

## **Blown Away by Boston** **By Brian McAleer**

### *Day One*

September 7<sup>th</sup> 2004

Massachusetts is the land of legends, landmarks and lighthouses. The capital city is Boston, and so we come to the last stages of my trip. It's early September 2004 and I have come to the city for three days. So why Boston? Well it all comes down to movies again. This certain film was an infatuation of mine after I first saw it in 1997. It starred Jeff Bridges and Tommy Lee Jones and focused on the life of an officer in the Boston Bomb Squad. He is haunted by a past he cannot forget and one he won't be allowed to escape either. One day, one of his old buddies from the IRA, escapes from a Northern-Ireland prison, makes his way to Boston and tracks the hero down to his home and work place. What follows is a game of cat and mouse between the hero and the villain, played out by uneven Irish accents from the actors, but an excellent soundtrack featuring a few songs from U2. Oh, and the film is called 'Blown Away'.



After a ten hour bus trip from Toronto, I arrived at the Boston Bus Depot around 10.00am. My home for the 3 days was HI (Hostelling International) Boston as listed by Lonely Planet: America. I couldn't check in until 12.00pm, so that left me two hours to kill at the depot. The girl I had sat with on the bus and spoken to all the way from Toronto, was still hanging out with me. She had to wait as well for her bus to Portland, so we went for a wonder and discovered a McDonalds. I got some breakfast (Egg and Bacon McMuffin) but she didn't have anything. While I ate, she went to the toilet and asked me to mind her bags. She was pretty trusting, but as we were both being former camp counsellors, we had an understanding of each other. When she returned, she said goodbye and went to wait for her bus. I sat at the table near McDonalds, finished my breakfast and read 'On the Road' to pass the time.

At 11.35am I went in search for a taxi and found the rank at the main entrance. The morning was breezy and fresh and the city air was still clean. A driver represented straight away and we were off. I was excited during the drive and I kept an eye out for any places I recognised

from 'Blown Away' – none yet. Arriving at the hostel at 11.50am I asked if I could check in and the lady said they usually wouldn't until twelve o'clock, but did so anyway. The price was \$105 for three nights and as I forked through my wallet, I only had \$102 in notes. I didn't want to use one of my two remaining traveller's cheques yet, so I searched through my coin-collection pocket on the side of my backpack. Using every American coin in there, I managed to find the additional \$3, which was all in quarters. I handed the money over, was handed my towel and bed sheets in return, and hiked the four levels up to room 409, bed 4.

Snoring and the bodily smells of a partying from the night before filled the room as I walked in, as well as my two roommates. They were dead to the world, on opposite sides of the room, with their bed-sheets hanging half-off of them. I dumped my luggage as quietly as I could, and then proceeded to take care of the first order of business, money. I had \$190 in US Traveller Cheques left and knew that exchanging them at some banks would incur a fee. I also knew there were certainly many places in the city that would exchange them for free, but a bank was only two doors down on the corner up from my hostel and I wanted to hold bills in my hand as soon as possible, just for my own well-being. Exchanging them took away \$10 from me, which I thought wasn't too bad. I then returned to the hostel and purchased a padlock, which cost \$4. Lockers were provided in my room and I decided to secure my backpack, with my passports and tickets. I hadn't had anything stolen from me at all during my trip but that didn't matter. It would be terrible to get ripped off at this stage.

After checking into my hostel and exchanging my travellers cheques, I went on my usual exploring expedition so I could familiarise myself with the buildings and streets. Boston is known as the Walking City and looking at its size from my map I could tell that description fitted it well. Following my map, I headed to the Freedom Trail, a simple red line on the sidewalk that is 2 ½ miles long, starting at the Park Street Train Station, winding through downtown and the North End and finishing at the USS Constitution in Charlestown. I wasn't sure how far I would get but naturally, I would start in the centre of the city and see where my feet would take me.



I cut through the relaxed Boston Common Park (the oldest public park in America, but you'd think it was fairly new) which I came across just before the downtown area. The weather on this day was cloudy but pleasant and surrounding me were some of the museums I had included on my must-see list. I had made a note to see the Museum of Fine Arts and considered popping in there at that moment for an hour or so, then remembered how an

organised tour had been set up by my hostel to go there tomorrow evening, so I decided to put my name down and tag along with whomever from the hostel went.

