

# By the WAY #10

by W. Andrew York  
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## Commentary

There is a farm about 30 minutes away that provides organic free-range chickens (plus eggs), beef and lamb year round. I've found the meat excellent and well worth the price. Interestingly, I cooked one of the whole chickens and served it to a friend. He didn't think it tasted like chicken - his taste buds having been corrupted by the hormone fed, broth injected, bred for "plumpness" poultry rather than chicken as it was meant to be.

The farm sells the meat through one of the farmer's markets plus you can always give them a call and go to the farm to get what you'd like. Additionally, a few times a year, they have "processing days". This means, you go to the farm and pick-up chickens just harvested the previous day - as fresh as you could ever want or expect.

Then, for Thanksgiving, they raise a limited number of heritage breed turkeys (free-range, organic, etc). They are freshly harvested and ready for your celebration. Last year, I had a Harvest Gold turkey and it was excellent. Moist, plenty of dark meat and very flavourful. Unfortunately, this year, the demand was greater than the supply and I volunteered to take a chicken instead of getting a turkey. However, it was still a tasty addition to my dinner table.

More and more I'm drawn to buying fresh food direct from the farmers rather than through the grocery stores. Yes, the prices are a bit higher, and it takes more of an effort to get the items, but in the end it is better for me, helpful to the small farmer and, in some small way, helps keep diverse varieties of many crops around. Too often what is in the stores is factory farm raised for appearance and for overall crop yield, not necessarily what is the best in nutrition for you.

As a side note, when you look for farmer's markets, be sure that they really are "farmer's" markets. A number of places, including roadside stands, bill themselves as farmer's markets. However, what they really represent are resellers. They go to farms, buy excess produce, mark it up and sell it. Often, the produce is collected over a number of days before being sold rather than sold the day of or the day after being harvested.

To buy from true farmer's markets, ask where the farm is and who is the farmer. If the seller is vague on where the farm is located or who actually grew the produce, they're probably resellers and any profit goes into their pockets rather than into the pockets of the folks digging in the dirt and tending the cattle.

## Texas History

This time, I'm going to cover my trip to Goliad arranged through the Texas State History Museum. Every so often, they'll set up tours to attractions within about four hours of Austin. Past tours have included the Missions of San Antonio, Johnson Space Center in Houston and a river rafting trip. One price covers the transportation, lunch, snacks and all admissions.

Promptly at 8am, the fully loaded bus left with 50 tour members and two museum staffers for Goliad. It has a place in history that is over shadowed by another place you might have heard of - the Alamo - the battle for which occurred about two weeks before.

In the Battle of Coleto Creek, a company of Texans under James Fannin surrendered and were returned to the Fort at Goliad. Seven days later, under direct written order of Santa Anna (invoking a Mexican Congressional decree that all foreigners in arms against the government were to be shot as pirates), the ambulatory prisoners were divided into three groups, marched out along different roads and shot. The invalids were killed in their hospital beds. Fannin, who was wounded, was taken in front of the chapel and executed. The loss of life was twice that of the Alamo.

This action further incensed the revolutionaries and, at the Battle of San Jacinto, the massacre was invoked with the battlecry "Remember the Alamo, Remember Goliad". In a matter of 10 minutes, the Mexicans were routed and Texas independence assured.

Note - unlike the Alamo, some people at Goliad did escape from the three groups in the confusion, a few of the youngest were protected by the "Angel of Goliad" and some specialists (artisans, doctors, blacksmiths) were kept alive to help the Mexican army.

Back to the trip - about 10:30, we arrived at Goliad State Park and a guided tour of the Mission Espiritu Santo. The mission was originally founded in 1721 in another location. After an interim second location, the mission was moved to the current site in 1749. The mission remained in use, working with the indigenous Indian population, until 1830 and then fell into disrepair.

The State of Texas took over the land in 1931 and, shortly thereafter, the church itself and some of the outbuildings were heavily reconstructed by the CWA (Civil Works Administration) and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). The church is a functioning church and in the workshops behind it, there are demonstrations of textile preparation from the time period (dyeing, weaving, etc).

