

Bill Rea ? Not much time for TV

I heard an interesting item on talk radio a couple of days ago.

It was basically to the effect that people don't watch as many TV programs as they used to.

That didn't surprise me much. That fact is I don't waste nearly as much time as I used to in front of what my parents used to call 'the idiot box.'

For one thing, I don't have time. For another, there are too many stations available these days. If I'm going to waste time watching the tube, I'm going to get selective. For example, I generally don't bother with any TV series because I have no way of knowing if I'll be able to keep up with it. On the other hand, I have hung around the TV most Sunday nights as my wife watches *Madam Secretary*, which deals with some woman who managed to become American Secretary of State for some reason. I was the one who first suggested we start watching it, if only because the idea intrigued me (I think my interest in politics had something to do with it) and Sunday is a night that I'm usually (not always) home. But I will confess the show has grabbed Beth a lot more than it has me. Beyond that, I haven't followed a series since *The West Wing* went off the air, and the last season of that show was such a creative write-off that I hardly missed it.

So you don't get the wrong idea, I do watch some TV. Indeed, as I write this, I'm seated at the kitchen table while Beth watches a rerun of *Jurassic Park*, a film we saw together early in our dating days ? Fact is I enjoyed the company a lot more than I enjoyed the movie, and things haven't changed.

Beth generally has charge of the remote in our household, and since I often work nights, I figure I really have no business raising an objection. I'll occasionally come home while she's watching a 'chick flick' (her words, not mine). She also has a thing for crime dramas, so I'll often walk in the door and join the investigation of some hideous murder already in progress.

I'm married. I know my place. I don't interfere.

But the bulk of my channel viewing falls roughly into three categories.

Beth is into sports, so I often come home to find her sitting on the couch watching the Leafs lose. At the risk of sounding cynical, I sometimes come home to find her sitting on the couch watching the Leafs win. Life can be so strange. And in the weeks to come, I expect to come home to find her watching the Blue Jays ? they might actually win. And while she's not much of a football fan, Beth raised little fuss over me watching the Super Bowl a couple of weeks ago.

I also enjoy watching news and documentaries. Although Tuesday is deadline day for the paper and I usually have to work late (midnight is not uncommon), I made a point of getting home early enough one recent Tuesday to watch President Barack Obama's State of the Union address. I also try to watch *60 Minutes*, which is usually followed by *Madam Secretary* ? Good thing, since Beth has always frowned when I try to watch *The Simpsons*. And if I hear of a good documentary coming on, I try to heap lots of charm on my spouse for permission to watch it, hoping there's not a 'chick flick' on a competing channel (didn't I already state that I know my place?)

The other category is movies. Granted, I love many of the classics (*Casablanca* is my favourite), but there have been some pretty good movies in the last couple of years, such as *The King's Speech* and *Lincoln*. I thought it was a grand evening last Saturday night when I learned two Humphrey Bogart classics were on right after each other on one of the stations we get (*The Harder They Fall* and *The Caine Mutiny*).

Actually there are lots of great movies, that don't have Bogey telling Sam to 'play it,' that can be part of a wonderful way to spend an evening, and Beth and I have enjoyed many of them on our tube, from silents to recent Oscar powerhouses.

Oh yeah, we took out time Sunday night to watch the Academy Awards (at least as long as I could stay awake), even if we hadn't seen any of the movies that were nominated. I paid to see only one movie in the last year, and was a little surprised that it hadn't been nominated for anything.

Our TV (we only have one) still sees a lot of use, although we frequently don't bother with the channel-hopping.

I have quite a library of movies on tape, and our collection of DVDs is constantly growing. One of the nice things about my job is I frequently have to attend sales, bazaars, etc., and I usually make a point of checking on the movie inventory. My tape of *Gone With the Wind* hadn't even been opened when I grabbed it at one such church sale.

It is a fact that I will frequently ask Beth, on those infrequent evenings when I'm home and we have nothing else pressing, if there's anything good on the tube. If the answer is in the negative, we start going through the shelves of tapes and DVDs. And like I stated above, the collection is pretty good.

We have all six *Star Wars* movies (one of my Christmas presents to Beth a couple of years ago), and there are some discs with TV shows. We have a small collection of *Perry Mason* classic episodes, and Beth, for Christmas last year, bought me the set of

first-season episodes of the original Star Trek series. I often find a session of watching Trelane a great pick-me-up (Trekkers, of course, know precisely what I'm referring to ? the rest of you don't know what you're missing).

I sort of had the idea that Beth was going to buy me the set of second-season episodes for the Christmas we've just had. In fact, she's indicated that was what she was thinking, but she couldn't find it. Thus, I had to settle for the entire seven-year offerings of Hill Street Blues. Life is tough, but we're getting through it. As of this writing, we're nicely into the second season, not yet to the point at which I got interested in the show during the initial run.

And the internet is a great source for good viewing. My appetite has been whetted lots of times by items I have found just by Googling. I have found some great documentaries on the net, enabling me to add to my knowledge of a lot of topics that are of interest to me.

So who needs TV? In the last week, on the internet, I found a brief, but interesting, account of the crash of R101.

If you're curious about R101, turn off the idiot box and Google