Look there – is it a bus, is it a tram? No, it’s a duck on wheels? Boston is home to the popular ‘Ducks’ which are land and water vehicles, using WWII amphibious vehicles. They cruise through the city streets and finish the tour at ‘The Lagoon’ in the Boston Common. Casually, they drive into the water then proceeded to do laps of the water, to the amusement of the tourists on board. I decided to give it a miss.

After casually strolling through downtown I reached the trail and the first place it took me to was the Waterfront on Atlantic Avenue, home to the New England Aquarium and the adjoining IMAX theatre. I was tired after my ten our bus trip from Toronto to Boston and I had a whole three days to spend in a city that really only needed two at the most. That being the case, I decided to visit one or the other for my first evening so I wouldn’t over do myself. I walked over to IMAX first as the posters for ‘Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban’ and ‘Spiderman 2’ caught my eye. Walking into the foyer, I approached the ticket booth to check show times. I was keen on seeing ‘Harry Potter’ on the IMAX screen and as I asked for a ticket I was informed it hadn’t begun screening yet. ‘Spiderman 2’ was available however, and then,

‘Would you be interested in pahchasing a combo ticket sah?’ he asked, and gave me my first hearing of a strong, typical Boston accent.

“How does that work?” I asked

“For just \$24 you can visit the Aquarium for as long as you want and see a film heeyah at the IMAX Theatah”

I had seen plenty of IMAX films while on my trip but after thinking for a moment I couldn’t say no “Yeah sure, that sounds good” I said.



I headed to the Aquarium as that was closing in an hour and half’s time at 5.00pm and ‘Spiderman 2’ wasn’t showing until 7.15pm. Walking in I saw a real first for an aquarium; lots of penguins were just hanging out in a pool that circled the four story tank that protruded up, not down, and was wrapped by a spiral viewing ramp. I still had the crappy disposable camera I bought at Niagara Falls and got one of the two ladies who walked in just after me to take a picture of me with the penguins in the background. It didn’t flash and then I remembered that it was an outdoor camera. I thanked the lady anyway and moved towards the ramp. I started off with the jelly-fish exhibits which were a real eye opener. They almost

looked dream-like as they floated in their dense, black tanks and appeared to glow fluorescently, aided by the UV lights that were cleverly hidden. I loved gazing at them because it triggered off my mind and oddly, I began to think about when I would finally return home from my travels; when I would get home, I believed things would be different and because of my experiences I would be able to float through certain situations kind of like a jelly-fish – confident and smooth.

Heading up the ramp I darted my eyes between the 700 different sea creatures in the tank and the smaller exhibits tucked away in the corners. The tank was home to fish, sharks and a couple of giant tortoises, and they had a coral reef in their tank to parade about. Some of the displays to my other side included, seahorses, featuring both the leafy and weedy species. They were mesmerising to watch as well, and also cousins of seahorses from Australia. There was the Twilight Dwellers Tropical Gallery; a small tank of fish with lower eyelids that glowed in the dark and the Amazon Exhibit, which housed tropical reptiles and frogs, 12 foot long moray eels and cuttle fish, who change both their colour and texture to hide from predators. To top off my visit to the New England Aquarium I caught the sea lion show, which was definitely the highlight of the establishment.

As the aquarium closed at 5.00pm, I had just over two hours to kill before seeing my show. Leaving the Waterfront area, I put my feet back on the Freedom Trail and followed it into the Financial District of Boston. When I arrived, stopping to stare around, I knew I wouldn't be gazing up at rows of skyscrapers like New York or Los Angeles, but it was a nice, warm looking area none the less. It was busy too, as being the end of the working day, the office folk in their suits and skirts rushed home. I really stood out amongst that crowd and they let me know I did as well with the wry smiles most of them had on their faces. African-American men were spooking newspapers, and there were many, many homeless people standing on corners, most of them African-American men as well. I found a 'Borders' book shop and walked in, heading straight for the travel section. Once at the four rows, I ran my finger along the spines and unintentionally grabbed a book on Australia. I began to read it, in particular the chapter on Melbourne. I was homesick by this stage of the trip, no doubt.

