

By the WAY #4

by W. Andrew York
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Commentary

Sorry for the mix-ups with the deadlines last time around. I'd put in a place holder for the estimated date and neglected to get it updated prior to publishing. Fortunately, everything worked out and all the submitted answers for each of the deadlines are below. I do appreciate those who send their responses in early, rather than waiting for the deadline. It does make adjudicating and commenting on the rounds that much easier - something all GMs appreciate!

Around Austin, summer has arrived. I went out last Sunday to the apartment's pool to get a bit of sun. Fortunately, after about 1 1/2 hours, a friend called to go see a movie (reviewed below). The next morning, I was a bit red, but not to the point of peeling (thankfully!). If my friend hadn't called, I'd certainly have spent the rest of the afternoon out there and been a crispy critter the next day (ouch!).

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Feature: CSA's - please be aware, this has nothing to do with the American Civil War nor with the new documentary making the rounds of the artistic theaters "CSA: The Confederate States of America", one I want to see.

What I'm writing about is something I've been involved in for a few years - Community Supported Agriculture. In the purest form, it is a partnering of the community with smaller, usually organic, farmers nearby. This guarantees the farmer a known income and gives the involved community members regular direct access to freshly picked seasonal vegetables, fruits and other farm products.

My experience is primarily with one farm here in Texas (the south has larger growing seasons than the northern participants). So, I'll speak mostly on what I've enjoyed. However, I'll mention some other ways CSA exist, such as *off-the-shelf*'s published (Tom Howell) has experienced in Washington state as well as other ways of participating, such as farmer's markets and farm stands.

My involvement came from an article in *Cooking Light* a few years back. It gave information on what CSAs were and some ways to find local farms. The best way, today, to get involved is Google "Community Supported Agriculture" and look for the links to USDA and your State listings. From there, you should be able to find local farms that offer this program. In my case, I checked the USDA listing and found a number of farms around Austin listed. I picked one at random, Emailed them for the particulars and then joined up.

I have to say, that first year, the first box I received was (and the farm family will agree) probably the best box of that season. It was filled to the brim with a variety of vegetables and fresh fruit. I must say, I was immediately sold and wrote a glowing letter to *Cooking Light* (published in the next issue). I've not missed a week since, even though not every week has been as bountiful.

The CSA I'm involved with runs a 32-week summer season, beginning in mid-April through late November. You pay a weekly fee (discounted for paying in 8, 16 or 32 week installments) for about a 1/2 bushel of whatever is harvested that week. My delivery day is on a Saturday with most everything gleaned on Friday and at the pick-up site by 8:00am on Saturday morning. For a small additional fee (a Plus share), you get a dozen farm eggs every other week and on the alternate weeks you receive something from the farm's kitchen such as Bread & Butter Pickles, Wild Mustang Grape Jam, Honey, or Pesto.

They also run a smaller winter season, which just finished. The delivery included a pint of strawberries, three heads of red leaf lettuce, a mess of spinach, a large bunch of swiss chard, spring onions, a bunch of golden beets (with greens), a bag of carrots, a fennel bulb, a bunch of endive and of asparagus. Throughout the course of the year, you get what is seasonal and ready to pick - fresh, organic and tasty!

Integral to the partnership between the farm and the community is that the community joins with the farm in famine and in bounty. If the harvest is poor in a particular week (or season), the boxes are a bit light. However, in times of bounty, they can be overflowing with produce at their peak. This, at times, can

lead to burn-out - here in Texas okra is as hard to knock down as weeds, so during late summer, okra becomes a staple in the box. One year was a bountiful year for tomatoes, while another was peppers. And, when they are heirloom varieties, yum!

Two things are necessary for enjoying and getting the most out of the CSA. The first is enjoying vegetables. I'd never eaten kohlrabi (great stuff!) before I got one in a box and you do get enough veggies to fill your plate for a week. The second is adaptability - you rarely know exactly what you're getting until you get the box, two pints of blackberries this week, what to use them in? Also, when the sixth week in a row with a pound of okra, you need to figure out the best way to use it (and, yes, okra fritters can get tiresome).

