

ONE MAN'S WAR

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February 2000

Updated August 2001

I have often been asked, "What did you do in World War II, Grampa?"

It is a hard question to answer, especially after fifty-five years have passed, so I resorted to rereading the letters I wrote to Marion during the War, which are really a diary of where I was and what I did. We had been lectured by General McNaughton, head of the Canadian Forces when we first arrived in England. He advised, when writing to our loved ones, that we should omit the horrors of war, and emphasize the good and especially the funny things that happened. Civilian morale was an essential part of winning the war, as much as bullets. And, even with a war going on about you, there were certain incidents that, when you stop to think, really had their funny side.

I found that some of the things that I thought were carved in the stone I call my brain, when I reread my letters to Marion and hers to me, were not exactly as I thought they were, but here goes...

Early in 1936 I was visited in my office by Dr. Frank Morrison, Executive Secretary of the Manitoba Dental Association. He had been a major in the Canadian Army Dental Corp, in the First World War. He had just received word that the Government of Ottawa was revamping the Canadian Reserve Army. There was a vacancy for a dental officer in Military District 10, which comprised of the province of Manitoba and as far east in Ontario as Fort William (now Thunder Bay). He asked if I would be interested as it paid a yearly honorarium of a few hundred dollars. I jumped at it. In due course, Ottawa completed the necessary paper work and I was commissioned a lieutenant in the Canadian Army Dental Corp Reserve on July 10, 1936. I was commissioned by King Edward VIII. He was never crowned King but gave up the throne of England, "For the woman I love". At the time the general public called him the third mate on an American destroyer. She was an American who was twice divorced.

Other than a few official communications from Ottawa, I never had any contact with the army until early in Sept 1939 when Canada declared war on Germany, when I was phoned by the officer commanding the 3rd Field Ambulance in Fort William. He said that he had been authorized to get his unit ready for active service. I was the only dental officer in the reserve army in this district and asked if I would enlist for active service. I talked it over with Marion and with Manly Bowles, my partner, and they both agreed that it would probably be a good idea, with several reservations of course. We had only been married a little over a year and had a month old baby, Jock. However, they thought that in time I probably would be drafted anyway so it would be a good idea to get in right at the beginning. I phoned back to Fort William, and told the officer commanding, (I forget his name now), that I would go on active service, and what do I do. He told me to stay in my office until I heard from him again but to consider myself an active officer.

About a month later, Dr. Winston Wright, now Lieutenant-Colonel, who had been the officer commanding military District 10 Dental Corp in World War I, came to see me and asked if I would consider going into the army. I told him about the arrangement with the 3rd Field Ambulance in Fort William and he said forget about it, that he was head of the dental Corp and would do his own recruiting. As I knew practically nothing about the politics of the army, I did as I was told. He told me to keep working in my office and as soon as he had any authorization to take officers on strength, he would let me know. He called me about October 15th and told me to get my uniform ready and report for duty as soon as possible, which I did. I was put to work in an army type dental office in Minto Armouries and I proceeded to examine recruits and do the necessary documentation, of which there was an awful lot.

I quickly wrote my qualifying exams and was appointed Captain later the same year. Early in 1940 I was made adjutant of the company whose duty it was to look after the administration. Mainly because I was an orthodontist, I would not be called on to straighten many teeth in the army. I enjoyed the administrative work and when Number 5 Company Canadian Dental Corp, was formed in February of 1941, as part of 3rd Canadian Division, I was appointed adjutant and proceeded to Ottawa to take up my new duties. While in Ottawa, I stayed with my cousin Will and his family. He was an architect and a great deal older than I, being a contemporary of my Mother. She had lived with his Father and Mother as a child before she was married to Dad. His oldest son Bill later joined the Air Force. He was an Engineer and built the air fields at Goose Bay and Gander, in Newfoundland. They are still in use today.

While in Ottawa I was introduced to my boss, Lieutenant Colonel Lorne Janes. He was a veteran of World War I and practiced in Calgary. We became great friends and remained so until his death a few years ago. Together we explored Ottawa, attended a session of parliament and were not very impressed with our country's leaders. After a briefing by the powers that be, we proceeded to Debert, Nova Scotia, where a staging camp had been set up expecting to go overseas momentarily. Number Three Company was already there, taking up the quarters assigned to the Dental Corp, so until they moved out we could not assemble our company.

As the Germans were taking a terrific toll on allied shipping, the Battle of the Atlantic was in full force and the powers that be were not chancing troop ships at that time. One ship carrying a group of Canadian medical personnel had been lost and a rumor went around Winnipeg that I was on it. Marion had a few hard weeks denying the rumor and assuring friends that I was still in Debert.

As Colonel Janes and I had no duties while Number Three company was there, we bought a little car and traveled the Maritimes from stem to stern and loved the country. Marion came down in July and I took leave for two weeks and we had a second honeymoon. While on our trip we visited Pictou Lodge, a place very much like Minaki Lodge where we had spent our first honeymoon. Princess Juliana of the Netherlands was staying there with her two children. They had gotten out of Holland when the Germans

overran their country. We also went over to Prince Edward Island, around the Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia, down to Yarmouth and the Acadia Valley. Before Marion returned to Winnipeg, we arranged a code to let her know what ship I would be on when I sailed, using the first letter of the first word in each paragraph to spell out the name. I still have the letter together with nearly 400 others that I wrote.

** Following is the letter I wrote to Marion and Jock on Monday, September 15, 1941. There was a rule that we were not allowed to divulge the name of our sailing ship to our family. Marion and I had a code that was the first letter of each paragraph of my letter would spell out the name of the ship.*

Halifax, N.S.
Monday, September 15/41

My Dearest Wife and Son,

Every time I think of you two darlings at home in our little house hanging on while your Daddy fights a war I kind of get a thrill of something or other.

Made a quick trip down from Debert and are now safely packed away in my new quarters which are not any too good but passable. Four of us in a room originally intended for two, but war is war and space is space.

Pa. Janes was down to see me this afternoon and looked my new situation over – not any too pleased as he was told he and the others are going to be pretty well fixed by probably the latter part of the week, nothing definite as yet.

Really had a lot to do today and as the weather has been rotten since tea last night it has been none too cheerful. Rained all morning and the mud as pretty terrific but we didn't bog down on the way and made a good trip down.

Ede hasn't written about her golf game and I am anxious to hear the result of her competition – hope she came through with flying colors.

Sybil Galanebas must feel very low after the tragedy – have you heard any more about it?

Silly all the things that run through your mind at a time like this but I am doing my best to take it in my stride. I am thinking of you constantly and dreaming of the future already.

Alysa being away hasn't hurt our plans I hope. I didn't wire Mr. White as I took it for granted you would have my letter of instructions in lots of time. Everything will be looked after by now I am sure.

Such a bunch of air men at my new station – from all over the Empire especially South Africa from where they just arrived & are quite some lads. Seems like a very nice sort really. Am going to have a terrific amount of work to do – have it mapped out partially now & as we get under way I am sure it will either bail out or get a lot worse. It can do either quite easily.

Is there any chance of John catching this measles thing Sue had or is it not contagious? Have been a little worried since I got your letters but he looks like such a husky lad in his pictures he should be able to throw off anything.

Another officer from the Ordnance corps – a major and I are hitting it off very well and I think we should have a lot fun together. Is from Toronto but aside from that is O.K.

Well my darling I don't know how soon I will be able to write again – not too long I hope. You had better start right in sending my mail to the new address so I will have it soon. I long for your letters and treasure each one till the next arrives. Got a nice one just before I left this A.M., which I will treasure until the next arrives. I just have half an hour off now so really must dash. Hope you got my wire O.K.

I think I have passed on all the information I have at present – at least I have done my best. Will be thinking of you every minute my darlings and will pray for an early reunion.

God bless you both.

Your loving Husband & Daddy

While in Debert, I visited Wing Commander Dowie and his wife Mildred, of the Royal Canadian Air Force. She was a great friend of my sister Jessie. He was stationed at Dartmouth across the bay from Halifax. I was introduced to one of his fellow officers who was in charge of the rescue fleet because he knew the coast of Nova Scotia like the back of his hand. Purportedly, he had been a rumrunner during prohibition and his boss was the infamous Legs Diamond, a gangster from New York. I also saw the battle ship Revenge and several American destroyers in the harbor. Also at that time, unfortunately, we heard about the British battleship Hood being sunk, and also the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck.

