

Lieutenant Queen's Own Rifles

to a sixty hundred-weight lorrie. Besides driving we were also given lectures and practice on making minor repairs and adjustments on engines. My non-mechanical aptitude came to the fore and I forgot whatever I was taught on fixing engines very quickly. Marks were given at the end of the course. The highest was O for Outstanding, followed by Q1 and Q2 for two grades of Qualifying, and F for Failure. To my surprise I got a Q1.

After a short time on sandy roads, we took the vehicles across country. You soon learned that when the wheels of a truck hit a pothole the steering wheel would spin completely out of control. If you had your thumbs inside the rim of the wheel, the cross bars could give you a very nasty bruise. If it happened suddenly there was the chance of ending up with broken thumbs. This was carefully explained by the instructors and although some trainees did not believe it with the results as mentioned, I made sure to hold the steering wheel exactly as I was told.

We also drove Bren-gun carriers and dropped them over what looked and felt like perpendicular cliffs. I never saw one flip but when coming down a steep incline, you sure had the feeling that that was what it was about to do.

My bete-noire was the big heavy Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The stupid things would get bedded down in the sand, stall at the most inopportune time, or run away with you when you least expected it. One of the tests was to drive up a steep sandy slope, come down the other side and hurtle off the edge of a bunk so that you were in midair for a few seconds and land in a sandy pit six feet below with your legs out on either side to provide balance. The first time I tried this, my machine stalled just before I reached the crest of the hill. I lost my balance and landed on my side with the motorcycle pinning down my right leg. It was so heavy I could not move and to add insult to injury, gasoline from the air hole in the gas tank cap spurted in little spitting jets right into my face. I cursed the brute in no uncertain terms. An instructor got me on my way again and I completed the route but because of my fall I had to repeat it which I did successfully without further mishap.

I think the only thing the course really taught me was a healthy respect for my lack of knowledge. The only vehicle I ever felt comfortable with was the jeep but we did not get any of these until just before we went into action.

Somewhere around this time we were stationed at Red Hill just south of London. I believe the Canadians were pulled back for a few months to let the Limeys gain some experience on coastal defence. Our quarters consisted of a large cream-coloured stucco house with Nissen huts again clustered around it half-hidden amongst the trees and shubbery. Our problem here was not mud but dust. Southern England was experiencing a drought which as far as I could figure out was any period of two weeks without rain. It happened very rarely. The grass on what must at one time have been beautiful lawns was tall and a burnished gold. On the dirt roads throughout the estate a truck could produce a cloud of dust which

might easily identify our position if a German reconnaissance plane happened to be overhead. An order was issued that all vehicles were to travel less than 5 m.p.h. much to the chagrin of some jockeys who loved to spin their wheels.

Only one episode at Red Hill sticks in my mind. One of our captains had recently been promoted to major and his new crowns weighed heavy on his shoulders. As a matter of fact, he was a pain in the ass, constantly demanding that he be shown the respect he thought he deserved. At a mess dinner he rose on a point of privilege and announced that one of the lieutenants present had done a heinous sin by failing to salute him. Such remarks were uncommon among friends and we were not only taken aback but also slightly disconcerted. Georgie Bean, a good friend of mine, who was about five foot four, rose to admit that he was the culprit. He asked the indulgence of the mess offering as his excuse that the grass through which he was walking was so high that he could not see the major and therefore failed to salute him. This brought a great round of laughter and approval and we thought the major had been put in his place. But this was not the case. He was drunk enough to continue on the subject and get the mess to take disciplinary action like buying a round of drinks. The president of the mess asked if George had given a satisfactory reason for his misdemeanour and everyone shouted yes. So the subject was closed but the major turned purple and there was a nasty glint in his small pig eyes.

Quite a while later when we were at Inverary in Scotland we were using landing craft with very high sides. As we could not see over them, it was the rule that when the landing ramp went down we were to wade ashore immediately. One day when making the regular shuttle service across the loch to our training grounds we were about half way over when the ramp suddenly dropped. Whether it was by accident or by design was never proved. Our cocky major without even looking yelled over his shoulder, "Follow me" and plunged into the water with a great splash. I can still remember seeing his leg spin in midair as he tried to stop. The marine running the craft took evasive action at once and avoided hitting him and the possibility of chewing him up with propellers. Before hauling him back on board we all had a good laugh at his expense. Everyone agreed that it could not have happened to a better man. After he was back in the craft, we were very careful not to smile. The major was seething and loudly demanded a full investigation. The colonel refused much to everyone's relief. Shortly afterwards the major was transferred to a unit fighting in Sicily. A few months later we heard that he had fallen off a cliff, landed on his head and died. Much as we were sorry to receive the news of his death, it was perhaps better it turned out this way. There was muttering in the ranks on how they intended to even up scores with him and with live ammunition around, his life might not be worth much. We had heard of "accidents" in other units. He was the only officer of the QOR who was thoroughly detested by everybody.

From Red Hill I think we next moved to Willingdon just north of Eastbourne and were billeted in a development of new

houses which had never been occupied by civilians. It was a pleasant change from Nissen huts and tents. Up on a hill nearby was a large red brick house which was turned into battalion headquarters, and where the main officers mess was located. Each company had its own officer's mess and quarters in one of the houses.

While at Willingdon a request came through from Canadian Army H.Q. for me to be transferred to an aerial photo section in London. I presume my name was selected because of my connection with Kodak which would have been on my records. I discussed the possibility of taking the job with Steve Lett. There were two things against it. I knew nothing about interpreting aerial photographs and I was hesitant about the possible continued strain my eyes would be subjected to. Steve agreed with me and turned down the request on the basis that I would prefer to remain a regimental officer. The story of my war years would have taken an entirely new direction if I had accepted.

I usually had a good and relaxed relationship with the men in my platoon. We cooperated well and worked like a team. On one occasion, however, we were on parade in the street in front of our billets and as I approached the platoon to take over from the sergeant, I overheard one of the men being very snarky. He made the mistake of saying a few things about my sergeant's ancestry so I could hear him. It could be classified as insubordination and was considered a serious crime. Instead of putting him under arrest I gave him a tongue lashing which made the whole platoon cringe. I did not know I had it in me but I was extremely angry and the platoon soon knew it. It occurred so seldom it stands out in my memory.

Also while at Willingdon I was sent off to a Commands Course held north of Portsmouth. After reporting in and being allocated quarters in tents, we set off on a nine-mile cross-country run. It proved how poor our condition was. I thought I could withstand nearly any kind of grind the army could throw at me but I came back from this opening run totally exhausted. For the next two weeks such runs were everyday occurrences. We never moved unless we ran and always carried the extra weight of haversacks filled with mess tins and camouflaged gas cape, ammunition pouches filled with blanks and a rifle.

We spent a good porportion of our time learning about grenades, gelignite, fuses and other methods of blowing things up; how to handle ourselves in hand-to-hand combat with and without weapons; how to ~~use~~^{use} our new stilleto-like commando knives; how to sneak up on a sentry and put him out of action; the stringing of block and tackle to get us across practically impassable obstacles. The strenuous exercises produced great appetites and we ate like horses. The food was plain but there was plenty of bread and potatoes and beer which we devoured in great quantities. The result was that I hardened up and put on ten pounds. I was lean and wiry and in better condition than I ever had or have been. I could run nine miles in an hour wearing full equipment and be hardly out of breath.

Whenever we were out on a mock attack, we had to cover

our hands and faces with dirt or whatever else was around. One day the only available material was sheep manure and it's smell nearly turned my stomach. It is said that if you have a toothache you will forget about it if you stub your toe. It was the same with sheep dung. A series of harrowing exercises made us forget the smell very quickly. On another occasion we were wading up a stream which was a watering spot for cattle and cow flaps covered the bank. We were ordered to hit the dirt and landed in the soft cow manure. After these stinking experiences, we would stand in the showers fully clothed to wash off the mess.

