

# By the WAY #19

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I'm glad to be back, along with Jim and *TAP*, landing your Email queue and your mailbox. Below, besides the usual, I've added a quick book review listing akin to the movie review. If you ever want more information on any of the books or movies listed, just let me know.

Also, I've finally settled on an "All-Players" game that starts below. Everyone is welcome to play or join in at any time. As it is a variation, that I've just come up with, on an old game, I may need to tweak the rules slightly or have to explain something a bit better. Let me know your questions and if there's something that isn't clear to you. And, send in your letter and your word guess!

## Commentary

A couple years back, I had the pleasure of going to Chicago to have dinner. The Burghof was closing after more than 100 years and I joined a number of Chicagoans, and a couple San Francisco travelers, to celebrate the event while enjoying some excellent food.

About a week ago, I was able to return to that City for another dinner and, this time, stay a few extra days to spend time with friends to experience Chicago in the afterglow of the memorable Election Day results that brought a new political spotlight that overshadows the negative memory of the '68 Democratic Convention.

From the lamposts, downtown, the mayor had banners put up recognizing the president elect. The newspapers were filled with stories, had printed additional copies and produced commemorative sections. The radio and TV news reports commented on the changes happening in Hyde Park due to the increased security and had human interest bits. One was about the secret service reaction to a car which cut off one of the motorcades, which included drawn guns, and the number of cars in a motorcade when Barack and Michelle were going to different locations after an event. It created an interesting atmosphere to the visit.

My flight in was uneventful, my first time flying without checking luggage and having printed out the boarding pass from the Internet. Doing so appeared to make things easier, along flying early in the day to avoid crowds, and allow the most flexibility if there are delays or other disruptions. In this case, I left home about 4:30am for a 6:40am flight.

Passenger screening went exceedingly smoothly - knowing and following the rules while keeping a positive attitude seemed to make a significant difference. Those that argued, wanted preferential treatment or otherwise didn't follow instructions had a much more difficult time - both heading out of Austin and returning from Chicago.

Upon arrival in Chicago, about 15 minutes early, I ended up having a short wait until Jim swung into the passenger pick-up area. He stopped by to get me on his way home from work, but was caught in some inevitable road construction. I had plenty to read, and it hadn't gotten too chilly yet, so that wasn't a problem.

We chatted while heading to Clarendon Hills and a stop by his house to pick up his wife Andi. They took me to an Irish eatery, The Kerry Piper, for lunch. I ended having a very tasty Loaded Potato Soup and Turkey Club combo. Then, to the hotel in Westmont to unpack and get a short nap.

The Clubhouse Inn was a nice place, decently maintained with large rooms and attentive staff. A number of amenities were available, but I wasn't able to take full advantage of them. Free internet access, indoor pool/spa/weight room, nightly (except Sunday) manager's reception with free drinks and snacks, full breakfasts are just some of the perks included in the reasonable price (@\$75/night). The only minor inconveniences were delivery of the newspapers (I like to read one when I get up, not wait until 7am) and initially being charged more than I'd been quoted. However, that was quickly fixed when it was pointed out.

The San Francisco contingent of two folks arrived later that afternoon, and we headed to Jim's for a tasty home-cooked dinner (Chicken Picatta) and some gaming (four rounds of "No Merci" and one game involving artifact hunting, dubbed "Indiana Jones" - the real name didn't come up).

Friday, we headed on a day-trip into Wisconsin and "The House on the Rock". It is hard to describe the place, there is a 'house' built into/on a rock outcropping by an individual who wanted to showcase local materials and a building that compliments the locale. Included in the house, is the "Infinity Room". It is a glass sided extension that juts, free-standing, over a gorge and narrows the further you go out. As it was overcast (with a bit of snow flurries), the view was limited. However, in a good day, it should be stunning.