Spending most of my two hours there, I left at about 6.50pm, arrived back at the IMAX theatre and watched Spiderman 2. The film didn't take up the entire screen and the viewing experience was about the same size of a regular cinema. However, it was much louder, and there was something special about seeing that particular film on the IMAX screen; it was the way movies like that should be seen. Afterwards I decided to walk back to my hostel through downtown. It was dark and chilly, with surprisingly little street light and a large amount of homeless people on every corner. Some of them sat on grills on the sidewalk that actually had hot, metal rods underneath, keeping them warm. I never found out what their purpose was. Just around the corner from my hostel was a liquor store and in the window was a photo of actors Laurence Fishburne and Kevin Bacon and written beside the picture was a description of the scene. It was from the film 'Mystic River' and the scene was of their characters of detectives inside this very same liquor store, interviewing the clerk. Once back in the hostel, I turned in for the night and slept very well, even as a group of instrument players in the building across the way jammed all night.

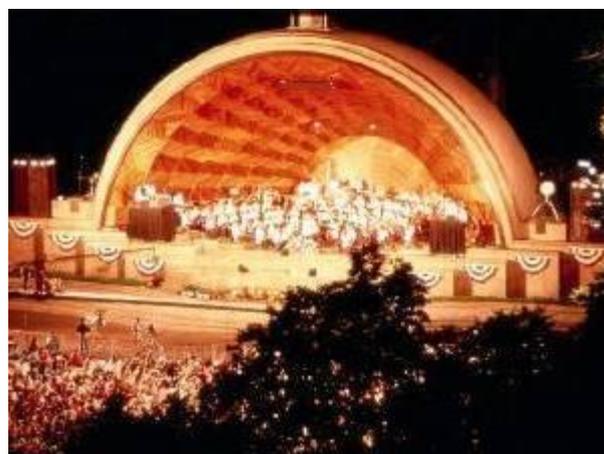
## *Day 2*

September 8<sup>th</sup>

*“To awaken alone in a strange town is one of the pleasantest sensations in the world” –  
Freya Stark*

I slept in till about 11.00 am on my second day because I was sensing Boston was a laid back and relaxing place that didn't require me to get up early in order to explore it. I hoped that one day I could wake up more often in a city like that. My destination for the day and my first real attraction was none other than Harvard University. I felt compelled to absorb the surroundings of the 'big cheese' amongst 34 other colleges and universities in the greater Boston area. The main part of my attendance was of course the Museum of Natural History, which I had read was outstanding, having good exhibitions on Central American ethnology and archaeology and an amazing collection of glass flowers. My walk to get there took me to Massachusetts Avenue, which if you keep following, will take you to the famous MIT, but I hung a right and plodded along Beacon Street. I could see the Longfellow Bridge in the distance, where I would cross and I had a hunch about where I had seen it before. But first, along the Esplanade, I came to a stop when I knew I had spotted my first recognition; one of the locations used in 'Blown Away'

It was the Hatch Memorial Shell and there it stood, still and alone with a short stretch of green grass in front of it. Many free summer concerts take place there as well as free movies under the stars on a Friday at dusk during July to August, just my luck, wrong day, wrong season. The most well-known and popular event held there is the Boston Pops July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert, which comes complete with fireworks and brass cannons and is usually the most lavish and crowded occasion. At night when it's all lit up, the sight is quite spectacular. In 'Blown Away', the love interest of the hero plays in a brass band and in an early scene he goes to watch her practice. As he stands in the dim light, in the exact place I stood, he gazes across the open space with his eyes that meet her on the stage and smiles like he's a man truly happy and confidently in love. That moment in the film got past my defences and is one I remember the most vividly, so it was a pleasant surprise to come across the location unintentionally. Walking across the dew-ridden grass I arrived directly in front of the Hatch Shell. It's old and historic looking and I imagined a group of wise-looking brass instrument players, passionately playing a piece of music just for me.



It seemed to stretch on forever across the muddy-green water, and cars whooshed past me as I stood on the sidewalk of the Longfellow Bridge. I was on my way to Harvard University and had no idea how far down the road it was. Anyhow, I walked along the bridge and stopped at the half way point, already feeling tired. I turned and scanned the Boston city skyline, tucked away behind masses of trees and resembling a village more than a city. Nothing really stood out; it is a non-protruding place with more green bushy-trees than buildings almost, which were shades of browns, whites and greys. There was an invisible force shining from it which was perhaps its history, academic prowess and overall attractiveness. I wasn't sure what it was saying to me, but I liked what I saw as my eyes delved into the city maze, and a fondness was beginning to grow. Out of all the flash-bang cities I had seen so far, Boston and I were becoming friends and that was because it had the qualities of a good friend, providing a feeling of relaxation and a sense of trust. Hooray! While I began to fall in love with the place I also acknowledged that I was standing on the bridge where the first explosion from the movie took place. Wow!