On one of our evening runs we were told that we would sleep out in the open. No blankets were available of course and it was a cold night. It did not take us long to find out that we could be reasonably comfortable by rolling up in our gas capes. To keep even warmer, we put our heads inside the capes and slept quite well. Occasionally we had to come up for air but I was surprised how well I survived without much protection or covering.

When I got back to the regiment and we began similar training with the men, I found I had to gear down to the speed of the platoon or company and never had to expend myself to the degree demanded on the course. I could still run circles around everyone else but slowly I softened up and lost my extra ten pounds of hard muscle. I did not lose the ability to run long distances with full packs for years.

At the end of the street where we were billeted, the Downs rose up steeply to over five hundred feet. We would run up it regularly to keep ourselves in shape. From the top there was a magnificent view and on a good day you could see for nearly fifty miles. We practiced our map reading overlooking the Pevensy Flats. One day the Brigadier accompanied us to study the lay of the land in relationship to a possible German invasion which was actually becoming more remote but which was still a possibility. Our attention was distracted by a couple making love behind a hedge four hundred feet below us. We were all carrying binoculars and our discussion on defence was postponed until this diversion was over. Shortly afterwards, we were interrupted again when a flight of Spitfires roared by about a hundred feet below us. It was the only time I ever saw a warplane from above while in flight and I was interested to note that what I had considered garish and perhaps unnecessary camouflage actually made a plane very hard to see against the patterns of the ground.

The regiment was becoming a strong cohesive team but occasionally we had problems. I recall once when two men from another platoon in the company went AWL (the Americans called it Absence Without Leave, AWOL) and took with them a large supply of cigarettes from the locked storeroom. The cigarettes belonged to two other men of the same platoon and could be used for bartering, usually on the black market. When the pair got back from London, they were put on charge and paraded before Steve Lett to whom they denied stealing the cigarettes. Steve, whom I always admired for his ability to handle men, postponed

sentence until the following day and put them under guard for the night. The guards Steve chose were the two whose cigarettes had been taken. They were a lot bigger than the two culprits. In the morning when they were paraded again, the two prisoners were black and blue all over and wanted to make a confession. Their punishment was much more severe for stealing than it would have been for just being AWL. As I have said before, the most despicable crime in the army was stealing from your fellow man.

Willington is also remembered for a stimulating exercise or scheme or manoeuvre, the terms were interchangeable, which took place while we were there. The QOR were to act out the part of a German invasion force and a British brigade were ordered to throw us back into the sea. We moved into a position on a long ridge of land where we were supposed to be on the defensive and awaited the attack of the English. It was evening when we got to a large farm in and around which we were to set up our defences. The exercise was to start in the morning so the Orders Group took a long time as our plan was rather complicated and I was to take a major part in it. It was dark when I got back to my platoon and the men were all bedded down and asleep in a long row of empty horse stalls in a huge barn. Norris, my batman, must have been on leave or away and I had to fend for myself. After checking that all was OK, I searched for a place to throw my bedroll and found a stall which was completely empty. I thought this was very decent of the men to leave a whole stall for me and proceeded in the dark to make myself comfortable. While doing this, my hand touched something soft and furry and I lit a match to find out what it was. I suddenly knew why the stall was unoccupied. There was a dead sheep lying there and for the first time I noticed a slight aroma of decaying flesh hanging on the air. I was so tired I did not care, climbed into my bedroll and fell fast asleep.

Early next morning I joined the carrier platoon as per my instructions and moved out into the scrub and low trees which grew in confusion on both sides of a road which came in at right angles to the one going along the ridge and down which the English were expected. We were surrounded by umpires and prepared for our mock battle. In the middle of the morning the advance patrol appeared. We pretended to open fire with Bren guns and two-inch mortars. The umpires told the patrols they were under fire. As soon as we saw them hit the dirt and send a runner back to the following troops, we scooted out of our hiding place and went about a hundred yards down the road towards the ridge where we again took up a similar position. The English set up an attack on our former position only to find it abandoned. They then had to reform to continue down the road. We had to wait for a couple of hours until they again appeared in sight and we went through the whole thing over again. Once more we moved back a hundred yards or so and waited. This time the English were much more cautious but they still walked into the same set-up. By now it was late in the afternoon and we seemed to have our attackers completely confused. Up until dark no more patrols appeared and we received orders to dis-

engage and withdraw as quietly as possible to the ridge. The colonel congratulated us, told us to get a hot meal and report back within an hour for another Orders Group.

I grabbed something to eat and then got my orders. I was to lead the battalion out of the ridge position to a spot chosen for breakfast and then on to the South Downs some fifteen to twenty miles away. Our trucks were pushed to the edge of the ridge and rolled down the gentle slope leading away from it. They had enough momentum to travel nearly half a mile without turning on their engines. By the time I started out, all was quiet except for a couple of the last trucks to leave which rolled past us silently and disappeared into the night like ghosts. There was a beautiful full moon shining and we could here cuckoos and owls in the woods. We marched on the soft shoulders of the road to creat as little noise as possible. Halfway along our route when memorizing the next four or five miles during one of our hourly rests, I noticed a ride marked on the map which went through a forest. It was not on our specified route but if we took it it would save us nearly five miles of night marching. Without a second thought I entered the black tunnel which was a good two miles long with no sight of the other end. The trees were thick and the ground soft. Just as I was beginning to worry that I might have made a mistake, I saw a light patch at the other end. At the same time a dispatch rider came up on his motorcycle with compliments of the colonel but asking where the hell did I think I was going. The colonel was only acting colonel and I did not know him too well but I bent over my map with the D.R., showed him our exact position and pointed out the end of the tunnel. I noticed that my own company commander, Steve Lett, never questioned what I was doing.

We proceeded on and it began to get lighter. As often happens in England near dawn a drizzle began, but it was nothing to worry about. Around 7 a.m. I swung into a field surrounded by very high hedges. There tucked against the bushes on all four sides of the field were our food trucks with a good hot breakfast waiting for us even though we were about an hour early. After we had eaten, we walked the few remaining miles to the Downs and up a chalk road to the top of them. We immediately set up Bren gun and mortar positions strategically covering the road we had just come up. About an hour after, our trucks followed us and were able to hide themselves in a hollow behind us amongst the gorse bushes and under camouflage nets. The day cleared, the sun came out and as the English seemed to have lost complete contact with us, we relaxed and sunbathed.

Just before dawn the next day during our regular stand-to we could hear the marching feet of the English far below us. The stand-to at dawn was a normal procedure on exercises and of course, in action. Many attacks took place in the first light of the day and it was standard practice to be woken just before dawn and take up positions with your weapons at hand for that crucial hour. It also became the practice to issue a tot of rum if we had it or a mug of hot sweet tea. So we were ready for whatever might occur. Umpires were scooting back and forth and one sat with me in a commanding position

where we expected to clobber our "enemy". To our utter surprise the English troops were marching up the road, three abreast as though on parade. We heard later that because they had absolutely no idea where we were, they had been given orders to attack the Downs at dawn in our general location. We clobbered them alright. On the steep sides of the Downs with no cover, they did not seem to know what to do. It looked as though they had no pre-conceived plan on what action to take if they came under fire. Much to our delight we were told that we had practically "wiped them out" and the exercise was officially brought to a close.

Trying to resurrect as much as possible out of the fiasco, those in charge arranged a tank battle on the wide open top of the Downs. We had ringside seats and watched the fight with interest. The huge ungainly Churchills were able to move much faster and swivel around much more quickly than we had realized. It gave us PBI (Poor Bloody Infantry) a lot more confidence in them than we had had before.

After lunch we opted to walk back home instead of taking a ride on our trucks. It was a glorious day. The turf was springy and made marching a pleasure. The gorse and other flowers were in full bloom. The men were pleased with themselves and sang the whole way. They returned to Willingdon in high spirits. The regiment was gaining confidence in itself and of course I was personally pleased that I had had some small part in building this esprit de corps.