It is an interesting look into the Spanish colonial period and the mission movement. The original mission was built on top of an abandoned French settlement and used to spread the Spanish influence in the New World. Later, it was moved to convert the natives, provide protection to settlements and collect taxes for the Crown.

From there, we went to the town square and dinner in a local restaurant. I had a very tasty chicken breast with mashed potatoes and green beans. Surprisingly, considering the local clientele and our party of 52, our pre-ordered meals were served quite quickly and hot out of the kitchen, though the wait staff was a bit overwhelmed. Afterwards, we were free to check out the local stores or relax. I ended up reading....

Our next stop was for a guided tour of the Presidio La Bahia, the fort half of the mission colonization movement. Situated across a river from the mission (to help keep the soldiers from the locals), it was in use continually through the Texas Revolution. It even has a place in the American Revolution, a large cattle drive left from the Fort to supply Spanish troops fighting British troops along the Gulf Coast.

Fannin's men were stationed here, in the renamed "Fort Defiance", at the time of the Battle for the Alamo. Ordered to retire to Victoria, after the fall of that mission, they were caught in the open at Coleto Creek. The two sides battled that afternoon, but the next day with minimal food and water, the Texican force surrendered. They were returned to the Mexican occupied fort until that fateful Palm Sunday.

After the revolution, much of the fort fell into disrepair. However, the chapel continued in use through today (with a short period of time being used as a personal residence). The fort was restored through a major donation and much local work in the 1960s. Interestingly, as this site's guide pointed out, the original Mission Espiritu Santo is owned by the State of Texas while the companion La Bahia Fort is owned and operated by the Catholic Church.

Once we were finished there, most of us walked the short distance to the Fannin Memorial. After the massacre, most of the bodies were gathered and burned. They were left uninterred. After the defeat of the Mexican army, a detachment of Texas troops gathered the bodies and buried them in a common grave. This memorial was later erected on that spot.

After the brief visit there, we again boarded the bus for the drive home (but first, getting a cold soda and some snacks). For entertainment on the bus, in the morning they handed out a 14-page flyer with background information and started the latest "Alamo" movie. On the way back they finished that movie and played a documentary video picked up at the fort. Back at 6pm, we went our separate ways with new knowledge and respect for Texas history.

Information from site guides and:

Texas Forts by Wayne Lease (2001) <- purchased at the fort  
Presidio La Bahia pamphlet  
Interpretive Guide to: Goliad State Park pamphlet (2003)  
Excerpt from *The Handbook of Texas* online included in Museum handout  
(<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/qeg2.html>)

**Feature:** A couple weeks back, the annual MilleniumCon gaming convention was held here in Austin. I've enjoyed attending the Con since I discovered it a few years back. It is hosted by a miniatures group and an RPGA group, but they have a varied mix of games across almost all genres. Over the years, I've played miniatures, board games, playtested games, been in demos, card games and others. For the minimal cost, it is a top-notch regional convention!

This year, on Friday, I'd signed up for an RPG (not part of the RPGA group). Unfortunately, I was the only one and no one else answered the call for other players (not an uncommon occurrence for the time frame). The game was based on the old Arduin Grimore rules with the latest updates (I'd not been aware that they'd been updated - something for future research). When we decided to call the game start, the GM gave me a set of cards for "Swords and Dragons," which was his prize for the best player in each of his sessions. This is a game inside the Arduin universe with which I'm not familiar.

So, I looked around and found another GM with a lack of players. He'd set up a "Battle of Kursk" miniatures game and I took on the German side. The GM played the Soviet side and had already performed the defensive bombardment. A good chunk of my Tigers (about 30%) fell to his artillery bombardment.

Over the course of the evening, a few of the teen and pre-teen generation joined us and we split the commands and the dice rolls. In the end, when we were kicked out at 1am, the Germans were close to taking and holding the flags. Almost all of the Soviet armour was destroyed, only a few light and lend lease tanks left, along with a bit of infantry. The Germans still had a couple of Tigers and Panthers with their lorry-borne infantry uncommitted. One of the Panthers was in an impregnable woodland position - it was unable to be killed by any of the remaining armour and infantry had to run across open ground to get to it.