The general officer commanding 3rd Division was Major General Price from Montreal. I found that he was a great friend of Victor Sifton, who was the publisher of the Winnipeg Free Press, a great figure skater and also a friend of mine. General Price told me that all of his family were figure skaters and that didn't hurt my relationship at Division Headquarters.

Just before we left Debert, Marion wrote to tell me that her brother Len, who had been a Sargent in the Dental Corp in Winnipeg, had transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force to become a radar operator. She also told me that her brother Mac had enlisted in the Navy as an engineer but unfortunately, for some reason or other, he failed his medical test and had to be discharged.

Our company was assembled in August. Number Three moved out and went overseas shortly afterwards. We got our sailing orders and left Debert to go overseas on September 15th, 1941 I took the company of other ranks over on the Empress of Asia which was later sunk at Singapore. The officers went on the French liner, Pasteur, which had evaded the Germans when France was overrun. The Empress had been decommissioned several years early and left to rust and rot at Scapaflow in Scotland. When war broke out, she was put back into service and had been used to ferry Italian prisoners from the Mediterranean area to South Africa for internment. She was sailed up to New York for a refit and then to Halifax where we boarded her without having been

cleaned up, or deloused. It took the troops the whole two weeks we were on board to get it cleaned up.

***Following is the report I wrote on board ship "Dairy of My First Ocean Crossing"*

Monday, September 15th, 1941

Left Camp Debort amid a rain storm at 0900 hours, after having been inspected by Lt. Col. Coons of Ottawa and Lt. Col. Janes, Officer Commanding Number Five Company, Canadian Dental Corps (AF). I was in charge of the Company, the remainder of the officers being left at Debort. I accompanied the troops to the station in the Motor Transport vehicles. Capt. Johnson of Number Five Co and Capt. Simmons of Number Four Co accompanied the troops to Halifax and assisted in embarkation. I was placed in charge of the baggage party for the train, which consisted of representatives from each of the Units in our train. After the men were safely on the train and fed an excellent meal, I went forward to the baggage car where the baggage party were stationed and remained there until we arrived at Halifax.

On arrival at Halifax the baggage car was split from the train and run alongside the freight sheds; here the baggage was unloaded long with the unwanted baggage shipped up the previous night by freight. All baggage was piled in two piles, one wanted, the other not wanted. The troops embarked on transport vessel 348 A at 1400 hours and were guided to their sections by escorts from the ships company. Space was set aside on a Ping-Pong table in the main hallway on A deck for an Orderly Room and all our wanted baggage was moved there except my personal baggage which was moved into my cabin. I am in with Major Conn, Capt. Warner and Lieut. Latimer of the R.C.O.C. The sergeants are in Section J in the very nose of the ship along with R.C.O.C., Royal Navy and Field Cashier Sergeants. The other ranks are in Section K along with men from Number Five Salvage, 3rd Field Park and Labor Sections of the R.C.O.C. The accommodation is very, very poor for both the Sergeants and other ranks. They sleep in hammocks with mattresses and blankets much the worse for wear and dirt. Cockroaches and all that goes with them are everywhere, even in the cabins. Prospects of a nice voyage.

After the army troops were embarked approximately 1000 Air Force men came on board. They were guided to their space and when they saw it they turned around and walked off the ship, rushing the guard who was powerless. Their officers did their best to make them return and by 1100 hours Tuesday about three-quarters of them had returned.

Col. Janes, who had driven down from Debort, visited the ship at 1700 hours, much to my relief, and saw for himself the conditions our men were living in. I had been bemoaning the fact that words could never adequately describe the conditions and was relieved of that necessity by his visit.

Most of our men slept either on deck or in the hallways, the weather is good and they should be much more comfortable than in "The Black Hole". It will probably be a different story when we hit the north Atlantic but for the time being will be nice.

Tuesday, September 16th, 1941

The ship left dock at 1100 hours today and proceeded out of the harbor where she took her place in a convoy of fast freight-escorted by the one destroyer and one corvette. We are right in the middle of the convoy and it is really a beautiful sight. Forty-six vessels of varying sight and shape all hitting along at the astounding speed of 9 knots.

The food is graded a good fair by those who are eating in the sections and the dining room serves up a tasty meal. I was appointed Messing Officer for the boat and also Officer-in-charge of Section K. – 182 men. There are 1906 troops on board, crew of 400 and about 100 civilian passengers including women and small children most of who are returning from the Near East by way of Suez, Cape Town, New York and Halifax – quite a motley crowd. There are also 35 officers from the American Army who are going to London to be attached to the American Embassy.

The ship is riding very smoothly, but some of the lads are a little the worse for wear. The Quartermaster has not yet issued our sea legs and most of us landlubbers are having quite a time with slippery decks and stairways.

Wednesday, September 17th, 1941

Really beginning to get organized now, with the lads becoming more accustomed to boat life. Looks like rain today, with the wind coming up a bit. Muster parade in the morning at 1000 hours on deck, where roll-call is taken and the lads told their duties for the day. Ships officers make rounds at this time and look for things to complain about - makes up for our complaints so it is “Even Steven” all round, - no one gets anywhere. The weather is really getting tough, with a fair amount of rain and wind. Several of the lads have had twelve meals today – six down and six up, but most of them faring quite well. Pay day today. Each man in the Company received \$5.00 boat payment – all except me. Most of them really needed it as they had come on board without a cent in their pockets.

The Canteen is open 1130-1300 hours, 1600-1800 hours and 1900-2130 hours. Most of the money was gone before midnight, but at least it had made them happy for the time being. A unit party in the orderly room at night with several cases of beer and sandwiches and cake procured from God knows where – Panchuk has a friend in the kitchen and our lads are world’s best scroungers. Organized a sing song with Blatchford playing the harmonica, Arsenault the guitar and myself Blachfords Violin. The noise was terrific but the lads were happy for the first time on board.

Thursday, September 18th, 1941

Wakened to find a pea-soup fog this morning. Cannot even see the next ships which are approximately 200 yards distance- we hope. Fog horns blowing intermittently with answering blasts from out of the distance. Muster parade at 1000 hours as usual, gradually getting the lads organized and they know what they are supposed to do most of the time. The fog lifted during the afternoon but the going became a little rougher, with a good number of green looking complexions around. Have been quite comfortable myself so far but am touching wood every chance I get. The convoy was joined by five more destroyers this morning – American I think, and were given a hearty cheer by our lads. Tonight the northern lights are playing tag off our port bow. The North star is almost directly ahead. The fog has lifted entirely and it is a clear, cold night, very uncomfortable on deck without a greatcoat. This afternoon each man on board was issued fifty

cigarettes supposed to be the gift of the government, they will need more than that to get our votes the next election after putting us on this louse-infested tub. The cigarettes were very welcome however, as all you can buy on board are American and not very popular with our lads. Another party in the Orderly Room tonight which has become a general meeting place for our lads, we are the only unit so blessed and are the envy of all the others. We are holding only by constant guard, we even have four men sleep there. At 2100 hours there was a lecture in the dining room by Brigadier Minus who was in charge of the Engineering in the Abyssinian campaign. It was very interesting and instructive and thoroughly enjoyed by all who were there. There is lots of bridge, cribbage, crown and anchor and bingo being played with our boys getting more than the lion's share of winnings, - they are either damned lucky or damned crooked. I am not sure which.

Friday, September 19th, 1941

The main point of excitement today was the joining of two grain boats out of Churchill – came into the convoy just before lunch and were greeted with many whistles, bells etc. Everybody seems happy and the men are gradually getting into the new life in the “Black Hole”. Meals are improving steadily and organization on the boat is much improved.

A full-dress lifeboat drill at 1420 hours with everyone on board going to his appointed place and having roll call. Life boats were lowered to show just how they work and how you get in them – we hope we know all about it now – our only hope is that we shall never have to use the knowledge. Nothing of particular interest tonight, everybody making their own amusement and discussing the weather which has turned quite cold and very windy – the sea is mounting steadily and it looks as if we are in for a tough night. Complete darkness tonight – cannot even see the north star – don't know which way we are going and don't care as long as it isn't down.

