

## Made in England

I was 'made in England' on October 9, 1964. I share my birthday with John Lennon...and my mother-in-law. Take from that what you will.

Most of my youth and early adult life was spent in Bristol, located in the south west of England. I left high school in '82 - right in the middle of the Thatcher revolution. Being brought up in a socialist family, I was taught to detest Thatcher and everything her conservative government stood for. Funny how we change as we age...and funny how the truth has a way of getting out. Looking back, it's clear that Margaret Thatcher must take the credit for reinventing the United Kingdom and setting in motion many of the policies that ensured the Great was definitely back in Britain...until Brexit, of course. Now we're back to square one.

But I digress, this story's about me. There was little work around back in '82. I was working part time filling shelves in a local supermarket while I was at school. Luckily a full-time employee left and I got the job, so at least I had some money coming in...but the work wasn't exactly stimulating. I stuck it out for five long years, even working my way up to trainee manager for the company, but by the end I had cabin fever, big time.

In August 1987 I left England and flew to Israel to live on a kibbutz. I'm not Jewish, but the flight was cheap and living expenses were taken care of in return for work, mostly agricultural...tomato and cotton harvesting, plowing and planting. I loved it! Plenty of sunshine instead of the damp and cold of England. Loads of new experiences and people to meet. I was supposed to stay for three months, but I stayed a lot longer than that. My kibbutz was in the north of Israel in the Golan Heights. Whenever I got any time off, I traveled around the country, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, The Dead Sea, Eilat.

After working on the kibbutz for a while, I decided to change things up and went working for Diab, a Bedouin tribesman. Diab had a small team of guys and contracted himself out to local farms to help with their harvesting needs. The Rumor was that Diab had made his money during the Six Day War. Allegedly, he stole heavy equipment (tractors, bailors, harvesters etc) from the Israelis as they fled the Syrian advance...and then sold the equipment back to them when they returned. Now there 's some quality B2B marketing.

After a while I got bored and headed down to Eilat for some R&R, and then onto Egypt. I had quite a bit of money saved up, so I partied for a while in Cairo, staying at the Hilton. After doing all the tours and with Christmas looming I headed home

to the UK, surprising Mom and Dad on Christmas Eve. After a few years away, I was eager to catch up with old friends and see how much my homeland had changed. By the end of January, I was in Miami, so that will tell you everything you need to know about how I felt the UK was doing at that time.

I hung around Miami for a while and then scored a driveaway to deliver a car to San Francisco. I drove long and hard to make sure I had time to visit as many sights along the way as I could. After delivering the car I hung out in the city for a few days and then collected another driveway, this time to Long Island. For many Europeans, driving coast to coast in the U.S. is a dream..and here was I, doing it twice!!

By the time I got to New York, I was beginning to run low on funds and beginning to think it was time to head home again. I remember having just enough money to buy a flight back to London but at the last minute I checked out the TWA desk, and they had a flight to Tel Aviv for about the same price. Well, I thought, and within 24 hours I was back at the kibbutz for a second stint. You know what they say about never going back? Well, I think they might be right. Either the Kibbutz had changed or I had...I'm guessing it was more likely to be me. It wasn't the same the second time around, and after a couple of months I said my goodbyes for the second and final time and headed back to the UK to begin thinking seriously about what I was going to do with my life.

For the next five or so years my life was pretty uneventful. I worked in sales, marketing, transport...had a couple of long-term relationships, just the usual, really. Then, one day before Christmas 1998 I was shopping with a mate and we stopped at a little cafe. When the waitress came over she flashed an awesome smile and asked to take our order. I clocked her accent right away and said. "I bet everyone thinks you're American, but I know you're Canadian."

In 1999 Melanie and I landed in Montreal to begin our lives together. I've been here ever since and couldn't be happier.