



The Big Bang BA Birthday Bash (BBBBB) That Wasn't – Trip Notes
It was to be: Paris, Cap D'Ail, Nice, Grindelwald, Zurich
May 5 – 23, 2015 but was May 5-10, 2015

You can't win them all?

Here's the story from the patient - who is fine now:

As planned, we landed in Paris on my birthday, May 6th, were picked up by Black Lane car service as usual and whisked off to our lovely boutique hotel in our favorite district, Saint Germain des Pres. But, things sort of went downhill from there.

Most of you know that I suffer from Atrial Fibrillation (a-fib) and have for several years. Normally, this condition is managed by medication but on that day it was not effective and the episode lasted an unusually long time - maybe 20+ hours. The effect on me at least, is fatigue so I spent the day and night in bed instead of dining at the pre-arranged celebration dinner in our favorite restaurant - Procopé, I had vegetable soup in the room! Bummer! but good soup.

The next morning I was feeling some better so we had a nice breakfast and set out to be tourists. Since we'd been to Paris maybe 50 times in the past 35-40 years (obviously our favorite city - remember, we lived just up the road in Belgium for five years) it was a matter of choosing our sites from pleasant memories. The weather cooperated but my a-fib didn't so I tired rather early and we called it a day but not before having a bite to eat at an outdoor cafe just off the Champs Elyse (I even had French Onion Soup). During the night the a-fib continued so by the next morning I was pretty fatigued but we set out again after breakfast to be tourists and it was decided that for me sitting down as opposed to walking much, was the better option. So we took a taxi to the quay on the Seine where the sightseeing boats start their tours, and took the Bateaux Mouches. Well, a million Chinese mainland visitors had the same idea and came in thousands of tourist buses. Now I understand the phrase "Yellow Hoards." I've never seen anything like it and all of them had a camera device and took multiple pictures of each other and the sights passing on either side of the river. One couple with a selfie stick took a continuous video of themselves with the scenery passing behind them, all the while never changing their facial expression. Think about what that would be like showing their friends. I was pretty tired so we went home early. Then the plot thickens.

As I bent down to untie my shoes I became room-spinning-dizzy and fell over (not a good thing in light of starting the driving phase of the trip). The episodes of dizziness and losing balance continued, even when just turning over in bed. Pretty scary and certainly worrisome.

The next day we were booked for a flight to Nice where we were to pick up our rental car and go to our rented house in Cap d'Ail (the first village inside France from Monaco) where we'd stayed a week a few years before. But, during a rather sleepless last night in Paris I decided in light of this new and startling development that I just couldn't risk driving. Of course, Diana could drive but there was now a serious cloud over the remainder of the trip. So, we decided to abort the balance of the trip, book a flight home as soon as possible, spend the night in an airport hotel, and just throw in the towel. All this Diana accomplished with her usual élan and of course, all at great cost in last minute air and loss of deposits of payment for things already booked. This gave new meaning to my usual phrase - It's only money.

So, it's about 10 o'clock on Sunday night, we're home safe and sound and I've had another long nap even after sleeping for several hours on the much appreciated first class lie-flat seats, and will approach the next phase in the morning - arranging to see my cardiologist to find out where we go from here. Yes, gettin' old truly sucks!

From Diana – the prescription: It sounds like the A-fib was causing his heart to race so much that the quick heart pumping action wasn't giving Tom enough oxygen. He was thus full time totally exhausted. With a change of medicine, two new ones, and a 24/7 heart monitor for at least a couple weeks in order to adjust the medicine to his heart needs, he should be ready to go for the next adventure – meeting up with Marie and delivering her to Stanford. We leave June 14 for a few days in San Francisco at our favorite Hyatt Regency Embarcadero overlooking the Bay, and then pick up Marie June 18 to take her to Palo Alto. We return home June 23. Tom thinks he's going no matter what!