Talking about umpires and schemes and things reminds me of the times when I acted as an umpire. The first one was with Dick Blue. Again it was on the South Downs but this time it was a tank manoeuvre and it rained constantly. The Churchills churned up the turf and the whole area soon became a sea of mud. Even though Dick and I had our own staff car and were protected most of the time, it was necessary to move around on foot amongst the tanks and by the end of the first day we were liberally covered with mud and fed up with the awful conditions. Dick suggested we have a decent meal at the coaching house in nearby Lewes and we headed for The White Hart. By the time we got there the mud on us had hardened and dried and we were able to scrape and brush off most of it in the public washroom before we sat down to dinner. What we had to eat was not outstanding but Dick put on his colonel act during coffee and ordered port. The waiter reverently showed us a half bottle covered with dust and cobwebs and extolled its virtues. You would think we were buying the crown jewels and in some way we were in that it was a treasure and smooth as silk. We lingered over it for nearly two hours and complemented it with good cigars and poor coffee.

I saved the cork and when I got back to the regiment tied a luggage tag around it, briefly described our evening and mailed it to Pork. He wrote me later to say that he and the postman had stood on the front steps of 39 reading the tag and having a good chuckle together over this rather different kind of mailing.

After the port we did not really care what the weather was like. Dick, because of seniority, slept in the staff car where there was room to roll out his bedroll and I found as

sheltered a spot as possible in a small copse nearby. It was one of the few times I used the extra flap of my bedroll to make a lean-to tent-like protection. As I was setting things up, a small brown terrier kept bothering me obviously looking for a dry place to sleep. After I had climbed in I decided to let the pup under the tent flap and he promptly curled up against my stomach and went to sleep. The warmth of the dog was welcomed and with this added comfort and the effects of the port, I slept like a baby.

The only other umpiring job I had introduced me to a section of England which I had not seen before, the Salisbury Plains. Here the Americans were on manoeuvres and I got an insight into the more relaxed approach of the "citizens' army". The officers had no batmen and few extra privileges. After the day's exercises I was invited to their quarters which were in a former tennis clubhouse. The meal which was served by orderlies consisted of steak and home fried potatoes with ice cream and canned peaches for dessert. I was impressed that they were able to obtain such rations in a country where there were shortages of these luxuries and were non-existent to British or Canadian troops. I learned that food supplies for the American army was shipped over from the States and except for fresh vegetables and fruits they bought nothing in England. The men got exactly the same rations as the officers. The real treat was the excellent coffee and I must have had six cups. I also tried bourbon for the first time but did not particularly like the taste. There was a devil-may-care attitude which was pleasant and charming but I wondered what would happen when the going got tough and they came under actual fire. By the time D-day rolled around, I got the feeling that perhaps next to the British Guards, the Airborne Divisions and the highly trained Commandos, the Canadians were the best troops in England.

The Canadian Army had just become an entity unto itself and although we had heard all sorts of rumours of the politics involved, the only direct affect it had on us was to march along a desolate road somewhere in England while General McNaughton drove by in a big black limousine. We thought it was a funny way to say goodbye and, not fully understanding what was taking place, many of the troops ignored the big car flying the Canadian Army insignia and forgot to give our commander a final salute. If we gave any thought to the change, we were pleased to belong to an army of our own and thought Crerar would do a good job of leading us into battle.

Dispersed throughout brigade, division, corps and army headquarters and later even at Supreme Allied Command, were QOR officers who had been promoted into a variety of key positions. They were known as the Black Network. The name came from our black accessories, ties, buttons, rank insignia, belts and puttees. It was an unwritten rule that if you were a member of the Network and the regiment needed help from your area of responsibility, you did everything in your power to assist. Over the years, the arrangement was very useful. Often vital information would reach us before it filtered through the slow process of regular channels.

To bolster, encourage and say thank you for this regimental

support, we held a party once a year, even when we were in action. I believe the first one was at Willingdon but there may have been one before that. The Willingdon party took place in the summer of '42 but from then on it was held between Christmas and New Year's or as close to this time as was convenient. The Black Network began to gather on Saturday afternoon and evening. Many brought along girls and most of the regimental officers invited girlfriends. As mentioned before, Nora Mathews came over from Portsmouth. The colonel's station wagon was running a regular shuttle service between the station at Eastbourne and our main officer's mess. The parking lot began to fill up with other station wagons displaying a great array of other Canadian insignia besides our pale blue 3rd Division patch.

An excellent buffet dinner was served and of course there was plenty of liquor flowing non-stop from four o'clock Saturday afternoon until four Sunday morning. A band had been hired and there was dancing until two. Around three in the morning the officers of our company decided to adjourn to our own mess. We had a piano, which come to think of it, I have no idea how it was acquired. Dick Blue was our pianist and could render any tune you asked. He played for hours and that night all we had to do was make sure his glass was filled with gin and he would never stop. As the sun began to rise around 5 a.m. we decided it was time for bed. Dick got up from the piano stool and did a dead-man's fall flat on his face. We eventually got him to bed and Nora and I wrapped ourselves up in my Hudson's Bay blanket on the living room floor. After about an hour's sleep we were woken by our batmen who seemed to take extra delight in making more noise than necessary. Breakfast at 7 did not appeal to many of us and there were a lot of blood-shot eyes as we gathered for Church Parade at 8.

The sun was hot, the road was dusty and the march took three-quarters of an hour to get to the large brick building which I think was a cathedral on the outskirts of Eastbourne. I would say that all the officers were sweating distilled alcohol by the time we arrived at the huge front doors. It was a tradition for the officers to drop out at the steps while the men marched into the church between two rows of officers thus formed. Once all the men were in, the officers marched sharply in quick step to their seats in the front three pews. Our padre, Jack Clough, took as his text for his sermon Paul's letter to the Galatians 5:19-21 on fornication and high living. He read the passage twice looking out over the whole regiment and then he leaned forward and rested his arms on the edge of the pulpit staring straight down at the front rows below him. He proceeded to lambaste us with the toughest words I have ever heard him use. We could tell that the men loved it and the occasional snigger would reach us from the pews behind. However, I do not think it was Jack's words which made my pew shake. The only relief from our castigation came when Dick Blue who was playing the organ decided to have a snooze and leaned forward on the bank of keys. He had forgotten to turn it off and a huge groan penetrated the church adding a punctuation mark to what Jack

was saying. We struggled back to our billets where some had black coffee, others had a bit of the hair of the dog, and some brave souls ate lunch. After sunbathing with Nora in the back garden where she created the sensation I mentioned before, the visitors dispersed and we got to bed at an early hour-alone.

A lot happened while we were at Willingdon and I think it was a time when Canadian troops began to hit their stride. A general process of weeding out had started and those who could not stand the pace were being transferred to areas more compatible to their age and experience. The last and toughest clean-out was Operation Tiger. Montgomery had taken over and his influence was felt right down to the last man in every unit. After the fiasco of the so-called English attack on the Downs, we heard that Monty had removed a number of generals and colonels from their command. It was the first warning signal of what he intended to do. He wanted a tough hard-hitting young modern army and would use any means at his disposal to get it. Montgomery was a hard task master but he had our respect.

Tiger started with the full regiment marching across the Pevensey Flats, through the town of Hastings and up into Kent. The second day no food was issued and we had to survive on half a dozen hard-tack biscuits and the water in our water bottles. That day we marched forty-two miles. The worst part of it for me was that our lighter trucks accompanied us and the smell of exhaust fumes was nauseating. When we got to wherever we were going, the remains of my platoon, for many had dropped out, disappeared into the copse near the crossroads we were supposed to protect and promptly fell sound asleep. When I called for someone to stand sentry duty and man a position at the crossroads, I was greeted with snores. So I took a tommy gun and an anti-tank rifle, walked out to the corner, propped myself against a telephone pole and fell asleep standing up. Not long after I was awakened by the food truck trying to find my platoon. I pointed out where they were and asked the driver to get someone to relieve me as soon as they had finished eating their first meal in thirty-six hours. Again I seemed to be without a batman and by this time had no sergeant. I had barely time to gulp down some tea when an Orders Group was called and shortly afterwards we were on the move again.