The first person I came across was a man dressed in tennis gear but carrying a suitcase.

"Excuse me sir, but how far am I from Harvard University? Am I going in the right direction?" I asked

"Yeah you shah ah. Aah you planning to wahk thah?" he, again that thick Boston accent amusing me.

"Yes I was. Would you recommend another way?" I inquired

"Oh definitely. You'll kill yourself wahking that, what you want to do is wahk down to the next stashion and take the train" he explained

"Does Harvard University have its own stop?"

"It shah does" he said proudly "Take the red line, not the yellow, and it's about two stops fahm the closest stashion right down thah" and he turned and pointed far down the bridge.

"Thankyou very much" I said "you have a nice day" and he smiled like no one had said that to him lately.

"And you too" he said walking on at a fast pace, swinging his suitcase.

The first station was Kendall and was on the red line. I had come to the right place as I saw a sign that had Harvard as one of the stops. A train arrived within minutes and I boarded. The carriage was practically empty as I drank my Pepsi, so I occupied my time by trying to read the small print on all the advertisements. Most of them were directed at young people (students) and the largest one was titled 'HIV: Know the Risks!' Two stops later and I was at the exclusive platform for the university. I stepped off the train, climbed the steps and was on the street again, and in the area known as Harvard Square. It overflows with cafes, bookstores, restaurants and street performers, but was quiet at this moment. Looking for the sign to tell me where to go, I spotted one on a street pole. It was blue, with 'Harvard University' written in white and was pointed in the opposite direction to where I had been facing. I headed in that direction and moments later I arrived at the gates to Harvard Yard.



Walking into the campus, I didn't really know where I was or where I was going, but I wasn't bothered by that; I was going to let Harvard guide me, just as it had the thousands of others before me. Tours started regularly but they weren't my bag. The grounds were relatively quiet to my surprise as I was expecting to see hundreds or maybe even thousands of students carrying books and drinking lattes. The ivy-covered buildings were situated in a quadrangle and quite impressive in their design. Feeling the historic nature of the location, I wondered which great individuals, famous and non-famous, had studied within the classrooms. What were the requirements to be a student here anyway? As I was looking for inspiration, I began my search for the Museum of Natural History. Cutting through the shady gardens, there were chocolate-brown furred squirrels running wild and weaving their way through the gold and red leaves that had fallen to the fair green. One again I received glances from the students that were there; didn't Bostonians like tourists?

The first of the many campus libraries I arrived at had a map of Harvard on the front window, which I stepped up to. I studied it for a good ten minutes but even on there I couldn't spot the damned museum. When in doubt, ask, I supposed, so I headed inside and confronted the lady at the service desk. I asked her how to get there and immediately she whipped out a small map and pointed directly to the museum, like she had done it a million times. Thanking her, I took the map and walked out to the fresh, crisp air of the Harvard. Following the route she laid out I discovered the museum about ten minutes later. Still, the grounds were quiet, with the real only movement indicated by the cars that drove past, winding down the small campus streets. From the outside it didn't look like a museum, but more like a building full of classrooms. When I entered I pulled out my wallet, but to my surprise was given free admission as there was no charge on that particular day.



This one museum was actually four museums under the one roof, and although it's small and feels cramped in, Harvard's version of the Museum of Natural History, is a fascinating visit. I began with the Botanical Museum, featuring the famous "glass flowers". I had never seen anything like them; carefully arranged in six display cabinets, were the amazing creations of Leopold Blaschka and his son, Rudolph. The models on show, which number over 3000, were created by the glass artisans over a span of five decades, commencing in 1886. They resemble 847 plant species in total and for visitors use there were coloured and laminated cards with some plant types listed on them. The task was to move about the displays, find the flowers then read about their characteristics.

When I was all flowered out, I headed for what an eight year old boy would normally rush to if dragged to a museum; the dead, stuffed animals. On display you will find the earliest creatures, including fossil invertebrates, reptiles and dinosaurs, as well as today's mammals, birds and fish from around the world, many of which were all new to me even though they were from present-day environments.



