

“Memories Are Made Of This

As I begin to type this article for Magna, my eye catches a headline on the front of a certain right wing tabloid newspaper that reads, “Should You Be Taking a Memory Pill? Fortunately for me that has not been a problem with regards to this article . Having been ‘round the block’ , so to speak, for more times than I care to recall, the difficulty I have had has been to limit a wealth of memories to just twenty.



Steering away from the main ‘milestones’ that have blessed my life, I have looked at these memories from the perspective of our five main senses, and where possible I have chosen them from as far back as my memory will allow. Some may seem trivial and inconsequential, but they all have earned a place in my memory bank . The first of these concerns the sense of taste and the wonderful NHS orange juice that was issued free to parents of young children .just after the war. No doubt if I was to drink it now it would be far too sweet and not live up to how I remember it. All I know is that as a toddler it was the best. Close on its heels, but when I was a few years older, comes the taste and the aroma of the sweets that were stored in big glass jars with brightly coloured plastic tops, as if housing some expensive jewels. Sweets with delicious names like sherbet lemons, pear drops, .flying saucers, love hearts for the girl/boy you fancied, and pineapple cubes that made the roof of your mouth sore if you ate too many. We had all these and more in the sweet shop that was situated as near to Peabody Buildings, Hammersmith, as you could possibly get..

A further memory that springs to mind from this era, was my first bag of chips which I bought with my own pocket money. Wrapped in newspaper with lots of salt and vinegar with not a Gary Lineker in sight, this was a taste that was pure heaven.. It also leads me neatly in to yet another memory that featured the above said bag of chips. It had been a wet and boring day, one of many that particular school holiday, and in an effort to amuse ourselves someone suggested we all do a mime, and preferably one that would make us laugh. Not knowing what to do I decided to utilise my love of chips by featuring a man buying some but accidentally putting too much salt ‘n’vinegar on them. His face with a broad grin on it at the start gradually gets more and more grotesque as the taste becomes more and more obnoxious to him. This was a mime that was no threat to the great Marcel Marceux , but amazingly it had all the gang laughing and demanding that I do it again and again over the years. .



Alan pretending to be Robin Day with his bow tie!

Another memory that I associate with the sense of smell, comes from our first few days of living in Greenford. Having never had a garden I was excited at the thought of looking after a small plot of land that came with the house. The previous owners had kindly left us a good manual mower and at the first opportunity I dashed outside and began pushing with all my might. Suddenly a chorus of “Good evening-nice to have you with us” greeted me and I stood open mouthed as about ten of my new neighbours waved

to me whilst doing synchronised mowing up and down their gardens. But what really made me remember this incident was the fantastic aroma of newly cut grass that went right up my nostrils. Sadly it also revealed that I had classic hay fever and so for the next twenty years my mowing efforts were always accompanied by a large white handkerchief and a pair of red inflamed eyes!

Before leaving the realms of aroma and taste, two further memories were awakened by this article. The first was the smell of Sunday roast that seemed to linger throughout the whole of the buildings but was especially strong when I used to return from church just as Jean Metcalf and Cliff Michelmore were presenting Two Way Family Favourites.. The delicious aroma would get my taste buds going and overcome by desire I would run up the stairs, knock on the door and run into the kitchen where mum would be working hard to give us, as always, the best meal of the week. With dinner still more than an hour or so away she would take pity on me and slice off a piece of the roast meat. This I would devour as slowly as possible to get the maximum enjoyment from it. I swear that the taste of the food then was infinitely more appetising than today for all our modern hygiene rules and regulations.



Latymer Foundation School - Form V, Alan 2nd from the right top row

My final memory in the aroma category is one that I really would like to forget. I had moved from St. Paul's Primary school up to Latymer Foundation School in Hammersmith, but unfortunately the school was right next door to Fullers Sweet factory.. Depending on the day and the time of the year we would be subjected to all the sweet sickly smells that made up the flavours inside the chocolates. At first it didn't seem too bad. We had something like strawberry truffle, followed by sweet almonds and marzipan with chocolate and nut centres. But it was when they were going full belt that all the sweet smells would converge into one. Play-time took on a whole new meaning, including writing phoney notes asking to be excused and to stay in during playtime. Quite often boys would be physically sick as the deadly aroma took hold on them as it hissed it's way out of the factory and then with a belch of steam oozed its way into the atmosphere and in to our lungs. To this day I always see it as a product of the Rohald Dahl school of storytelling : a real life Charlie and the Chocolate Factory..