This day was easier in that we were supposed to be doing one of Montgomery's famous "hinge" tactics and only had to march thirty miles. But the pace was having its effect and the toll was heavy. As we were passing through a town some of the men were foolish enough to buy some fish and chips. The greasy food on an empty stomach gave them a severe case of cramps and they all had to drop out of the march. Except for the meal we had had at the crossroads, there was no regular issue of food for another eighteen hours. At the end of that third day the exercise was declared over. We turned around and marched a short distance to a large farm where what was left of the regiment had a meal and slept in the nearest available hay for twelve hours straight.

While we were getting the men together and re-organized before their meal, the company officers took turns going up to

the local rectory where we were able to have a luxurious bath in a huge bathroom. There was plenty of hot water. The largest towels I have ever seen were stored in a big warming cupboard. After having our meal with the men and arranging for a rigid inspection parade for the next day, we were invited by our host, a pleasant elderly Anglican priest, to have coffee with him in his library. All of our company officers had come through the ordeal except Dick Blue and we spent a quiet hour with the priest. Along with the coffee, he shared his small supply of liqueurs and offered us cigars. The cigars were a luxury but because he did not smoke he did not know to keep them in a humidor and they were very dry. No one complained and after some good conversation we headed for bed in his large attic which he had turned into a dormitory for us. The farm belonged to the church and the priest spent his time making it productive as part of his war effort.

The next day we inspected the men and their weapons carefully and the second-in command worked out the logistics on how to get us back to Willingdon as quickly as possible in the few trucks we had available. Part of the company started the journey on foot and part in trucks and then switched half way. When we got back there was a long list of men who had to see the medical officer.

Tiger thinned our ranks considerably. Where the effect was noticed most was amongst the officers and NCO's. Many of them were older and had been with the regiment since Toronto. It was sad to see them go but that was the purpose of Tiger. I was particularly sorry not to see Dick Blue again until years later at the Arts & Letters Club. He had been a sort of father to me but was past his prime in Montgomery's books. Monty could not establish an age limit or set up physical tests and make them stick, so he resorted to the toughest possible exercise he could devise to do his weeding out. The result was that we became a unit able to tackle practically any test thrown at us. Training took on a new tempo, much of it to do with landing crafts, scrambling nets and live ammunition.

I am going to have difficulty keeping our moves in proper sequence and may have already mixed things up, but without being able to search out reference books, I will continue and hope my story falls into a proper pattern.

We moved out of Willingdon and I think we headed for another Nissen hut camp located in a woods on the edge of a golf course just north of Brighton. The officers had quarters in the club-house which was rather pleasant. I was not able to enjoy it for more than a few days because just after we arrived I went on my famous last leave with Nora and as soon as I returned I was posted to a six-week weapon training course at Bisley. Eddie Dunlop had been the weapon training officer for the battalion and continued to hold the title even though he had been given a company to command. I was to be his assistant, take the course and then give the regiment an intensive period of training on weapon handling. We were going back to basics, which may have been another of Montgomery's ideas.

The Bisley Rifle Ranges were world famous. International rifle shooting competitions had taken place on these ranges for

many many years. The facilities were geared to handle all the requirements of teams from countries around the world. It is located just north of the Pirbright railway station which is on the main London to Portsmouth line. Just north of the railway embankment and running parallel to it is the Basingstoke Canal. To the south is the Guards training camp and the huge cemetery known as the Necropolis. I got to know this little corner of England very well.

Our quarters were substantial wood huts divided into four rooms each containing two cots, dresses and chairs. A narrow verandah ran across the front and the roofs were made of corrugated iron. I have forgotten the name of my room mate but he came from Wimbledon and one weekend I visited his family's home. He was not in the same squad with me so I only saw him at the beginning and end of each day. He nicknamed me "Godammit" because it seemed I had developed the bad habit of using this swear word in practically every sentence. Until he pointed it out, I was not aware I was doing it and made a valiant effort to erase it from my speech.

My squad consisted of six of the most diverse types possible to throw together. I do not remember their names but never could forget their personalities. One was a British officer who had been adjutant on the Rock of Gibraltar for three years. He had expected to be granted a decent period of leave on his return to England but to his utter disgust had been posted to Bisley instead. He spent the six weeks with a large chip on his shoulder. Another was a wild-eyed tall thin Irishman from the Ulster Rifles who disliked anything British and made sure we all knew it. Then there was a little Jewish officer who had won a couple of important medals for bringing out a platoon of twenty men from Poland. He had led them through France while it was collapsing and the Germans were all around him without losing a man. He belonged to the Free Polish Army and, because he spoke little English, usually kept to himself. The other two were Canadians, one a short wiry farmer of Irish decent from the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Regiment affectionately known to most Canadians as the Sand, Dust and Gravel. The other Canadian came from Ottawa and was in the Governor General's Horse Guards. He was a mild mannered individual until he got a few drinks in him when his character changed completely and he became a wild buffoon. Our excellent instructor was an elderly Cockney staff sergeant with a great sense of humour. He had his hands filled to bring us along and cajole and prod us into doing better.

The course concentrated on small arms. We practiced firing each one. It was the first and last time I fired an anti-tank rifle from the hip. It spun me around in a complete circle from its recoil. We dismantled and put together every weapon there was, had lectures on trajectory and fields of fire and learned a great deal of theory. The most important thing to learn was how to crawl over the ground without being seen and get into position with a weapon in good enough condition to fire. It sounds simple but it took a lot of hard practise. The purpose of the course was to send us back to our units fully trained, where we, in turn, would train a number of

sergeants. They were then to pass on their knowledge to junior NCO's and finally each corporal would take his men out for training until every man in every unit was included. It was a sensible approach. If the invasion army was to be made up of units from different countries, it was necessary that each unit had the same basic knowledge of the weapons being used so that if at any time we were intermingled under one command, we could function together without any problems. We also would know what fire power to expect from our neighbours and, of course, it made life simpler for the high command to know that orders would be based on the same general use of weapons and no translation was needed.

Meals were served in a large well decorated mess hall by an efficient and polite staff of waiters under the watchful eye of a very English civilian steward. Dinner was served early and we had to dress in our walking-out uniforms complete with Sam Browns. The food was no different from other similar well-established camps, plain but plenty of it.

Five out of six in our squad stuck together, the Polish officer was included to go his own way. We soon found out that the pub in Pirbright south of the railway on the edge of the Guards' permanent camp, had a good supply of Canadian rye on hand as well as the normal rum, gin and scotch. We decided that we should make this our after-hours' meeting place and arrangements were made to have a taxi pick us up every evening after dinner around 6.30. We had become highly competitive amongst ourselves. It became a practice to give our staff sergeant sixpence each and the one who got the best score in any practice shooting would win the pot. This carried over to darts and shove-halfpenny in the pub. I became quite good in these contests and won my fair share of the bets. The drunker we got the wilder the games would become and often we attracted a crowd of spectators who would cheer us on. They were very pleasant evenings and the war seemed far away.

I had met the daughter of the owners of another pub which was located in the middle of the Necropolis. Such a sensible race the English. What better place to have a pub than in a spot where one could drown one's sorrows for a dearly departed. My new girl was small and petite and very young. Quite often we would take the train up to Woking or even London to see a movie but I never got too serious about her. I was still hurting from my Nora affair and my emotions were in a turmoil. My heavy drinking and my dalliance with the pub owner's daughter helped me forget what had happened in Glasgow.

One night after being up in London for the evening we caught the last train to Pirbright and I took her out the special entrance in the station which led into the cemetery. I remember our embarrassment when other soldiers coming down from the train platform above made cat-calls and whistled at us as we slipped out the side door. She never would let me walk her all the way home so we did some necking amongst the tomb stones before we said good-night. I headed back down the path to the station and found to my horror that the entrance was locked. There was no way to get under or over the railway embankment at this spot except through the station tunnel. I decided that the only thing to do was to follow the fence

along the side of the railway property to the Pirbright tunnel where I knew there was no fence between the cemetery and the road which ran under the railway at that point. I had not taken a flashlight with me and had to feel my way along the fence. Even though there was a moon, the pine trees threw very dense shadows and it was difficult to see where I was going. About half way along I fell into an open newly-dug grave. The soil was sandy so I was not hurt but when I tried to get out it was nearly impossible to obtain a firm toe hold in the crumbling soil. The top of the grave was about level with my eyes and for a panicky moment I thought I was going to have to stay there until someone found me. With great effort I eventually got my arms over the edge and was able to haul myself out. It made a great story to tell later, but at the time I did not enjoy the experience at all.