Inside the house, there were all sorts of nooks and crannies with an almost organic (in a rocky sort of way) flow. Somewhat narrow passages open out into multistory rooms, each turn revealing something different. On display are all sorts of art, decorative items and, being the Christmas season, hundreds of Santas.

Adjacent to the house, is a series of display rooms for the builder's collections. Over the course of time, he'd collected all sorts of older weaponry, coin banks, musical instruments, nostalgic pieces, vehicles, pneumatic bands (up to room sized) and the largest carousel.

In one room is a larger than life display of a whale fighting a squid. Along the three story walkway circling the walls are all sorts of ship models and artifacts. In another room is a recreated street from the late 1800s with all manner of storefronts, displaying contemporary wares and tools of the trade.

All in all, it took us hours to wander around and see what was in the two buildings (a third structure was closed for the season). Much of what was there, if not acquired for these collections, may have ended up destroyed and lost to the future. For instance, the air powered installations of musical instruments were something I had not seen before in such numbers and good condition. Check out the website to get an idea of the uniqueness of the place!

Once back in Chicago, it was time for pizza and a game of St. Petersburg.

Saturday was a trip on the Metra into downtown to sit in on Jim's graduate journalism class at the University. The first half was discussion on the Election night coverage, especially the use of the hologram by CNN. Jim and I had chatted about it and whether the delivery method detracted from the message as well as the wisdom of taking the reporter from the atmosphere of the historical event in Grant Park into the studio for the interview. Most of the students' reactions were along the lines of "it was cool" and how the technology could be used in the future to bring interviewees to the interviewer rather than using remote location shoots. A follow-on discussion was about an article in the New York Times comparing the situation Obama is facing with that of FDR in 1932. There was some lack of the students' knowledge of that historical period and how it compared to what's going on today.

After a break, the class was taken to the radio news station where Jim works for a tour and a presentation by one of the reporters. The reporter showed how he was able to leverage a set of interviews at a job fair to create three different stories of various lengths and focus. Also, the manner of taking the interviews, finding the best quotes and weaving them into his report was demonstrated. He was a wealth of information and anecdotes, while providing the students with plenty of ideas and tips to use in their future careers.

Then, we went to the renewed Burghof for lunch. A bit of the ambiance was gone, along with the long time staff. The considered opinion was that the food wasn't quite as good, the service was under the bar set by the old restaurant and it wasn't the destination place it once was. However, it was still a good lunch along with good conversation and time with friends.

While downtown, I was able to see "The Bean" installation art, the location of the summit where the railroads met to define the four continental time zones and the Cultural Center, which had an abbreviated display of books by Chicago writers and publishers. Then, on the Metra to return to the suburbs to freshen up for dinner.

We headed to El Primo Canto for the dinner event where we were joined by six others for a Brazilian steakhouse feast. All chose the 'all-you-can-eat' option, which started with a garlic/eggplant spread with pitas and breads followed by a trio of pastas and sauces (mushroom, marinara and garlic). The main course was a selection of pork tenderloin, lamb, beef and chicken accompanied by green beans and pearl onions, polenta sticks, mixed greens salad and roasted potatoes with gorgonzola sauce. Plenty to eat, good conversation and a great time had by all!

Sunday was a low key day, another game of St Petersburg and a round of Ticket to Ride were played. Nippon Rails was brought out, but we quickly realized that it would be a long game due to our collective unfamiliarity with the city and load locations. So, we folded that game and headed to the Bohemian Crystal for a Czech dinner. The food was excellent and the portions enormous (at a very reasonable cost). The leftovers from my plate became my dinner that evening.

Afterwards, back to Jim's to catch a bit of the Bears game until Tom had to head to the airport for his flight. I relaxed that evening and to the airport first thing in the morning for my flight. There in plenty of time and had an enormous omelet (five eggs!) with home fried potatoes and onions at the Illinois Bar & Grill. Another smooth flight home, again arriving 15 minutes early. All in all, a great weekend!