Saturday, September 20th, 1941

Very fitful sleep last night. Cold as hell and couldn't sleep or find a steward to get me more blankets – will have to dig out the old sleeping bag tonight. At breakfast the waiter told me one of the accompanying destroyers had dropped a few depth charges about a mile away. They could be heard quite plainly at the boat and the lads below deck could feel the vibrations. No report as to whether or not they landed any “fish”. Quite rough this morning with a fair breeze but as the lads are gradually finding their sea legs and stomachs, there are few casualties. Held a kit inspection this afternoon. Most of the lads knew exactly where their stuff was stowed, but a few had to look all over the ship before they located their gear. There were very few losses, mostly knives, forks and spoons and one small pack. Up to this evening we had been travelling almost straight north, but tonight as we took our night station we headed due east. I have my little pocket compass Dad gave me on my 15th birthday and I am the envy of all on board except the ship's Captain, who kids me about it every time we meet. Asked me this afternoon if I would like to come into the chart room and plot our course and when I said “yes” he backed down graciously and said it was contrary to Admiralty orders – guess they think I'm a Fifth Columnist. Tonight Major-General Brunskill spoke to the other

ranks on the evacuation of Greece and Crete. The lads all said his talk was very interesting.

Had to dig in and do a little work this afternoon. Major Grahame, the ship Medical Officer, came up and asked me to come down to the sick bay and look at a couple of lads. One is an English evacuee of Crete and had a throbbing third molar of which I relieved him. The other an Ordnance lad, who fell down on the slippery deck and broke a central off at the gum line. I extracted the root using the ship's instruments – might as well have used carpenters or plumbers tools. Still don't know how I produced anesthesia with the syringe and cocaine I had to use, but the patients both said they were still my friends when it was all over so guess I just hypnotized them. Had a grand concert in the lounge tonight given by an Australian airman. Played for about two hours – everything from Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata to Strauss Waltzes, requested by me, and Yankee Doodle for the Americans. Crawled into my sleeping bag at about 2300 hours. Had to put Pte. Moran in the hospital tonight. He has not eaten anything since he came on board and has been an off green color. Should be better off in a good bed.

Sunday, September 21st, 1941

It was officially announced at breakfast that a submarine had been sunk yesterday by an American destroyer – I can see the headlines in the American papers now, - it should provoke something. Church service in the lounge at 1000 hours – taken by the ship's Padre (C of E) and the ship's Captain. Very nice except the "For Those in Peril on the Sea", which brought out some sickly grins. We have been heading due east all day according to my compass. Will check it with the stars tonight. Read just about all afternoon – still on "Oliver Wiswell" and it is mighty good too. It was cold and windy on deck so I was quite content to curl up in the lounge and read. Organized a bridge game at night – played with Major Morley Elliott from Winnipeg – going over to Medical Headquarters at London to a staff job – Lieut. Latimer of the R.C.O.C. and Lieut. Sugnet, one of the American officers. Col. Janes of Regina – R.C.A.S.C. provided some entertainment on the piano – very good too. Dark as the inside of an ink bottle tonight – took a turn half way around deck but had to give up as I kept bumping into things. Had to go below at 2300 hours to look after a plugged latrine – it had been running over the floor for an hour and down into the men's quarters. The plumbers, who belong to the Union refused to do anything about it because it was Sunday. Got the ship's commander out of bed to exert some pressure and finally had the trouble cleared up about midnight.

Monday, September 22nd, 1941

Did not waken until 0800 hours after a grand sleep. The ship is riding beautifully and is quite comfortable. My stomach is behaving admirably and I am happy about the whole thing. A little more dentistry this morning – two ladies of English heritage had "stoppings" come out of their teeth and they were sore. I visited the Naval Surgeon who has quite a nice little dental kit and borrowed enough stuff to fix them up – just zinc oxide and oil of cloves cements, but they should be all right till they get back to Harley Street. They thought I was "frightfully skillful" helping them out with practically no "tools"! Woe is me, these English do beat all – I wish they would learn to speak English! A bad case of trench mouth reported this afternoon. All I can find on board is 10% silver nitrate – will do my best. Have the man in the hospital and segregated to prevent an

outbreak – that would really be the straw that breaks the camels back. Removed a suture for Sgt. Halliwell and put in another zinc oxide cement for a lad who lost a filling “just eating soft bread”. The wind is coming up pretty strong. Still travelling east according to my trusty instrument. Issued the men’s pay books today and got a signature for each of them. Had a bit of a talk to the men tonight. I was congratulated by the O.C. Troops on their behavior and the way in which they had cleared up their section and kept it clean. I passed on the good word to them and told them to keep up the good work. They are really making the most of a terrible condition and deserve a great deal of credit. Nothing of interest tonight – played bridge and read most of the evening. Had a bit of a chill from being out on deck most of the afternoon so had the steward mix me a hot rum and so to bed.

Tuesday, September 23rd, 1941

Wakened at 0300 hours to a terrific clanging and banging – found it was just baggage in the passageway and dishes in the pantry across the hall falling around with the ships roll. It is tossing around like a cork – must be a high sea.

Got up at 0800 hours to find I was Orderly Officer and should have been up at 6. Had breakfast and then accompanied the O.C. Troops and Commander on rounds. Examined everything from bow to stern and port to starboard. What a ship! In my imagination it is what would be used to transport criminals to Australia or Italian prisoners to India. Very interesting however, really saw the workings of a liner. About half the troops were woozy today – a very high sea and the boat is pitching quite a bit. I feel fine myself, but keep knocking on wood. At 1700 hours a great commotion caused by the appearance of a big ship on our starboard bow; as it got closer we saw it was a liner with an escort of two destroyers. We figure it is the “Pasteur” with our officers on board. She does a good 25 knots according to the men on board and at that rate will be in England, to welcome us. We are supposed to pick up our English escort tonight and let the American destroyers go in to Iceland to refuel. It will be a welcome sight and will herald the passing of the half way mark. About time too, as today is the seventh day we have been underway and the eighth we have been on this tub.

Nothing of particular interest tonight. Sat in the lounge and listened to a piano concert again. Made my rounds at 2200 hours and found all well. In bed at 2300.

Wednesday, September 24th, 1941

Wakened at 0730 this morning and after shaving and dressing had a fine breakfast. Went down to the hold to visit our section and found the lads had been loafing on the job a bit, so really put them to work. They were still hard at it when the O.C. made his inspection at 1000. Looks much better again after a couple of hours slave-driving. They have certainly lost interest in looking after themselves and I can hardly blame them, especially with another 5 – 7 days to look forward to. Just one patient this A.M. – an English lad with a bad swelling over an upper lateral – put him in hospital with hot fomentations to relieve swelling and will then extract the tooth. Fairly heavy sea with an overcast sky today. Sprinkle of rain every hour or so, but nothing heavy. Our American destroyers are still with us as are the three American freighters. They have pulled away over to the north of the convoy however, and look as if they are getting ready to depart. Fire broke out in the hold of one of the freighters to our port this afternoon. Yellowish

smoke belched out for an hour or so and finally she dropped out and turned around and left the convoy. The naval lads said the yellow smoke would be seen for many miles and thus draw enemy raiders to us. They said she would probably head for Iceland.

Nothing else of interest today, just ships routine keeping me pretty busy.

Thursday, September 25th, 1941

At 1100 hours we pulled way from the rest of the convoy and stepped up to about 15 knots. When we got out ahead about two miles we could really see the whole convoy and it was certainly a sight. We were joined by two destroyers and away we went – to make a dash for it as they say. Kind of a lonely feeling to go out on deck and not see twenty or thirty ships and know there are the same number on the other side. The wind is coming up and the clouds lowering and it looks like perfect weather for a convoy. Nothing else of interest today, getting damned monotonous and I wish it as all over.

Friday, September 26th, 1941

Wakened at 0600 hours to the sound of airplane motors and being Orderly Officer anyway, I got dressed and had a look see. Found a big Whitley Bomber circling us. It was a welcome sight but I don't know how he found us as the ceiling is low and there is quite a haze over the water. Muster parade at 1000 hours and inspected the men for haircuts. Made a list of about 40 who require them. Sgt. Reid and Pte. Wilson are getting busy this afternoon and doing the trimming. A dirty, windy day today, perfect for convoy work. We all hope to be in sometime tomorrow or Sunday. Oh boy, land will look good! Boat drill for entire ships personnel at 1620 hours. All the men at their stations and accounted for.