The GM said I'd played the scenario much differently from others he'd run. I was much more methodical and used some interesting tactics (such as putting troops in the church steeple to spot). He said that next time, he'd put a turn limit on the game. However, at the beginning, he said the game would run about 12 turns. We were 9 or 10 turns in and, given a full 12 turns, I probably would have tipped the balance and taken the flags.

The next morning, I played in a "Babylon 5: A Call to Arms" space miniatures game. The group of us split up Centauri and Narn fleets with me controlling the "fast" division of the Centauri. Most of my ships joined the combined fighter group in a right wing sweep with my one quasi-capital ship holding the left flank of the main body.

Unfortunately, we (the Centauri) had little experience with the game. The Narn's have a proximity mine that is very deadly to packed ships. Our fighter group was a packed group of fighters stiffened by a few of my fast ships. The mines caused horrific losses, taking out that wing for all practical purposes.

This left our other wing to close and it also had significant problems in closing with and damaging the Narns. In the end, the entire fighter division was lost, my ship in the other wing was also lost - every ship I had was a burned out hulk. However, I'd caused the most damage to the Narn fleet, so I was deemed the "top" Centauri and received a free miniature from the sponsoring vendor (I chose a Minbarai Torotha Fighter blister pack).

Coming off that loss, I joined a "Circus Maximus" game that I'd watched many times in the previous cons. The GM has created a large miniatures arena for the game including chariots with individual personalities. In previous cons, I'd watched but never participated. This time, I was going to play!

Showing up, the GM went over the rules and described the chariots available. When my time came, I choose the one which was supposed to be based on Charlton Heston's character in "Ben Hur". However, became to be called Conan (as I recall). The GM of the game is very vocal and provides an amazing and entertaining commentary on the events on his game board (such as the chariot named after a witch, when doing something evil, reincarnated with a leading "b" in the name).

We started, and I was in the midst of the pack. But, this game had a special aspect - you could give incentives for the players to accomplish certain tasks. One early incentive was - \$1 to the person who killed the first medium horse. Well, coming into the first turn, one of the players whipped my horses like a madman. I ended up going through the turn at something like 32+ (well over the max on the table). I luckily rolled under the needed amount (1/6 chance) and, per the GM, went into "warp speed" ended up far in front of everyone else. This made me a marked man, quickly \$10 was on the incentive pool for anyone who could remove me from the game.

I usually play a conservative game, so nearing the end, I'd fallen back but was in the leading group with a few possible contenders. So, I decided to whip what I expected to be my closest foe. Of course, with my luck, she took my whip on the first attempt, leaving me to reins for control. After the last corner, I raced to the finish line with all could muster. I barely made it over the line (with a whip, I had a 50% chance of improving my ending by 3 spaces). By the end of the game, one person had bested me by 2 spaces. So, I came in second.

But, it wasn't a total loss. As the final tally revealed, there was still \$10 in the pot to remove me from the game. As I made it across the finish line, I ended up with \$10 in my pocket as no one else met the conditions. Very Cool and I'm going to sign up early next year for the Circus Maximus games!

In the evening, the GM for a “Dork Tower” game didn’t appear. So, a few of us ended up playing a game of “Axis and Allies” with the latest rules. The game owner played Japan/Germany, I was Russia (not having played the game in more than a decade) while a neophyte played England. More or less I ran the US, though it was supposed to be a split command with the English player. Needless to say, we were slaughtered. I’m not sold on the “new, improved” rules.

Sunday morning, for the last session, I found a pick-up miniatures game as what I’d signed up for had the same GM as the previous evening (it was a game of “Munchkin”). Later in the morning, some folks started up a game, but I don’t know if it was a pick-up game or the GM did show.

In any case, two of us split the Japanese defending a beach while the amphibious assaulting Americans were split into a three man command. It wasn’t a pretty sight with the Americans only taking one bunker and, at the end of the game, having only handful of men left. The GM stated that this was the third time he’d run the game and was the first in which the Japanese held on to more than a small portion of the sandtable. As an added bonus, the GM handed out to all participants a copy of “Platoon Commander: World War 2” skirmish rules.