But, by the end of the season, you've had regular, fresh vegetables delivered to you each week (yep, healthful and filled with vitamins!). On the flip side, you've supported a local, small yield, farmer make it through another season. I must say, the best I've felt about participating was when the farm I partner with commented in their weekly newsletter (as I recall) "without the support of our CSA subscribers, we would have had to take second jobs in town just to make it through the year."

Other CSAs exist in different forms and with different seasons. In Michigan, near my parents, the CSAs I've found only have a 16 week growing season. With Tom, in Washington, they work part of their commitment to the CSA on the farm, actually helping raise the food itself. Others I've read about have a subscription fee which can be refunded based on the amount of time you spend assisting with the farm chores. So, check around to see what is available in your area and which fits your particular needs.

Two other ways to support the small farmers in your area are farmer's markets and farm stands. I strongly encourage you to visit both of those, buy what grabs your interest and definitely ask questions of the vendor. It is nice to actually know who raised the cabbage or even the beef that is on your table (yes, there are small farms raising chicken, beef, lamb, etc and sell directly to the consumer - the taste of fresh, free range, organic, chicken or turkey (at Thanksgiving) is something amazing).

The one caution - make sure you are buying from the person who grew or raised the product. All too often in "farmers" markets, and even roadside stands, you get resellers who buy from the farmer, jack up the price, and sell "farm fresh" product to the unsuspecting consumer. Many times, the product is not freshly harvested vegetables while the reseller gets the profits, not necessarily the small farmer.

I must say, I've been very happy with my involvement with CSAs. I've met a number of wonderful folks who spend their days tilling the soil and finding joy in providing wonderful food for those of us who live in the city and toil in a cube. Having the chance to walk the fields, see the plants growing, dodge the pecking chicken and taste food fresh from the vine is well worth it. As well as helping the small farmer continue to thrive, encouraging the cultivation of heirloom crops (instead of the Wal-Mart hybrid all-sizes-fit produce) and reducing the pesticide load on the planet is very much worth it.

So, look around, try CSAs and local farmer's produce. It may not have the glossy, oiled, unblemished skin of the chain supermarket produce, but it is a darned sight fresher, tastier and better for you!

Footnote: the farm I get my produce from is Hairston Creek Farm in Burnet and I shop every so often at the Boggy Creek farmer's stand in Austin. I also stop by the Sunset Valley Farmer's Market and the Austin Farmers Market every so often.

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Review: "Lucky Number Slevin" - I saw this movie last Sunday with some friends. Not really knowing what to expect (other than that two of my friends were quite interested in the promised lengthy scene with Josh Hartnett in only a towel - which turned into a number of lengthy scenes), I found it somewhat disappointing. It was a mass of seemingly disconnected, twisting turns that were confusing, with the ties between them only revealed late in the show. That being said, one of the primary lynch pins of the mystery was a bit too obvious - and that actually added to the confusion with the storyline.

One of my companions drew a number of parallels to "Pulp Fiction" (I've not seen it), but stated it was more of a poor imitation rather than an homage. Much of the humor was forced and the improbability of the Freeman/Kingsley feud added to the head scratching.

The one thing that did catch my eye was the effective set decoration. The different locales reflected the person who lived there; while the hallway wallpaper effectively contrasted with the starkness of other sets (such as the bus station).

The acting was decent, with Willis's deadpan approach providing a bright spot. Overall, it was an OK movie to see once (though I could have waited for the DVD). Grade = C

Observation: Why do the students protesting about the Immigration Reform issue only find the need to assemble, march and protest during school hours? What is wrong with a march on Saturday afternoon? At that time, they would draw as much (or more!) press coverage, be less disruptive to workday traffic, not interfere with their own education and probably draw more participants who are concerned with missing school/work/child care/etc.

Playlist for this issue: Bat Out Of Hell II (Meatloaf) (<--hey, I know it is a repeat. However, it's one of the standby albums I play again and again. Great for introspection, thought and contemplating life); "The Amazing Race 9" (Episode 6?); Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe DVD

Coming up Next Time: Jury Duty.....

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

On TAP:

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

Let me know what else you're interested in seeing here.....(sorry, we're out of Shiner).

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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 Three Category – Best TV Shows EVER!