Tom's message dated Tuesday after doctor visit:

The bottom line is a change in prescription (an additional two pills) and a reduction in alcohol consumption (excess itself can bring on a-fib). So, since I quit smoking in 1989 by just quitting (I think they call that cold turkey) maybe I can handle a reduction in my Johnny Walker intake. Stay tuned. P.S. People have asked about ablation or pacemaker. I am not a candidate for ablation at the moment and not at all for a pacemaker.

Way after, in the calming down phase, by Diana:

You would have read Tom's email by now and know that things are a lot better than that awful worst-case scenario that many of us think far too much about.

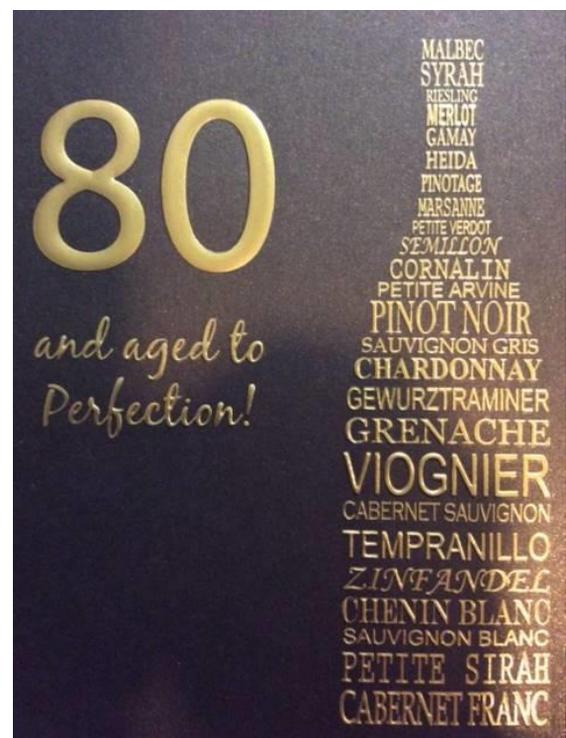
He will be hooked full-time to a heart monitor that sends information to the doctor 24/7 until they get the heart leveled out. He has apparently been pretty much full-time with a-fib and the heart rate, which is hard to count during a-fib, has been extremely high. So the pumping of the heart wasn't complete, and just wasn't getting enough oxygen through. The doctor described it like billows pushing in and out and when they push too fast and too often they can't get a complete push in and out. Can't get a complete pump. Thus the fatigue and lightheadedness.

I think it was BIL Carl who made a logical suggestion of increasing the quality of drink if you have to decrease the amount. While that might have been in jest, Tom thought it a good idea and thus the bottle of Johnny Walker Blue came out.

So can you tell me why it is, after things have settled, and we had a lovely doctor house call last night (Pat the psychiatrist) that I should feel teary-eyed? My cure? I'm researching small apartments in Paris and looking for a solo trip in December. That is with Tom's encouragement while I feel a bit sacrilegious to go without him.

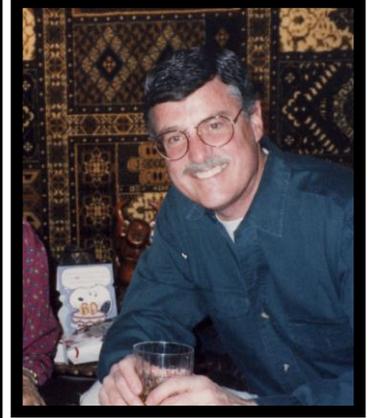
Tom wasn't totally left out to dry – he'd had a few days of birthday parties, celebrations and gifts prior to the trip. Oh - oh, was that the reason for the health failure? This "80 – and aged to perfection" card from a couple's dinner. Perfect!

Then if that didn't do it, here is the invitation for Tom's earlier extravaganza:



It's Another Milestone Birthday Event In the 5-year tradition

Tom's 80th (May 6), Chris's 60th (May 3), Kurt's 64th (May 1), and honorary Taurus member Jack was 73 (Jan 28).



To keep Tom's tradition:

60th - Moufid cooked for us

65th - Warren cooked and gave a magic show

75th - Dined at Nicholas. But by then the 'girls' got busy or traveling and the 'boys' began a dining tradition so I propose:

You are invited

80th - Nicholas again and for 'boys' of course! It's everyone's birthday so a special meal is planned following a different tasting at the house.