All in all, it was a packed weekend and a heck of a lot of fun. Also, those of us in the B5 game traded Email addresses and a number of us have met to play that game in local gaming stores. I’ve only made one of the sessions, taking five Omega class heavy destroyers against five Minbari battlecruisers (commanded by the GM of the Circus Maximus game mentioned above). Minbari also have some nasty surprises and are danged hard to hit. Meanwhile, my ships managed a good impression of swiss cheese.

I’ve now got the rules to the miniatures game and am debating on what fleet to build. In our group, all of the major fleets have been taken (Narn, Minbari, Earth Alliance, Centauri) and I don’t know if I want to pick one of the minor fleets or duplicate on existing one. I’m also not sure I want to paint miniatures....

Update on Last Month’s Column: Well, the person who had my wallet did do one other bit of mischief. My gas card statement came a couple days ago and they had charged a full tank of gas on the card before I’d canceled it. On the plus side, a recent check of my credit report shows nothing out of the ordinary.

**Review:** “Jericho” recently went on hiatus until February. If you don’t know, it is a TV serial based around a small Kansas town in the days and weeks after a number of nuclear explosions around the country. How many went off, who did it and how the rest of America is coping is the central mystery, along with local efforts of trying to stay alive.

Overall, I’m enjoying the show and look forward to its return. It does a good representation of what may happen in a post-apocalyptic scenario in a similar location. However, due to narrative necessities, there are gaping plot holes and faux paus. I do realize that some of these may be explained later on, such as how the Red Chinese air dropped supplies (China has no long range cargo planes or effective in-flight refueling capabilities) was hinted as possibly being cover for American supply drops (why???)

Other curious things - eight weeks after the event, everyone is still driving around in their cars, trucks, etc for routine, run-of-the-mill errands. A small Kansas town would not have the fuel reserves available. On the other hand, the writers realized that the town grocery would need to be supplemented. So, they had the weekly train delivery crash outside of town with, presumably, a number of other town’s grocery’s supplies inside. Only, this isn’t the 1880s - tractor trailers deliver foodstuffs, not railroads.

The town’s police chief and about half of the force is killed off in the first episode, leaving only a couple of officers. For a town this size, that is an awfully small department and it apparently it had no reserves. When I worked for a city of roughly 10,000, we had about 20 officers and a reserve force of 15. Additionally, since the event, no county or state police forces have shown up (let alone the military).

On the other hand, mercenaries hired by the US military are in control of nearby towns. They are apparently operating with no liaison or oversight by any US government agency or military personnel, only a mandate. Not even a representative of the state or local government appears to be working with them. In real life, this is a bit incredulous.

However, it is a good mystery that I’m enjoying even with the scratchings of “you’ve got to be kidding!” in the back of my mind. There is a lot that I’m sure will not be what it seems (the mystery man and his family who just moved to town, but has a wealth of knowledge and connections to an unknown organization; the prodigal son who’s past few years are a mystery, but brings just the skills the town needs; where is everyone else - until the last episode there were only a handful of refugees reaching the town).

In short, when it comes back with recap episodes, watch it. Or, as a co-worker recently did (and who is now hooked on the show), see every aired episode from the CBS website.

**Observation:** I don't really know what to think - I bought an Epson Printer (a Photo R300) for about \$60 from Fry's Electronics in late spring. A full set of replacement ink cartridges (four color, plus black) was \$59.84 (plus tax) at Costco yesterday. Does it really cost nothing to make, package, ship and sell the printer? Or, is it the printer equivalent of a disposable camera?

**Playlist for this issue:** Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy DVD; CBS National and Local news, "Friday Night Lights", "Boston Legal"

**Coming up Next Time:** Discussion of a SANS computer security class I recently took. Otherwise, I don't have a clue....

=====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)  
Scattergories! will be the next "everyone plays" game unless there is another suggestion....

