

The Christmas Issue

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So much for Mayan prophecies.¹

None of my dance partners raised the matter even past the midnight advent of last year's winter solstice. Some of them probably are Mayan. One woman nearly stumbled off the raised dance floor at Dallas Nite Club when she saw me approach and smiled, but she's just the latest of her sex to discombobulate in my presence. Off the dance floor, many men scowled and pulled their women closer. Must've been the cadet gray linen jacket and '80s abstract-pattern necktie that

caused all the fuss. After the bemused anticipation of the possible end of the world, everyone apparently settled down to a long winter's nap during the season's holidays.²

Actually, 2013 has been more notable for events I didn't attend and things I didn't do.

In spring, my brother inquired about us rooming together in New York City while he's studying advanced techniques in hip-hop and dubstep music

production from a program there. This is less bizarre than you might think. Rob studied at the Berklee College of Music, and we were the first kids in our neighborhood to listen to rap, back when the mainstream media picked up on it as a New York phenomenon. Anyway, most of the conversation dealt with the financial reasons against living there, which quashed our enthusiasm. And this was before New Yorkers elected an unrepentant red mayor.³

After I speculated my high school graduating class *wasn't* holding a 25th anniversary reunion, the organizers, whose names I still don't recognize, e-mailed me July 22, at the wrong address, about the same thing over three days at August's start. I guess they wanted the reunion to seem as interminable as doing time in government school. Such short notice was another reason not to attend. Months later, I still can't find any online proof anybody else attended, even the twits who tweeted about it beforehand. Maybe they developed the same



reservations about enduring formulaic nostalgia for entertainment.⁴

For variety, in October, I worked on contract testing the software and hardware on intravenous units in the basement of a hospital off Interstate 35. While there, I discovered the cafeteria selections were mostly fried foods, desserts and sugary drinks. In other words, medical professionals don't eat any better than the general public.⁵

That job solved three problems or potential problems. I can demonstrate recent wage income to the IRS in a year where I've earned more in stock market trades. For that I must partially credit GrandChester for the books on investing he sent years ago, when I expressed interest, which taught me how to think like an investor. The job also demonstrated recent employment and medical experience, the one field of technical writing I haven't done because all the positions require prior experience. So far, I've encountered increased interest from recruiters at a time of year when such activity normally tapers off.⁶

Unfortunately, after working at the hospital I caught the flu for the first time in more than a year. It kept me home Halloween. Nevertheless, still in the seasonal spirit, thanks to the Internet, I provided friends with links to

NOTES

¹ AD No. 158 (Dec. 2, 2012); Renda, Matthew. "End Times?" *The (Grass Valley, Calif.) Union* 21 Dec. 2012: A1+.

² AD No. 88n1 (Dec. 23, 2005); AD No. 139 (April 1, 2011); AD No. 159 (Dec. 25, 2012); AD No. 160n1 (Jan. 8, 2013).

³ AD No. 55 (Sep. 3, 2003); AD No. 67 (June 5, 2004); AD No. 75 (Dec. 5, 2004); AD No. 163 (May 5, 2013); AD No. 169 (Nov. 22, 2013).

⁴ AD No. 163 (May 5, 2013).

⁵ AD No. 169, op. cit.; Eisler, Dan. Letter to Mary Ruth Kiser, 2 Dec. 2013.

⁶ AD No. 169n15; Eisler, op. cit.

⁷ AD No. 169, op. cit.; O'Brien, Daniel. *Spooky Encounters: A Gwailo's Guide to Hong Kong Horror*. Manchester, U.K.: Headpress, 2003: Ch. 2.

⁸ Bordwell, David. *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*, rev. ed. Madison, Wis.: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2011; Gilberto, João. *The Legend*. É1 2932393, 2013.

⁹ Martinez, Melissa. "Let Others Feed You Thanksgiving Day." *Austin 360* 22 Nov. 2013: 8.

¹⁰ AD No. 50n19 (May 14, 2003).

¹¹ Gunnison, Elizabeth. "Is Homemade Green Bean Casserole Worth the Effort?" *Bon Appétit* 14 Nov. 2011 <<http://www.bonappetit.com/test-kitchen/cooking-tips/article/is-homemade-green-bean-casserole-worth-the-effort>>.

¹² Richman, Alan. "Hold the Cranberries." *GQ* Dec. 1995: 105; Rooney, Andrew A. "Holiday Recipes." Rooney, Andrew A. *And More by Andy Rooney*. New York City: Atheneum, 1982: 65-66.

about 160 films upon which they could feast. And I'm not that fond of the horror genre. My holiday selection broadly included speculative fiction, supernatural tropes, and a lot of Hong Kong horror-comedies.⁷

The latter category, and post-chop socky Hong Kong cinema in general, is one of the big cultural discoveries I stumbled onto in 2013, along with comprehensive CD box sets of Brazilian musicians. In other words, I discovered them the same way I discovered most anything worthwhile, by stumbling about. That should be the title of my memoir.⁸

This year, Thanksgiving coincided with my birthday. I evaluated the dwindling list of places offering all-you-can-eat holiday meals and settled on Estância Churrascaria, a Brazilian steakhouse.⁹ This was probably my most untraditional Thanksgiving meal ever. Aside from mashed potatoes and roasted turkey breast added to the menu for the occasion, I consumed a lot of beef and lamb, brought to my table by circulating waiters with skewers, and washed that down with a caipirinha, a Brazilian cocktail that doubled as dessert.¹⁰ As a service arrangement, that has its limitations when a capacity crowd at noon is also circulating between the tables and the salad bar.



Thankfully, I didn't witness or participate in a slapstick collision.

Contra tradition, Bon Appétit's Web site ran an article criticizing the original green bean casserole recipe, as yucky and old-fashioned in so many words.¹¹ However, as with foodies' attempts to reinvent stuffing and cranberry sauce to a more refined level, the results have been too precious and ultimately unsatisfying, because the variations altered the texture, density and viscosity too much.¹² But the author of this article seems to think green beans are the point of the casserole.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Dan