Wednesday, April 29

6:30pm at Burton home

7:30pm at Nicholas

No gifts please - remember it's everyone's birthday.



Then Tom and Diana are off for

Tom's Cinquo de Bs:

BBBBB = Big Bang Badass Birthday Bash to 5-favorites:

Paris, Nice, Cap d'Ail, Grindewald and Zurich.



It was most fortunate that we had a lovely duplex suite because we stayed in it a lot the three days.



The downstairs as taken from the stairway, and a panorama view out the downstairs window. There was an upstairs bedroom and second toilet had a balcony terrace overlooking the rooftops. We were by then on the 4th floor, which relates to the 5th floor American-style.

Yet it wasn't all worry and gloom. Tom had a couple days of a couple hours each where he was feeling okay.

Here's a report home to a friend who must have had ESP and had voiced her concern at our silence:

We had a good day- nice weather, breakfast in the hotel's glassed-in conservatory in their garden then out to go through the Louvre grounds (always a treat) on the way to the Tuileries, then a boat trip on the famous Bateaux Mouche sightseeing boat along the Seine (among hundreds of Chinese straight from the old country - I mean zillions of 'em). I've never seen so many tour buses and a yellow tide of humanity (analogy - Diana says a bunch of squawking chickens!). Sure made one want Apple stock. One couple took selfies of themselves the whole time with the Paris sites and sights passing behind them. They had the same facial expression throughout. Talk about boring your guests with your vacation pictures!!! We had a bite to eat in a typical sidewalk restaurant just off the Champs Elyse. I even had French Onion soup. We have tomorrow to be tourists again here before flying to Nice, getting our rental car, and off to the rental house in Cap d'Ail for a week starting Saturday. We have a guided 3 1/2 hour food tour on Sunday morning in Nice. And as I keep saying - Life is good.



Some notes by Diana:

A slow walk along the Seine on the way to a sit-down water tour reminded us of the locks problem. As much as Paris (and many other cities) try, they can't stop the need for couples to attach a lock and throw the key into the river. Now its multi-layers of locks and constant dredging.

We just read that Paris would be removing these love locks and replacing the bridge sides with Plexiglas. It would be multiple tons of locks which had already caused a portion of one bridge to collapse.

Chinese in Paris: Just read that a Chinese billionaire gave 6400 workers a trip to Paris. They must have ALL been there while we were. It sure seemed that way.

Plan it again?

If you'd had a similar trip aborted as our trip was for my 60th/his 70th, and now this aborted trip, would you do it again? I am suggesting that at the best, we stay near to main cities with direct access back

to the U.S. No, we don't have trip insurance. Yes, we do have medical evacuation insurance. I've been trying to be an optimist!

Besides – if half the fun of travel is in the planning, we certainly got our money's worth.

Did I encourage aborting the trip?

I did not. However, he was probably right in realizing that had we gone onto Nice, it would have been more difficult to get home. I offered to go, I offered to drive, I offered that he could sit on the balcony and watch the Mediterranean all day long. I (hold your breath for this one) that if I thought I had to spread his ashes somewhere, it might as well be where he wanted to be.

8 reasons travel might make you live longer | Road Warrior Voices – Very funny. Much of this type of travel and I'm going to be getting very old indeed. <http://roadwarriorvoices.com/2015/05/17/8-reasons-travel-can-make-you-healthier-and-give-you-a-longer-life/?csp=travel>

A \$1,000 Day in Paris for \$100 - NYTimes.com

This article was such great fun. Especially since we know how to do both sides of this travel and are blessed with being able to choose some of both. I'm saving it for my December trip. Do I really think that the \$1,000 a day can be replaced by \$100 a day? No, there is little comparison, but both are good. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/20/travel/frugal-traveler-in-paris.html?em_pos=medium&emc=edit_tl_20150523&nl=subscription-3&nlid=22982744&ref=img

Well, we were much more into the \$1,000 a day or over when you add up the lost costs, but what the heck, it's a big headline? Here's a few of Tom's photos from our three days.



