

## Episode two

### ‘Beanz meanz Heinz’ and catching up on a lost childhood.

Leaving the confines of an English public cathedral school after ten years I thought was going to be tough. But as it happens, it was not. I decided not to go on to university, although my three pathetic A levels would have got me to some second tier University, -but instead I was to become a management trainee in industry.

At HJ Heinz, where they awarded six places a year, I was to be paid a handsome twelve pounds and fifty pence per week in cash. During that time, I was going to be on a day release scheme studying for Business Studies at what is now West London University (better known in those days as Ealing Tech!). My work would be in different departments for about three months in each. That experience was to introduce me to export, public relations, human resources, and industrial engineering.

I moved into digs in a very little house with a lovely family in Hanworth, which was very much the ugly and down-market area near Ealing. I took a bus to work, followed by a long walk to my new offices. These however were formidable and quite definitely the finest UK corporate headquarters that I have ever seen anywhere. It was a super modern US designed massive marble palace in the middle of beautiful farmland with cows and sheep all around it. My very first desk, was a piece of exquisite furniture surrounded by a stunning office. Believe it or not, above my desk hung a Salvador Dali original painting! Mrs. Heinz clearly thought that all employees needed education in the arts. The entire corporate headquarters was plastered with fine art that her family had bought to display. I was clearly spoilt and expected that all offices would be like this in my future career-dream on!

Each morning ceremoniously began by walking across to the adjacent marble wonder modern building. Here, in the research labs, we would be tasting perhaps two to three different varieties of tomato ketchup, a new potential taste for baked beans, or even on some occasions new baby foods.

One of my favourite memories from my time at Heinz was when I was transferred to the industrial engineering department at the factory in Harlesden (another not so nice suburb of north London). Here my job was to work on a forklift clamp truck and to calculate the pressure at which twenty cases of tomato ketchup on a pallet could be moved around the factory without being crushed and bursting into pieces. Naturally, you guessed it, several times 240 bottles exploded all over me before I reached the correct answer to the required pressure. For one whole week, I remember returning to my digs, covered in tomato ketchup, and being banned from eating supper with the family.

One positive observation that I recollect from my days in the factory were the fresh vegetables I saw arriving, which were then unceremoniously chopped up and shoved into tin cans before cooking. They were quite the finest and the largest vegetables I have ever seen in my life. Heinz always set the highest standards in whatever it did.



Another rather fun job that I fell into when working in the public relations department was a bit of a Heinz tradition. When somebody famous arrived at their 57th birthday they were presented with a wonderful hamper full of 57 varieties. The first time that I was asked to personally deliver a hamper took me to a beautiful home at the back of Harrod's belonging to Vincent Price. On opening the door to me he looked every little bit as terrifying as in his many horror films.

My weekends as a Heinz trainee were largely spent traveling overnight on Friday to Snowdonia, heavily supported by the wonderful parents of my fellow trainees. A small group of us had become fanatical climbers, sleeping in a rat-infested barn at

Williams Farm near Capel Curig. The best thing about it was that both the minibus transport, the equipment of ropes, carabiners and crampons etc. were all funded by our very generous management trainee HR department. Sunday night was spent driving back along the M1 direct to the office to start work promptly on Monday mornings. This proved very good training for later in life, when everyone was expected to crawl off the overnight flights from the USA and go straight to the office for a full day's work without falling asleep!

We became even more adventurous over time spending an Easter break in an ice cave near Aviemore in Scotland and climbing snow and ice mountains during the days. Provisions were restricted to cans of anything from Heinz staff sales, two bottles of whiskey and a very substantial amount of haggis. This type of adventure and risk taking was like a tonic for us all in those days and incredible fun.

Strangely, my last job as a management trainee was working for a gentleman called Tony O'Reilly. He was the young CEO of Heinz, who had been recruited from Kerrygold in Ireland, where he had made his name as a marketer for Kerrygold butter.

