



A Personal View: The Academy's Amazing Oscar Ceremony, A three-day event

by Leah Lubin



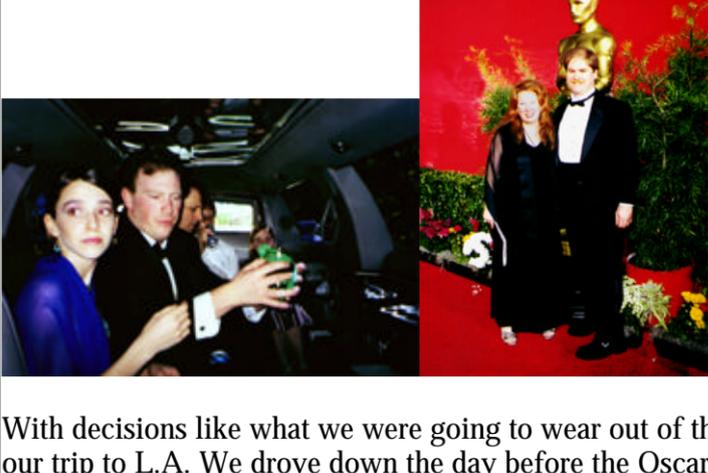
It all begins with the submission. You must have your film in by October of the year before. All films must be shown to the general public for at least one week in a regular movie theater.

On February 13, the Academy holds a press conference at 6:00 a.m., and your life changes. They read the list of nominees in the different categories, ours being short documentary as my son, Daniel Raim, is the producer and director of "The Man On Lincoln's Nose."

Somehow, I had slept the night before and when the phone rang at 6:05 a.m. I jumped out of bed to answer it. Great news! We are nominated as one of five films in the short documentary category.

For a while, your life becomes slightly unreal. Our phone rang constantly. International calls to my family in Israel, Daniel's father and family in France, my husband's family on the East Coast. It seemed to cheer everybody up and give the world a shine. Life in Skylonda was definitely friendlier, but it was Daniel's life that, of course, was most affected. At 26, his first movie that he began working on nearly three years ago, after completing film school at the American Film Institute, was nominated for an Oscar.

The talent of this year's 123 nominees was exceptional. The Academy basically treats them as if they were long-lost children, and for that brief period of time from February 13 to March 25 (actually March 26 because the parties go on for two days, as I was later to discover), life is bliss. The nominees' luncheon, which everyone attended except Julia Roberts and Bob Dylan, took place on March 12. They all gathered and took a group picture, which they call the "class photo." Later that night, the footage appeared on ABC's 11 o'clock news. There was my son standing next to Juliette Binoche, with Geoffrey Rush in the row underneath him and Kate Hudson above to his left.



With decisions like what we were going to wear out of the way, we prepared for our trip to L.A. We drove down the day before the Oscar ceremony. One sad change in plans was that 91-year-old, veteran filmmaker, Robert Boyle, the subject of this movie, had taken ill and would not be attending the Oscar ceremony. The rest of our group of fifteen, were all going to sit in Row 32 ground level, and Daniel and Bob were to sit in Row 12. With Bob not well enough to attend the ceremony, Daniel decided that I would sit next to him for the show, and his Dad would go to the Governor's Ball later that evening.

Saturday, March 24, the day of our arrival in Los Angeles, the International Documentary Association and Paramount Studios had an event called "DocuDay." From 11:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. that night, they were showing this year's nominated documentaries and short documentaries. "The Man On Lincoln's Nose" was being shown at 3:30 p.m., which gave us enough time to rest in our room before we made our way to Paramount Studios.

Turning into Paramount Studios' large, white, columned gates off the busy and slightly grungy streets of Los Angeles feels a little like going through the Gates of Heaven. Soon, we meet up with Daniel, his father and sister, Laura. We are given our general admission tickets and go into the theater to watch three of the short documentaries followed by a panel discussion with the filmmakers. During the feature, I turned around to look at the packed house of avid moviegoers who had paid up to \$30 for a full day's worth of documentaries. I said to Daniel, "These are your real audience, the true documentary fan."

