

# By the WAY #7

by W. Andrew York  
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## Commentary

Sorry for the quick turnaround on the column. Most everyone was able to get in on the game, and I appreciate all you for getting your orders in smartly. It really helps on the GMing side to have orders earlier rather than at the last minute. This time should have a bit more breathing space.

And, I note, that we are getting into the late rounds of the “By Popular Demand” game. Are folks interested starting up another? Or some other game? Or both a BPD and another game? If so, speak up, let me know and we’ll see what transpires.

My apologies, in the last issue, I failed to reference where I took the Texas history tidbits from. It was Texas Politics Today 6th edition. It has a slew of editors, including William Earl Maxwell and Ernest Cain and was copyright 1992. This was the textbook for my college Texas Government class.

## Texas History

For this month’s Texas History tidbit, it deals with the Six Flags Over Texas. No, not the theme park in Arlington, but the six flags the theme park is named after:

Spanish Flag, French Flag, Mexican Flag  
Republic of Texas Flag, United States Flag and  
Confederate States of America Flag

Each of these flags have flown over Texas lands as the representative symbol of a recognized government. Five of them are obvious, Spain originally colonized Mexico and, by extension, Texas. Mexico gained its independence and that was the central government which was replaced in 1836 by the Republic of Texas. Nearly a decade later, Texas joined the United States and, subsequently, left to join the Confederate States. Now, the US Flag flies again.

The French flag takes a small bit of explaining. La Salle led an expedition into eastern Texas and established a colony there. Eventually, Spanish colonization won out over the minimal French efforts and France withdrew. However, it was enough to count them as one of the six flags over Texas.

Now, as I did that from memory, I hope I didn’t have a miscue on any detail.

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**Feature:** ArmadilloCon didn’t work out very well for me this year. Most of the programs I wanted to see were late at night (I’m an early to bed type person) or opposite other commitments. So, I didn’t spend as much time there compared to other years. However, as I usually do, one of the first things I did was to get a membership for next year. Hopefully things will work out better for me next August.

This convention is mostly a literary convention with plenty of writers and editors around. Secondarily, it has a good turnout of artists. The media presence is subdued, with a few panels and promotional materials for upcoming movies, tv season, etc on the freebie table. Costuming is minimal, no legions of Klingons or Jedi around.

The convention was in its second year at the Doubletree. This is a good location, with the meetings rooms out of the mainstream hotel traffic with a large central area for conversation and such. The event was well attended and folks seemed to be enjoying themselves.

The art show was excellent, I wish I had enough funds to be able to buy some of the space art and a couple of sculptures. As it was, I was sorely tempted with two pieces and would have paid the quick-sale

price if someone hadn't already bid on them. I was a bit more open with the wallet in the dealer's room, but mostly window-shopped.

I was able to attend the panel I really look forward to each year - that by our local "JPL Ambassador". (this year he only had one presentation while most years there are two). This time he touched on the Messenger mission and the New Horizons probe.

The Messenger mission was launched two years ago and will be the second visit to Mercury (the first being Mariner 10 thirty years ago which did three flybys of the same side of the planet). The flight will reach the planet in January 2008 and have orbital insertion in March 2011. Some of the areas the probe will look at are the magnetic fields (only planet besides Earth with significant ones), what is on the poles (ice?) and what volatiles are in the exosphere and how are they replenished.

The New Horizons mission is headed to the, now, dwarf planet of Pluto. It launched in January with a travel time to Pluto of 9.5 years. Afterwards, it will head into the Kuiper Belt and beyond. It will be our first close look at the dwarf planet and the probe should arrive before the atmosphere refreezes (Pluto is on the outward leg of its orbit, having dipped inside of Neptune's orbit).

Besides that, I ducked into a couple of panels briefly, one being a recruiting presentation by the Austin Robotics Society. I also caught the tail end of the charity auction, with the last item having a lively couple of bidders and going quite high.

I'm already looking forward to next year! I'll have to do better on my scheduling, maybe taking Friday off so I can sleep in and be awake for the 9pm and 10pm panels.

