

## **News From Home 4**

Text Copyright © 2003 Richard Thompson

[www.richardthompson-music.com](http://www.richardthompson-music.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any forms or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any other information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.

9/26/02

### **News From Home**

This really is the last straw...Back home to the Trellises from a brief trip, to discover that Hashimoto, who I have at times thought of as a horticultural brother, has talked Mrs.R.T. into installing one of those Japanese garden sculptures, the ones that look like, and may well be, Shinto shrines....He's placed it, with minute calculation, as a focal point at the end of a grove of Camellias and Azaleas. I can't help feeling usurped from my own garden - even though it is tucked around the corner a bit, and is not in immediate view from the house, still - I remonstrate with Mrs.R.T., but to no avail - she has already filled the little crevices of the thing with birdseed (or ratseed as it will probably turn out), and has painted it with yoghurt (raspberry), in an effort to promote the growth of mosses and lichens. With a view to spiriting it away in the middle of the night, I gave it a hearty if experimental heave, and nearly herniated myself. The cursed object weighs a ton, and must have been installed with the aid of a couple of cranes. I brood...

Our occasional child-minder, Mavis, has agreed to help with our veritable menagerie of pets which are getting out of control; Mavis hails from Macclesfield, not too far from Manchester if memory serves, and she is good for a laugh, and good for a bit of gossip. I asked her if she remembered Macclesfield's own 60s chart band, The Purple Gang, but she gave me a patronizing and deeply pitying look, communicating disdain and

disinterest in all things musically Mancunian prior to Joy Division. Child-minders in this area, of course, have usually put in a bit of time with the stars, so the stories about Bruce and Demi, and Tom and Nicole, are first-hand and priceless. Mavis also puts herself about a bit socially, and never seems to have the same boyfriend twice. She told me she was at one of the 'British' pubs the other day, and a couple of young Californians asked her, in all seriousness, if they had cars in Manchester, or even electricity. She wound them up, of course, explaining that many people bought cars as status symbols, but the real problem was – no engines – forbidden by the Anglican Church. And all electricity in England was the property of the Queen, who was by far the biggest consumer, giving out a few amperes here and there to especially loyal subjects. So our Mavis will feed the beasts on a regular basis, and try hard to win the affections of our three parrots, who all come from abusive or neglectful homes, and are pretty grumpy, being confused about who to bond with for life. Our poor Hyacinth Macaw, for instance, is missing about 60% of its feathers, and looks like a septuagenarian stripper. It doesn't help its neuroses having Honourable No. 3 Son telling it that it is nearly extinct in the wild – and teaching it to say, "Birds can't talk, silly" must be confusing for its fragile ego.

Everyone else was pretty grumpy today, too – Georgio seems totally in the doghouse – I think relations with Maria are on the slide, he was muttering to himself as he testily scooped fine filaments of Yucca stamens from the pool – I sense trouble brewing. And Mr. Alphonso, when I called round for a hand of Schapskopf, was mute and reflective – I think he and Anita had been going at it, and she had popped off to bed early. Mr. A started to talk rather sadly about his father, also a horseman and a serious gigolo, and what really made me sit up - he mentioned his father's Nazi sympathies – seems he used to hang out, after WW2, with a German U-Boat commander, who was often at the family home of the young Mr.A. At the end of the War, he did a runner across the Atlantic, with full crew, and gained asylum in Argentina, as did many, we suspect. This chap was more than just a seaman doing his job, however – he was a card carrying Nazi, who believed to the end (died in the 1960s) in the greatness of the Aryan race, and the inferiority of Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, etc. Which set up a dilemma in the young

and generous-spirited Mr. Alphonso, and drove a wedge between him and his father, which never truly healed. “ You know me, Boyo, said Mr. A, “My heart always with the English, who invent the beautiful game!” He chuckled a bit. “Very smart, though, Boyo”, he said, “Those Fascists - Lovely uniforms”. I was so taken aback by this that I played a succession of extravagantly wrong cards, and lost without the usual effort. Later, on reflection, I wondered whether the whole South American/Nazi alliance was based merely on a common love of nicely cut riding boots, and a natty line in peaked caps and scrambled egg.

More anon.

### **News from the road**

Dreamed it was 1967, and I was playing ‘One Sure Thing’ in a field in Oxfordshire...came to my senses on the Washington DC Metro, shouting like a madman, “Watch that G minor!”...Hitler would have liked the National Museum of Art - just the building – Albert Speer wanted Whiteley’s Department store as HQ after the invasion of England...Ghosts of Fairport again at the Philadelphia F/F, but maybe the stage was at the other end...or was my brain at the other end?...and they complain about our English summers...reliably grey....and they built yon University of Boston on landfill in the middle of the harbour – and what did they use for infill? Why, good English tea, of course. No wonder the Folk Festival is 6 inches lower each year...back to wade in the litter of the glittery ones, and nurse my blisters, but all that glisters...