

## Part 7 Boston

### Boston, Massachusetts

I am going to follow the Cambridge section with a description of Boston to give you the full picture right now of the metropolitan area. Boston was an extraordinary experience. That's the best way to describe it, an "experience", a "happening", compounded of a wealth of new-to-me things and old places. I was introduced to a fraction of the possibilities of the cities during the four years I lived there but it was sufficient to give me a sense of the city. It is quite extraordinary to live in one of the birthplaces of our country, literally. I'll share some of the places and experiences to give you the flavor of this historical metropolitan city, in random order but that's how they are experienced. One of the items below is a description of the "Freedom Trail", a carefully mapped out walking-tour of the city exposing the walker to famous landmarks, e.g. Old North Church and the site of the Boston Massacre.

### Brigham's Spas & Silverware

At the time we lived in Boston, the most prominent chain of soda shops, if I can call them that, was "Brigham's". They were scattered throughout the metropolitan area. Constructed a bit like an English pub with exposed timbers and individual booths, they were more formal than the fountain in a drug store, and charged a heck of a lot more. The ice cream was supposed to be one of the best through I couldn't really tell. Seemed to me that Madison Avenue and snobbery had affected opinions. For me ice cream is OK if it's cold and not old. Brigham's was a place for teenagers with some money to go after a dance to see and be seen. The measure of its fanciness was its tableware: sterling silver. Yep, sterling silver. It wasn't counted to my knowledge and I'm sure that the sterling was replaced many years ago by stainless, but it was a remarkable thing that a public establishment would use expensive tableware.

### Science Museum

Rich Hawkes took Dick and me to the Science Museum for the first time. He was the only child of parents who were well-off and who lavished gifts on him, particularly the educational kind. Science was his major interest so he went to this museum often and took us along one time.

Among the things we saw was a color television in 1957. At the time, there were very few TV shows broadcast in color. When we saw it, the NBC (I think it is) Peacock started the show, its tail fanning out in colors. What an amazing thing, color on the TV that usually was just black and white. It's so odd today to see that "explorers" and "inventors" in the graphic arts are returning to black and white, as if it was an innovation, a surprising discovery. It is not. Black and white simply is black and white, possessing more emotional power than color for some reasons.

Some exhibits in the museum were constructed to give kids a chance for hand's-on experience with science. That was really the novel aspect of the museum, Instead of a bunch of static displays behind glass panels and screens, things were set up to that kids would actually walk into and through them.

Near the entrance was a simple one that impressed me because it surprised me. It was not what I expected. It was simply a table with blocks of four or five different substances. The blocks had been set permanently into the table surface with a thermometer attached to each. Labels explained what each substance was. All of them were at room temperature which was about 70 degrees. That wasn't the remarkable thing. The remarkable thing was that the wood block and leather didn't seem cool or warm while the metal definitely felt cold. That was the point, to demonstrate that some substances conduct heat better than other things even when they are all the same temperature. That was what foxed me and seemed counter intuitive - but I could see the thermometers in all of the substances. They showed the same temperature.

The most painful exhibit was a small Van De Graaff generator. This device generates enormous amounts of the same static electricity you experience when you walk across a carpet and touch a metal door knob. The one we saw in the museum was about the size of the one in this image.

The girl has her hand near the ball which has made her hair stand on end. There is a cylinder with a metal sphere on top. The ball is connected to a static generator under the table which generates a flow of electrons that accumulate on the outer surface of the metal sphere, like a capacitor. An employee stepped up to the device and turned it on. There was a quiet whir from the static generator as the man talked about static electricity and explained what the thing did.

To demonstrate that a charge had built up on the ball, he took a long metal rod and started to move it



Figure 1

<http://www.oms.edu/community/plannedgiving/>

near the ball. Suddenly a purple lightening bolt about an inch and a half wide and a foot long jumped loudly from the ball to the metal bar. He repeated this demonstration on each side so all of us could see and hear it - and get psyched out by it. He also reached toward the globe with his bare hand to show that the bright bolt actually created a momentary depression in his skin where it hit. It looked painful but he didn't seem to mind. He explained that static electricity is different than the other kind of electricity because it only stays on the surface of objects, not inside of them. Then he said something to one of the kids and offered him a chance to experience the shock.