Round Three Results:

- 01) Best Science-Fiction Show (be specific): Star Trek 4, Star Trek: The Next Generation 1, Babylon 5 1, Battlestar Galactica 1, Twilight Zone 1
- 02) Best Soap: As The World Turns 2, General Hospital 2, Dallas 1, The Young & The Restless 1, Days of Our Lives 1, None 1
- 03) Best News Show: 60 Minutes 3, McNeil Lehrer NewsHour 2, The Factor with Bill O'Reilly 1, CBS News 1
- 04) Best Drama: Hill Street Blues 2, Law & Order 1, Dallas 1, Gunsmoke 1, Hallmark Series 1, Sopranos 1, 24 1
- 05) Best Comedy: MASH 3, Friends 1, Saturday Night Live 1, Cheers 1, Seinfeld 1, Simpsons 1

Individual Scores:

- 01) Jamie McQuinn: Star Trek, General Hospital, 60 Min, Sopranos, Seinfeld = 57 + 11 = 68
- 02) Edi Birsan: ST:TNG, General Hospital, 60 Min, Hill St Blues, MASH = 51 + 11 = 62

03) Nathan Simmons:	BStar Galactica, Young & Restless, 60 Min, Dallas, Friends	= 52 + 7 = 59
04) Doug Kent:	[[no entry received]]	= 49 + 7 = 56
05) Jim Burgess:	Star Trek, Dallas, 60 Minutes, Law & Order, MASH	= 38 + 12 = 50
06) Steve Koehler:	[[no entry received]]	= 42 + 7 = 49
Christopher Janik:	[[no entry received]]	= 42 + 7 = 49
08) Brendan Whyte:	[[no entry received]]	= 41 + 7 = 48
09) Fred Davis:	Star Trek, None!, CBS News, Hallmark Series, Cheers	= 36 + 8 = 44
10) Tom Howell:	Zone, World Turns, Lehrer NewsHr, Gunsmoke, Sat Night	= 35 + 7 = 42
11) Marc Ellinger:	Star Trek, Days of Our Lives, Factor w/OREilly, 24, Simpsons	= 27 + 8 = 35
12) Kevin Wilson:	Bab 5, World Turns, Lehrer NewsHr, Hill St Blues, MASH	= 22 + 10 = 32

Best possible score: 14. Best score achieved: 12 by **Jim** (our host for this subzine)!

WAY's Commentary:

General: Overall, I had expected this whole round to be wide open with, at most, one front runner followed by a scattering of other choices - truly a "By Popular Demand" round.

01) Best Science-Fiction Show (be specific): Hands down, ST:TOS (Star Trek: The Original Series) was the obvious choice due to its longevity and wide fan base. Is it the best show? It really depends on how you define "best". Is the best the one that defines and, for the most part, founded the genre or is it the best written. If the former, then ST:TOS certainly fits the bill. However, both Babylon 5 and the "new" Battlestar Galactica are hands down the leaders in the latter category. Taking both criteria into account, I'd have to lean towards Rod Serling's original Twilight Zone.

02) Best Soap: This isn't a category I'm well versed in. In my early college days, one of my friends watched As The World Turns and I was hooked for couple of years, so that most likely would have been my choice. However, I wasn't even thinking along the lines of Dallas or other "evening" soaps (Dynasty anyone?).

03) Best News Show: It's interesting that only one "cable" news show was chosen. In these days, with the proliferation of them and the (supposed) influence they have on the nation, the listing of more traditional news reports on broadcast stations/PBS is a bit surprising. It seems the more mainstream, middle-of-the-road (if leaning a bit liberal), shows are considered more appealing than the more slanted, partisan, presentations. Myself? I watch CBS news with CNN Headline News (which no one chose) in the off hours.

04) Best Drama: I have to say that I'd agree that all of the ones listed are near the top of their class, even if I've not watched 24 or Sopranos. This would be a tough category for me to choose just one, but I'd almost have to pick 7th Heaven - a show I've enjoyed quite a bit over the past decade.

05) Best Comedy: I'm not a big comedy fan, so this would be another tough one. Of the ones chosen by the players, the only one I've watched almost every episode of is MASH. The Simpsons is a distant runner up. But, for *best* comedy, I'd definitely have to look to the classics - I Love Lucy is the one that comes to mind.