## The name of the game has changed says Tony O'Reilly



Tony o' Reilly was quite an extraordinary and successful man who went on later to become the CEO of the global Heinz Corporation in Pittsburgh. He had a memory that I could not believe. My job, whilst working in Public Relations, was to come into the office every morning and read ten business newspapers, cutting out any of the articles that might have been either urgent news or of interest to him. He would very often say, 'Oh, yes, I remember Chesswood mushrooms. They were taken over six years ago for £3.2 million'. His memory was gigantic, and I could understand how, at a relatively young age, he had achieved this elevated position. One of the 'secrets' that we were supposed to hold from the media about him was that he had married an Australian multimillionaire, and that the common perception was that his entrepreneurial spirit had made his early fortune during his time marketing Kerrygold butter in Ireland. This did certainly not detract however from what a brilliant man he was. I have little doubt that the Board Room in those days might have been a little feisty, as his fellow directors had all worked their way up through the organisation, starting on the factory floor.

He once asked me for a piece of advice! Tony was invited to play rugby for the national side for Ireland. He asked me if he should accept this invitation? Now I knew that he had already upset the team by rolling up to rehearsals in his chauffeur driven Mercedes and I was most concerned that if he had an accident, we might lose our highly competent CEO for a while, thus affecting the stock price. All of which these fears I bravely expressed to him. Naturally, as all good bosses do, he totally ignored my thoughts and advice. He did play rugby for Ireland, made a complete mess of it, but fortunately wasn't injured.

Without a doubt my strongest memory of working with Heinz was that I was selected out of the management trainees to help Mr. and Mrs. Heinz (yes, they really did exist as a family run company!) to help organise their annual party. This took place each year during Ascot Week where they sponsored one of the horse races. I arrived at their Mayfair home one evening to receive a briefing. The first thing that Mr. Heinz II requested was that I seek out for him ten gondolas and gondoliers, to transport their guests across the lake to Juliana's disco tech in the grotto of their newly purchased Ascot Place estate. This was to be my first career entry into major events with mega creative thinking and budgets!

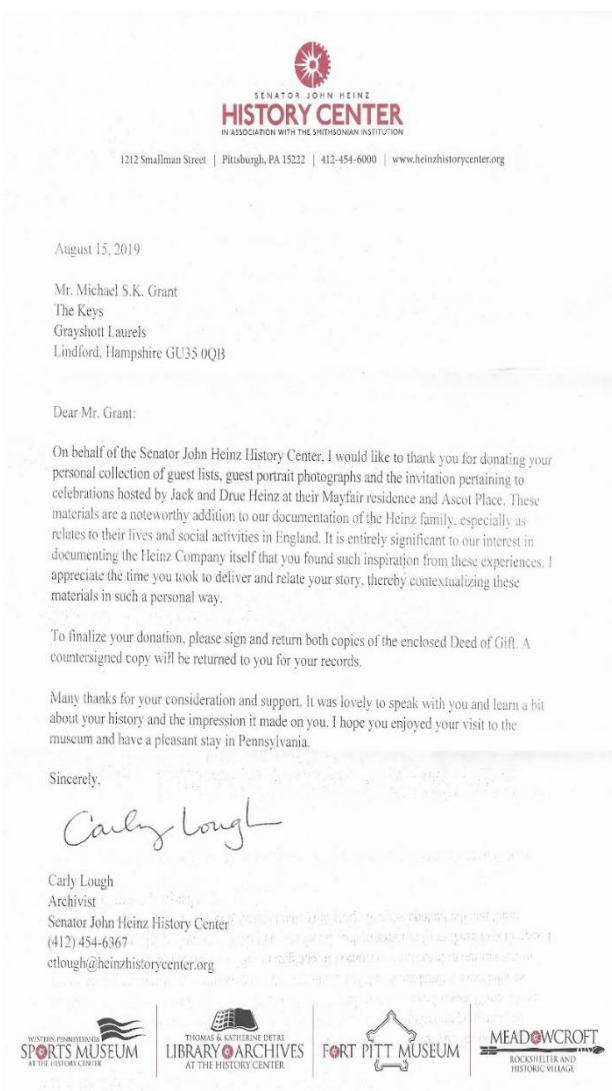
Each annual party would have guests from the next 2,000 entry names in 'Who's Who', alongside some special family friends. On my first year the theme was 'The Jack & Drew moving in' party. There were no curtains or furniture in the rooms, just twenty attractive cordon bleu cooks preparing magnificent food with camping gas stoves on upturned 'Jack & Drew' tea chests. The walls of each room were covered in caricatures of each guest specially painted by an artist flown in from the US.