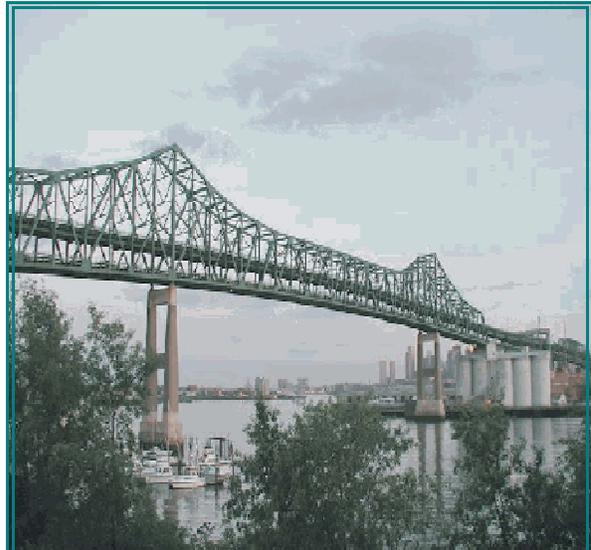
The kid timidly walked up and held out his hand as requested. The man held one of his hands a few inches from the out-stretched hand of the kid. He then held the metal rod up to the globe again -slowly to build tension in the kid- until a bolt jumped to the rod. At that point, the bolt, which traveled on the surface of his own body jumped off his other hand onto that of the kid who yelped in shock and minor pain. He had obviously not anticipated that anything would happen to him if the man was touching the globe and not him. That actually surprised all of us because we didn't expect it either. The man called for a couple more volunteers who nervously but eagerly came up but then did something totally unexpected. He then reached out his hand to a volunteer kid who was still standing in the crowd of us kids. As the shock jolted that kid, it traveled over his body and immediately jumped off his body to strike the hands and arms of the kids who were too close to him, in which instant it traveled over those kids to their close neighbors and so on until it was so attenuated that it died.

That Van de Graaff generator had a globe of about 12 inches. On a later visit we saw another generator that had just been donated by MIT. This one had a globe of something like 10 feet! They told us how many million volts it generated and I was glad it wasn't operational.

### Mystic River Bridge

Down in the middle of Boston is an enormous suspension bridge named Mystic River Bridge which was a cantilever bridge with a main span of 800 feet built to provide a minimum clearance of 135 feet above the Mystic River to allow large vessels to pass. It was built after the end of WW II to handle the growing amount of traffic into and from the north end of town. It was opened in 1950 with a 15 cent toll. I was surprised at Rolly Thomas' reaction to it. He was a native Bostonian, our landlord, and lived a narrowly focused life in a small region.

At some point while we lived in his house in Waltham, his wife had to go into town for something to do with the Relief Society. It turned out that she had car trouble so she called Rolly to come and fetch her which he did. Upon his return, he was in a state of shock and not from the malfunctioning car. He said that he hadn't been downtown for about 25 years and that during that time a multitude of things had been built. The one that seemed to actually upset him for some reason was the Mystic River Bridge which is an enormous thing.



**Figure 2** a cantilever bridge with a main span of 800 feet. The bridge has a minimum clearance of 135 feet above the Mystic River

### Howard Johnson motels

"Ho Jo." These things were all over the place and had a shocking bright orange room that was accented by the watery turquoise sign color. The colors in this image don't reflect the brightness of the actual colors. I'd never heard of this chain but got used to seeing it everywhere we went in New England. They were the most distinctive of all chains in my mind because of the garish colors.



**Figure 3**

<http://www.fwmadigan.com/files/history.html>

### Spas, apothecaries, frappes and tonics

There are various dialects in New England that differ enough that you can tell where someone came from. This was particularly true for people born and raised in one location. In addition to the accent, there was a set of foreign words that we had to learn to communicate with the natives such as:

Spa = drug store  
Apothecary = pharmacy  
Frappe = thin milk shake  
Tonic = soda pop  
Phosphate = old word for soft drink

They actually used these words. We, in our own narrow-minded provincialism, laughed at their quaintness, thinking how provincial and insular they were. But of course, WE were the foreigners, uninformed and ill-bred to judge them.