The other escapade I had at Bisley was much more horrendous. I have told the story often and have tried to keep it unembellished and as close to the facts as I remember them. My fellow squad member from the GGHG's challenged me to a drinking bout. I was in good drinking form after a number of weeks of practice and was finding that I could drink more and longer without showing it. I was sure I could beat him hands down and so took up the challenge. Once again we headed for the pub in our ever-ready taxi and as soon as we checked in, asked "mine host" the publican, who had become a good friend of ours by now, what he had the most of in liquor. The answer was rum and rye. My girl from the Necropolis joined us but she must have had a dull evening just watching us pack it away as fast as possible knowing we only had three hours to find out who was to be declared the winner.

I woke up in brilliant moonlight propped against the whitewashed wall beside the main entrance. There was not a sign of life anywhere and I had no idea what time it was. I started walking down the road towards camp following the middle white line. To this day I will swear that the line swung from curb to curb and not me. When I reached the Pirbright tunnel, which was about the size and shape of a Nissen hut, I had great difficulty getting through it. I kept coming out the same side I went in. No doubt I was worried about falling in the canal near the other entrance where I had to cross over a narrow bridge with very low stone parapets. I must have made it safely because the next thing I remember was the guard at the camp gate asking me for my course number which was the password for getting in. About this point I was joined by two paratroopers who had been up in London and were in the same condition as I was. They asked me if I had ever done any parachute jumping and when I said no, asked if I would like to try. I was game for anything, so we climbed to the top of the nearest hut, slid down the corrugated metal roof on our feet and then hit the ground in the proper rolling drill. I think we did it twice before the occupants of the hut came out and chased us off, cursing us roundly.

I woke up on my cot next morning still fully dressed with grass stains down the front of my uniform. My room mate was not very sympathetic to my condition as I had given him a lot of trouble trying to get into the room and into bed.

My drinking companion and I happened to converge on the mess at the same time. Neither of us were interested in breakfast and decided to persuade the steward to let us have a beer instead. He was disgusted with the idea and kept backing away from our foul-smelling breath. I think he finally agreed in order to get rid of us.

The first thing on the timetable that morning was shooting the Tommy gun from the hip on the twenty-yard range. Once again we put our sixpences in the pot and started blasting away. The target was a piece of plywood shaped like a man and I won the pool with seventeen out of twenty rounds on the target. As the staff sergeant handed me my winnings, he said, "Mr. McLean, when you go into action, I suggest you go in drunk."

It was a long hard day for me. I did not start sobering up until four o'clock in the afternoon. I drank gallons of water and hardly touched my dinner. We headed back to the pub to check who had won. It was so close we decided to call it a draw. In setting up with the publican, I paid for sixteen double rums which meant I had consumed thirty-two ounces in less than a four-hour period. I have never drunk so much since and I hope I never will. It sort of purged my system and I kept my drinking at a much lower level from then on. A doctor later said that he was surprised that I had not come down with alcoholic poisoning. I had to make all sorts of apologies to my gal and I lost my Ronson lighter with the QOR crest on it which Bill had given me. Aside from this, I survived the twenty-hour bout without any bad effects.

When the course ended I rejoined the battalion who were still in the Brighton Golf Course camp. There was a lot of activity going on because of preparations to move to a new location at Wykehurst Park. During those few days I remember how a number of the officers took an early morning run on the overgrown fairways every day and would gather enough morels and mushrooms to add a tasty touch to our breakfasts. The cook would fry them with the bacon and serve them up on toast. Bacon was not a normal issue but most regiments kept a pig which they fattened up on slopes. When it was big enough, it was slaughtered and the bacon was cured and, along with other pork cuts, supplemented our normal dull meat rations.

When we had been in Eastbourne, or maybe it was before that, Steve Lett had won himself a charming blonde English girl we all called "Mama". She was married to a naval officer who had been reported missing in the Japanese attack on Singapore. From all reports he was presumed dead and Mama (Audrey) welcomed Steve into her life to help adjust and be a replacement father to her young son. She began moving to a house or rooms close to the regiment wherever it went. Even though our moves were supposed to be secret, it would not be long before she turned up in the vicinity and became a regular guest again at our mess.

I was rolling up my bedroll in the Brighton Golf Club when who should appear at my door but Audrey. I should have known something was up but she had become so much a part of our lives, I did not give the strangeness of her visit a second thought. It was not long before she wormed out of me where the battalion was heading. As she left her eyes went to

a large poster on the wall of my room which said, "Careful. Hitler is listening". I suddenly realized that Steve would not tell her where we were going and she had used me to find out. By the time we got to Wykehurst, she was esconced in rooms over an ancient coaching house just down the road from our new quarters.

We stayed a long time at Wykehurst Park. It was a large rather ungainly red brick Victorian mansion in a beautiful setting on the edge of a shallow valley of open lawns and fields interspersed with interesting trees and shrubbery. Again the men were quartered in Nissen huts clustered in what had formerly been an extensive rhododendron garden with large pine trees giving added protection. A long gravelled drive swept up to the entrance. Inside the imposing weathered oak doors was a large reception hall with fireplace big enough to stand upright in. A magnificent staircase went up to a long balcony on the second floor where the owners still lived. The walls of the central hall were covered with tooled leather in crimson and gold leaf design and all the wood-work was honey-coloured oak. The ceilings of the main rooms on the first floor and the bedrooms on the second were painted with pictures of cherubs and naked ladies in frothy outfits floating around playing erotic games. Chandeliers hung in each of the main rooms. It was Victorian elegance to the hilt.

The place was a mess when we took it over. The Chaudiere's had occupied it before us and had left the living quarters and the grounds in frightful condition. The owners hated the sight of Canadians and had locked themselves in their apartment. Steve Lett was now second-in-command of the regiment and when he visited the owners on our first day, he was totally rebuffed and had the door all but slammed in his face. He decided to rectify the situation at once.

Work parties were formed to do a complete cleanup. Garbage was removed. The gravel on the main front terrace and the driveway was weeded and raked. Stones on the edge of the drive were whitewashed. Bushes were pruned, duck-boards repaired, window panes replaced, and a hundred other items attended to. The front hall of the house had been used as a mess for the men and there was about half an inch of grease imbedded and ground into what had once been a beautiful parquet floor. It stank of stale food. No wonder the owners were annoyed. It took hours to scrub it down. No improvement could be seen until we brought in a supply of fine sand and went over it with bricks. Slowly the grain began to appear again. Once we had it completely clean, a number of coats of white shellac thinned with turpentine brought it back to its original condition.

After about two weeks of good hard work, Steve formally called upon the owners again and invited them to inspect their property. Few of us knew who they were and so it came as a surprise to find out that the owners were two little old ladies. They were dressed in Victorian long gowns with frills of lace at their wrists and neck, wore large brimmed hats and carried parasols. We had been put on our mettle and whenever we passed the little party, saluted extra smartly. Steve along with the adjutant and the regimental sargeant major were dressed in their

best uniforms. We did everything possible to give the impression that we were responsible and trustworthy. The effort paid off and relationships improved. From then on various officers were invited to tea from time to time. I had tea with them once and silently thanked Uz and Baba for the training they had given me on how to handle delicate teacups properly and make small talk. Whenever we had a party we extended the owners an invitation. They made a brief appearance once at Christmas time and we persuaded them to take some oranges and chocolate bars back to their apartment.

I began my weapons training course at once. For two intensive weeks I had to pass on everything I had learned in my six weeks at Bisley. There were five sergeants, one from each of the four infantry companies and one from the support company. Support Company consisted of the Signals, Supply, Mortar, Anti-tank and Pioneer Platoons. We worked hard together and it is interesting to note that all the sergeants from that session became company sergeant majors or officers within the next two years.