### 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 Nine Category – Internet Sites

#### Round Nine Results:

- 01) Favorite News Site: CNN 3, NY Times 2, Drudge Report 2, MSNBC 1, WSJ 1, BBC 1
- 02) Favorite Personal Blog: none 2, Boing Boing 1, MySpace 1, Dilbert Blog 1, Onion 1, "Benzene 4" 1, Pete Duxon's 1, Johncomb.com 1, jergames 1
- 03) Favorite Reference Site: Google 4, Wikipedia 4, DallasNews 1, Webster.com 1
- 04) Favorite Entertainment Site: Yahoo 3, Playboy 1, YouTube 1, ESPN 1, off-the-shelf 1, worldwinner.com 1, ebaumsworld 1, MSN 1
- 05) Favorite Commentary Site: NY Times 1, Yahoo 1, Guidelive 1, Salon 1, WSJ 1, PopPolitics 1, Onion 1, Groklaw 1, abcnews.com/politics/TheNote.html 1, jergames 1

#### Individual Scores:

01) Nathan Simmons:	CNN, none, Google, ebaumsworld, Onion	= 155 + 11 = 166
02) Jim Burgess:	CNN, Benzene 4, Google, Yahoo, PopPolitics	= 138 + 12 = 150
03) Jamie McQuinn:	CNN, Dilbert Blog, Wikipedia, YouTube, Salon	= 138 + 10 = 148
04) Edi Birsan:	NY Times, none, Google, Playboy, NY Times	= 137 + 10 = 147
05) Steve Koehler:	MSNBC, Boing Boing, Wikipedia, Yahoo, Yahoo	= 134 + 10 = 144

06) Doug Kent:	drudgereport, myspace, dallasnews, yahoo, guidelive	= 130 + 8 = 138
07) Marc Ellinger	Drudge Report, Johncombest, Webster, worldwinner, TheNote	= 126 + 6 = 132
08) Brendan Whyte:	BBC, jergames, wikipedia, msn, jergames	= 121 + 8 = 129
Tom Howell:	NY Times, Pete Duxon's, Google, off-the-shelf, Groklaw	= 120 + 9 = 129
10) Kevin Wilson:	WSJ, Onion, Wikipedia, ESPN, WSJ	= 110 + 8 = 118
11) Fred Davis:	[No Entry Received]	= 105 + 6 = 111
12) Christopher Janik:	[No Entry Received]	= 81 + 6 = 87

Best possible score: 13. Best score achieved: 12 by **Jim!**

#### WAY's Commentary:

- 01) Favorite News Site: Hmm, I expected more CNN. That's the only news site I visit on a regular basis. I do check out BBC on occasion, but I've not been to any of the others.
- 02) Favorite Personal Blog: Very interesting, "none" is the highest scorer for the category. I've heard of about half of the mentioned sites, but I've only been to MySpace (where Doug Kent has his blog) and Dilberts (once or twice). The blogs I follow include Neil Gaiman's and Wil Wheaton's; but I might check out a couple of the others. As for The Onion, I read the free weekly print edition here in Austin.
- 03) Favorite Reference Site: Hmmm, I don't know that I'd call Google a "Reference" site. It is more of an index than a destination. Wikipedia I've used, but I take their content with a big grain of salt and look for corroboration before I'll accept something for fact. The reference site I use most often is "m-w.com" (the Merriam Webster dictionary site).
- 04) Favorite Entertainment Site: My favorite site is the Penny Arcade one. Hilarious comics, even if I don't always follow some of the online/computer gaming inside jokes. They are publishing their older efforts in books that I've quite enjoyed (Attack of the Bacon Robots and Epic Legends of the Sword Kings).
- 05) Favorite Commentary Site: There was no consensus on this one and I really didn't know if there would be one. Personally, I've not found a commentary site that I'm sold on, but I keep looking and will check out the suggestions y'all have given.