My job was simply to meet and greet guests and check them in on the day, which proved to be a great privilege. My experience at King's proved to be invaluable by not getting phased out when meeting famous folk. On both party occasions, I got to chat a little bit with Jack Cohen (the founder of Tesco), Paul Getty the oil billionaire (who would often need a little helping hand to get into the building) and strangely enough Princess Margaret, who at least on one of those occasions, asked me where the next eligible young bachelor could be found.

I think that these parties inspired me to think big and out of the box for the many major events that I was destined to run in future years. But one of the most salient lessons that I learned was from Mr. Heinz himself. On his return to the global corporate headquarters in

Pittsburgh each year, he would write me a HANDWRITTEN ‘thank you letter.’ A curtesy and inspiring simple deed that meant so very much to me as a young man. I have used this lesson in life many times since, not the least of which was to hand write 220 ‘thank you letters’ to hosts in my year as Master of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists.

Little did I ever dream that the home of the Heinz family in Pittsburgh would play such a major part in my life in future years. The invitation lists and a few original RSVP invite cards from those parties are now lodged in the archives of the Pittsburgh Smithsonian Heinz Museum.



I can't pretend that I was perhaps the most hardworking and motivated Management Trainee at Heinz. After all, I was enjoying a freedom for the first time in the last ten years with no specific responsibilities. It was time to catch up on some of my missed youth!

After a short while I invested in an old and cheap car, but it enabled me to change my lifestyle and location. I moved out of the rather grungy area near Ealing to join with two other Heinz management trainees. Our basement flat in 20, Queensgate, Kensington was going to be a wonderful introduction to life in London.

As a young, single person I now had six flatmates, two of them were girls (whose parents insisted that they had a Yale lock on their bedroom door), and four guys. Perhaps inevitably one of my flatmates married one of the girls in the flat and they subsequently spent most of their lives living in New York. Mike became a successful broker and Maureen, his wife, became one of America's first women lawyers. I, on the other hand, married the other flatmate, my first wife, Mary-Anne. We all had a wonderful time meeting and entertaining people on our 20-

seat dining table in the entrance hall of our basement flat. Every Thursday was a ‘dining in night’ at which it would be my turn for cooking. For me this involved buying one penny cans of Heinz food (minus the labels) from the Heinz staff sales area, bringing them back to the flat and continually opening the cans until sufficient food of the right type turned up. Somehow, nobody died from my cooking, and we all had an extremely enjoyable time for no cost.

Our parties in the flat were admirably supported by copious amounts of pure alcohol from one of our temporary residents, who was a student at Imperial College opposite the flat. For me, this flat was to become my only home for several years.

It was not until many years later from my Australian relatives, many of whom had stayed for a while in our flat, that I learnt at it was not perhaps the palace of my memory. We were, after all, located adjacent to the Iraqi Embassy whose frequent rioting demonstrators obliged the police to place wooden window shields over our flat windows. We often returned the compliment by inviting the poor police officer on duty into us for a nice warm coffee in the evening.

