

# The Hollywood Experience

- Liam Reilly

Having never ventured far from Marblehead, Massachusetts in my sixteen years on this earth, I could scarcely believe it when I found out that I would be traveling to California over February vacation. Being the fan of cinema that I am, I could scarcely contain my excitement when I realized that during my trip to California, I would be in Los Angeles for the weekend of the Academy Awards, the premier award ceremony for the film industry. I'm not the least bit ashamed to admit I felt a little bit star struck, knowing that all my favorite actors and actresses would be all around me during this star-powered weekend. However, upon arriving in Los Angeles, reality hit me rather harshly.

For those who have not flown to California, the flight from Boston is lengthy, clocking in at about seven hours. Once in the golden state, my mother, sisters and I spent several days in San Francisco, and then traveled down the coast. We arrived in Los Angeles on Thursday night, and checked into the hotel. Walking through the halls of the Hilton, adorned with black and white photographs of celebrities from Marylyn Monroe to James Stewart, I was excited, and anticipated the prospect of actually meeting an actor or actress over the next few days. What if I met someone nominated for the Oscars, like Jenifer Lawrence from Silver Linings Playbook? Maybe Daniel Day Lewis from Lincoln? What would I say? Would I play it cool, or act the fool? In my mind, anything was possible. However, life doesn't always turn out like the movies, and my happy ending was not to be.

On Friday, I took a tour of Warner Brothers Studios. Although we were able to see the sets of hit TV shows like Conan, The Ellen DeGeneres Show and Friends, we never saw a celebrity; we even passed by the sound stage of The Big Bang Theory three or four times in the trolley, hoping to see Jim Parsons or Kaley Cuoco. Later that day, we walked Hollywood Boulevard, as the red carpet was being rolled out in front of the Dolby Theatre. Reporters were already at the scene reporting pre-

Oscars news. And yet still no luck. There were no celebrities to be found.

I was hoping Friday would be the breakthrough. We went to a Lakers game at the Staples Center, a hotspot frequented by celebrities such as Jack Nicholson. We were able to see Kobe Bryant drop 40 points on the Trailblazers, but alas, no celebrities sighted here either. By Sunday morning's drive to Los Angeles airport, I had accepted a truth: I was not going to meet anyone while in L.A.

After coming to terms with the fact that my dream was not to be realized, my view of the glam and glitz of Hollywood changed. Before, I had imagined Hollywood and Los Angeles like a whale watch, with celebrity sightings coming often. Now, I have come to realize that actors, actresses and others are people, too, and deserve privacy, respect, and the right to live their lives in peace. This meant more to me than that though. It also meant a lackluster Academy Awards: not only had I failed to see any of the stars, but the nominees themselves seemed haphazard and

weak this year. For example Ben Affleck, who acted in and directed Argo, a compelling period piece set in the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, won the Golden Globe for his direction. In the field of Best Director for the Oscars, he wasn't even nominated. Neither were Katherine Bigelow nor Tom Hooper, who were at the helm for Zero Dark Thirty and Les Miserables, both immensely popular movies that were nominated for Best Picture. I not only felt I had been snubbed by the stars, but I also felt some of the stars themselves had been snubbed by the Academy.

Seth MacFarlane was funny, and I think all of the movies that won were well-deserved. However, my trip made me look at all of these celebrities in a new light. They are not gods, they are people like me. And an interesting idea to me is that while it was a bit of a letdown not seeing any actors, it must be much worse to be wrongly excluded from an award category.

© 2011-2012 Headlight  
You may not copy use or  
distribute without  
permission from the  
author of this piece and  
from the Headlight  
newspaper editor.