There was much to see and read about, however the real highlight of this section was something I am proud to say I saw and will never forget. Behind the glass, spanning 42 feet long, was the world's only mounted Kronosaurus, a prehistoric marine reptile. Originating from the Great Barrier Reef off of Queensland, Australia, it had a head like a shark but a body like a whale, in skeletal form of course. And the brilliant thing was that every single, solitary bone was still intact.

"A deep-sea digging team discovered that specimen" said the strongest Boston tongue I had heard so far, and belonged to a woman who walked up to me from behind. She was middle aged, with curly silver hair, thick make up and round glasses.

"And it was completely intact?" I asked

"They were all there. The diggers found remains of fish bones, still in the area where its stomach was. It's almost as if it simply stopped swimming and gently plummeted to the ocean floor, where it was buried by sand over millions of years"

"Awesome" I said, totally gob smacked, and I took a good five minutes out, just observing the most amazing dinosaur specimen I had ever come across. If you ever get the chance to see it, I think you'll agree.

*"I think we should take our mineral displays and turn it into a fine research collection"* was what was bequeathed by a Harvard student, who graduated in 1888, and that's what was done, to give museum visitors the Mineralogical and Geological Section that is available today. The collection of rocks and ores, worldwide in scope, were acquired primarily through the field work of faculty and students and since the retrieval of examples was made public in 1891, an impressive sampling of the earth's crust can be seen. This part of the museum intrigued me the most. There were gemstones in both rough and cut examples, and a great collection of meteorites. The colours and textures were limitless, and I wondered what the function of each mineral was, if they all had a function. Could the secret to some great discovery lie in one of them? Where had they come from, and what were they doing before man found them?



On my way out of that section I spotted the gift shop and the key rings, near the register, caught my eye as they were all little shiny, stones. I hadn't bought my memento for Boston

and I had to keep up the tradition of purchasing something interesting that would act as a good reminder of my visit to each location. It had to be something that would spark of a thousand memories and detailed conversation. And there it was; a blue, polished stone key ring. About the size of a 20c coin, the swirls and mixtures of it were like a smear of paints on a mural. I knew that when I held that thing in my hand in the future, it would bring all the memories back and I still have it to this day.

Leaving the museum, feeling satisfied with my visit, I caught the train from Harvard again, but this time let it take me into downtown. Somehow I ended up in the Theatre District, but as little action was happening there I wandered through the Financial District and passed the main and busiest train station in Boston, South Station. Leading off from there was another bridge and I trekked across it. I was standing on the Summer Street Bridge and from there you get a rather jaded view of Boston. The skyline doesn't have the same look from there, and funnily it looks like a different city than it does when looking at it from Longfellow Bridge. However, I lost myself in the architecture of the buildings and as the sun set behind me, the orange and golden glows reflecting off the windows, reminded me the day was nearing an end again.

Walking back to the hostel took nearly an hour and along the way I stopped for dinner at a deserted food court on Kneeland Street, which is south of Chinatown. I also picked up one of Boston's many free street magazines and the one that had me was called 'Improper Boston'. There was an interesting article in there, which described how Boston's rival city is New York, and the perceptions they have of each other is similar to the way Melbourne looks at Sydney; basically, they hate each other. The reason for the rivalry is because of each city's baseball team. The Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees are their names and when they play, it's a huge competition of who are the better team, but mainly, the better city.

### *Day 3*

September 9<sup>th</sup>

My last full-day in Boston began with me sleeping in again. It was a warm day on this September 9<sup>th</sup>, and I awoke feeling hot and slightly sweaty. I pictured myself walking along Massachusetts Avenue, across the bridge and over to MIT University but that didn't happen. Instead, I started off with a visit to the Boston Public Library to check my e-mails. Not taking too long to walk there up Boylston Street, I discovered upon my arrival that the internet was divided into two types of access; one for members of the library and one for members of the public. That one was the 'Express Internet Service' allowing fifteen minutes of log-on time. Once I was on, I e-mailed my mum asking her to call Aunt Mae in England to let her know I was coming back early. I couldn't call her myself because the phone-card I had purchased in the city hadn't worked. I could call through to Australia for some reason, but because of the massive time difference, I kept missing everybody at home.