From there the sergeants took over and instructed the remaining sergeants and corporals in their own companies. Again it was concentrated into two weeks and my job was to make sure the training was progressing properly, answer questions and solve any problems which might come up. For instance, one of the sergeant instructors had a two-day bout of flu and I had to fill in for him. I constantly moved from group to group but found that the programme was being maintained exactly as planned.

The next phase, also of two week's duration, was concentrated on the men. Each corporal was responsible for the training of his section. Small pockets of men were spread all over the grounds and the five original sergeants and myself were kept busy visiting each one. Many a time it was necessary to grab a rifle, get down on the ground and demonstrate exactly what was supposed to be done. Towards the end of each phase we accented how to move into firing positions without being seen, the use of camouflage and how to get across open areas without presenting too great a target. Throughout these manoeuvres the care of the weapons was of prime concern. It was a busy and exciting time which I enjoyed. I seemed to have a flair for teaching and was impressed with the calibre of our NCO's. We could see a day-to-day improvement. Each man in the regiment was learning to handle himself and his weapon with confidence in situations which might well be duplicated in action.

The course took up my whole time so I had little contact with my own platoon and company after the first two clean-up weeks. The clean-up had quickly drawn another condition to our attention. The place was over-run with rats. With so much garbage lying around the rat population had exploded and they had developed an impertinent air, not even getting out of your way on the paths. The colonel appointed a pest extermination officer known by all as "Officer Rat". No poison was available and we were not allowed to shoot the animals in camp. So large rat traps were bought and set, but the rodents were clever, they could steal the food and never set the trap off. The rat

officer was becoming frustrated and made a careful study of their ways. He talked to local farmers who had the same problem and discovered that rats are creatures of habit. They will normally keep to one beaten path when moving from one spot to another. He obtained a number of volunteers who spent two or three nights identifying where the regular rat routes were. His next move was to get a supply of large lard pails, spot them strategically along the routes, fill the pails half full of water and lean a plank at an angle leading up to its edge. For a so-called clever animal, the rats acted in a manner which we thought very stupid. They would go along their normal path, up the plank as though it were a continuation of their route, fall into the pail and drown. Slowly the population fell, probably helped by the men who quietly set snares for them, made their own cages and practiced commando dagger throwing on them. For quite a few weeks it was a topic of general conversation and everyone had a pet rat story or a theory on how to get rid of them.

Throughout our time at Wykehurst and the many other places we were stationed, we participated in a variety of manoeuvres of short duration. It is extremely difficult for me to pin-point exactly where and when they occurred. Only if they were connected with a specific part of our constant training can I bring them in to my story in their proper place and sequence. It might be well to insert some reference to what were highlights for me and at the same time provide some idea of the different aspects of general life which weaved in and out of our months and years in England.

I got to know the Sussex part of England quite well. Names of places which had some connection with my activities come to mind: Horsham, Crowborough, Cuckfield, Bolney, Henfield, Hurstpierpoint, Bognor Regis, Fleet, Farnham, Farnborough and many others which if I examined a map would no doubt come back to me. Of course, these are in addition to those places where I can remember the events accurately enough to give them a definite spot in my overall story.

As mentioned before, I often had the job of leading the regiment because of my map reading ability. Naturally, I do not remember every occasion but there was one about which I would like to write. It took place on a night march when the weather was very warm and the air completely still. A strong perfume from something in full bloom at that time of year permeated the night air. It was so sweet it was sickening and had the effect of putting you into a partial stupor. It reminded me of the lotus eaters in the Odyssey. Cuckoos were calling and the world took on an unrealistic feeling. As the night wore on, a mist came up and we walked through wispy patches which floated across our faces and gave us the feeling of moving through a cloud of cobwebs. As usual, during our ten-minute break each hour I would carefully study the next four or five miles of the route with the aid of a shaded flashlight, or torch, as the English call it. I committed this to memory so that I would not have to refer to the map while marching. The general dreamy atmosphere of that particular night made it difficult to concentrate on the route but I never made an error and was highly annoyed when reaching one difficult crossroads with a

railway running through the middle of it to find a DR there to direct me. I knew exactly where to go and felt it was a lack of confidence on someone's part to send someone to show me the way.

Perhaps at this point I should mention more about our Canadian Dispatch Riders (DR's). They roared around the narrow twisting roads of southern England on big Harley-Davidson motorcycles with no lights or with so little it really could not show them where they were going. They were constantly on the go delivering either verbal or written messages and dispatches from one unit to another and thereby provided a vital service to commanders by keeping communications open. It could be dangerous because of fog, drizzle, unseen objects or potholes on the road. At times the strain of long hours and high speeds needed when messages were urgent made the drivers careless. The result was that there were many accidents and a lot of these were fatal. It caused considerable concern and even the Germans took notice. There was an English commentator who broadcasted regularly out of Germany known as Lord Haw Haw. A remark he made one night had us all laughing but it contained a grain of truth. He claimed that the Germans should have no worry about the Canadian Army, all they had to do was provide each Canadian with a motorcycle and they would kill themselves off. I do not know how he got his information or who the senior Canadian officer was who picked up the broadcast, but shortly after, new rules and regulations were issued to reduce accidents and the mortality rate. As radio sets became more prevalent, communications improved and the need for DR's reduced. However, whenever contact with other units broke down, which could happen quite often, the dispatch rider was called upon and some were always stationed at each headquarters. Also, as we got more and more jeeps, it was found that these vehicles could go nearly wherever a motorcycle could travel and emergency messages were handled in this manner more often.

Another item which seemed to interest the Germans was a comic strip. The Daily Mail, like all other newspapers in England during the war, consisted of four pages printed on very thin onion-skin paper. No advertising was included and the comic strips must have been considered important in maintaining sales when you realized how much valuable space they took up. The one which attracted so much attention was called "Jane" and featured a well-proportioned blonde who with her dachshund was always getting into some sort of situation where she lost part or all of her clothing. It must have been read by ninety-nine percent of the total armed forces in Britain and theories were produced that the fewer clothes she had on, the more successful the Allied cause was progressing, or when she lost certain parts of her wearing apparel it was a code of our activities which the Germans could decipher. Neither theory was probably true but Jane sure did her war effort well by keeping up the spirits of the troops.

The morale of the troops was of constant concern but units like the QOR did not have too much of a problem. We were kept so busy with training and exposure to new experiences that our spirits rarely lagged. In the supply depots or in

permanent camps it was a slightly different story. Boredom could set in and morale sag. To overcome this NAAFI shows toured the country. NAAFI stood for Navy, Army, Air Force Institute and it was the forerunner of the PX stores. They sold a variety of supplies and services at permanent camp locations and an off-shoot was their touring shows. I was able to take in a number of them especially whenever I was located in or near Aldershot and I was always delighted with the high calibre of the performances. The jokes were often raw and the slapstick overdone, but I never heard of a dud.

As I try to recall as many things as possible which I experienced in the three and a half years I was in England, I am always amazed how much was packed into such a short period of time. The months at Wykehurst were a good example, for even though my weapon training took up the major portion of my time, there were breaks when the regiment went on manoeuvres or a group of officers were given special training.

Before going on, I should include a description of my Wykehurst room. It was on the third floor and must have originally been part of the servant's quarters. I shared it with another officer who I think was Jack Lake. When we first moved in, like the rest of the place, it was filthy, so we worked with our batmen to give ceiling, walls and floor a good scrubbing. The liberal use of soap and water produced a problem. The scrubbed surfaces took weeks to dry. There was no heat except from a small fireplace and as coal was in short supply we only lit it in the evening when the weather was chilly. The fire warmed the room a little and made it more comfortable for us but it never produced enough heat to dry out our water-soaked surroundings for a long time. We had a cot each, one folding table but no other furniture. Our trunks had to double as chairs. We also had mice. If we left anything edible in the open or if we did not close our trunks firmly, we would find little teeth marks in soap, chocolate bars and even some of our clothing. At night, the mice would venture forth looking for food and in the light of our dying fire we could see them scampering here and there across the floor. Jack and I spent many an evening lying on our cots on either side of the room trying to hit them with our commando knives. We came close but never did skewer one.

