

Midrash regarding

“This Puzzle’s Honoree and George Washington Have Something In Common”

by George Barany (February 2012)

Dear family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and other well-wishers,

By now, you’ve either figured out (or peeked at the answer key on the next page) that this puzzle’s honoree is Barbara Barany,¹ who shares a birthday (February 22) with the Father of Our Country. Back in the day, George Washington (born 1732) had his own holiday, as did The Great Emancipator Abraham Lincoln, born on February 12, 1809, the same day as Charles Darwin, but we digress. Now, we have a whole generation that knows only of President’s Day, yet another excuse for a long weekend and assorted sales at the mall.

The puzzle teaches you that the joys of Barbara and George Barany’s 25+ years of marriage (see 20-across) are their children (named in 39-across): budding historian of mathematics Michael,² and Academic All-American and aspiring neuroscientist (51-down) Deborah.³ This brings up the question of how the two women in our nuclear family are referred to, and why? Passing on the late University of Minnesota chemist Paul Barbara,⁴ (and the prospect of being Barbara Barbara or *Barbara*²), BLG courted GB. The contraction to *Barbarany* (see 52-across) was self-evident, and even extended to discussions of whether we could name our future daughter according to the same principles, i.e., *Debarany*. We finally opted for the traditional spelling, like the warrior/judge/poet⁵ from the Bible.

For those of you who don’t know BB (see 41-down; not to be confused with “base on balls”, and what a happy coincidence to realize that ‘B and B’, the informal description of a ‘bed-and-breakfast’ also signifies the two initials of our honoree), she (36-down) currently teaches high school chemistry (see 44-across – DTS protection was developed by GB and studied by MJB for his Intel Science Talent Search project; see also 62-across and 26-, 32-, 40-, and 58-down), with some astronomy thrown in (4-, 5-, and 57-down), has a keen interest in math education (14-across; 25- and 56-down), likes sports (15-across; 1- and 38-down), knows several foreign languages (1-, 19-, 23-, 24-, and 60-across; 7- and 58-down), watches the news (24-across; 32- and 47-down), reality shows, comedies, and dramas on TV (“ER” as in 2-down; “West Wing” as

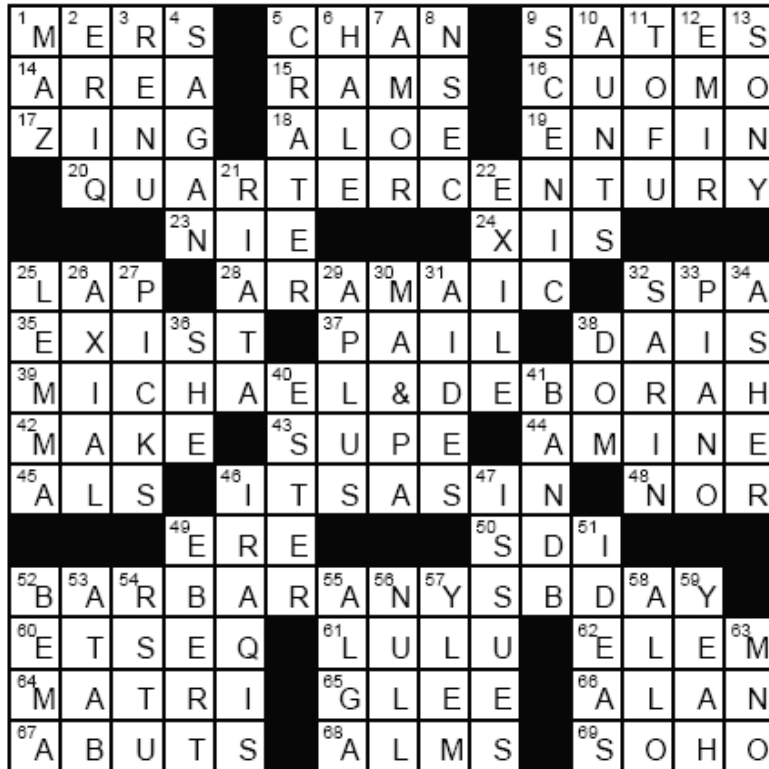
¹ http://highlandsr.spps.org/Barb_Barany.html