After e-mailing mum, I checked my other messages and received a very interesting e-mail from a man in New York. He had found me through the IndieClub and was producing an independent science-fiction film in Australia in early 2005. He asked if I could send out a message asking for help in certain areas of the production. I replied, saying I was currently in Boston at the moment and would be back in Melbourne in early October. Nearing my fifteen minute time limit at this point, I logged off, and left the library feeling quite satisfied that I

had established a good contact, even though I still hadn't signified what my true calling in the filmmaking game was, if it was my game.

Weighing up my options for the day I thought back to my travel journal, picturing my list of must-see sights in my head. The first one that appeared was 'Historical B...something'. It was a place starting with B (not Boston!) that was something every visitor had to see. I walked back into the downtown area and down into Government Train Station. Looking at the map I saw "Beachmont" listed and knew that was the place. I found the right platform and boarded the next train. It didn't take long to get there and once I arrived, walked out of the station and looked upon the location, I was a bit thrown back. I was expecting to walk into a nice, little town full of beautiful buildings but instead found long, empty streets populated by cardboard box looking houses.

The place was definitely old-fashioned but there was nothing in sight. I stood near the station looking down the streets that shot out like a fork in front of me. I considered walking down a street that I hoped would lead to something more exciting because there was a slight rise in the street I couldn't see past. It began to rain and I wasn't heading that way at that moment. However, I saw a building down the street to my left and headed down there to discover what it was. It was a supermarket and I settled for it as I supposed it did offer some kind of human interaction. I carefully selected a drink from the fridge and purchased a rather excellent banana and orange smoothie that came in a glass bottle. A bit disappointed by this trip, I blamed the travel book for misleading me to thinking that Beachmont was historical and affluent, walked back to the train station and returned to Boston.

Getting off at Government Station I unintentionally wandered back into the Waterfront area. I spotted a sign for Historical North Boston and a sign for the Freedom Trail. I found the trail and let it guide me again. The walk was relaxing and pleasant and paved by cobble-stone sidewalks. The area was populated by Italian shops and restaurants and the rich smells of coffee brewing, steaming pastas and fresh flowers in the air. I was in Boston's Italian quarter and it had been that way since the 1920's. Everyone I walked past gave me a smile and I smiled back. So the locals in this part of Boston smiled to you genuinely no matter who you were? I liked that, it's the way it should be. The first attraction I came across was the Old North Church. Built in 1723, its Boston's oldest church and part of it naturally had been turned into a gift shop where I purchased three postcards that I wouldn't send to anyone, but instead, just keep as a reminder of my visit to the walking city.

After leaving the church I continued through the oldness and came to a house. Built in 1680, it was the oldest house in Boston and the former home of the patriot who carried advance warning of British manoeuvres to Lexington and Concord on the date of April 18<sup>th</sup> 1775. On that night two lanterns were hung in the lofty steeple of the Old North Church, signalling this certain man and two other messengers waiting across the river that the British force would set out by sea ('one if by land, two if by sea'). So I was at this house, which would only cost \$3 to enter and the former owner was Paul Revere.



Tucked away in the corner of the lot where it stood, along with a courtyard, I observed it and could see a hundred stories of history pour out of the windows. Heading in I immediately confronted the neatly arranged and identified 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century furnishings and artefacts, including the famous Revere silver on display in the cabinets, which is considered some of the finest anywhere. The tour was self-guided and as I stepped into each room, trying to read the plaques on every item, the experience really began to provoke my thoughts. Revere was married twice and had 16 children in his lifetime, with usually only five or six living in the home at any one time.

The restoration jobs done over the years were phenomenal and the heavy beams that made the ceilings, the large fireplaces and the absence of corridors were somewhat odd in their design, but common for the time period. During his time there, which spanned 30 years on and off from 1770 to 1800, Revere used the first floor for the basis of his work, which was a silversmith's trade. It would later be used, once Revere moved on, as a candy store, cigar factory, bank and a fruit and vegetable shop. Out in the courtyard of red paved tiles and attractive trees stood three creations by Revere and sons, including a 900 pound bell, a small mortar and a bolt from the USS Constitution.