#### Player Commentary:

- 01) Favorite News Site: **[Steve]** (MSNBC) according to the Neilson ratings. **[Jim-Bob]** I don't often use these, and when I do, it is the newspaper sites of the New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, and my local Providence Journal that I use most often, but those won't be winners. **[Marc]** (Drudge Report) Up to date with lots of information across the world. Less concerned about car chases than what's happening in the hot spots across the globe. It is the best.
- 02) Favorite Personal Blog: **[Edi]** (none) though I wonder if the Drudge report is a blog... if it is put it down as the answer though I have been there once which is more than other public blogs. **[WAY]** I've not been there that I remember, but from what I've heard about it I'd classify it as a commentary site. **[Steve]** I have never looked at any blogs, so I wouldn't know. **[Jim-Bob]** And the only ones of these I ever look at are those of TAP subbers Mark Lew and Pete Gaughan. Let's choose Mark Lew, but just so I don't slight anyone, Pete's is raptormagic.blogspot.com. What Mark calls "Benzene 4" is at radio.weblogs.com/0134204/. **[Marc]** (Johncombest.com) This is the only blog I've ever really read any of. Never posted on any. Missouri politics from the proper perspective. **[Brendan]** Yehuda Berliner's site, he runs the Jerusalem boardgames club, gaming with a jewish perspective.
- 03) Favorite Reference Site: **[Jim-Bob]** (google.com) of course. **[Marc]** Merriam Webster dictionary online. Very convenient the one time a year I need it. Reference stuff is just not the same anymore. With Yahoo or Google, all one has to do is enter what they're looking for and they can find a specific site. Maybe Google ought to be my answer, but that's not a reference site, it's a search engine.
- 04) Favorite Entertainment Site: **[Edi]** would have liked to put down the Diplomatic Pouch but this group has more earthy interests. **[Jim-Bob]** Can we say TAP's site? That actually might get some votes here. I don't know how to answer this one, so I think I have to answer yahoo.com, since from there

you get to all of Yahoo's popular sports and fantasy sports sites. But I don't even know what you really mean by an entertainment site. **[Marc]** Who has time for this stuff? I really can't think of any entertainment site off hand. Ummm....worldwinner.com? How's that?

05) Favorite Commentary Site: **[Jim-Bob]** No idea here, really, no idea. So here's a scientific way, let's see if it scores a point. I went to Google and entered "Commentary" and got about 109,000,000 hits. And that is so general that the top is all dominated by paid sites (including Bible Commentary sites). So I tried adding various combinations of "Web Sites" and Popular Web Sites, and didn't get much of anything. Then I did just Commentary+Popular and got 30 million hits. The Top 10 there still had lots of Bible Commentary sites, but it said something called "PopPolitics.com" which seemed to be a favorite site to get placed so high in Google. I have no idea if this is a good site or not, but if it scores points, I guess it was. **[Marc]** What is this? Commentary site? Huh? God, I must be way behind the times. I guess the only thing I can come up with is abcnews.com/politics/TheNote.html. **[WAY]** The way I looked at this, a "news" site is a site from a reputable news organization or a traditional presentation of news. A "blog" is one person's ramblings, commentary and points of view that other may or may not be able to comment on. A "commentary" site is between the two, sort of the old BBS style of presentation, with multiple people initiating discussions and/or commenting on various topics with some structure and/or guidance.

#### **General Player Commentary:**

**[Steve]** Stumped me on these.

**[Jamie]** Extra points should be awarded to participants who answer with a complete URL... **[WAY]** which you kindly provided. **Doug** also came close to full URLs, just leaving off the http://. But, as that is implied in most major browsers, they'd count as complete if I was giving bonus points. A few other gave partial URLs.

**[Marc]** Wow this was tough. I use the web a lot, but not for several of these categories. Could you have added favorite sports site or maybe favorite weather site? I know, I know...boring!! But hey that's life when you turn 40.

**[Brendan]** got married on 2nd. so late orders with no apologies (no zines received here in Thailand as yet....) **[WAY]** Congrats on the wedding! Are you moving to Thailand??

#### **Round Ten Category – People**

- 01) Favorite Comedienne
- 02) Favorite Singer
- 03) Favorite Movie Personality
- 04) Favorite TV Star
- 05) Favorite Politician

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

**Deadline is: January 13, 2007** at high noon Central Time