Saturday, March 25, a clear and bright spring day had everyone ready early. At 2:00 p.m., we all gathered in the living room of Robert Boyle's daughter, Emily, and her husband John Biddle. Soon it was time to go and we piled into two stretch limos. Staying behind to get our after-Oscar party started, was Susan Boyle, Bob's other daughter, and her husband and little boy. Visiting from Oregon, they would greet guests and watch us on TV. Robert Boyle, who was feeling better, but still in the hospital, would also be watching, of course.

As you approach the Shrine Auditorium, the road splits down the middle, with one lane reserved for the limos which seemed to be the main transportation for the over 2000 guests. It is about this time when things rapidly shift from "happy but still believably normal" to absolutely "I can't believe this is happening to us!" You're being driven down this lane with crowds screaming and cheering on either side of the street. Then you see the protesters with their signs. You try and see what their signs are saying, but the words blur together. Police are ushering you forward. Your limo driver is not allowed to exit the limo and open your door because as soon as you get there the Academy takes over. I say this with my deepest respect as this huge world-famous party could not have been organized better. Every second of every minute was planned and acted out to perfection. A three-level cocktail party catered by the famous chef, Wolfgang Puck, lasts about an hour and a half, then it's time for the awards ceremony. Daniel and I find our seats, and wave to the rest of our party behind us, but well within our view. Steve Martin, looking very smart comes onstage, with all the stars in their seats. The strangest feeling of oneness comes over the place. The next thing you know, people are clapping loud and it starts.

Hopefully, you watched. It was a great show. Halfway through, Samuel L. Jackson came on to announce the winners of the documentary short subject and documentary feature in our category. We didn't win. It happened very quickly, and it felt like a stab. All of a sudden I wasn't having such a good time because, to be honest, I hadn't prepared myself for the possibility that we wouldn't win. I wanted to stop the show for a recount, but decided against it. So I sat back in my chair and looked at Daniel from the corner of my eye. I was glad to see that he seemed okay, better than me. "Daniel, call Bob," I said. "See what he has to say about the results." Everyone around us was talking quietly on a cell phone, so it seemed okay. Daniel called Bob, and I could see Daniel was smiling. "What did he say," I asked. "He said, Hello old bean, it doesn't matter." "Hello old bean" — words worth hanging onto for the next few hours when sulking is not allowed. Ten minutes later, Daniel decides to switch seats with my husband and sit with our larger group behind. It was probably more fun than sitting with his bummed-out mom. The show proceeded, and like all great art, it had its moments, so magical, nothing was personal anymore. Highlights included Dylan, the man, with his song "Things Have Changed," and original score music played by Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman.

At the end, we all piled out of the auditorium and into the evening air as if from Cinderella's Ball. We retrieve our cameras, camcorders, and wait in line for our ride back to Emily and John's Hollywood Hills post-Oscar party. Daniel and his father were on the way to the Governor's Ball, care of Academy transportation. Our party at Emily's had already started and the guests were waiting for us to arrive. I was still struggling with my feelings when Pattie Valantony, Daniel's well-loved art teacher from the American Film Institute, met us at the door. This creative and charming lady made it impossible not to feel good. Also among the guests was two-time Oscar nominee art director, Harold Michelson and his wife Lillian. It was then that I learned from John that Bob had five nominations, including one for "Fiddler On The Roof," so they had all gone through the ups and downs, and now had learned to enjoy the game. Within about two hours Daniel and his Dad returned from the Governor's Ball. It touched me that everyone stopped talking and eating and clapped for Daniel and his film as he walked in.

The next day, another sunny day, and we had one more celebration ahead of us. Harold and Lillian Michelson were hosting a special celebratory luncheon at DreamWorks in one of the conference rooms, which was set up for seventeen guests. Lillian demonstrated the fine art of hosting as Harold shared stories of his encounter with Churchill, and his current movie work with a film created by Danny DeVito. We toasted, we laughed, and talked of Bob's return home from the hospital.

Daniel is now sifting through his future opportunities. A new movie project, and the selling of "The Man On Lincoln's Nose" to TV. As for me and my husband, we have returned home to our Skylonda home. Although we will not be moving to Hollywood, we could definitely contribute long distance and be ready next time the Academy calls.