The most unusual feature of New England speech is the epenthetic "r". (Epenthesis is the phonological process of inserting a sound in sentences.) Turns out that's a feature of some dialects in Great Britain, from whence it obviously sprang. The first example I remember, hearing my folks poke fun at it, was the phrase "lawr of the land'. They thought that was so funny, in a sort of sarcastic way. Why would anyone put an "r" after "law"? "Don't they know how to talk?!" Well, well.

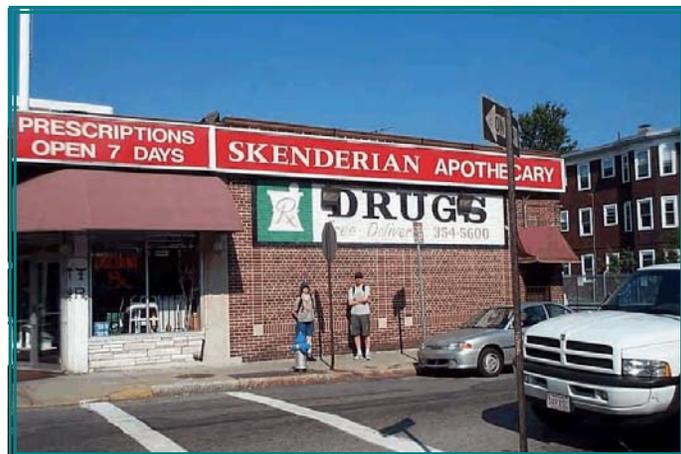
The explanation turns out to be simple and historical. And WE were the ones who didn't know how to talk. The fundamental issue is that this dialect does not tolerate the collision of vowels, one vowel running into another vowel, which can only happen across word boundaries, i.e. between words. That's very simple. The problem for this dialect is that hearers have difficulty understanding words if they are allowed to blend together, to be slurred into a single string of sounds. "Lah-ahv" sounds like "lahahv", which is difficult to understand as being two words, "law" and "of." If two vowels were allowed to come together, the hearer may have difficulty understanding which words were spoken. So speakers, who may not have the option of separating words by inserting an "r" between them, may do something else.

In fact, this is what you probably do sometimes for the same reason without even realizing you do it. You may insert a glottal stop after one word and before the next to be sure the hearer understands the two words - or to be sure that you don't sound like a slob. Try it. Say "law of the land" as a single smooth string of sounds, and then say it with a little stop after "law" to break the flow of sounds, to make an audible break between "law" and "of".. Can you feel that? That shows the hearer where one word ends and the next begins. Another method is to insert a glottal stop between the vowels, an interruption in speech caused by closing your vocal cords briefly. That would differentiate separate the two words. the ending of on work and the beginning of the other.

Plus there is a sort of stigma associated with the use of glottal stops in Cockney which serve the same sort of function, to prevent the collision of vowels. You've heard how this phrase sounds when pronounced by a cockney, "what do you want?". It comes out chopped off with glottal stops where I put apostrophes here: "Wha' 'ah ya want?" Glottal stops are used when one word that ends in a vowel is followed by another word that begins with a vowel. a word-final vowel with a following word-initial vowel. Remember to ignore the spelling of these words when thinking about what I'm saying. Just think about the sounds you make when you say the sentences. The word written "Law" is pronounced "lah" so the final sound -not letter- is 'a" and the sound of the word written "of" is "ahv", the first sound -not letter- being 'a'. So there are two vowels colliding with each other. Those particular dialects don't tolerate vowel collision so they insert another sound to alter the flow of sounds.

This turns out to be fairly common in languages of the world. Classical Greek -I don't know about modern Greek- did the same thing. Instead of inserting "r", Classical Greek would insert an "n", and French chops off the "-e" from "le" in the phrase "l'homme".

This apothecary near Harvard Square has survived, obviously owned by an Armenian family.



