

Bill Rea ? Toss acceptance speeches



?You people who just tuned in at home, this is the Academy Awards ? Warning, contents may cause drowsiness. Do not drive or operate heavy machinery.?

Johnny Carson ? 1984

I admit, I watch some of them, or at least parts of some of them.

I'm referring to these fancy and flashy award shows that we seem to get overrun with this time of year.

I guess I do it for the same reason many of you do. Curiosity over who's going to win has a lot to do with it, as does the glamour of the occasion. Some people, my wife included, want to see the gowns the ladies are wearing. I will grant there is considerable creativity that goes into these clothes, and some of the gowns are pretty impressive. But I refuse to put more than a token effort into gawking at women wearing fashions that cost about 10 times my annual take-home pay. Do I sound jealous? I prefer to think of myself as practical, befitting a man who tries to function in the real world.

So it was that Beth and I spent last Sunday night watching the 87th edition of the Academy Awards.

I know of better ways to spend part of a Sunday. For example, as I was going to bed that night (while they were still handing out hardware), I realized that I had completely forgot the Daytona 500 was that day, and I had missed it. Had I remembered, and had I been at home, and had I lavished enough charm, I might have obtained Beth's permission to watch it.

Okay, so I watched the Academy Awards instead, or at least as much of it as I could stay awake for. I think I made it almost to 11 o'clock, which is pretty good for me for a Sunday night. Beth stuck it out almost to the end. I neglected to ask her to turn the volume down on the TV, so I was able to hear a lot of what was going on while trying to saw wood.

Fortunately, I had a work-related obligation that kept me away from the tube for the early part of the evening, thus I missed most of the traditional red carpet foolishness. Beth started to give me a report on what she had seen, and it was mercifully brief. The fact is, as Beth very well knows, I'm not interested. The fact is I saw a lot of those impressive gowns when the various women appeared on stage in the course of the festivities.

?How do you sit down in a thing like that?? I asked Beth at one point.

Part of the reason for my apparent cynicism, I admit, is I had no real interest in the Oscars this year. I saw only one movie in 2014, and waited until the last day to see it.

Beth and I have sort of New Year's Eve tradition of going to a movie very early in the evening (actually later afternoon), then going home to eat fondu and see the old year out in each other's company.

The movie we saw was Unbroken, which was one of those films that's supposed to inspire by recounting the struggles that people sometimes have to endure. It was also depressing because most of the story was set in a prison camp during the Second World War. Hogan's Heroes this most certainly was not.

I frankly thought (and I think Beth agreed) the show was largely stolen by Miyavi, who played a sadistic prison guard. We both were sure he at least would be nominated for best supporting actor at Academy Award time, and were taken aback when he wasn't.

The film was nominated for nothing, meaning I had no real movie-going interest in the whole spectacle.

I wasn't too impressed with Neil Patrick Harris as host, considering I recall several people who did terrific jobs in that role. I've always thought Johnny Carson was the best host I ever watched, although Bob Hope was certainly no slouch and Whoopi Goldberg

was very good as well. I thought Billy Crystal did a pretty fine job the times he hosted the show too.

True, there were parts of the show that were worth watching. I've never been a big fan of Lady Gaga, but her tribute to the Sound of Music was the high point of the evening, as far as I was concerned.

And I always find the tribute to the motion picture people who have died in the past year worth watching (I hadn't known that Rod Taylor had died).

There are still lots of people attending movies. There was a time, before Beth and I were married, that we got to two (and sometimes three) films per week. Once we were hitched, there was no pressing need to go on dates, so we didn't. But the theatres are still attracting crowds, meaning there is an interest in the industry and the Oscars can still attract an audience.

Those behind the show should start fixing things up if they want to keep the audience.

For one thing, the show goes on much too long. Since it's a Sunday night, those in charge should realize people they're hoping will watch the show also have to go to work the next day.

They might want to think about eliminating the acceptance speeches. Some of them are good, but in a lot of cases, there's just a lot of stammering, with the winners making up their words on the fly and often going on too long. And as was demonstrated last Sunday, starting the music to give the speakers the hint that they've run out of time really doesn't work that well. When Anna Paquin received the Best Supporting Actress award in 1994 when she was just 11, her address consisted of little more than a couple of minutes of hyperventilation (as if anyone realistically expected more from a kid that age).

I doubt those who run these programs will take my good advice. I'm sure they'll excuse me if I retire for the night in the middle of the show.

Remembering Mr. Spock

Like so many, I was upset Friday when I learned that Leonard Nimoy had died.

I grew up watching Star Trek, even through all the complaining my parents did about the amount of TV I watched.

It came around during the space race of the late 1960s, when dreaming about the future of space travel was in fashion. There are some who chided me for watching a program that was deemed 'geeky,' but I didn't care. And in the end, considering the on-going and increasing popularity of Star Trek, I guess I was proved right.

Mr. Spock was a big part of that, making realistic the notion that people from another planet could some day be part of human existence.

Interesting that the character was almost written out of the show, as network executives issued the direction to 'get rid of the guy with the ears.'

Good thing they didn't.