

December 28, 2016



On this day in 1966, a British Overseas Airways Corporation VC-10 took off from Manchester Airport about 10:30, bound for New York. Molly and I were sitting towards the rear of the plane after saying farewell to our families, who were now making their way from the observation deck to their cars – and thence to resume their lives across the Pennines. We, on the other hand, were about to start a new life in America and it is no exaggeration to say that we didn't know when we would next see mums, dads, brothers and sisters.

Both of us had flown only once before in our lives; Molly to the south of England to attend a training course offered by her company and Bob to London for the interview that ultimately resulted in the journey we were starting now. That interview had been in June of 1966, after which there was a six month period during which PhD studies were completed (successfully), a job offer was received (and accepted) and the formalities of immigration into the United States were conducted. Now we were embarking on a 3000 mile flight across the Atlantic and then a much shorter hop from New York's JFK airport – only recently re-named from Idlewild – to Syracuse, NY. It was in Syracuse that Bob was on the very next day to start a career with General Electric at their Electronics Park facility.

We have often been told what a "brave decision" it was to uproot and move to a country about which we knew very little and which would take us away from all our family and friends. How could two 25 year olds, married for 18 months, even consider such a major move? Weren't we nervous, a little frightened, and apprehensive about what the future might hold? It would seem that we must have had a few qualms – everything was to be new, after all – but we recall our major sense was one of excitement.

Even in those days we both loved to travel (albeit in more rustic accommodation and more locally than we enjoy today) and the United States was definitely on our (unwritten) list to see, but of course we didn't have the resources necessary to do it as vacationers. At that time, if we wanted to see almost any other part of the

world, we had to have a job there – so this move provided us with an opportunity we couldn't resist. We would be able to see another country, a different culture and mix with another group of people – and get paid for it!

Having said that, despite the fact that we were happy to be making the move and had no alternative plans, we did have a “fallback” position. If things didn't work out as well as we hoped, we were determined to stay for at least two years – to give America a fair chance and (as we somewhat naively felt) to earn sufficient to return home and live in relative luxury back in Britain. Since we are now celebrating 50 years residency in our adopted country, it seems safe to conclude that things did indeed work out well and it is fair to say that we “never looked back”. Within nine months of our move we had bought our first house; less than a year after that we had our first child and had made a number of good friends, some of whom we see still.

Were there never times when we were “homesick” or contemplated a return to Britain? Of course. Within a month of arriving in the US we had made plans for a vacation in England for September of that year, as we felt a need to connect with family again. We had some reservations with the education system in our new country (mainly because it was different from that which we had experienced) and talked about returning to England when first Elizabeth and then Christopher reached age 5. Obviously we didn't make a move at either time and we are happy with the education that our children received and, more importantly, with what they have been able to do with it themselves.

There was a time when we thought that the decision to stay in America or return to Britain would be taken out of our hands. In 1970 the electronics business was slowly moving overseas and GE went through significant layoffs; Bob's turn came in November after less than four years' service. So we had six weeks to find alternative employment – or risk being persona non grata as at that time non-citizens had to show that they could support themselves and not be a drain on the economy! After sending resumes to hundreds of potential employers with essentially no response (it wasn't the best time for the country as a whole) and a number of sleepless nights, a job offer arrived from a GE organization in Cincinnati just a few days before the deadline. Not only did this allow Bob to retain continuity of service with GE but the Aircraft Engine business was one which fit his training better than electronics. So began a 30 year term in one of the most exciting industries, with a company which would become pre-eminent in the field. Fate was on our side – and our life in the US continues to this day as a result.



The rest, as they say, is history: a history that we both have relished and enjoyed as our children grew, graduated from good universities, married and gave us four beautiful grandchildren. We became US citizens in 1983 (when job requirements overcame inertia) and enjoy Dual Nationality. In recent years we have been able to visit Britain at least twice a year so we spend a good deal of time in our country of birth. At the same time, we thoroughly enjoy the life we have in Ohio and are always happy to show off our adopted country to friends and family as they visit America the Beautiful.

We truly have the best of both worlds and are proud to claim both the United States and the United Kingdom as home.