## Mass Turnpike

While we lived there the Massachusetts Turnpike was completed - 1955. It was a toll road that extended 123 miles from Boston directly west across the state to upstate New York at the Hudson River. The tolls were among the highest in the

US. I don't remember the amount but they were based on the number of miles you traveled. You had to pass through a toll booth wherever you entered to turnpike, at which point a very fancy looking IBM punch card was generated with lots of writing in tidy columns and bands of color. Then you drove to wherever you were going and as you exited, you passed through another toll booth. The operator at that point fed your punch card that was coded for your point of origin. The machine magically computed a number that was your toll. You paid it and were allowed off the turnpike. I was mightily impressed at this fancy technology. Remember, computers were limited to a few in universities. They had not touched every day life. Today people drive through similar settings without even slowing down and the toll fee is deducted from a RFID chip that the driver carries. Wow.

### Earl, Editha and Rich

Earl Hawkes was the Business Manager for some segment of the Hearst Publishing Syndicate, THE Hearst Syndicate which was a big deal at the time. His generous compensation was reflected in their elaborate life style. He, his wife Editha and their only child Rich lived in a fourth floor apartment in a large brownstone-sort of dignified buildings on Massachusetts (Concord?) Avenue, north of Harvard Square near Harvard Square. I suppose it was proximity to town and happenings that kept them from ever buying a home which is surprising because it had to be exorbitantly expensive to rent this large apartment and not have any tax benefit. Earl and Editha were both from Utah and were good to us. I liked both of them. Rich was well-mannered and over-protected, but it was fun to spend an afternoon in his apartment.

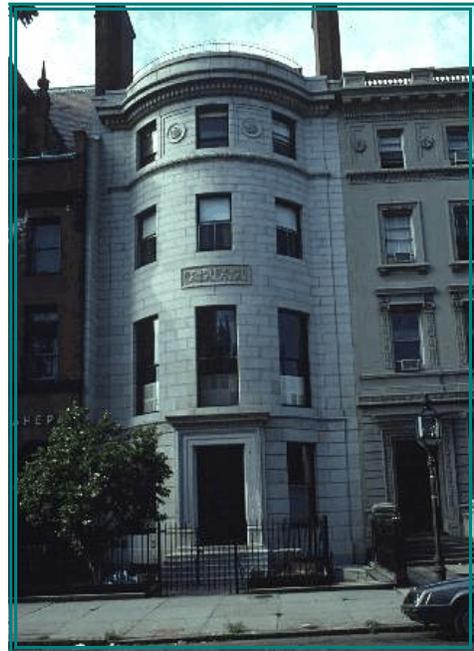


Figure 5

Earl had one child, Rich, who became one of our friends, friends in those days being pretty carefully chosen by mom. Editha was formal, dignified and serious. I never saw her in anything but a tailored suit, other than at a clam bake. She didn't get jokes. She'd issue a odd little laugh after the punch line, and then make what she thought were appropriate comments -giving away that she didn't understand.

[http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/19th/303Ccomm\\_ave.jpg](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/19th/303Ccomm_ave.jpg)

Editha would formally invite us over for a Saturday afternoon. Suits were practically de regieur. She was so strict that she didn't allow Rich to play with just any kids. We apparently passed muster so she'd invite us over for a Saturday afternoon with Rich, or to go to a show with him. . The first visit was an eye opener. We were ushered into the apartment, she took our coats and gave us to Rich. Rich took us to his large bedroom and proceeded to share his toys with us. The most fascinating ones were the scientific ones, the most vivid of which was a radiometer. It looked like a lightbulb with four little flags sitting on a wire. It was magic. When you shined a light on the black side of these flags, that started the four flags slowly turning. I was pretty unsophisticated as far as this kind of science was concerned and was astounded. It was sort of like spraying a hose of water against a small windmill.

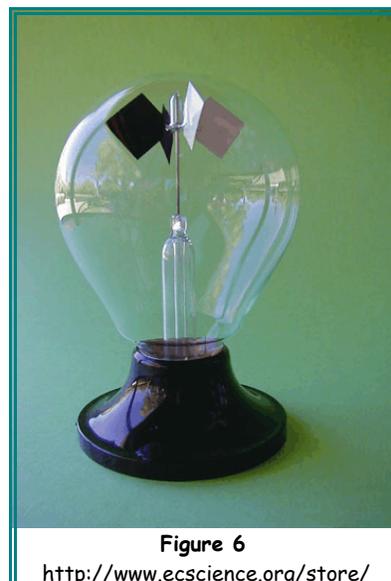


Figure 6

<http://www.ecscience.org/store/>

Rich was also a magician so he did shows for us there in his apartment. He had all of the apparatuses needed, a table with a lovely silk cloth, magic boxes, trick cards, hats, tiny silk scarves, black hat, and special money, evidence of his family's financial position. We expected that since he was our friend that he would finally reveal the secret because we knew that magic is only tricks but true to his "profession", he absolutely refused to divulge even the slightest bit of information.

