



No Sweat

(more from David's adventures in London ...)

Life in the 'shared house' in Brixton was much more pleasant - of course! - than the time in the hostel. The housemates were congenial people, and the fact that three of us were young musicians made things even more comfortable. We weren't playing in an orchestra together, but being on the same 'ladder', we were able to share information and experiences, especially as they were both from Canada too.

The other two - a horn player and a violinist - were far more serious about their careers than I seemed to be. They practiced regularly, something I never got around to doing, and were bit-by-bit becoming well integrated into the music scene in town, which I never managed to do. As part of their 'training' regimen, they both jogged daily in a nearby park. Being a musician can be a fairly sedentary job, but as it makes plenty of demands on the body, they were determined to make sure they were in good condition. One morning they suggested I join them, and - for want of anything better to do at that moment - I agreed, and off we went.

I had no 'official' jogging equipment, not even a pair of running shoes - so just went out in my normal clothes. Brockwell Park is quite large, and to get there, go around a couple of times, and then get back, was at least a few miles.

I hadn't jogged as much as an inch since PE class back in high school, some years before this. And even then, I hadn't actually 'run', but just trotted around the schoolground oval, not making any attempt at all to keep up with the more athletic kids in the class. My two friends though, had been working at this for a long time, and as we moved off the sidewalk onto the pathways in the park, smoothly shifted gears and pulled ahead.

What happened next surprised me beyond words. I too 'shifted gears' and kept pace with them. And as the miles went by, I continued to keep pace with them. And even once we had left the park and were on our way back home, and they were starting to flag and pant, I didn't miss a beat, but continued to fly along smoothly and without any stress at all. When we arrived at our door and pulled up, I just stood there. No panting, no nothing. I hadn't even really broken into a sweat.

It seems that during all the previous months - with my daily routine of walking here and there across London - I had actually been 'training' without realizing it. In the early days, when I wasn't riding the buses because I was too embarrassed to ask the conductors how the system worked, I had just walked to my destination, even if it was on the opposite side of the huge city. I had walked miles and miles and miles every day. I must have been in fantastic condition!

As I sit and write this - nearly forty years later - I have the feeling that I am in 'pretty good condition'. I have neither TV nor car, two of the greatest hazards to good health, nor do I smoke (at all) or drink (more than a smidgeon), and as I am naturally kind of a skinny body type, it is easy to convince myself that I am 'OK', and that I don't have to make any particular effort to exercise.

But I wonder. If those two musical friends knocked on my door tomorrow to suggest that the three of us go for a five-mile run in the park together, I rather suspect that only two would be returning!

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