We had a nice little walk over a few of the bridges. And entertained too by people with selfie sticks. Same kind of little twits that would fill up a lovely bridge with their locks and then throw the key into the River Seine. See the effort to cover up the bridge to keep locks out? They found an opening and are now filming themselves attaching a lock.

Then we had a river cruise and had another laugh at the Chinese and in particular all those with selfie-sticks. This couple did little of nothing but film. Same expression. All the time. Don't you just wish you were invited to their home to see their tour pictures? NOT!



I told you we spent a lot of time in the hotel? Above is the hotel's lovely sitting room and library attached to the breakfast room. I suspect they had afternoon tea as the place was full mid-afternoon.



Breakfast was very Parisian. I don't know how they stay slim or how they survive on breads, butter and jam, but I tried. The glassed area was a courtyard in older days.



Tom was incentivized to get up to Montmartre and since there is a funicular (versus all the usual steps) we did, and then via a tourist train we renewed acquaintances to include the Pigalle area and Moulin Rouge – which I've never been inside. In Tom's earlier life assigned to France in the 60s, he did.



I'm sure there's a lot of shopping types in Montmartre. The famous square with the artists/painters/hawkers surrounded by little restaurants. I used to buy *Defense d'Afficher* clothing a couple blocks in. If you need a rubber chicken it's there too. I think these were cloth bags for laundry.



The glass is the apparatus used to serve the old poisonous drink called absinthe. A couple trips ago I had to try it. Maybe once is enough. This was in the restaurant which was the impetus to get Tom to Montmartre.

Final story?

I don't like the word final, but the plans are now "final" for me: With Tom's encouragement I have booked a studio apartment in St Germain des Pres for December 1-12 and will do a solo trip. That way I can wander as I wish, slow or fast, come and go as I wish, and change my mind at any time. I like to think of a cat starting to cross the room and has no compunction about stopping and changing course. One can only do that when they are alone. Or when with Tom as he lets me do whatever I want, so long as it's slow go with a lot of restaurants included.

Itinerary

Tue May 5

9:10pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#54

Wed May 6 – TOM'S BIG 80th

10:55am Arrive Paris CDG

Car service Blacklane

Dinner Procope – reservations made by Hotel

Hotel Hôtel de l'Abbaye – 3 nights
10, rue Cassette 75006 Paris France Tele: 33 145443811
hotel.abbaye@wanadoo.fr www.hotel-abbaye.com

Restaurants desired: Train Bleu, Procope, Colbert near Palais, Le Fermette near Charles V
To do: Tuilleries walk; Luxemburg walk; Montmartre
Perfume museum?

Sat May 9

10:05am Depart Paris Orly ORY via Air France AF#6244

11:25am Arrive Nice NCE

Rental car Avis

House Villa Rosalinda in Cap D'Ail – 7 nights
9-11 Chemin des Eucalyptus, 06320 Cap d'Ail France
Lena.midtveit@sonymusic.com Cell: 4791366283
<http://www.vrbo.com/18421ha>

Week to do: Walk Eze Village, search for Menton site; Walkway to Monaco; Visit Nice and eat in market; Rothschild house in St Jean Cap Ferrat; Brasserie Le Cap; St Paul de Vence

Sat May 16

2:45pm Depart Nice NCE via Swiss#569

4:00pm Arrive Zurich ZRH

Rental car Budget

Hotel Hotel Alpenhof – 5 nights
Kreuzweg 36, CH 3818 Grindelwald Tele 41 (0) 33 853 52 70 info@alpenhof.ch
www.alpenhof.ch

Thu May 21

Am? Depart via rental car to Zurich

To do: Sausage stand

Hotel Zurich Marriott – 2 nights
Neumuehlequai 42, Zurich 8006 Tele 41 44 360 7070

Sat May 23

10:15am Depart Zurich ZRH via UA#993
1:20pm Arrive Newark EWR

Car service – ordered