When our visit was coming to an end, we were summoned to the dining room by Editha who had been fretting in the kitchen all along. Editha was a perfectionist and insisted that the lunch served to her son and friends be top notch. It was so formal as to be uncomfortable. Then she finished it off with a special desert she had bought as an expensive store in Cambridge. She handed round a plate of what she called "petit fours", funny little pieces of cake smothered in tasteless pastel-hued icing, each sitting a little corrugated white paper as if they were chocolates. We were supposed to be impressed and I suppose we were but it was a bit much for me. They really didn't taste good, icing was tasteless and the cake was pretty dry. Can't remember the name of the place

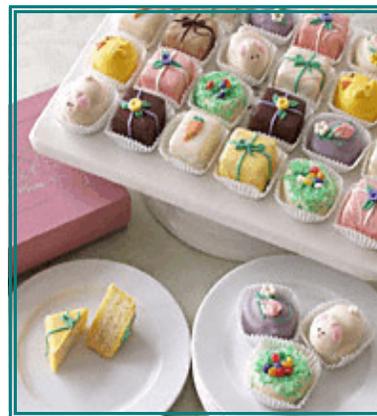


Figure 7

[http://www.stonewallkitchen.com/Content/ProdImages/693\\_large.jpg](http://www.stonewallkitchen.com/Content/ProdImages/693_large.jpg)

she shopped, but it was the most expensive of all and that's where these weird little things came from.

Editha was a strange woman. When she told my dad that Rich was "called on a mission" to Australia, the southern hemisphere, dad told her that the sun rose in the west down there. She said, "Oh." And went on.

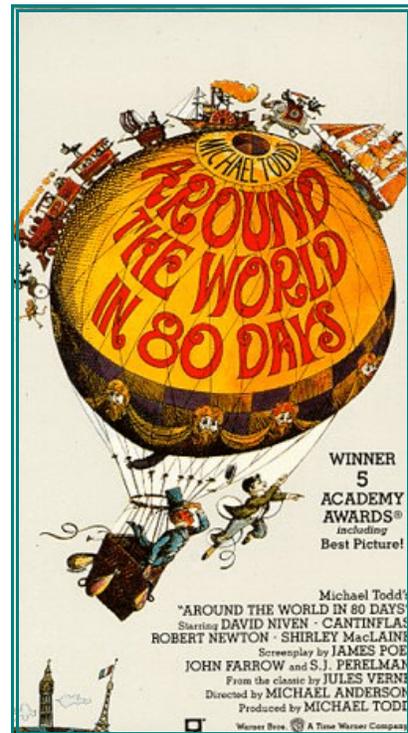
Earl et al later moved to SLC and there he persuaded "The Brethren" to let him decorate the trees on Temple Square with strings of Christmas Lights to go with their crèche. Like had been done on Boston Commons. In so doing, he started a tradition that persists today and has spread like wildfire. Others may have had the same idea but he had the influence in the right places to make it happen. And he did. First time was around 1965. I remember. Lived in SLC with first wife at the time, three blocks off Temple Square.

Anyway, I was a copy boy on Saturdays, starting early in the morning. Walked from our house on Belmont Street over to Trapelo Road near the English Walker shoe store to catch the trolley, rode it to Harvard Square, changed to the subway, rode into Boston and got out somewhere near the Winter Street-Summer Street intersection. Changed into each other right there. Never got used to the idea. Unpatriotic or dishonest for streets to do that.

Rich went to a snooty private school in Cambridge, may have been Brown and Nichols. So his friends were from the well-to-do. As a major officer of a major newspaper, Earl received all sorts of tickets and perks, including tickets to see the Ice Capades at the Boston Skating Club where Tenley Albright practiced.