A meeting of all the officers on board was held to make plans for evacuating the ship in an emergency. Kind of late as we have now been on the boat eleven days, but a pleasant divergence. All kinds of ideas and plans suggested, with one finally being settled on. At 2200 hours the destroyer on our starboard ran away off to the south and dropped about 20 charges – lots of excitement for a time. Kind of a clear night with a half-moon which will go under about midnight. Think I will sleep in my clothes tonight, getting into very hostile waters.

Saturday, September 27th, 1941

Wakened at 0800 hours after a fretful sleep – getting the jumps I guess. This trip has been so darned long and miserable it has us all down. Received definite word we will dock sometime Sunday, but as yet we don't know where. The lads were certainly glad to hear the news as they are all as bored as I. Rumor has it our escort got a sub last night and has the crew on board as prisoners, don't know where the information came from, but it is all over the ship. Had a nice snooze this afternoon until about 1600 hours and then went out on deck and watched a patch of smoke off our port side turn out to be another ship – running parallel to us and heading in. The sky is becoming overcast again and the night should be dark – sincerely hope so. It's a great feeling to walk out on deck and not be able to see your hand in front of your face – nothing like a feeling of security, even though false. Had a meeting of all O.C.'s to arrange for debarkation – found that a baggage party will have to be detailed to look after our stuff – will use the same party we had at Debert.

Sunday, September 28th, 1941

Awoke to find land quite near our starboard, which would be Ireland. Proceeded south all day and then turned a short left and headed east. At about 1700 hours we arrived at the outer harbor buoys and took the pilot on board. We proceeded up the channel to Liverpool and dropped anchor at 1900 hours. It is a beautiful night, with a few scattered clouds just above the balloon barrage which in itself is quite a sight. Few signs of the Blitz – the odd spar sticking up out of the water to show where a boat was lost. At 2000 hours a tender came alongside with all the necessary officials on it. Found that the Canadian Debarkation Officer was Major Sparling, who was at one time D.S. & T.O. Officer at M.D. 10, Winnipeg. Needless to say, Number Five was looked after first and we will leave the boat at 0845 ours tomorrow and entrain immediately, leave Liverpool at 0950 and arrive at Aldershot at 1830. Was nice to renew acquaintance and be able to give him the latest news of Canada. Learned from him that the “Pasteur” had docked in Scotland and he was sure our officers were on it so they should be at Aldershot to meet us – hope so. By the time I had made the necessary arrangements for baggage and debarking and given the lads all their instructions, it was midnight and a very tired little Johnie turned in for a few hours sleep.

Monday, September 29th, 1941

Up at 0600 hours and breakfast immediately. Sgt. Major had the wanted baggage all assembled at the proper place and the men had their breakfast and had cleaned up their section at 0730. We were warped in to the dock and I first set foot in Merry England at 0750 Monday, September 29th, 1941. It was nice to feel land under my feet again as it is two weeks to a day since we first went on board at Halifax. The baggage party went off first and loaded the car with all our stuff and the remainder of the company came ashore at 0845. We loaded the train immediately, as it was just two hundred yards walk from the boat to train. When roll was taken, found McNeil, Gorman and Schofield missing. They turned up just ten minutes before the train left – had been to get a cup of coffee while I was getting gray hair. Left Sgt. Thorne to look after the freight and he will check it as it is unloaded and accompany it to Aldershot some time this afternoon or tomorrow. All the rest of the company is on the train. We were provided with a haversack lunch of one large cheese sandwich, an orange and an apple and away we went. The English countryside is surely beautiful and to see the men and women working in the fields and the cows contentedly chewing their cud certainly does little to make one realize this country is at war. Flower gardens everywhere and hedges bordering all the roads and lanes. Just exactly as you see it in pictures and read about.

End of ship diary.

When we first arrived in England, we traveled to Aldershot by train. I was very impressed by the beautiful country. It looked so peaceful with the cows grazing in the fields and all the people at the various stops with grins on their faces, giving us the thumbs up salute. We were met by Colonel Janes and proceeded to Salamanca barracks. We were attached to the Regina Rifles for quarters and rations while we were there. They were in the same brigade as the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Little Black Devils as

we knew them. The old barracks had been built before the Boer War and had not changed ever since. However we were comfortable and were happy to be there, with our sea voyage over.

Third Division was moved to an area in the south of England between London and Brighton. We took up quarters in a beautiful home that had been taken over by the army when the war broke out. It was called Tanyard and was near West Hoathley, which is about half way between Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. We had headquarter offices, our orderly room, quartermaster stores etc., and the officers mess in the large mansion. The ranks took over the out buildings. We found that the owners were living in the gardeners' cottage down the lane. One evening the Colonel and I knocked on their door and introduced ourselves. They were Mr. and Mrs. Westall. He was the President of the British Banknote Company and I imagine, very wealthy. We invited them to dinner the following evening. After a few drinks, and to them a wonderful meal, (because their rations were really pretty poor), we became great friends. Mrs. Westall was shocked to find we were living with army issue table and chairs of the collapsible variety. They collapsed more often than they stood up. She persuaded her husband to let us use some of their furniture, which was stored on the third floor, behind well-locked doors. Among the beautiful furniture, I saw my first television set. I did not know what it was. The government had stopped broadcasting at the beginning of the war. They had become used to it in the thirties before we had ever heard about it.

I had my first visit to London on a 48 hour landing leave and was duly impressed with all the sights. I registered at Canada House and ran into Edith Harding, daughter of the Archbishop at St. John's Cathedral in Winnipeg. She was a friend of Marion's. She in turn called in another old friend and former patient of mine, Joan Francis, who was a skater and now a member of the Queen's Ice Club in London. I arranged to go skating with her on my next visit and later became a regular attendant at the rink.

I stayed at the Overseas League, which was just off Piccadilly Circus. Along with one of the other fellows, we roomed there, but ate our meals at the Officers Club just across the street from the Canadian Military Headquarters and Canada House on Trafalgar Square. This Officers Club was run by Mrs. Massey, the wife of Vincent Massey, the Canadian High Commissioner and later became Governor General of Canada.

I found that I could get a train to London on Sunday morning about 9 o'clock and arrived about 10:30. Coming home reversed the order and got home about 23:00 hours or 11 o'clock and so to bed. I could do this for a couple of Canadian dollars. Needless to say I spent a few hours at the Queen's Ice Club in the afternoon. I arranged to take lessons from Mrs. Kreeger and found out that her husband was a Sargent in the Royal Air Force. His name was Harry Lauder, spelt the same as the Scottish comedian but certainly wasn't a comedian. After the war I was surprised to learn that he had been appointed Manager of the British Olympic Figure Skating Team.

One afternoon I spied a nice looking young lady who obviously was a strong skater and I asked her if we could have the next waltz. I was in uniform so she didn't decline. We had a couple of dances, and when I introduced myself she said she was Cecilia Colledge. I knew of her as being an outstanding skater who had won many European championships and was a member of the British Olympic Team in 1932 and 1936. We became great friends. She took me to her lovely home on Wimple Street that is the next street to Harley Street. That is where all the famous doctors have their offices. Her father was an eye specialist and a great old guy. She had an older brother in the Royal Air Force, a spitfire pilot who was later lost. Their home was just down the street from where Elizabeth Barrett had lived and there was a plaque describing it as a historic property.

I was made a member of a trade testing board whose job it was to test all the dental personnel in the Dental Corp. We traveled all over the place wherever there were dental establishments. We really saw the country. While visiting Number One Company at Leatherhead in the south of England, they had an open house for some of the local dignitaries. I was presented to Lord and Lady Lyons. He was an uncle of the Queen who had been a Bowes-Lyon so I expected to be invited to the Palace for tea at any time. While near Windsor we were able to tour the castle and able to see the Queen and Princess Margaret. We did not stop to chat, which of course was their loss.

I had my first visit to Number Five Canadian General Hospital, which was from Winnipeg. I knew practically all the officers as most of them had been in the Medical Arts Building in Winnipeg. I also toured Aldershot and heard about Mackenzie King and his visit to the Canadian Forces where he was thoroughly booed. It was just at that time that he put through the so-called Zombies Bill conscripting men for duty in Canada but never to be sent overseas. I also had my first visit to Brighton, and heard the story of the hotels that rang bells at 4:00 every morning so people could return to their own rooms.

