over dinner, there was a wide range of discussions, including questions about recently read books, movies seen and old friends catching up with each other and their families' activities. This being Chicago, a lively discussion of the merits of the Cubs versus the White Sox was a given at one point. All in all, a very friendly bunch of folks that made the southerners and west coasters very welcome.

We wrapped up well after 10pm, with the restaurant closed and the last stragglers leaving. The check ended up being an extremely reasonable \$31 a head - tax, tip and alcohol included. Many folks headed home, though some souls were going to a Jazz Club to extend an enjoyable evening. I was tempted to join them, but it had been a long day (up at 5am to catch my flight).

After a good sleep, I had the breakfast buffet in the hotel restaurant. A bit pricey, but what should you expect? Checked-out and then I caught the bus to the Science and Industry Museum. The coat-check took my coat and clothing bag, though I kept my backpack.

In stark contrast to the Field Museum, this museum is definitely "new school" with interactive displays and multi-media presentations of information. I was surprised to find that I'd come on a "free day", so there was no cost to enter. My first interest, with my history background, was the German U-boat. After going through the background displays, you walk into the hall with the sub. Unfortunately, access on the boat is only via tour and ticket. So, back to buy a tour ticket.

About 15 minutes before the tour time, I showed up and chatted with the person taking tickets. I commented about how everyone had been friendly and helpful that I'd met in the City. She assured me, with a chuckle, not everyone is like that and certain areas of the City weren't as friendly as others. However, those weren't something for me to worry about.

The sub was markedly different from other ones I'd been on - especially in the amount of open space. It was darned roomy in there compared to the two or three US WWII era boats I'd been on. As the tour was very much scripted and timed, there wasn't much of a chance to ask questions. But, it was informative and well worth experiencing.

Afterwards, I commented to the tour leader about the spaciousness and she explained why there was so much room in the sub. Basically, to allow more folks on-board and larger tour groups, they took out much of the equipment on the starboard side, dropped the floor a number of inches, removed overhead obstacles and cut through bulkheads so folks wouldn't have to go through hatches. I was assured that German boats were every bit as crowded and claustrophobic as US boats were.

I then toured most of the rest of the museum and found it a worthwhile experience. I was startled at one point when I walked around a corner and saw the Ju-87B plane on display. Definitely wasn't expecting that! Overall a very informative and fun place to visit.

It was time for my visit to end, but one thing stood in my way. I couldn't find my coat check. I must have lost it when I opened my wallet to buy the sub ticket or when I purchased a forgettable lunch in the cafeteria. I started to wonder if someone had claimed my dirty clothes and jacket, leaving me to travel home in shirt sleeves (thank goodness I had kept my backpack, which included my ticket).

Deciding I had nothing to loose, I went to talk to the folks in the check room and explained my situation. Fortunately, I saw my bag but as they turned the carousel of coats, I didn't see my jacket. On the second time through, I spied it all but hidden behind large winter coats. I described what was in each pocket, they checked, and gave me the coat and the bag without further difficulty. Then, to the airport and back to warm Austin in an uneventful flight.

Looking back to the trip, and in a nod to the reason I was there, I recall one of the displays at the Science and Industry Museum. They had a mock-up of a Chicago street from 1910 with part of the facade a recreation of the front of the Berghoff. The restaurant is now a part of Chicago that resides only as a fading memory in the minds of those lucky enough have experienced it and in a museum display that will have as much relevance to the visitor of the future as the drug store soda counter, the Gossard Corset Shop, the Nickelodeon Cinema and the corner grocer. I'm lucky to be part of the former group.....and in having had the opportunity to meet a bevy of new friends.

One of these days, I hope to return for another dinner.....

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Review: "Deep Sea 3-D" - this is the latest IMAX movie (just opened last weekend) and I've already seen it twice. It is an excellent movie for the visuals - stunning for the most part - using the polarization technique of 3D presentation. It is easy to get lost in the scenes and music, just floating through the 40ish minute event. Unfortunately, the narrative and sound enhancement don't live up to the rest of it. When Kate Winslet and Johnny Depp are giving information, identifying species and describing the interrelationship of marine life, it is fine. When they try to be cute or humorous, they can be grating, drawing the viewer out of the movie. The same with the foley sounds added into the scenes, scallops squealing and clacking away from a predator and digestive sounds as a creature eats another are a bit much (though the kids in the audience seemed to enjoy it). Bottom line - definitely worth seeing if you get the chance.