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**Review:** "The Illusionist" - I went to see the movie this afternoon with a friend. I'd seen some previews and knew it to be a period piece, but little of the story. The three leads, Paul Giamatti, Jessica Biel (looking very good) and Edward Norton weren't strong draws for me, but I'm a sucker for a historical drama. Plus, our first choice, "Who Killed The Electric Car," had already opened and closed. Interestingly, the movie was only playing in Austin's artplex.

The movie was astonishingly good and, as best I can tell, historically accurate in the setting - I'm not really up on late 1800s in Vienna. Also, I'm not sure about the storyline, needing to do some research on the movie. I seem to recall hearing about Eisenheim, but I'm not sure if it was in fiction or fact.

The illusions are done beautifully, I'm sure with a bit of CGI rather than true slight of hand, but it doesn't lose any appeal. The acting is above board, with a rare slip of the accent. The story is engrossing through the end, even if a bit predictable.

Worthwhile film to see!

**Observation:** Has network television peaked? Of all the new shows, only "Jericho" really grabs my attention (and, as such, will likely be canceled straight-away). Nothing else jumps out at me, though there are a few I'll probably look in on to see if they are worth investing time in. On the plus side, (the non-network) Sci-Fi is bringing new Dr. Who and BattleStar Galactica episodes. But, for better or worse, having my tv off most nights unless watching DVDs (Rome, excellent!) looks like the norm.

**Playlist for this issue:** "Rome" (episodes "Pharsalus" and "Caesaron"), RV dvd, Emmys

**Coming up Next Time:** More Texas History.....

=====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 Six Category – Dating

#### Round Six Results:

- 01) Worst Place to take a Date: Strip Club 2, Tractor Pull 1, Football Game 1, Rock Concert 1, Bowling Alley 1, Morgue 1, Funeral 1, Frat Party 1, Motor Sport Event 1
- 02) Best Place to take a Date: Restaurant/Dinner 4, Movies 3, Beach 1, Home 1, Paris 1
- 03) Favorite Place to take a Date: Restaurant/Dinner 4, Movie 3, Amusement Park 1, Museum 1, Bed 1
- 04) Average Cost of a Date: \$100 5, \$50 2, \$75 1, \$65 1, \$60 1
- 05) Best Food for a First Date: Italian/Pasta 4, Steak 2, Chinese 1, Ice Cream 1, Chocolate 1, Thai 1

#### Individual Scores:

01) Nathan Simmons:	Tractor Pull, Nice Restaurant, Nice Restaurant, \$100, Italian	= 101 + 18 = 119
02) Doug Kent:	Football Game, Movies, Amusement Park, \$50, Chinese	= 94 + 8 = 102
03) Jim Burgess:	Rock Concert, Beach, Restaurant, \$50, Steak	= 89 + 10 = 99
04) Steve Koehler:	Frat Party, Dinner, Restaurant, \$100, Italian	= 80 + 18 = 98
05) Tom Howell:	Strip Joint, Posh Restaurant, Movie, \$65, Thai	= 86 + 11 = 97
06) Jamie McQuinn:	Morgue, Movie, Museum, \$60, Ice Cream	= 88 + 7 = 95
07) Edi Birsan:	Funeral, Home, Bed, \$100, Italian	= 81 + 12 = 93
08) Brendan Whyte:	Motor Sport Event, Movies, Movies, \$100, Chocolate!	= 76 + 13 = 89
09) Marc Ellinger:	Strip Club, Paris, Dinner and Movie*, \$100, Steak and Wine*	= 71 + 14 = 85
10) Fred Davis:	[No Entry Received]	= 73 + 7 = 80
11) Kevin Wilson:	Bowling Alley, Dinner & Drinks*, Movie, \$75, Pasta	= 65 + 13 = 78
12) Christopher Janik:	[No Entry Received]	= 54 + 7 = 61