While at Number Fifteen Canadian General Hospital at Bramshot I was presented to Lord and Lady Besbrough. He was Governor General of Canada at one time. They were visiting wounded troops. On one of my skating trips in London I ran into Charlie Goodeve who had been my instructor in physics in the University of Manitoba. He was also a figure skater and lived with his wife Janet, who had been at university with Marion. They had a suite in the block just above the ice rink. He was later Knighted by the King for his work in developing the anti magnetic mine that overcame the German mines in the English Channel. I had a hard time calling him Sir Charles but he assured me that Charlie would be OK.

It was getting close to our first Christmas in England and lots was going on. I was given a chance, as one of the officers in 3rd Division, to broadcast back to Canada. I was one of seven or eight so I worked hard on the minute I was allowed. My final effort is preserved in the scrapbook that Marion kept of things I wrote about.

We were having all kinds of parcels and telegrams arriving, as it was getting close to Christmas. Had one in the morning that I knew was from Marion and I did not have time to read it so I put it in my pocket to read when I had a minute. It wasn't until that

evening that I was horrified to find, when I read it, that Jock had been rushed to the hospital with an acute appendix. From then on I read cables as soon as they arrived.

I heard from Len, Marions' brother, who had been transferred to the Royal Air Force and was then taking a course in radar somewhere in England. We arranged to meet in London, which we did. We had trouble finding a place to eat and chat, since he was a Sargent and I was a Captain. The British Military Police did not like us hobnobbing. No matter how close we were related, we had to find a place that we wouldn't have been seen by any other ranks. No wonder they had to retreat at Dunkirk, they were still working in the middle ages. However, we did have a good get together and I took him to Canada House and introduced him to Mary Harding and Joan Francis. Joan was in the mailroom and kept track of all those who registered so she was able to keep both of us posted as to where the other one was. Through Joan, we were able to get together quite often. We found a little pub in London where we could have a drink together and a meat pie or something and kept each other up to date, not only on what we were doing, but what the latest news from Winnipeg was. Len certainly seemed to be very happy at the time but was missing his family in Winnipeg almost as much as I was.

At this time we heard about the U.S. entering the war and the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong and China, and of course we wondered what was happening to the Winnipeg Grenadiers who had occupied Hong Kong. Nevertheless we had an excellent Christmas, had a dinner in the Officers Mess of all ranks. It was great for the lads because most of them had never been in an Officers' Mess before in their life. We had an excellent dinner with all the trimmings and lots of drink to go along with it.

Early in the spring of 1942, Brigadier Lot, the head of the Corp in Canada, paid us a visit and asked if I would be interested in a job at Headquarters in London. He said he had spoken to Colonel Janes about it and he was agreeable to let me go. I was a little put out about him letting me go so easily but of course didn't know that he was scheduled to go to London as Head of The Corp in Europe. He was sending me ahead and again I became his assistant. I left for London early in April and stayed at a temporary billet until I took up residence at the Grantleigh Hotel on Inverness Terrace. Needless to say it was right close to the Queen's Ice Club. When the Colonel finally arrived a month or so later, we found a flat on Lancaster Close, also a couple of blocks from the rink. We had a batman look after us, and he turned out to be an excellent cook. So we were well looked after. We were on subsistence pay and along with cigarettes, I was sent and didn't use, Mike was able to feed us beautifully. As a matter of fact I hardly touched my pay except when I went on leave which I did every three months.

During the war, one of my favorite London pubs was the Chandos, which was on Trafalgar Square, right next door to St Martin's-in-the-Field Church. At the time, you could get half a pint of bitters and a meat pie for a couple of shillings, and that was all I wanted before going to the theater at night. After the war, I sent many of my friends there, telling them to have a drink on me. Then they came back and said, "You said have a drink on me, so you owe me five pounds!" It had become a very famous landmark and a hangout for theater people . . . actors, actresses, stagehands, etc, and ultimately became a

very posh restaurant and pub, so that when Katherine and Allison were in London and visited it, their prices were sky high. They could afford to have a half-pint of bitter, and that was about it. In wartime, fortunately for us, the prices of all restaurant meals and drinks were set by the government so we were able to take advantage of these nice places without ending up completely broke.

In June of 1942, I was promoted to Major and given a little more responsibility. I think the best thing that happened to me at that time was that I was appointed to the Canadian Military Headquarters Camp committee. I had run into General Montague who had been a judge in Winnipeg and whom I knew slightly but he recognized me for some reason or other. He was head of the whole headquarters. He was setting up a committee to look into the welfare of the other ranks at headquarters to try to keep them out of trouble. The idea was to organize entertainment and sports for them and otherwise keep them busy when they were not at work. It was a lot of work but very worthwhile. I had a lot of side benefits, as we got invitations to everything under the sun. Mrs. Massey, the High Commissioner's wife, was also very active and we became very good friends. She saw to it that I got invitations to a lot of wonderful events. I wrote to Marion two or three times a week and sent her along theatre programs, invitations and things of that type. She kept them very beautifully in scrapbooks, which I still have and go over every once in a while and become very nostalgic.

In addition, I became a student in the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Colonel Edgecomb had enrolled in the silversmithing classes and persuaded me to go along a couple of evenings a week. I became very interested in it and over the next couple of years developed enough skill to make a small tea service. To get the silver plate we had to be registered as an apprentice in the silversmithing guild. Then when we were finished an article it was returned to them. They registered it in the guild and hallmarked it to show that it had been made in London at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. The date etc. was stamped on the bottom. When I finished it all I sent it home to Marion and I still have it here which I show off very proudly.

In October of 1942 Marion wrote to say that she had been asked to go back to teaching at the University, but what was more important was that the title to the house was clear and tucked away in the safety deposit box. That was a great relief to me of course. Just about this time the CWACS arrived. That was the Canadian Women's Army Corp, but they were best known as Quacks. They were under the command of Major Alice Sorbey and her second in command was Francis Riley, known to all her friends as Dime. Con Riley was a very well known oarsman, from Winnipeg, and she was his wife. He had come over very early in the war with the artillery and was stationed somewhere down in southern England. I had run into her in the hall one day and she said she was going back to Canada and did I have any messages for Marion. I asked her if she had a new job and what was she going to be, and she said "a mother".

At this time I took leave and went up to Edinburgh and Aberdeen. I visited Mother's relatives up there. I have gone into that fairly fully on the tapes that I have made on the Family History. Probably the most important thing at that time was that through

my work on the Entertainment Committee, I helped form a headquarters hockey team and we played several games at Purley which was a suburb of London and had a nice hockey rink. I found changing from figure skates to hockey skates a bit much, so as I had learned all the silver and gold dances, I gave up my figure skating for the time being and concentrated on hockey. I didn't play very much but acted more or less as a manager and only played short periods of time. I was usually in goal because we did not have a very good goaltender. Fortunately we had several players who had played in good leagues in Canada and they didn't allow the opponents many times to shoot at me. Otherwise we would have been in trouble. However, it was a lot of fun, and when walking through headquarters building I was often greeted with a salute and "Hi coach".

Through Mrs. Massey I was invited to a lot of receptions and parties. The most important ones being at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd George. I think he was a grandson of the World War I Prime Minister. He was a Minister of Transport in the government. On several occasions I was invited to tea and once to a meal at the Anthony Eden's. His wife was a real doll! We became quite friendly and even to the point of being called Jack, which was my one claim to fame.

As I mentioned earlier I had a weeks leave every three months. The Knights of Columbus had organized a hospitality service through which you were sent to a home in the part of the country you wanted to visit and were people's houseguest. All you did was arrive along with your ration book. They were very happy to get them because their rations were really pretty slim. I usually took one of these leaves and went to many different parts of the country and made some very fine friends. Some I corresponded with for years afterwards. When Marion and I traveled to Britain and Europe in 1952 we were able to visit several of them.

