



## **Tom's Big Birthday Bash Trip – Mostly Canceled Yet Still Enjoyed May 6, 2020**

- Chateaux of the Loire: This is the trip that wasn't. While very sad, its even more sad for so many people affected by the COVID-19.
- We were to be gone April 29 to May 9.
- Celebrating Tom's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- We would have gone had the country opened up but they are locked down tight. There are no flights.
- We are really adding up the credit vouchers and wondering how we'll make room on the calendar to use them.
- We are equally hoping we last long enough to use them.

Of all the trips that I have canceled for this pandemic, this is the most difficult one. Tom never pays attention to birthdays except every five years.

We were to leave on April 29 to Paris, Rent-A-Car, and stay in the Château of the Loire region. In the late 50s he received his officer direct commission while in that area and in the 70s we lived not far away, traveled there often and took visitors to the châteaux. We have had bicycle trips in the area and remember it fondly. This was to be somewhat of a homecoming. But it is not to be.

I realize that canceling my Paris trip, our Venice to Athens cruise, our Stockholm through St. Petersburg to Bergen and Oslo cruise, our Kansas City family reunion with Marie's graduation, my Azores hiking trip, etc. etc. are all "first world problems" and make no mistake but that we count our blessings. Yet. This one is more emotional.

Tom has been very introspective about this and has totally agreed that we would just do the trip on his 86th birthday. Nothing is going to spoil his day! Me, I hate to think about even buying green bananas at this stage of life, but I am very appreciative of his attitude.

Yet. Tom was not totally without a birthday celebration.

- People sent loads of cards.
- Some came in to chat and wish him well by FaceTime.
- Some called.
- One sent not only a huge lush full dinner but also a tiramisu with candles.
- Two sent long missives about Tom's history.



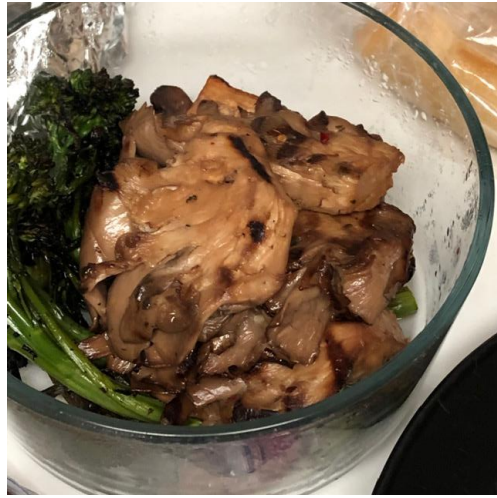
- Gifts were unique: A 1935 Bottle of Port. An old Chateau Yquem with added cheese and pate de foie gras. A basket of at least a month's worth of favorite cookies. A card a day leading up to the birthday. A collection of Johnny Walkers. Lots of special wines.
- Tom saved his Chateau de Loire hotel reservation credit for 2021. No fear of buying green bananas for Tom.



The Lalique Circle of Koi on the table was from a surprise 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Only every five years does Tom celebrate.



The dinner was enjoyed at least a couple nights. (There were actually two dinners, two days apart!) It was a big day for the 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday, well enjoyed and well tuckered out.



Did I get confused about what dinners came when? Probably. There were steaks, osso bucco once, flank steaks and hot Italian sausages once, oyster mushrooms, on and on. How about hot sweet potatoes with crème fraiche? I thought you had to go to France for crème fraiche. Cheeses, nut crackers and a chutney for one of the desserts.

Some of the gifts:



Looks like a pretty okay 85<sup>th</sup> birthday anyway.