As I left Paul Revere's house and Historic North Boston, I moved towards City Hall, I'd go due east from there. I had yet to check out Faneuil Hall, which is the brick building with the grasshopper vane on top of it. It was constructed in 1740 as a marker and public meeting place and has been a venue for inspired speeches since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Topping off the area that is the shopping and dining complex are the granite Quincy Market buildings and the North and South Market buildings. On my way there I passed many restaurant's and bars and looked in with envy as people, none alone, enjoyed some famous Boston lobster with their plastic bibs, metal crackers and melted butter with lemon juice for dipping the meat into, along with a glass of crisp, white wine. My mouth watered and my stomach complained as if it knew that to take part in such a guilty pleasure was not allowed by my budget and travelling status.



Shortly after that display, I walked passed an ATM and thought I would check my account, just to see if there was any more money in there. Accessing my Savings Account I was told that it was empty as I had predicted. I began to walk away again when out of curiosity I returned to the machine and accessed my Cheque Account. When I received a statement my eyes almost popped out of their sockets when I saw I had \$300 in there. Mum had recently sent me that same amount, which I had already withdrawn but for some reason there were more for my disposable. I was wrapped and only took out \$100, leaving the rest snuggled in there. I couldn't figure out where the money came from and frankly, I didn't care (even though it had to have come from home). I had been worrying about the shoestring budget I had but this money would make things easier, and help me survive in England for the next few weeks anyway. With my surprise \$100 I was now going to splash out!

Would I see the Ghosts of Boston or the Ghosts of the Abyss? Those were my choices for my last evening in Boston. I was back at the Waterfront and like the idiot that I am I felt like going to IMAX again, even when there was something far more interesting and one-off on offer. James Cameron's 'Ghosts of the Abyss' was showing, which was a deep-sea adventure in 3-D, going back to the Titanic. They went farther into the ship than ever before and the film was apparently an excellent viewing experience. Then there was a tour called 'Ghosts and Gravestones', the city's premier Fright seeing tour, taking you through the streets once stalked by the Boston Strangler and a visit to two of Boston's oldest burying grounds. There were actors at each location, ready to jump out and give tourists a scare for their dollar. I weighed the possibility of doing both; 'Ghosts of the Abyss' was showing at 6.45pm and went for 50 minutes. The tour left at 7.30pm on the dot and was the last for the evening.

So I couldn't do both but I had enough money for one or the other. However, I had visited a ghost house tourist thing back at Niagara Falls and I really wanted to see the documentary because I had a feeling it was on the way out from the screens. I made my choice and went with the IMAX experience. With a little bit of time before it started I went over to the markets and had some sushi and Apple and Strawberry Bubble Tea for dinner. Concerning presents for the family back home, I believed that since I had been away for so long and in so many different places, I couldn't really buy anything, but after a wander over to the mobile stalls near the North Market, I picked out a present for mum and dad. Boston, being the Irish community it is was bound to have some Irish Dancing stuff and there was. I found a small female figure in a dress, attached to a piece of string and an amusing magnet that had a cartoon with an angry face, holding a sign that said, "They went to Boston, and all I got was this stupid magnet". After purchasing the two items, it was nearly time for my show so I headed back to IMAX to see 'Ghosts of the Abyss' in 3-D; it was stunning.

What was one of the other most famous attractions in Boston? And I found the answer – ‘Cheers!’ There were two of them in the city; one was a real bar which the outside of was used for the show and there was a recreation in the market area that was exactly the same on the inside as the TV set. I found the recreated one in the market and slowed down as I walked passed. There were about 20 people in there eating stakes and drinking mugs of beer in the company of cardboard cut outs of Sam (Ted Danson) and Fraser (Kelsey Grammer). I would have loved to go in there, order a meal, have a beer but I chickened out because I was alone. No bother! But where was the one that was Cheers from the outside?

I walked around looking for an information booth and the first one I came across was closed. Then a tour bus came into my view, parked on the side of the street. It had a sign promoting the two Cheers bars, and providing the address. The recreation one was directly behind me and the exterior one was on Beacon Street. To get there I cut through Boston Common, which was creepy looking in the dark, and full of shadows. I walked down Beacon Street taking in some rather large and expensive houses. It was windy and it blew directly into my eyes and tossed rubbish across the pavement in front of me. Cheers is actually on the corner of Beacon and Charles Streets but silly me, I walked right passed it. Unfortunately I would miss out on the souvenir shop and a very crowded back-room pub where servers begin the experience with, "Where you folks from?"