On this particular Saturday, Earl had picked up a set of tickets for 4 to go to "'Around the World in 80 Days". " That is really a wonderful movie that you should see before you die. It has apparently been released in DVD format and is a must-see. David Niven is the star with a valet Passapartout played by the famous actor Cantinflas and a host of walk on cameos worth seeing.

We took the MTA to meet Rich at his apartment. Editha drove us over to pick up the fourth kid, a son of Al Capp, the cartoonist who was doing "L'il Abner" those days. They lived over there on Brattle street, not far from Longfellow's House. Had a lovely blown glass tubey sort of chandelier hanging on the



front porch. I don't remember the kid's name but he, too, attended private school -probably Brown & Nichols- and displayed that intellectual-nerdy humor of those kinds of kids. I was out of my depth just having sprung from the docks of Seward Alaska.

As soon as he got settled in the car, he took charge of the conversation and told joke of the day. It was pretty funny. It had to do with space shots and orbiting animals which was au courant - Sputnik had been sent up the year before, i.e. 1957(?). We American's were pretty sensitized to things to do with space as a result and I remember feeling disappointed that the Russian's got a march on us. The kid's joke went on for a minute or so until he had a collection of cows, horses and pigs in orbit (like the sputnik). The punch line was naturally funny but it had special effect since Concord was nearby: "That was the first herd shot round the world." [Of course the effect of the joke depended on the listener being sophisticated enough to remember what the original line was. We did and thought we were pretty cool. Editha was driving their flashy new 1957 Buick, which looked and drove like a black and silver gun boat. She laughed politely at the kid's joke, not quite sure what had happened.]

### Tenley Albright & Boston Skating Club

You can imagine that Earl received all kinds of free passes to events in the Boston area so he was always giving some of them on to Rich who'd take us with him sometimes. This time he took us to the Boston Skating Club to see Icepades, a brand new experience for me, included a performance by Tenley Albright who had just won the gold medal in the 1956 Winter Olympics. Since I wasn't too clear about this Olympics business I probably didn't appreciate the opportunity as much as I should have. I was familiar with ice skating in a drastically simplified form. I played goalie in Seward with the neighbor toughs who'd get up a game now and then with broken sticks but formal rinks? Roofs over them? People jumping around on skates? Nope.

This was a totally foreign style. This lady was spinning around in a tiny skirt, showing off her

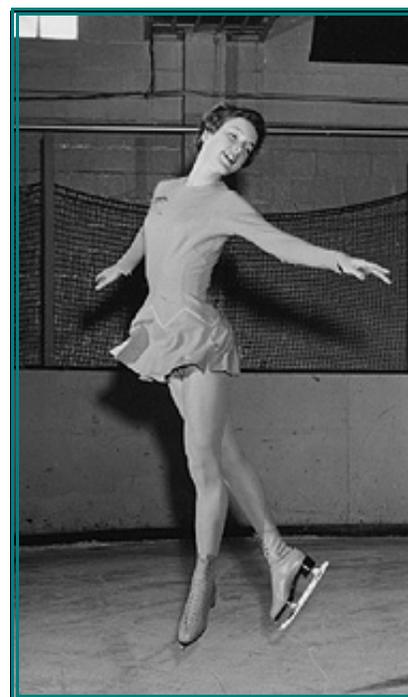


Figure 9

<http://www.bu.edu/bridge/archive/1998/12-04/sports.html>

underwear! I was shocked. Everybody acted like this was OK. I'd never seen a grown woman's underwear. It was hard on a pubescent male. I pretended to be impressed, I was shocked.

The Boston Skating Club itself was not nearly as fancy as the performances were inside. It was an older building that had been built with function in mind. Rich took skating lessons at the club and had met Tenley on various occasions so they were friends. I had a hard time being impressed, however, because I was not raised to be impressed by "notable" people. I scarcely understood what notable meant, coming from the farm in Utah and then tiny wet frontierish Seward. The school principal or city manager were about as notable as anyone in my experience. Rich was completely different. He spilled over with names of famous and important people he'd met or fancy events he'd attended or places he'd visited. Too much for my nervous system but mom wanted us to do these things so we did, like it or not. Ultimately, it was a great thing. Looking back I see she gave us a gift. But at the time, it was a bore.