Observation: I went to see a presentation at UT (University of Texas) that postulated Bob Dylan was the Homer of this day and age. It focused on his roots in traditional balladic music and how he was a reflection of his life's issues and events. Thought-provoking.....

Playlist for this issue: Trish Murphy "Crooked Mile", Emerson Lake & Palmer "Love Beach", Kenny Chesney "The Road and the Radio"

Coming up Next Time: CSA's (note - nothing to do with the American Civil War)

=====GAME SECTION=====

On Tap:

By Popular Demand (Join Now! Open to Anyone at Any Time!)

Let me know what you're interested in seeing here.....

BY POPULAR DEMAND

The goal is to pick something that fits the category and will be the "most popular" answer. You score points based on the number of entries that match yours. For example, if the category is "Cats" and the responses were 7 for Persian, 3 for Calico and 1 for Siamese, everyone who said Persian would get 7 points, Calico 3 and the lone Siamese would score 1 point. The cumulative total over 10 rounds will determine the overall winner. Anyone may enter at any point, starting with an equivalent point total of the lowest cumulative score from the previous round. If a person misses a round, they'll receive the minimum score from the

round added to their cumulative total. And, if you want to submit some commentary with your answers, feel free to.

NOTE: I always acknowledge an Email submission. If you've sent something in and don't hear back from me after a couple of days, send again or check with Jim. I let him know if I expect to be away from the computer for any extended period of time.

Round Two Category – Magazines

Round Two Results:

- 01) Favorite News Magazine: Time 5, Newsweek 3, Economist 2
- 02) Favorite Magazine for Women: Cosmo 8, Ladies Hm Jnl 1, Vogue 1
- 03) Favorite Tabloid: Inquirer 8, People 1, New York Post 1
- 04) Favorite Magazine for Men: Playboy 4, GQ 2, Sports Ill 2, Maxim 1, Pop Mechanics 1
- 05) Favorite Scientific/Educational Magazine: Sci American 4, Nat Geographic 2, Discovery 1, Astronomy 1, Pop Mechanics 1, Mil History 1

Individual Scores:

01) Jamie McQuinn:	Time, Cosmo, Inquirer, Playboy, Sci American	= 28 + 29 = 57
02) Nathan Simmons:	Time, Cosmo, Inquirer, Playboy, Pop Mechanics	= 26 + 26 = 52
03) Edi Birsan:	Time, Cosmo, Inquirer, Playboy, Sci American	= 22 + 29 = 51
04) Doug Kent:	Newsweek, Cosmo, Inquirer, GQ, Discovery	= 27 + 22 = 49
05) Steve Koehler:	[no entry received]	= 27 + 15 = 42
Christopher Janik:	[no entry received]	= 27 + 15 = 42
Brendan Whyte:	Time, Cosmo, New York Post, Playboy, Nat Geographic	= 21 + 20 = 41
08) Jim Burgess:	Time, Cosmo, Inquirer, GQ, Nat Geographic	= 13 + 25 = 38
09) Fred Davis:	Newsweek, Ladies Hm Jnl, Inquirer, Sports Ill, Astronomy	= 21 + 15 = 36
10) Tom Howell:	Newsweek, Vogue, Inquirer, Pop Mechanics, Sci American	= 18 + 17 = 35
11) Marc Ellinger:	Economist, Cosmo, Inquirer, Sports Ill, Mil History	= 6 + 21 = 27
12) Kevin Wilson:	Economist, Cosmo, People, Maxim, Sci American	= 6 + 16 = 22

Best possible score: 29. Best score achieved: 29 by **Jamie** (two for two - best possible score!) and **Edi**!

WAY's Commentary:

General: It is good that I'm not playing this game. I'd have crashed and burned this round.

01) **Favorite News Magazine:** This one is a tough one for me as I get and read Time, Newsweek and US News & World Report (for the news weeklies, that is). My favourite is Newsweek, so that is the one I probably would have chosen. However, Time is definitely the leader.

02) **Favorite Magazine for Women:** I was thinking along the lines of Better Homes & Gardens or Good Housekeeping rather than Cosmo. I definitely wouldn't have scored well.