Where I did end up was Back Bay. I hadn't included this part of bustling Boston on my list but found it quite interesting. I came across the fantastic American ice-cream shop, Ben and Jerry's, and got a double-scoop rocky road. I had to eat fast, as the continuing wind was melting it. As I paraded down Beacon I took in more impressive Victorian houses which were very well designed. Hanging a left into Arlington, then right into Commonwealth Avenue I moved down the centre street of the grid-area. The shops there are very attractive and other buildings represented, such as The Institute of Contemporary Art, Trinity Church and the Christian Science Church. A woman passed me who was quite attractive and actually checked me out as she walked past. I felt quite flattered and thought to myself that it was re-affirming that I appeared good looking to women even in a place like Boston.

Dartmouth Street then appeared and I hung a right and headed down assuming that would bring me to Boylston Street, the passage I had taken every day to go between the city and my hostel. And I was right as I saw the Boston Public Library again, and there were bright lights to my right, which was the action from Fenway Park, the home ground of the Boston Red Sox Baseball team. As I was curious whether or not I had gotten any replies from the e-mails I sent at the start of the day, I returned to the library and headed straight to the ‘Express Internet Access’. The library was quiet, which meant I didn't have to wait at all. I logged on and mum had replied to my e-mail saying that she had called my aunt Mae but she was away on holiday. Instead she spoke to my cousin Michelle and alerted her that I was returning to England early. I also got a reply from the guy in New York and coincidentally he indicated that one of the producers actually resided in Boston and would be available to meet to discuss certain production aspects with me. But as I was leaving for New York in the morning, I e-mailed him back telling him I couldn't touch base with the producer.

As I was in the library and had some time to kill, I went in search of some Jack Kerouac books for a little inspiration. Another adventure was ending for me and as there was no doubt I would write about my visit to Boston in the near future, I felt like reading some words from the ‘King of Beats’ to get my creative juices flowing. His books were tucked away in the far

corner of the library and they almost had his entire works. I was currently reading 'On The Road' and didn't want to read the pages from another, such as 'The Dharma Bums' or 'Desolation Angels' but instead read the introduction from another author in the front pages of 'Big Sur'. As I read through it, totally engrossed by the realities that were what Kerouac was and what he did, I made a mental note of the following points.

...“he always fantasised that in some new destination he might find a balance between his craving for novelty and companionship and the reclusive side of his nature”...

...“perhaps Kerouac's mind was already converting those sixty-three days into fiction, beginning to give them a retrospective glow”...

...“writing was the defence against the feelings of emptiness and despair that overcame him whenever his life seemed to be standing still”...

...“Kerouac's transformation from the poetic young novelist of the late 1940's into the daring Bop prosodist of the 1950's might not have come about if he hadn't encountered an extraordinary group of independent-minded young writers”...

“no 'characters' was an indication of the growing distance Kerouac felt between himself and other people. He could still observe them brilliantly but could no longer connect”...

So why have I instilled these quotes in my mind? I felt many different possibilities to why I was attracted to the man's life and work. Did I feel like I was going through the same ordeals, was I just inspired by his 'live in the now' philosophy and his own myth, or was I becoming another Jack Kerouac, someone who had exchanged societal things for a life of wandering and writing? Probably not but as I thought about how I was feeling and thinking in that library, nearing the end of my travelling journey, maybe I was Jack Kerouac just for that moment. The thought 'maybe I will just continue travelling, never settling and looking for something in all the places of the world without even knowing what I was searching for' came into my mind but then I remembered that I had a home in Australia and things to do and achieve, so I snapped out of my daze and left the library. However, I made a copy of that introduction and secured in my jacket pocket as if I didn't want anyone to see it.

Returning to the hostel at around 9.30pm, I packed my things as I was leaving for New York in the morning to catch the bus to JFK airport, and then fly to Heathrow Airport in England. I reflected upon my visit to Boston. I wrote that if I ever lived in America I would seriously consider Boston as my place of residence. Like New York, it didn't feel like an American city, but just a place with its own customs and styles and a lot of mystery behind it. Why was Boston built the way it was? Why are there so many damn cities in America? Why doesn't it feel like I've actually done it all? I have achieved my goals but it's all so surreal. In closing I said,

“So long America, for the moment, and thank you for everything you have given me”