

Friday, 12 February 2010

[Anthony's America 5: Earthquakes, a Gunman Cook, the Governor, James Dean, Superbowl, Hooters & Pink Cadillacs](#)



So, folks, do you have a cup of tea or your favourite beer in hand? We have a lot to cram in. Hang on tight, we're starting with some shake, rattle and roll: yes, let's get, let's get, let's get ready to rumble...

I experienced my first earthquake last week.

This is no big thing for local Californians, there are around 100 earthquakes a day in this State alone. But, and this is not to in any way belittle the terrible situation in Haiti, I was morbidly excited. I was sitting at my computer when my desk, chair, the building, and the floor began to shake from side to side. I'd describe the feeling as like someone sliding a rough, old skateboard (with no bearings left in its wheels) underneath everything, rolling it back and forth at the same time as tipping it up and down slightly. It's bizarre, you don't so much shake, everything else does.



This was obviously *my* experience and, as this earthquake was 6.0 on the Richter Scale, with the epicentre around 100 miles north, the aftershocks we felt weren't too bad. But, as we don't get earthquakes in the UK, this was my Big Earthquake Experience.

The day after, I stopped at a diner in town (name hidden to protect the innocent). I'd been told they did amazing burgers, but what I wasn't ready for was the cook. I was the only one in there and, as I sat at the bar, he started talking about his huge range of weaponry. He mentioned he had had Special Training, and that he knew how to shoot guns *properly*.



This would have been [kind of] fine, and within an American cultural context, but it's when he added: "...I often do nothing but stare at walls for hours on end holding my guns, waiting for something to happen..." that I freaked out. Gulp.

I ate my burger fast and got outta there.

On top of this, I was feeling homesick for the first time this week. So it was strangely coincidental that a couple came into the office (where I'm doing my internship) and they were from Portsmouth, England. Where I used to live. And, not only were they from Portsmouth, but they lived on Highland Road, several streets down from where my house was! Spooky. *It's a small world, after all...* (and other such scary Disney-isms).

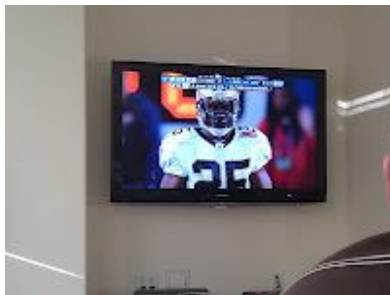


What I have really been enjoying this week, though, is my internship. I'm so very grateful for Debra de Graw - and the others in the office: Amy, Rosalie, Janice, Frank and April - for giving me the opportunity to do fun and amazing jobs such as: organising a 40th anniversary screening of the beautiful 1970s coming-of-age movie *Summer of '42*, emailing film-maker David Lynch, sorting out a film location tour for studio producers, talking to a very helpful Warner Bros. Vice President and the fantastic prospect of visiting Los Angeles at the end of this month to attend a Californian Film Commission expo. The kind of things I would never have had the chance to do in England.

And, whilst we're talking movies, I discovered that near where I live - in Mendocino Village - was where James Dean made his first film in 1955, *East of Eden*. There is one particular lamppost he leant against for a photo shoot and, obviously, being the geek I am, I found it and took a picture of myself leaning against it (sadly, Mr Dean looked about 12-gazillion times cooler than I do).



And, in the past few weeks, I did several things I would class as "Pure American". Firstly, I sat and watched President Barack Obama deliver his State of the Union speech. He, as they say, Does Good Speech. He's a funny man (or his scriptwriter is). But people don't appear to be as enamoured by his "change" program as they were a year ago. Personally, I think people should give him a few more years before they start moaning about his progress.



Secondly, I went down to Sacramento to stay with my friends Lynne and Ben to watch the Superbowl. Now, followers of this blog (and welcome to my new followers too!) will know I don't understand American Football - please see Part 4 of my American Adventure for more. As far as I can see, there are a lot of men with mullet hairstyles, padded shoulders, padded bums, padded legs and big helmets that move up and down a lined pitch, stopping all the time. I didn't really understand when I was supposed to cheer or boo, so I just cheered or booed when everyone else at the party did. However, I did learn two things about the Superbowl:



- 1) people pay more attention to the millions of dollars spent on producing the fantastic adverts, movie trailers and the half-time concert (*The Who* played in the Miami stadium this year) than they do the actual game

- 2) the aim of the game is to win sections of the field/pitch off the other team, which quite neatly - in my view - becomes a microcosmic metaphor summarising America's history of taking land from others to get a winning advantage, e.g. the American

Indians.

Oooh, can I hear a tumbleweed blowing?



Moving on, let's head over to the Sacramento Automotive Museum. Sacramento is California's capital city and it has a free museum day every month. Lynne, Ben and I decided to make the most of this and visit the Auto Museum. It had car and motorbike exhibits from the last 150 years of motoring history. From Model T Fords to Firebirds, and from Steve McQueen's bike to a genuine, *massive* pink cadillac (which looked more like a chrome-lined pink tank). For all the car enthusiasts out there, I took lots of pictures. You can click the link at the end of this blog to see them. I said at *the end* of the blog, not now. Jeez, you're so impatient.



After the cars, we went to the California Governor's Mansion. Expecting to see Arnold Schwarzenegger wandering around with half his metal-skulled exoskeleton showing, I was disappointed to learn that this mansion actually stopped being used as a residence after Ronald Reagan was the Governor. Reagan moved out because the neighbourhood was too rough for him. However, when I went for a tour round the beautiful State Capitol building too, I did get to stand outside The Governor's Office. I looked down into the centre of the building, to where he has had a special "cigar tent" installed outside so he can smoke his fat cigars without breaking Californian law.

The Capitol building is very impressive, with a domed ceiling. It mirrors the British House of Commons and Lords with its green and red session rooms (where politicians talk for hours at the front whilst the rest of the room play solitaire on their i-phones). Although it looks much older, the Capitol building itself is only thirty years old. The original was destroyed during an earthquake in 1971 and the building was re-built afterwards in eight years. If you ever go, look out for the tiny gargoyle on the ceiling sticking its tongue out at the painting of Abraham Lincoln. Very rude.



And, lastly, from politics to something equally as deep and meaningful.

I decided - as a single man abroad - to try out a special high-brow, Michelin-starred restaurant called *Hooters*. If you're reading this in England and you're not familiar with *Hooters* (as we, sadly, don't have this restaurant), it is a burger joint with the Unique Selling Point of cooking food served by young women wearing small, tight outfits and who have, er, great bodies. *Beautiful* bodies, actually.

Okay, let's not be so British about it: you get served by *absolutely stunning* girls in skimpy low-cut tops and hot pants. I chatted to my very gorgeous waitress, Emily (on the right in the pic, her friend Britney is on the left). She was lovely, funny and very intelligent. No, seriously. And, I

must be getting older, because Emily became far more attractive (and less model-like scary) after



I'd spoken to her for a while. Fifteen years ago I would have been dribbling saliva - I said *saliva* - on the table, unable to talk [whilst wearing my very uncool sellotaped NHS spectacles], but now I really have to get to know a girl to like her (oh, and a quick, polite 'hello' to Emily's boyfriend in case he reads this...I'm sure you're a *lovely* man).

And that's all for Part 5, my friends. A slightly longer story than usual, but worth it I hope you'll agree. If you'd like to see all the photos for this part of my American Adventure then please just [click here](#). See you next time. Wink.