I certainly remember on one occasion, when a waterbed belonging to one flatmate, was stumbled over by a girl in high heels. It took us two weeks for the water to disappear and dry out in one of the basement bedrooms! I similarly remember being so close to the Royal Albert Hall that we could listen into a Promenade Concert on the radio and then just walk up the road taking a cushion with us to enjoy a free second half of that concert. As we were all young people, with no decent incomes we frequently couldn't pay our phone bills. We would open the large cupboard in the hallway to invited guests for short stays at modest rents. I could never understand why one frequent cupboard guest was Roger Hoar of the private banking family.

It was around this time that I began my passion to join my first clubs and organisations. One of my good friends was the general manager of London's most famous gaming club, the Claremont Club in Berkley Square. We used to enjoy looking down from his penthouse flat at the croupier 'Bunny Girls' through his TV cameras located in the ceilings of the different gaming rooms, of which I will say no more. On joining the IT industry later in my career this became a great asset as many CEO high rollers would arrive from America wanting to lose their fortunes in this very famous casino. As a non-gambler I would relieve them of a £100 which I normally squandered in ten minutes. This is the casino in which Clement Freud would often be seen playing backgammon and from which Lord Lucan supposedly disappeared. My friend was followed into work and back home for months by the police in the hope that he would give away the location of the disappearing Lord.

I also joined a Masonic lodge in Dartford, as my uncle had decided that I needed a stable male influence in my life having just left school. Some 50 years later I enjoy my role as an 'Almoner' keeping an eye on my fellow 'distressed brethren'.

Perhaps more significantly I joined, very shortly after leaving King's, as a 'Reservist' in the Royal Green Jackets at Buckingham Gate. My school had taught us all to 'serve Queen and Country' in whatever way we could. But that is a whole other story which I will recount later.

During my last few years at King's and at Heinz my mother, sadly, was suffering from some mental issues. She had acute paranoia and after having fallen out with neighbours she moved from our home in Meopham to the nearby village of Sole Street, Kent.

My mother eventually had to resign from her role as a successful senior lecturer at Gravesend College. It was only then that I began to realize just how serious her illness had become when she had a mental breakdown and was admitted to hospital in Darenth, near Dartford.

I very rarely had a phone call at my desk at Heinz, but very sadly one day, I found myself receiving a call from the police in Kent to inform me that my mother had been found dead at our home in Sole Street. Heinz were, of course, amazing, and immediately hired a car to take me all the way from Middlesex down to my home. The police were waiting at my home together with my then girlfriend Mary-Anne, and I was asked to identify the body of my

mother in Maidstone. I knew immediately that my brave and brilliant mother had taken her own life.

I think, frankly, my mother had felt that she had successfully completed preparing me for the world and that her illness just was too horrible to bare any longer. I was truly fortunate, and am still most grateful, to my mother's cousin, Harold Marshall, who came to my rescue and helped me through what was probably one of the worst experiences of my life. Uncle Harold drove me down to Maidstone where he accompanied me as I identified my mother.

Afterwards he then took me out for more drinks than either of us should have consumed at the Malta Inn on the river Medway. I have never returned to the pub but will remain eternally grateful to have had him at my side. To help banish this experience it was time for a major change in my life. Little did I realise that this experience was to prepare me for even more tragedies to befall my family in later years. Life can be so unpredictable.

I resigned from Heinz and left my much-loved life in London, having decided that I needed something different to take my mind off this horrible experience. It was time to take my 'Gap Year' (or nearer two years!). By good fortune I discovered that Greg, one of my Australian cousins, was due to marry the lovely Penel at a wedding in Perth, Western Australia.

I set out determined to be there for their wedding, having taken the infamous 'hippie' overland route to Aussie. I set off on what was clearly to become the adventure of my lifetime, following a riotous and wonderful party with my flatmates and many of my friends at the 'Elizabethan Banqueting Rooms' in Queensgate, just opposite our flat. I remember starting my new adventure the very next morning on a journey which was to set my career aspirations to work internationally and to travel the world.