



The photograph

The photograph instantly took me back 57 years, to the the halcyon summer of '65.

I had finished my O Levels and for two months had helped my father on his milk round. Five o'clock starts were a real pain, but the pay-off was that I finished by twelve and could spend the rest of the day with my head stuck in a book. This routine came to an abrupt end in August when I had my results. "Not bad," said my mum, "but hardly impressive. You'd have done better if you'd revised, rather than spending so much time reading those novels." Harsh but fair, that was my mum.

"Staying in school or getting a job?" Straight to the point - that was my dad.

My two older brothers had left school after O levels; one away in the army and the other a trainee accountant. Both options filled me with dread, but needs must as they say. I had my obligatory interview with the careers officer. "Sorry, you're too short for the police force." My five foot five was a bit ambitious, I suppose.

My best results were in English; Language and Literature were my saviours from ignominy, as were History and Geography. “There’s a job as a cub reporter with *The Montgomeryshire Express*. You could go for that if you want.” The Careers Man had been impressed when I told him that Somerset Maugham was my current reading. “Goodness, he’s my favourite too!” He smiled at me. I remember there was a gravy stain on his kipper-wide tie. “I’m reading *Rain* at the moment,” he said. “Yes, a job on *The Express* would suit you down to the ground. I’ll ring the editor - he’s a friend of mine.”

As it happened, the editor wasn’t available for the next few minutes, so I was despatched to the waiting room. It was here that I saw that photograph while perusing *The Daily Mail*. Three very glamorous young women gazed out into the camera. They had the latest Vidal Sassoon ‘bobs’. To my young mind they were the epitome of ‘60s chic. Mary Quant was in the middle - very confident, very glamorous - but it was the beautiful girl to her left who grabbed my attention; Jan de Souza was the very essence of the zeitgeist. “Exotic”, I suppose, would best describe her, perhaps a little vulnerable, but certainly very memorable to a sixteen year old with raging hormones

The next interviewee, I remember, secured a job in a warehouse. The careers officer showed him out through out the waiting room and pumped his hand as he left. “It will suit you down to the ground.”

He turned to me: “Right, Kevin. The job’s yours if you want it. There’s an interview, of course, but I’m pretty sure you’ll walk it. I’ve let them have your details, so expect a letter.” He paused. “It’ll be some time in October.”

Suffice to say I never made it to the interview with the editor, opting to do my A levels instead, but the photograph has stayed in my mind over the intervening years. It appeared again today in ***The Times*** obituaries section. Jan de Souza enjoyed a very successful modelling career, giving it up to marry nightclub boss Johnny Gold. It seems she was equally successful in this new venture, and everybody said they were a devoted couple. They retired to the Bahamas in 2003. Johnny died last year, just after their golden wedding anniversary.

The final paragraph of the obituary is one of the most the most poignant I've ever read:

Jan de Souza, model, was born on August 11th, 1940. She died of loneliness on June 11th, 2022, aged 81.

Keith Morris, Miskin, June 20th, 2022