### **Texas Spotlight**

Austin hosts the largest bat colony in a city under the Ann Richards Bridge (formerly the Congress Avenue Bridge). Made up of upwards of 1.5 million Mexican free-tail bats, they arrive in the spring and leave in early fall. Each evening, as the sun goes down, they swarm out to feed and have become quite a tourist attraction. Near the

bridge, are a number of viewing sites and folks even go out in boats on Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake) to experience the daily event.

Just south of the bridge, there is a sculpture of a bat to mark the creatures' summer home and, recently, an annual weekend festival was started featuring all things bats. In past years, it has been held on the bridge itself; however, complaints about the disruption to traffic and shoppers resulted in it being moved to the nearby 1st Street Bridge (still within sight of the bats' bridge).

### LOCs

Send them in!

**Jim-Bob:** I completely share the hopes/fears about the new Star Trek movie. Although I actually came not to like Enterprise at all. I keep saying I'm going to try it again in the Sci-Fi channel reruns, but haven't dipped my toe in yet. I think in theory this is going to be great, to be what Enterprise WANTED to be, but wasn't. In practice, who knows if we can accept these new actors playing our beloved characters. [[**WAY** - I just keep hearing good things about the movie, well what little is getting out about the movie. I'm very encouraged and will be in line to see it opening weekend.]]

### Review

Last spring, Dave Sim produced a, roughly 56 page, graphic novel title "Judenhass" - a German term that translates as "Jew Hatred". This publication is his work on the Nazi Holocaust (or Shoah, the Jewish term), answering his stated responsibility that "every creative person should consider doing a work addressing (the Holocaust)...".

Acting as creator, writer, penciler, inker and publisher, this is a very personal work that reflects strongly on the pervasive views of that time period - not just in Germany; but in society across the world. Additionally, he delves into historical attitudes and features quotes from the centuries leading up to the Nazi period while showing the world's response after the Second World War and through the present day.

It is a sobering publication that should be used to spark discussion in schools and book clubs while encouraging the reader to look into themselves, reviewing their attitudes and beliefs along with how they relate to the rest of humanity. Very Highly Recommended!

**Books Finished:** Been Thinking About (Religion, B); The War North of Rome: June 1944-May 1945 (History, D+); Old Man's War (Sci-Fi, A); Out of the Ordinary (Religion, B+); The Road Not Taken and Other Poems (Poetry, B); Decision Making by the Book (Religion, C); Hitler's Beneficiaries (History, A+, not for the casual reader); 1634: Ram Rebellion (Alt History, B); The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems (Poetry, C+); The Ghost Brigade (Sci-Fi, A-); The Last Colony (Sci-Fi, A+); The Orphan's Nine Commandments (Autobiography, A+, highly recommended); The Android's Dream (Sci-Fi, A); The Bunker (History, B-, dated); The Sunrise Lands (Alt History, A-); Positive Thinking for a Time Like This (Motivational, A-)

**Movie Watch:** Iron Man A-; Speed Racer B-; The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian B; Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull B; Incredible Hulk B; Kung Fu Panda B+; Get Smart B+; Mongol A+; Journey to the Center of the Earth 3D B-; Hellboy II B; Wall-E A; The Dark Knight A; X-Files: I Want to Believe C+; Mummy D+; Bottle Shock B+; Traitor B; W B+

### Observation

I was eating breakfast at Sonic recently and happened to look at the bill. Included on it is the amount of change to make a full dollar. I was surprised - do employers think that their employees can't make simple change or are the schools so ineffective that businesses have to take these steps to ensure their staff can make simple monetary transactions?

**Playlist for this issue:** Dancing with the Stars: The Results Show; 60 Minutes; The Amazing Race; "Wardencluffe Tower" (Allan Holdsworth CD); "You Do Your Thing" (Montgomery Gentry CD); "West Texas Heaven" (Kimmie Rhodes CD); local CBS news; CBS Evening News

