

TOM RYLANDTHOSE WERE THE DAYS MY FRIEND.....

.....What a joy to be alive and to be a new AA student in London in the autumn of 1965.....coming up was only the third time I had ever been to London.....Tom and my early friendship flourished.....one of our first projects together was Elia letting us loose on London to develop our sensory perception.....off it was to Soho Square and Carnaby St.....

.....our task: observe boundaries, circulation, materials and silhouette, pedestrian and vehicular flow, light, shadow, noise, smells and colour.....I recall as yesterday the sheer delightboundaries? What boundaries?the psychedelic clothes a portent of Magical Mystery Tours just around the corner.....

.....then immersing ourselves in the enjoyable task of being part of the committee that delivered Go West!.....the AA 1965 Christmas Carnival.....the Nashville Teens, Herbie Goins Jet Set and of course the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band which cemented Tom and my lifetimes' affection for the Bonzo'sfilling the stage with a dazzling array of glorious props and pitching up in a pantechicon which they parked outside the door of 36.....they certainly took their place along with Pink Floyd etc., among the cultural troubadours chronicling these AAmazing times.....Tom and me never thereafter spoke or wrote without a Bonzo'ism creeping in.....

.....with Tom & Maurice Vella soon recruited to join me I had found a terrific job to fund several years of our student days together.....we were the three evening receptionists at Cranley Gardens Hotel, a fifty-bed B&B establishment off Cromwell Road and close to the West London Air Terminal that delivered most of the customers.....(extraordinary to think Cromwell Road was International check-in then onto a bus, with your luggage in a closed trailer towed behind, to be driven straight onto the tarmac at Heathrow!).....

.....after 18.00 we were on our own.....reception jobs included stoking the three separate coke boilers , and answering the front door and telephone all night from a console by our beds in the basement until 08.00 the following morning with just enough time for breakfast and a hand over briefing to the manager Mrs Cullen before a rush across London for the AA by 09.30.....for this we each got £1-10 shillings a week, free accommodation in the basement and all the fruit juice, cornflakes, eggs and bacon that we could eat.....

.....a chapter could be written on these times aloneto meet and greet our hotel check-in challenge we were alone save the stalwart support of Doug, the occasional Hotel porter who seemed to share his year more or less equally between us and going on holiday with Her Majesty for his felonious proclivities.....

.....by 1967 I had still never been abroad and Ron Herron wrote to Cornwall Council, my long suffering Scholarship provider, to say my modest worldview and experience was inhibiting my AA progresshe wanted me to go to Expo 67 Montreal to expand my horizons and would they pay half?.....amazingly they would.....
.....and so it was Tom and I set off on the adventure of a lifetime with Tom (the more worldly of the two of us) taking charge of masterminding our resource constrained ambitions.....he was brilliant at it!.....

.....he got us both to join a young men's Christian organisation which secured us charter seats on a Britannia prop aircraft out of Manchester, which landed a short time afterwards at Shannon on the west coast of Ireland to refuel!.....this unnerving event is assumed by us to be normal and it is many hours later when the captain informs us that landfall is to be a military base called Gander on the tip of Newfoundland to where we have diverted....we land with less than 15 minutes fuel left due to having battled headwinds.....whenever through our professional careers any conversation arose about cost/ value we would enjoy a wry smile together about when the maxim of getting what you pay for in life came into such sharp focus for the two of us.....

.....after eight days at Expo 67 it was life on the Greyhound Scenicruiser departing Montreal for Los Angeles via Toronto, arriving in the US at Detroit before joining Route 66 already legendary by the song that bore its name.....to travel the entire length of Route 66 by Greyhound Bus, and in 1967 was a standalone cultural extravaganzaand Tom's imaginative solution to our not having enough money for overnight accommodation.....and thanks to our 19 hour days at Cranley Gardens Hotel we were well trained in sleep deprivation which heightened the experience.....

.....we were met in LA by my uncle who lived on the back of Malibu Beachthe Surf was up and the attraction of Surfin' USA claimed first prize in the competition for the remainder of my jingle jangle Californian days.....

.....Tom departed for San Francisco with us reuniting for the hazardous journey home in NY.....but not before we had spent 4 days together.....Beachboys music boomed out from open topped sports cars full of beautiful people, The Byrds were in town playing Bob Dylan's Mr Tambourine Man – topping the charts for them on both sides of the Atlantic.....Surf, sun and fun.....Bob Dylan spoke for us all – the times they are a changing.....our boot heels had been wandering down the entire length of the most famous highway on planet Earth and the answer, my friends, was blowing in the wind.....

.....WE TOUCHED THE TIMES.....

.....the passing of time and man's forgetfulness will not diminish so many happy memories of our student times together.....kind, gentle and decent, heaven will be a better place with you (and your admirable organisational skills) there Tom.....God Bless.....

Your Cornish Chum,

Jonny B