There was one small window in the room and no electricity. We did all our letter writing and reading by candle light. From the window I could see the broad sweep of the park which was being used by my little training groups. With binoculars I was able to watch what was going on and if I saw something amiss, confound the instructor by visiting him immediately and confronting him with what I had seen.

I was given another chore which I enjoyed very much. The colonel asked if I would spend every Sunday for six or eight weeks teaching a Home Guard unit basic weapon training. I could have turned it down because Sunday was our only day of rest when we were in camp but as the job sounded interesting I decided to take it on. Each Sunday after an early breakfast a driver with a jeep would pick me up at the main entrance and we would head for Arundel through some of the prettiest country in England. It never rained once so I could sit back in the open jeep and drink in the countryside. We travelled

through vast beech and oak forests where the leaves of the magnificent trees were turning a burnished copper colour highlighted in yellow like shining brass where the rising sun filtered through. There were also great stretches of park-like country where the fields were golden and the grass bright green. England always surprises me with its thousands of little pockets of the most superb scenery. During the war it was only on a trip like this that I seemed to have the time to enjoy it. As we approached the sea after about a one-hour drive, the River Arun widened on our right and we would see waterfowl in the reeds and sedge grass in the shallows. A sight I always loved was my first glimpse of the castle in the town of Arundel. The sun warmed its rounded towers and the great pile of honey-coloured stone would be reflected in the still pale-blue waters of the Arun.

Just inland from where the coastal railway swings away from the sea, there is a small station and a pub. We parked beside the pub where the Home Guards would be gathered waiting for the whole group to come together. They were an interesting mixture of men, typical of hundreds of similar units formed all over the country. My unit consisted of about twenty, some of whom were too old to join combat units but many from professions or essential industries from which they could not be released. For instance, there were a number of doctors, a manager of an ammunition factory, some farmers and a retired general. Their job was to defend a certain crossroads in case of invasion. The signal would be the ringing of the local church bells. Once invasion was confirmed and the bells rung, thousands of these part-time soldiers would be ready to position themselves at strategic locations all over the country. The whole countryside was a network of small defense units manned by enthusiastic local inhabitants who would have rather died than let an invader take over what every Englishman considered his sacred plot of ground. They built all sorts of home-made defense systems which an invading force would have found not only annoying but in many cases impossible to by-pass. If an invader over-ran or leap-frogged one defense point, he would have come up against another a few hundred yards beyond and another and another wherever he turned. The delaying tactics of this in-depth type of defense would give the regular army units time to concentrate an attack in the area where the main threat developed. Luckily the invasion never happened but I would have not wanted to be in any force which tried to penetrate into England.

My teaching was exciting because my group were so pathetically eager to learn. The first job was to find out what their arsenal consisted of. It was stored in a small green hut on the high ground above the pub and our training was to take place in an abandoned over-grown quarry just beyond it. The arsenal was small but sufficient, being made up of personal rifles and shotguns of all vintages, a quantity of cast-off weapons from the British army including rifles, PIAT guns, two-inch mortars with bombs, grenades and a variety of other items mostly from the first world war. Ammunition was doled out very carefully and if I remember correctly, each man had only three shells per rifle for practice each Sunday. It

could not be saved up and used all at once but had to be expended on the day it was issued. This meant we did a lot of jumping around from weapon to weapon which was fun in a way but did not give me a chance to concentrate on individual problems which I would have preferred.

One Sunday was supposed to feature the use of the PIAT. It was an anti-tank grenade shot from a Lee-Enfield rifle. The explosive was packed in a container which looked like a cup-shaped funnel. On impact the charge was directed through the spout and if it hit dead on could penetrate about an inch of armour plate. The most vulnerable part of a tank next to its tracks was the gas tank in the rear. Training was based on letting the tank go by and then stepping into the open and firing at its rear end. We set up a piece of old sheet metal in the quarry for practice. The first shot was a dud. The unexploded PIAT grenade bounced off the target and fell to the ground in the middle of the quarry. It was a good example of what could happen at any time and I used it to explain that no live ammunition was allowed to be left on any firing range. Now came the matter of disposing of it and this also was a useful part of weapon training.

I got a Mills grenade from the shed and while everyone watched peeking over the edge of the quarry, I placed it beside the dud, pulled the pin and walked away to lie down behind a small hummock knowing that I had four seconds before it would explode. After about twelve seconds nothing had happened and it appeared I had a second dud. As I had been proceeding with the demonstration, I explained everything I was doing in a loud voice so everyone could hear. Now I had to go forward and find out what had happened. It could be tricky but I had to give the appearance of complete confidence and keep my voice calm. About two paces away from the grenade I heard the pin drop and this time I knew I had only two seconds to get under cover. I could not appear to panic but I took about four quick steps away from the spot and lay down behind a bump in the ground about the size of my head. The explosion took place and no one was hurt. It was now necessary to find out what had gone wrong with the Mills grenade. The PIAT was a common problem and the number of duds was one of the reasons why it had been discarded by the regular army. I was concerned about the Mills grenade because it usually was completely dependable. We adjourned to the shed and I found that none of them had been cleaned. The next hour or so became a lesson on how to take a grenade apart, remove the grease in which it had been packed and which was what had caused the pin to drop so slowly, and how to put it back together again. There were enough grenades for each man to work on his own but as it is a ticklish business, I spread them around the quarry far enough apart so that if there was an accident only one man would be killed. I was available to help anyone who needed it. However, they followed my instructions very carefully and by the end of the session we had a supply ready for use. It had been a rather tense morning and we were glad to break for lunch which we had, as usual, at the pub beside the railway station.

Not all of the group stayed for lunch but most of those of the working class did. The pub sold an excellent meat pie

and with a glass of ale from a local brewery made a great meal. Meat was rare in England and it was only in such out-of-the-way country pubs that you could find sausage rolls and tasty meat pies. They also served what was available from the nearest brewery and quite often you would come across a beer or ale which was a little different and usually a pleasant surprise.

At the end of the Home Guard training, we had a party over lunch and this time the whole gang stayed. They presented me with a pipe and a cigarette lighter. I had enjoyed our association and was sorry to see it come to an end.

Also while at Wykehurst a group of officers went through a night exercise on the use of the compass. We worked in pairs and were given a sheet telling us where to start and then how many paces to proceed on each given compass reading. The chap I was with was quite good and we were getting along famously until the last leg. We found ourselves struggling through brambles under overhead power lines which made the compass needle spin in circles. After we had fought our way through the undergrowth in the pitch black of the night, we discovered that if we had paced every leg perfectly we would have been able to walk down a sunken road on the last leg about ten yards away from the line we had taken. The only satisfaction we got out of our mistake was that about four other teams had done exactly the same thing.

Another night manoeuvre took place around the same time with my platoon competing against another one from our company, although neither of us knew it in advance. My orders were to proceed to a certain point and await orders. While waiting, two attractive WAAF's (Womens' Auxiliary Air Force) rode up on bicycles. We chatted for a few minutes and discovered that they were stationed near Wykehurst. Before they left I had their names and addresses.

It began to get dark when my orders came through to take a railway bridge about half a mile away and be prepared to hold it against a possible attack. I did not know that the other platoon had been given exactly the same orders. If everything had worked according to plan, it would have been a good exercise but both platoons arrived at the bridge at the same time and the result was utter confusion. However, there were always lessons to be learned from such exercises and in this case it was drawn to my attention that while waiting to receive my orders I should have had put out patrols to study the lay of the land as well as to provide warning of the presence of any "enemy" in the vicinity. Also, it would have been smart to move up to the bridge on the double, because if my orders said to hold it, no doubt an attack was expected and the sooner I got there the faster I could set up defensive positions. I mention this in detail because up to this time we had participated in large-scale manoeuvres in which you just followed orders. This was the first time where we were operating as a separate fighting unit and had to plan and think for ourselves under very general orders. What was missing was some idea of what the "enemy" was doing but in actual action we probably would have no more information than we had in that particular exercise. From then on we concentrated more and more on independent fighting unit situations.