On one leave I was to be the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Semple at Morpeth, which is near Newcastle. I wanted to go up there to do some shooting in the fall of '42. I was able to get a couple of boxes of shells through auxiliary services because they were almost impossible to get. However, when I arrived Mr. Semple loaned me one of this Wesley Richard guns and the game keeper took me out a couple of times. When he decided I was not a menace, Mr. Semple arranged a proper shoot and invited some of the local gentry. I had never shot from prepared butts, as they call them, but had always walked up and flushed the birds in the approved Canadian fashion. Therefore when they were drawing cards for places in the butts, I asked to be allowed to walk with the gamekeepers that were doing the driving of the birds. One of the shooters always went along with them. I found out very shortly that this was not a very happy place to be because the only birds you are supposed to shoot at were the ones that were not going to fly over the butts where the other guns were. The only ones you could shoot at were the ones that flew back over our heads or flew off to the side. After I learned this, or course, the next time we drew for cards I drew a high enough card to be in one of the butts and experience my first time of having birds driven to me.

You could travel to Ireland only on the invitation of a relative and even then you were not allowed to wear a uniform as Ireland was supposed to be neutral. My sister Edith had taught in school with an exchange teacher from Ireland named Ruth Glasgow.

Ruth, as I remember, lived in Cork so I wrote to Edith and asked her to write to her friend and ask her to write to me as if I was her cousin, and invite me over. In due course the letter arrived starting out "Dear Cousin Jack" and as only an Irish person would be able to do, wrote a lot of blarney of supposed relatives. But the main thing was that she sent the looked-for invitation to visit them. It was all I needed, and the necessary permission was granted. I went from Holyhead to Kingston, which was the port in Dublin. I then stayed at the famous old Shelbourne Hotel where I was taken up by three old men who were in the pub the first evening I got there, having a drink before dinner, to which they invited me. While having dinner a very smartly dressed young man came into the dining room and sat by himself. One of the old codgers leaned over to me and whispered that that was the German "charge D affair". Kind of hard to take but war did some strange things.

Another leave I spent at Brixam, near Torquay in Devon, and visited the home of the Reverend Lyte, who was famous for composing the wonderful old hymn "Abide with Me". I sat on the rustic bench that he was supposed to have sat on, looking out over the sea, as he wrote the words.

Probably the most notable event of that winter was being invited to the investiture of my commanding officer, Colonel Janes, as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire at Buckingham Palace. Colonel Janes had been awarded an OBE by the King and was allowed to invite two friends. I went with Lieutenant Colonel Dick McDougal from Victoria and we were suitably impressed. Marion has the invitation in my scrapbook.

The ceremony was most interesting. We walked up to the big iron gates in front of the palace, where we were met by a Sargeant in the Cold Stream Guards and eight or ten guardsmen. They checked our tickets, and then one of the guardsmen said, if you will follow me, I will take you to the investiture. We walked across the open area between the gates and the palace, into the palace and up several flights of stairs. We came into a very large beautiful ornate room, which I imagine was the palace ballroom. It was about half full already and the guardsman just said, "come with me" and took us up to the very front row opposite a set of very ornate doors. We sat there for some time because we had got there quite early and exactly at 2:00 the doors opened and the King stepped forward, dressed as an admiral in the Royal Navy and had eight or ten "flunkies" around him either in uniform or morning coat. They proceeded immediately with the investiture.

The first man was a lieutenant in the Royal Air Force who was in a wheel chair, and he was getting the Victoria Cross for bravery beyond the call of duty. After that came a couple of civilians who were being knighted and it was quite interesting to see them kneel in front of the King and be tapped on each shoulder with the official ceremonial sword and then asked to "arise Sir Biscuit Eater". They would then rise, bow and back away from the King. The remainder of the line must have been 50 or 60, who were grouped according to the honor they were receiving, and Colonel Janes was among those. When I was congratulating him on becoming an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), he said, "Well, going back to the first World War, we didn't call it that, we called it " Other Buggers' Effort"!

The best news in the fall of 1943 was the capitulation of Italy, rivaled only by the news that all administration personnel under the age of 35 were to be moved to the field and leave the staff jobs for the old men. Colonel Janes suggested I find myself a job I thought I would like. Without too much hesitation, I posted myself to Number Ten Canadian General Hospital. They had taken over the mental hospital buildings at Wateford, just outside of London and had a vacancy for a Chief Dental Officer with the rank of Major. I had visited the hospital on several occasions and became a good friend of the other dental officer, Captain Murray Campbell from Chatham Ontario. He was a veteran of the 1st war and was a graduate of the class of '23. All the personnel were from around London Ontario and as my ancestors had come from Galt, I was accepted without question. It proved to be a good move because not only was I happy there but I was within tube distance of London and could get in and out and go to my silversmithing classes or the theatre whenever I pleased. While at Number Ten, I had a leave and went up once again to Edinburgh and was the houseguest of Mr. and Mrs. Miller-Thomas at Innerleithen. He was the owner of a large distillery so the "Scotch" flowed freely. In addition, I went on another shoot at Cluny Castle, which was the home of the Gordon Gin family.

Marion wrote to say that her cousin Charley Deponsier was a prisoner of war. He was an officer in the artillery in First Division in Italy. He had left Winnipeg in the fall of 1939, one of the first to leave. At least he was alive and it was a great relief as he had been reported missing for several months.

I arrived back from leave to receive an urgent message from Colonel Janes in London. I phoned him immediately and he asked me to come into London for a conference. When I did, he told me that the invasion force was being organized and that Colonel Edgecomb, my old friend from Debert, had returned from Italy to take over as Head of the Dental Corp. He had an opening on his staff for an assistant and had asked for me. Of course I jumped at it and was duly appointed with the imposing title of Deputy Assistant Director of Dental Services. I left the hospital and moved back to London but as Colonel Janes had moved to a smaller suite alone, I was billeted with Lady Davidson. Her husband had been Governor General of Newfoundland during the 1st World War. She was a grand old gal and Marion and I had dinner with her when we were on our trip on 1952. She died shortly afterwards, well into her 90's.

I moved under canvas in June 15th 1944 in Windsor Great Park, sharing a tent with Major Charlie Mustard, who had been a school principal in Toronto. In spite of that he was a pretty nice fellow. We had all our stuff ready to move across the Channel whenever Montgomery gave the signal. I was assigned to the advance party and moved down to Southhampton, some time around the end of June and boarded a large SLT (which means Ships Landing Tanks) and landed on Sword Beach near Arromanches on D+19 (nineteen days after the initial landing at Normandy). We proceeded by lorry to a wooded area about three miles west of Bayeux and set up a tent headquarters. We had a piece of shell break through our tent one night and land on my pillow. I discovered it the

next morning after a frightful sleep, due to the heavy bombardment and lots of air activity. I have the fragment among my souvenirs.

I found the next day that the artillery had been blasting Caen over our heads. Fortunately I had slept through most of it. During my assignment in London, I had become somewhat desensitized to the noise of bombing. On leaving my quarters there early one morning I was surprised to find that the building across the street from me had been bombed and become rubble overnight! My ability to sleep through anything since then is well known by family and friends.

About the middle of August, the last of the headquarters joined us and we became a unit once again. We were also told that our mail from the middle of June had been held but happily would be forwarded to Canada in due course. I learned later that all my letters from June 20th to August 29th were lost whether at sea, confiscated, or thrown in someone's waste paper basket, I don't know. Unfortunately I had recorded in those letters all my experiences of crossing the Channel and setting up our headquarters.

We proceeded through Caen, Falaise, Lesieux, Rouen, St. Omer and then to Brussels. After we left Falaise, we moved, practically daily, trying to keep up with the fleeing Germans. When we got to St Omer, just on the border of France, we stopped for two or three days, to get organized for the big move into Brussels, which had been reported to be completely unscathed by war, and a sight-seeing paradise. I was driving the jeep and Charlie, who spoke quite passable French, was sitting on the curb side. After driving through and around the city, seeing the sights and marveling at the beautiful architecture, I suggested to Charlie that it was about time we found our street, with which he agreed. I stopped the jeep and Charlie beckoned a schoolboy of about 12 or 14, over to the vehicle and, in his best classroom French, said "Garcon, ou est le avenue Moliere, s'il vous plait?" The schoolboy looked at our Canada vehicle, our Canada patches and big maple leaves, and replied, in perfect English, "If you go straight ahead two blocks and then turn to the right, you will find it right on the corner."