Player Commentary:

01) Best Science-Fiction Show (be specific): **[Jim]** I am being specific, the original is still the best. I actually THINK Blake's 7 is a better SF TV series, but no one is going to say that. **[WAY]** I've not seen Blake's 7, so I can't comment. **[Kevin]** For the sci-fi, one of the Star Treks (probably the 2nd gen) might do well but the category was "best" sci-fi and I think B5 was by far the best written and designed sci-fi tv series that I've come across and I believe there are a lot of others out there who will agree with me. STDS9 got a lot better in it's later years with the Dominion War arc but the early parts we weak. Other good ideas are Doctor Who and The Prisoner but those are a bit less likely to pop up I think. **[WAY]** Doctor Who suffered from weak special effects and, at times, very poor writing/acting. However, when it was at the top of its game, it was brilliant. The "new" Doctor Who is showing quite a bit of promise as well. The Prisoner was a great show, but it didn't last long enough for my taste. I would have to agree with your assessment of B5 and, with the publishing of the Stracynski scripts, I'm finding even more depth and layers than I'd realized. **[Tom]** Twilight Zone, but of course the youngsters in the crowd will all say Babylon 5. **[Jamie]** However, the best SF show on TV right now is Battlestar Galactica. **[Edi]** Battlestar Galactica current is working to be the best ever for the old timers I would say Star Trek Next Generation.

02) Best Soap: [Jim] I don't know..... I never watch 'em. [Kevin] I don't know much about soaps so I had to think back to the days when, coming home from school, my grandmother would have shows on and the only one that came to mind was As the World Turns. I guess Dallas or one of that genre might work, but when I think "soaps" I think the afternoon variety. [Tom] As you can see, I'm going for "classics" here. [Jamie] I have no clue.

03) Best News Show: [Jim] Pretty much has to be that, though again I don't actually believe that is the best one. [WAY] 60 Minutes is good, but in recent years has been going for the ratings stories rather than the hard-hitting investigations of the past. So, Jim, what is the best one in your opinion? [Kevin] News, I went back and forth between The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite and M/L. M/L was much better so that's how I went. [Jamie] tho I nearly get all my news from the Internet and radio.

04) Best Drama: [Jim] This was by far the hardest category, I had NO idea what to pick. I decided to go with recent and ubiquitous, not stating which ONE, so I wasn't specific, so I guess I meant the original (L&O). [Kevin] The toughest will probably be the drama category. This could go many ways and trying to guess what everyone else will say probably doesn't change anything so I went with my favorite and the one I think led to all the great shows later like NYPD Blue, Law & Order and the CSI group. In my opinion HSB's started it all. I can remember in college when the whole fraternity house gathered on Thursday evenings for HSB. Then, off to the bars! [Tom] uh...now you've shoved me off the deep end and there ain't no bottom down there! So, lets go with Gunsmoke. [Fred] Specifically, I'd pick out "Death of a Salesman", circa 1967. [Jamie] never seen it... but enough people seem to rave about it. [WAY] Haven't seen any episodes either, but lots of folks like it as do the critics.

05) Best Comedy: [Jim] Really hard, again, I don't think this is it, but it should be the one everyone names. [Kevin] I expect M*A*S*H to win the comedy category. And in reverence to the quality and my enjoyment of the show, I tossed in the * too. ;-) [Fred] I'd like to nominate "Cheers" and "Frasier" as a combined series. [Jamie] The funniest show currently on the air right now is "My Name Is Earl".

General Player Commentary:

[Kevin] Not another particularly good showing last time. Again I completely missed a couple of the more obvious answers like the Nat'l Enquirer and Time. Nothing like bringing up the rear. But it's early still.

[Tom] You'd pull this on me. I haven't had a television since, ... um... I'm not sure, mid 1970's? Earlier??

[Fred] This is a very difficult category for me, since I am not usually a "couch potato". Also, by "Show", I presume you mean a series, not a specific episode. So, this is the best I can do. Comment: But how can I forget the "That Was the Week That Was" series?

Round Four Category –County Fairs

- 01) Best Midway Ride
- 02) Common Food Eaten
- 03) Type of Competition
- 04) Common Evening Entertainment
- 05) Best Midway Attraction (that isn't a ride)

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

Deadline is: July 10, 2006 at high noon Central Time