² <http://www.princeton.edu/~mbarany>

³ <http://www.hamilton.edu/news/story/seniors-taylro-adams-and-deborah-barany-awarded-nsf-graduate-research-fellowships> and <http://www.hamilton.edu/journals/pages/student-journals?action=list&id=8C5316F1-2BF9-6D10-A13914B7BC4F57D2>

⁴ http://www.utexas.edu/news/2010/11/03/barbara_paul

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deborah>



in 31-down; “Big Bang Theory” as in 57-down; however, “Glee” as in 65-across is more DAB’s show), enjoys classical and pop music (27-, 33-, and 59-down), and has an acquired taste for grand opera (see 61-across; however “Lulu” is one she has never seen and it’s probably a good thing – “Berg” and “Lulu” are both crossword puzzle staples, and GB is known to say things like “... now comes one of the most famous arias in the history of opera.”) Before the family decides on what movie to watch, the opinions of Roger Ebert⁶ (see 49-down) are inevitably checked on-line. BB has long been fond of Chinese food, and goes with GB most Sundays for dim sum (11-down). She is both knowledgeable and opinionated about history and politics (16-, 25-, 45-, and 49-across; 6-, 46- and 47-down), is well-versed in Judaic matters (28-across; 34- and 52-down; see also above paragraph on selection of daughter’s name), and generously supports a number of charities (68-across). With hindsight, her criticism of GB’s decision to amass a collection of beta tapes (see 13-down) was spot-on, although our investment in VHS tapes does not look so great either in this era of DVDs. BB still makes time to go to Lifetime Fitness (32-across), which reminds me of the one-liner that “... a sweater is something you put on when your mother (64-across) is cold.”

While the Lakers may have moved from Minnesota (“Land of 10,000 Lakes” – although it has been estimated to be closer to 12,000; who’s counting?) to Los Angeles, and the Rams moved from Los Angeles to Saint Louis (see 15-across), Barbara’s life journey to date has taken her from Trenton, NJ to Johnstown, PA to Los Angeles CA to Boston, MA to the Twin Cities, MN.

⁶ <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/>

Barb received her Ph.D. in physical chemistry under the mentorship of Professor I.-Y. Chan (5-across) at Brandeis University in 1982, did postdoctoral work at the University of Minnesota, and worked for a while at Honeywell where, among other things, she was involved in projects that received funding from President Reagan's "Star Wars" program, known in the fine print as SDI⁷ ("strategic defense initiative:" see 50-across). Those paying close attention will learn from the puzzle not only the names of BB's children (39-across) but also the names of her two older sisters (10-down), her younger brother (66-across), and her oldest nephew and grandnephew (34-down). The incredibly astute, after deciphering the incredibly tricky clue for the word "crater" (see 5-down) will realize that Copernicus shares a birthday with GB.

It should be stated for the record that BB tends to think GB wastes too much time on crossword puzzles, but even she was impressed when GB and his high school math team friend Art Rothstein recently reconnected to collaborate on a puzzle⁸ that immortalizes Gail Collins' magnificent obsession (commented on further in 25-across). That one was rejected by Will Shortz a mere 19 minutes after on-line submission, but *The New York Times* has seen fit to publish two of GB's collaborations⁹ with Michael Shteyman (see 17-across). Several of GB's crossword-minded friends, who wish to remain anonymous, helped beta-test the present puzzle, and their efforts and suggestions that improved the final product are gratefully acknowledged.

So, in conclusion, "have a life" (35-across) and:

HAPPY B'DAY, BARBARANY!!! (paraphrase of 52-across).



⁷ <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/80s/SDI-StarWars.asp>

⁸ <http://www.mojo-working.com/GailCollins>

⁹ http://www1.umn.edu/news/features/2006/UR_83049_REGION1.html