But without doubt the event that etched it's way on to my brain more than any other of this time, was the Coronation in 1953 (June 2nd). The nation stood transfixed by this young lady, Elizabeth II, bravely taking on the duties of the Monarchy at such a young age. For me personally it was a day of laughter and tears. The laughter came from the sand dance act that entertained all the children that lived in the buildings. With a special afternoon tea party complete with jelly and ice cream, and to crown it all -excuse the pun- we

were each given a Coronation mug. The tears came from my falling over whilst running in one of the morning races, badly cutting both my knees and grazing both my arms. Still we had seen nothing like it and the fact that we had our own TV was brilliant. Half the buildings must have come up to our small flat to see it at some point or other during the day.

School days in the 1950's were also laden with memories, but the one day I remember most was in 1958, when I and two other boys were told to come to the front of the class. At first I thought we had done something terribly wrong, but then the teacher informed us that we had passed the 11 plus examination and we were on our way to the local grammar school. It was one of those defining moments of your life, when you know that things have changed and that nothing will be quite the same again.

1958 was also the year of one tragic memory that I will never forget. On the 6th February of that year, Manchester United suffered the Munich air disaster which cost the lives of seven members of the team, along with three club staff and eight travelling journalists.

On a brighter note I also have my memory of going to see Fulham for the first time, at their Craven Cottage home ground. Seeing my heroes like Johnny Haynes and George Cohen etc. was pure magic. One further memory of course cannot be ignored, and that was seeing England win the World Cup in 1966. It was the greatest moment in English football history and still gives me hope that one day we may win it again.



The three Amigos

It will come as no surprise to say that my remaining memories are very much those involving Jacky and our son Alex plus a few furry friends. The furry friends are a list of the wonderful pets we have had since our childhood days. Cats with charmed lives and a friendly nature, along with a number of guinea pigs and even one or two budgerigars in our early married years. In stroking and handling them in a very gentle and friendly way I can still recall the relaxation and therapeutic pleasure they gave to us all, and the love and affection we gave them.

With regards to Jacky, I still can't believe that we have been together in a relationship that has spanned almost fifty years. Our first meeting was a bit embarrassing for both of us and was brought about by a match making but mutual friend who just happened to find out that we both did sports at Barn Elms on a Wednesday morning.. As I came off the football pitch, covered from head to toe in mud and looking like the creature from the black lagoon, a voice called out my name and then introduced me to a rather shy and evidently shivering Jacky who was about to do a cross country run in a flimsy top and blue knickers. Eventually, however, we got together and discovered that we both liked similar things,



Jacky auditioning for Steps - aged 15

including of course the kind of music that we would soon be playing.. This leads me to a second memory when I was a member of a local pop band and we would play for school proms etc. The only trouble was that Jacky had to be in by ten thirty, as stipulated by her dad, which meant that in the middle of our second half set I had to leave the stage to see her home!

Other musical memories must include the nail biting time when we were called to do an audition session to see if we were suitable for BBC radio. In the early seventies there was no tracking, which meant that the song had to be recorded as live. If anyone went wrong the whole song had to be done again. It was a brilliant feeling though when we were informed that we had got through, and an even bigger thrill when we were told we had been given a spot on the long running "Country Meets Folk". It was here that we met Brian Brocklehurst., session musician extraordinaire . Brian became like a fourth member of the group along with our dear friend Derek, and is featured on double bass for all our recordings in the 70's. Happy days.!

One final memory on the music front was that Jacky and I managed to see the Beatles, not once but four times. Queuing for what seemed like days we managed to get tickets on three occasions for their annual Christmas show . They were as wonderful as ever, but unfortunately the girl fans screamed so loud that you could hardly hear them sing.. Still, it was all part of the mad 60's and the memories that we will not forget..



To end this list, I can think of no more emotional a memory, than that of being present at the birth of our dear son, Alex and holding him in my arms. The joy and the awesome responsibility of seeing this little person through the first period of his life, being ever present.. Yes, memories are made of this, as the song goes.

Alan Kingshott