Once in Brussels, we took over the home of a Belgium Jew who was an architect and had fled Belgium ahead of the Germans. He had left only an old man, who was the gardener, and his wife Julia, who was the cook to look after the place. The Germans had occupied it for three years but certainly didn't do it any harm. Julia told us they had left with just an hour's notice. There were fourteen of us, including two CWAC officers. I roomed with Major Charlie Mustard whom I mentioned earlier. We became great friends and corresponded for several years after the war.

A couple of days after we arrived in Brussels, Charlie and I were walking from the mess to our headquarters, which was a couple of blocks away, when we were confronted by an elderly couple. The man, Mr. Bae, spoke very good English. He thanked us for liberating his country and asked if we would do them the honor of coming to their home some evening. We readily agreed and a date was set. As we were in battle dress at the time, on this special occasion when we went to visit them, we had our batman get out our good uniforms, shined up the buttons etc., wore our Sam Brown belts with all

the trimmings. We arrived at the Bae's home and knocked on the door that was opened by Mr. Bae with a great smile on his face, which quickly disappeared. He became quite flustered when he saw us. He quickly recovered and invited us in. When we entered the living room, Madame Bae had the same reaction. Mr. Bae explained that he had no idea that we were officers otherwise they never would have spoken to us. Charlie, quick as a wink said, "We are not officers. I am a school teacher and he is a dentist". That broke the ice and although Madame Bae spoke very little English, we became great friends. Marion and I visited them when we were in Brussels in 1952. They told us at that time that when Germans occupied Brussels, if they saw a German officer approach on the sidewalk, they stepped off into the street and offered the officers the sidewalk. A little bit different from what we did.

Shortly after we settled into our beautiful new quarters, we were assigned new batmen, which is an English term for servant. Charlie and I shared the services of a lad named Foster, who was straight off the farm and had so-called "battle fatigue", but did not want to go home because of the seeming stigma attached. I asked Foster if he could do my laundry and iron my shirts, etc, and he said, "Oh yes, Sir, I do that all the time."

Previous to landing in Normandy, my sister Edith, my Mother and my Aunt Paula in Aberdeen had revamped all my useable socks which were, of course, hand knitted, and I had a couple of dozen pair of beautiful wool socks, even if they were many different colors. I got home from my office one night to find all my laundry spread out on my bed, and each of the socks looked to be about three or four inches long. I asked Foster what he had done with them, and he proudly said, "I washed them, Sir!" I said I can see that, but what did you do? "Well," he said, "I put everything in a big kettle and boiled them, Sir!" Needless to say, my beautiful socks were ruined. Luckily, Christmas was coming again, and the people who lived on our street back home made the most of it. The decorations were superb, and they went all out to out-do each other, and to out-sing each other on every occasion. It was a very, very moving time. Fortunately, I had let all my friends know about the catastrophe of my washing, and so my wardrobe of hand knit wool socks was replenished at Christmas time.

We quickly got back into the routine of headquarters but there were a few incidents that were maybe a little outstanding. I think, probably one of the most amusing incidents was having a golf game at the Waterloo Country Club, which was just outside Brussels. I was taken to the club by Mr. Dubois, a very wealthy Belgium civilian industrialist, who lived just down the street from our mess. Playing golf while a war was going on was just a little bit different than what we were used to. I also met a dentist who practiced in Brussels, Dr. Lahey. He had taken postgraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and spoke very good English. He practiced with this brother in Brussels and they had a beautiful office that took up the whole bottom floor of an apartment building in the center of the city. We were disturbed at dinner one evening with a call from A Mess saying that they were entertaining Lady Mountbatten and her retinue of several ladies and they had more ladies than men. So they sent out for reinforcements. Six or eight of us went over and had a very nice evening. She was a charming person. Of

course I did not have very much use for her husband because he had a lot to do with the planning of the ill-fated Dieppe raid where so many Canadians had been lost.

There is a famous statue in Brussels of a little boy, which was erected after the King of the Belgians' little 3 year old son was lost. The King had searched the whole Kingdom but could not find him anywhere, so he finally offered a reward of 100,000 Francs to the man who would find the little boy. He also promised that a statue of the little boy would be erected on the site, and in the position that the little boy was found. Well, when the little boy was found, he was having a leak. True to his word, the King erected the statue of the little three-year-old having a leak, which is called the Mannequin Piess. I was amused to see, when I was censoring a letter from a soldier who was writing home to tell the story, after hearing about it while sight-seeing, that he had called it the statue of "the man who can piss"!

Charlie and I also attended the first concert of the Brussels Symphony Orchestra since the start of the war. It was a marvelous experience. They played the national anthems of all the allied forces and the cheering was tremendous. We were in uniform and were given tremendous ovations, salutes, hugs and everything else from all the people sitting near us. It wasn't hard to realize just what liberation meant to these people after being occupied.

Another interesting thing I think I should record at this time. I had had a letter from my Dad whose sister Julia Murray had lost a son in the 1st World War at the battle of Amiens. He was buried in a Canadian Military Cemetery near Arras. He had written that if I ever got near that area to try and find his grave because none of the Abra connection had ever visited his grave. One Sunday, Charlie Mustard and I, got a jeep and drove to Arras to the designated cemetery. After a little difficulty we found the grave and Charlie, who had his camera with him, took a picture of me standing beside the headstone, which said quite clearly, "Trooper Jack Murray, age 21". When I had it developed, I sent it back to Dad and he forwarded it to Aunt Julia and I was told later that she had it reproduced and sent a copy to each member of the family.

We had been getting reports of a problem that our troops had when they went to Paris on leave and got into trouble with toothaches or having teeth knocked out in fights etc. They could not get emergency dental service. Colonel Edgecomb suggested that I go down to Paris to see if we couldn't do something about it. I arrived in Paris, which had become a leave center for mostly American troops because it was in the American area. They had taken over all of the hotels, etc. Fortunately the Canadian authorities had been able to install an officer there who proved to be Captain Ernie Perkins who had been Commandant in London when I was there. I had gotten to know him quite well. I was assigned to a room in a small hotel just off Place de la Concord and within walking distance of the Opera, the Louvre and the Champs Elysee etc. It was quite a little journey up to Montmartre where all the nightlife was, but somehow I managed to get there.

I made contact with the head of the American Dental Corp and found that he was a fraternity brother of mine, from the University of Southern California. His name was

Ryder. We got good cooperation. We arranged for emergency treatment for our lads in the big clinic that they had taken over called the Eastman Dental Center that had about forty chairs in it. Colonel Ryder took me on an inspection one afternoon and in the officers section introduced me to one of the officers who turned out to be a Delta SIG from Ohio State University. He introduced me to the patient that he was working on, a lady in uniform, of the American Red Cross. She was an ambulance driver but more interesting still, she was Marlene Dietreich. Unfortunately she had a long pair of baggy slacks on so I didn't get a change to see the million dollar legs for which she was famous.

I had lots of visitors when I was in Paris. Colonel Edgecomb brought down Colonel Higgins who was the head of the British Dental Corp and of course I had to entertain all these people. I made use of the transportation which Colonel Ryder had provided me with and revisited the well-known nightspots, etc. It was really quite interesting.

We were getting reports from the German's last big push in the Ardennes Forest that was later known as the Battle of the Bulge. The Americans took a terrible beating there but fortunately they held the Germans back from their objective, which was Antwerp. The good news for me was that it looked as if I was to be given my own command. Surely enough, in February or early March of 1945 I was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was given command of Number Six Company, which was attached to the Fourth Canadian Armored Division. I proceeded to Tilberg, in Holland where I took over the command. I found I knew quite a few of my new officers. When I went up to Div Headquarters I found even more men who had been staff officers with me in London. I became reacquainted with General Chris Vokes whose son had been a patient of mine in Winnipeg just before I joined up. I didn't do much for him but I understand that Manley Bowles completed his case from then on. Unfortunately Chris was moved from Headquarters and General Harry Foster became our new general officer commanding.