03) **Favorite Tabloid:** Here, the National Inquirer is by far the best choice, though People is a good option that I hadn't thought of.

04) **Favorite Magazine for Men:** I wasn't thinking along any of the liens mentioned. Men's Health would have been my choice.

05) **Favorite Scientific/Educational Magazine:** National Geographic was my top choice, if only for the broad range of topics covered. I didn't think Scientific American has anywhere near the audience it has.

Player Commentary:

01) **Favorite News Magazine:** [Brendan] though Time seems to be running out, and Newsweek or The Economist seems more popular. [WAY] not here, Time is the definite front runner. [Marc] Time is probably the winner, but no one in their sane mind could call Time a quality news magazine. The Economist is by far the best news magazine and those who don't take it or haven't read it are missing out on real news from a global perspective.

02) **Favorite Magazine for Women:** [Brendan] How the hell would I know? I'm a man for crying out loud. Cosmo or Cleo, and Cosmo is banned in Singapore so it must be onto something... and by picking it,

so am I. [WAY] You are so correct.... [Marc] Who cares about these? Probably should have guessed Oprah, but I don't have a favorite so I'll play the odds.

03) **Favorite Tabloid:** [Fred] I don't really read the Nat'l Inquirer, but it seems to have the largest circulation. [Tom] better yet, DIDOES from CCC! <grin> [WAY] I don't get the reference, care to fill us in? [Brendan] A US tabloid (none of you American swill have heard of anything foreign)?? Aren't all US papers tabloids anyway, all run by some Hearst wanna-be? Even the NYT is making up its articles these days. I have absolutely no idea. But after some research found Murdoch's "New York Post" which seems to have a similar seediness level to "News of the World" or "The Sun", or Melbourne's own "Herald-Sun" (popularly known as "The Hun". So let's go with the NYP! [WAY] You may have something there about US papers. Most go for sensational over substance.[Marc] Has to be the Inquirer. No other rag is close.

04) **Favorite Magazine for Men:** [Fred] I see S.I. in my doctor's office, but I'll bet that Playboy wins. [Tom] although I think this has gone out of vogue and Playboy is probably a better answer. [WAY] you are correct about that, sir. [Brendan] "Bunny, hunny?" [Marc] Guys have two things on their minds...sex and sports. So Playboy and SI, which to choose. Since its March madness in the states, it seems to me that SI is more popular today than Playboy. Then again, when the next star shoots naked, this will flip.

05) **Favorite Scientific/Educational Magazine:** [Brendan] At least it was a decent zine until they stopped having maps every 2-3 issues. [WAY] They still have maps, though I don't know the frequency off the top of my head. I find the mix of articles interesting, most of the time. [Marc] Popular Science will probably win this category, but Military History is my favorite scientific/educational magazine. The articles are fascinating and well written and appeal to the dipper in all of us.

General Player Commentary:

[Kevin] Man, that was a poor showing last time. I didn't even think of Star Wars for the first choice. For some reason I was thinking of "old" movies and while I guess Star Wars would be old it's been in my lifetime so I guess I didn't think it old enough. Oh well, maybe I'll do better this time.

[Fred] For 1 & 5, I subscribe to Newsweek & Astronomy, so they're my favorites in these categories.

[Jim] Personally, at least for interest, I kinda like Brendan Whyte's Not Quite By Popular Demand that pops out the top choice for losses, even though I'm terrible at that too. [WAY] Do you mean Scattergories! you try to pick something that no one else will choose? [Jim] I thought this category was kinda boring....but then if he is totally NOT popular maybe he'll feel differently after he sees the results, my third person thinks.

[Jamie] many of the comments you received on the last round talk about THEIR favorites.... if I was picking my favorites, I might give different answers. [WAY] Well, for the game, you should choose what you think the majority of the players would choose. However, you are more than welcome to add commentary, your favorite in the category or other thoughts on the game in the comments section.

Round Three Category – Best TV Shows EVER!

01) Best Science-Fiction Show (be specific)

02) Best Soap

03) Best News Show

04) Best Drama

05) Best Comedy

Submit Email entries to wandrew88 of gmail.com or by mail to W Andrew York; POB 201117; Austin TX 78720-1117

Deadline is: April 8, 2006 at high noon Central Time