\*Counted first item only

Best possible score: 19. Best score achieved: 18 by **Nathan** and **Steve!**

#### WAY's Commentary:

- 01) Worst Place to take a Date: I wasn't planning on many matches here, and it didn't disappointed me. Only a strip club matched. I guess the morgue, followed by the funeral, would be a bad combination. Now, a bowling alley isn't all that bad (assuming your date likes to bowl). My worst date? You don't even want to know.....
- 02) Best Place to take a Date: Looking for the top-of-the-line place to impress and spend money. Paris will do it, as will a fancy restaurant. Myself, I lean towards fine dining.
- 03) Favorite Place to take a Date: Here, I was interested in the place you frequently take a date (i.e., affordable). Movies and/or moderately priced food are the norm. No comment on the bed entry.....
- 04) Average Cost of a Date: Hmmm....as many of you noted, it has been some time since you dated. Prices definitely have gone up. I would have leaned more towards to \$50 range as \$100 can put a strain on most anyone's budget - and, if you want to impress, \$100 doesn't go as far as it once did.
- 05) Best Food for a First Date: Italian is the number one choice and a very good one. Wide range of choices,  
nothing usually very spicy or with odd ingredients. However, avoid the spaghetti - marinara sauce

goes everywhere when slurping up noodles. Ice cream was another good choice, for that after-the-movies sweetness.

#### **Player Commentary:**

01) Worst Place to take a Date: **[Doug]** hmmm, not an easy one. How about Sporting Event? If you need more specific, football game. **[Jim-Bob]** Rock concerts, by definition are LOUD, so you can't talk,

you can't really get cuddly, they're great fun, but not to take a date. **[Marc]** Never tried it, but I knew someone who did...I took a date to Cave Party a long time ago, I think that might be the worst first date ever, but I doubt anyone else has a cave party, so might be a bit esoteric.

02) Best Place to take a Date: **[Jim-Bob]** Water, sand, the best! **[Marc]** The city of love, wine and food and, for the ladies, shopping!! Seems perfect.

03) Favorite Place to take a Date: **[Jim-Bob]** this one was tough, since as my wife and I often comment, we never really did date (I'll let you all ponder what that means), so I answered what I thought everyone else would answer. Best is best, but favorite is what you do a lot, so that's a restaurant. But I do find two and three confusing, we'll see if other people do. **[Marc]** What could be better than dinner and a movie, maybe dinner and a play? But that is rare nowadays.

04) Average Cost of a Date: **[Jim-Bob]** Gosh, could put anything here!!! **[Marc]** When I was dating, 12 years ago, this was a pretty pricey date (hey, I was in school then!!). I guess that prices have gone up. This is what it would cost for a movie and an average dinner with a couple of drinks. Right? **[Tom]** That's in today's prices. If I were going for in my dating days, it would be \$20, and

Chinese

05) Best Food for a First Date: **[Jim-Bob]** Here are the rules as I've always heard them: (1) no food where you have to choose between fingers and a fork, (2) nothing messy that can get on clothes, (3) nothing that is going to make your date break out in hives, and most importantly, (4) something that is going to make you feel sexy and virile. So Steak is it. You definitely eat steak with a

FORK,

it isn't messy, I don't think people are ever allergic to steak, and it's RED MEAT!!! **[WAY]** This works, unless you're dating a vegetarian or PETA member. **[Kevin]** almost everyone likes pasta. **[Edi]** Italian - which is also the best food for anything. **[Marc]** Hot wings at Hooters? Beer and brats at a Cardinals game? Depends upon the girl, but how can you beat steak and wine? I was at Morton's last week and it seemed pretty ideal to me, my wife said it was the best dinner she'd ever had. That's good enough for me.

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

**[Kevin]** OK, just an opening comment. This is going to be tough. I've been married almost 20 years. I haven't been on a date in a long time. And my daughter isn't even 2 yet so I don't have to worry/think about it from that perspective either. But here goes....

**[Edi]** Great #\$\$%^&^&@, I haven't 'dated' in 45 years then met my first (and only) girlfriend and we are still married for the last 33 years...yep I'm an expert on this subject!

#### **Round Seven Category – Books**

01) Favorite Author

02) Favorite Genre

03) Best Non-Fiction Book of the Past Year

04) Paperback or Hardback

05) Best Fiction Book of the Past Year

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

**Deadline is: September 30, 2006** at high noon Central Time