Once again I was up with the fighting troops, and there was a lot of fighting. They had just gotten through the terrible experience at Maas where the Canadians took a tremendous pounding before breaking through the German lines and getting into the body of Holland. When we got moving again, we crossed Belgium and Holland, across the Rhine and into Germany. By this time the front was moving very quickly and we moved our headquarters at least every week. As much as was possible the natural beauty of the countryside was preserved and tanks would bypass any towns or villages that were especially picturesque. It was at the little town of Rhyssen where my experience in liberating Holland took place. When we got to Rhyssen in Holland, we were greeted with open arms by the Burgermeister and the town dignitaries. They expressed their thanks because the tanks of the Forth Div had passed the town on the outskirts in pursuing the Germans and nobody had really liberated them. So we were greeted with open arms. I have a picture of a bouquet of flowers that was presented by the Burgermeister's daughter, who was about age 10, along with a beautiful dress sword which someone had stolen from a German officer. I still have it and have promised it to Bob. It has

swastikas all over the place and is really quite something. I also had a nice letter from the Burgermeister that is in my scrapbook along with several other souvenirs.

At one point we were stationed under canvas near the Hochvaldt Forest, which was Hermann Goering's private game preserve. The soldiers went crazy shooting deer, but the cook, being inexperienced, did not realize that wild game had to be "hung" for several days before it should ever be eaten. This, of course, was not done, and a sicker bunch of Canadian soldiers never existed. Fortunately, the Dental Corps didn't stand in the way of the Germany army marching on France, or the War would have been long since over. After that experience, when I got back to Canada and began deer hunting, I made absolutely sure that my carcasses were properly hung and butchered, and we had lots of lovely venison dinners.

We crossed the Rhine into Germany just at Easter time in 1945 and set up our quarters in a little town called Varel, near Oldenberg. It is about 30 kilometers from Wilhemshaven, which was the objective of Forth Div. Wilhemshaven was where the Germans had their big submarine base that I will talk about later. While we were there one Sunday morning my sergeant knocked on my caravan door and got me out of bed to announce that there were about a dozen Germans wanting to surrender. It turned out to be an Ober Lieutenant and ten soldiers. They were a very sorry looking bunch. Four or five of them were obviously about fifteen years old. The remainder that included the officer, were about fifty. He could speak a little English, and with my smattering of German, which I had studied at University, we were able to learn that they were part of an Ordinance Unit that had been decimated by the airforce. They had been hiding in a haystack waiting for an opportunity to surrender. When they saw our mobile clinics with the big red crosses on it, they thought we were a medical unit and a good place to surrender. They had not had a decent meal for about four days so I ordered the cook to feed them and then we loaded them into a truck and took them to Div Headquarters. It was about two miles away. The next day, General Foster at his commanders' conference, reported that obviously the war was just about over because the Dental Corp was now taking prisoners. As a matter of fact, a few days later, we did get the cease-fire – no further advances.

A couple of days later after the cease-fire I had my driver take me to Wilhemshaven because I wanted to see the famous submarine pens. We were stopped at the barrier that was manned by British military police. They were turning everyone away because naturally there were many sightseers. The sergeant looked at my epaulets, and called his officer of the day. The officer quickly asked if I was there to inspect the submarine base, to which I replied "yes" and he asked the driver to park the jeep, which he did, and stay with it. I found out that the British Intelligence Corp has green felt under their rank insignia, as did we. Theirs was a light green color and ours was a dark green color. Obviously the officer just saw that it was green, took it for granted that I was an officer in the Intelligence Corp and acted accordingly. I was conducted on a tour of the base. In spite of the word from both the Navy and Air Force that it would be nothing but rubble, it was in amazingly good condition.

When I got back to my jeep a couple of hours later, my driver looked a bit strange. When we had driven a couple of miles he stopped and pulled a framed swastika out from under his battle dress and said "Sir, I think you should have this because I think it will probably be taken away from me". He had lifted it off the front of the Base Commander's Mercedes Benz staff car while I was being conducted on my inspection trip. I still have it among my souvenirs.

We moved our headquarters out of Germany, back into Holland, and took over the quarters that had been occupied by Number One Company at Hilversum, which is a suburb of Amsterdam. We were very comfortable there. Shortly after I got settled in September I got a call from headquarters that they were looking for a convoy officer for a group one hundred and fifty lorries that the Canadian government were delivering to Czechoslovakia for UNRA (United Nations etc.). If I wished, I could have the job, which I jumped at of course. I would be away for about a week to ten days and would travel right across Germany and probably return via Austria and the southern Germany. They were not too sure of the route but I would report to Arnhem the famous Arnhem Bridge, which was in the picture A Bridge Too Far. That is where we started. The boys worked nearly all night fixing up the HUP, which is a heavy-duty personnel carrier and they made it into a small travel caravan for me complete with a bed, built in radio and all the comforts. You would think they were travelling the way they worked on it. I could not take my big caravan as it was too big, but the HUP was very comfortable. It was much like a station wagon, only bigger and heavier.

On the way down we went through Essen, Duisburg, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Nuremberg, and Pilsen, where I had to deliver the trucks, and then back to Munich, which is beautiful. All through that part of the country and then down to Hitler's famous retreat that was near Innsbruck. I went through the Brummer Pass and up along the shore of Lake Constance, just in and out of Switzerland (just enough to say I was there) and up into France through Strasbourg, Saarbruchen. Then we went up through Luxembourg, which is a beautiful city or country or Duchy, whatever they call it, and Bastogne which was the town where the American 101st Division held out during the push that Von Runstedt had made through the Ardennes Forest. It was beautiful country. Much like our Minaki/Wade area. I then went through Namur and then back to Brussels and home.

I must tell you a little bit more about Hitler's retreat at Berchtesgaden. Fortunately I had borrowed a camera and taken a lot of snaps. The airforce and artillery had destroyed a lot of it. The Americans had taken it over as a sightseeing place for their troops when they were on leave in Innsbruck and it was really quite a sight. It showed Hitler's retreat, his office, bedroom, Eva Braun's (his mistress) bedroom and the view over the beautiful Alps which is lovely country.

When I got back to Hilversum and Headquarters I was told that I was in the long line up to go home but would have to wait my turn. Troops were being sent home on a point system. I had over 200 points because of my early enlistment and overseas posting

but because I had command of a unit I had to stay overseas until November. I flew to England and waited in a staging camp near Liverpool.

I was finally called and boarded the "Empire McAlpine" along with about a hundred other officers. It was a liberty ship that had been converted into an aircraft carrier for convoy duty. It only carried four or six planes and although they could take off with some sort of a catapult arrangement, they couldn't land on the deck because it was too small. The pilots had to ditch their planes as close to the ship as possible when they ran out of gas and hope to be picked up by the rescue crews. They were only launched in severe attack conditions but were the closest thing to a Japanese kamikaze pilot that the allies had.

We just got underway when the Queen Mary passed us on the way in to pick up another fifteen thousand homeward bound troops. It took us seven or eight days to cross and when we arrived in Halifax the Queen Mary was tied up and discharging her cargo. She had made the voyage in four days. I boarded a train almost immediately and three days and nights later arrived in Winnipeg to be met by Marion and Jock, my Dad and sister Edith. Needless to say it was a welcome sight. We drove home to Ingersol Street, had a visit with Mother who was bedridden, and had been for about two years, which I didn't know about. I guess the excitement was too much for my Dad because he suffered a massive stroke ten days later and died.

I went back to the office the first of January 1946. I went on a refresher course to the University of Montreal in February for two weeks. I just got back into harness when my partner, Manley Bowles, had a heart attack in April and died in October the same year. I told his widow that I thought that he had killed himself trying to keep the practice going for me. She replied, "Well he was one more casualty of war".

We sold the Wolseley house the next year and moved to Yale Avenue. Doug was born in 1947. Bob came along in 1950. Our family was complete except for a couple of cats that came later.

My army career was not quite finished because about that time General Morton, Head of the army and Military District 10, called me and asked if I would come out to the Osborne Barracks and have lunch with him, which I did. I knew him casually but not too awfully well. When he had finished lunch he told me that the Department of Defense had ordered the re-establishment of the Reserve Army and asked if I would take on the job of organizing the Dental Corp. He promised that it would not be an arduous task and I would get lots of help. Foolishly I accepted and found that more time was expected of me than I was prepared to give. My practice was growing and so was my family. I was also becoming more involved in dental politics. When Colonel Drewery came out from Ottawa to see how things were going I told him I couldn't carry on and he agreed to find a replacement. He did, and I was allowed to retire.

My days of being a soldier were over. It had been a wonderful experience, but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone.