Later, along with another officer, I met the two girls from the WAAF's at a local pub near Wykehurst. We spent a number of pleasant evenings together and got to know them quite well. Around Christmas we had a series of parties culminating in another Black Network bash. The other officer and I invited the two WAAF's to the dance and we picked them up in one of the company jeeps. As usual it was a great party and while the dance band took a rest many of the officers disappeared to their rooms with their girls. I was taken aback when my girl suggested that we head for my room and go to bed for an hour or so. It was the first time I had been directly propositioned by a girl and it turned me off at once. I did not want to appear to be a complete prude so we did visit my room for some casual necking. Later as I accompanied her back downstairs, I was extremely embarrassed when her silk stockings kept falling down around her ankles. If I had been drunk, I suppose I would not have minded what kind of spectacle she or I produced but I had cut back drastically on my drinking and was very conscious of the inference she was making. Perhaps she did it on purpose to get back at me for not taking her to bed the way she wanted. Even though I found her interesting and would have been willing to accept her invitation to visit her home in a town with the fascinating name of Seven Kings, that was the end of our friendship.

Whenever we had a large party, or a series of them such as we did during Christmas week of 1942, each officer made a donation from his parcels. This time, however, the supply was skimpy. There must have been a fire on board the ship which had brought a large number of our parcels across the Atlantic. Everything reeked of whatever chemical had been used to put out the fire and had penetrated all items wrapped in paper. Only the oranges, toothpaste, shoe polish and tinned goods survived. Tinned food was getting scarcer and scarcer. It was the only time I can remember when this kind of thing occurred. Occasionally we would receive parcels which were badly battered but usually they came through with very little damage. When I think back on it, there must have been high-priority military supplies which should have taken up the precious shipping space used by our parcels. We sure were glad that they came through regularly. Without them we would have been short of socks and would have had to smoke the frightful Wild Woodbine cigarettes which were issued to the British troops. It would have meant also that we would have had to spend valuable time hunting for soap, toothpaste, boot laces and other small essentials in local English shops where supplies of such things were minimal and where the English should, and did because of our parcels, have the chance to buy them first. Parcels were numbered the same way as our letters and we reported carefully what was received and what was missing.

At about this time my weapon training programme came to an end. Although we had taken six weeks to do the laid out course, manoeuvres and other duties had dragged it on longer. I had made my report to Eddie Dunlop and one day all the officers were called together on the big gravelled patio in front of the house to hear the report. When Eddie had

finished he asked me if I had anything to add. I should have known better but I said I did, and that was my downfall.

Throughout my life I have often spoken before thinking. Any time I have done it I have lived to regret it. It is a fault which can be expected in the young but it should be overcome by any mature person early in his life. Of course, I forget how young I was at the time but I felt that I was mature. I knew that I had done well in running the course and accomplished what had been set out for me. I had received my fair share of praise in the summary remarks and should not have looked for more. But something made me open my mouth, praise the quality of our NCO's and criticize the officers for not recognizing this. As soon as I had said the words I knew I was in for trouble. There was an embarrassed shuffling of feet throughout the group and I realized I had put my foot into it right up to my hip. No young whipper-snapper of a junior subaltern was going to get away with a blanket criticism of his senior officers in public. It was not long before I received my dues. I was transferred to a small commando training unit near Farnham where I would be an instructor.

It was a small school consisting of four officer and a dozen NCO instructors. They were tough and in perfect condition. I was on the soft side when I joined them but within a couple of weeks was as tough as the next guy. A cluster of small green huts were our quarters and I had one to myself. It reminded me of the little cabins found throughout the resort area of Ontario but, like all other houses in England, did not have screens. There are no mosquitoes or black flies in England. Courses ran from Monday morning to Friday night and those taking it were trucked in from surrounding units each day and taken home again each night. The purpose was to keep those troops stationed in holding camps in more or less good condition and to harden them up. I have an idea that some commanders used it as a disciplinary measure as well.

Besides the normal running associated with such courses, we had an obstacle course which was where I operated with a group of NCO's. It was about one hundred yards long and located in a gully. There were scrambling nets, a single rope bridge with another rope over it for a handhold, log walls and ramps to climb, single logs over a stagnant pool to run along, a fire pit for running through, rolls of barbed wire to get across, ropes for swinging across the gully, and knotted ropes for climbing. Trainees were supposed to go through this on the double and of course, the instructors had to be able to do it faster and better. When a new batch of men came in we demonstrated how it should be done. It was a great way to clear a hangover first thing Monday morning. Once we had shown how it was supposed to be done, we spent most of the rest of the week standing on the sidelines urging the men along and watching for any mishaps. The only way a trainee could get out of completing the course was if he broke a leg or an arm. While I was there no one broke anything but it had happened a couple of times before I arrived. Sprained ankles were common as were wrenched backs and skinned hands. Bruises abounded.

By the end of the week the participants knew what they could handle if they had to. It was doubtful whether anyone except those who might actually participate in a commando raid would ever need the knowledge but you never knew what you might come up against in action.

The best part of the two or three months I spent in Farnham were the weekends. There was no training on Saturdays or Sundays and very often on a Friday night or early Saturday morning I would catch the Basingstoke bus out of Aldershot and head for Andwell Mill. I was careful, however, not to overdo my visits to the Sellers and wear out my welcome so I spent a number of weekends in and around Farnham. Occasionally we had to rebuild a section of the obstacle course but otherwise it was easy to find another officer and obtain bicycles to go exploring or spend an evening in one of the many pubs. It was on one of these rambles that I saw my first jet airplane. There was a small secret airport at Farnborough isolated by very tight security. Planes have to fly, so they were in full view of anyone watching and from time to time we saw some queer sights. I remember spotting a flying boat once with a huge specially built black bulge on its superstructure. I have no idea what it was and I never saw one again. No one ever spoke of such things even to his best friend. The jet which I saw zipped across the sky so quickly it took me a moment to figure out what it was. The lack of engines and propellers gave it away as a completely new type of plane along with the plume of smoke streaming out of its tail and the swishing sound it made. I do not believe the word "jet" was being used then and it was so hush-hush a development that it was not until much later I found out what it was I had seen.

On another weekend we had been to a pub about five or six miles away and were heading home in the blackout on our bicycles. The chap I was with was about twenty yards ahead of me. His bicycle had a shaded riding light but mine did not. We were talking rather loudly because of the distance between us and I did not hear a shout behind me. A few moments later my arms were pinned to my sides in a very firm grip by someone at my back. I found myself literally in the arms of the law. A young police constable had shouted to me to stop and when I appeared to ignore him, had sprinted after me. His complaint was my lack of riding lights but after showing him my identification card and promising to walk my bicycle the rest of the way, he let me go.

In some ways, because we lived within the confines of an army unit, we developed the feeling of living in an area governed only by our own laws known as the King's Rules and Regulations. We knew full well that the civil law existed and military law was secondary to it but because we came in contact with the law of the land so seldom and were ruled night and day by the military, we could forget the civilian side of things. Large towns, and especially London, were exceptions because the symbols of civil law were much more visible. I was bemused by this experience for here I was off duty for the evening and still surrounded by military people. Yet, in the middle of nowhere, in a quiet English country lane, the long arm of the law in the form of a young English Bobby was

demanding why I did not have a light on my military bicycle. My rank meant absolutely nothing to him. I am sure he would have acted the same way if I had been a general. I had broken the law, his law, and he could arrest me. This is the difference between a police state and a democracy and it reminded me why I was fighting this war.

The most pleasant aspect of the weekends I did not spend at Andwell was Mrs. Gibson's. Mrs. G. as we called her was Spanish, dark, very attractive and married to an English Guards officer she had met on Gibraltar. Her husband was either missing or dead or a prisoner of war or maybe he did not exist at all. For all I knew, she was a spy, but what attracted a small group of us to her house were the dinners she served. Two downstairs rooms had a number of small tables with red checkered table clothes on them and candles in empty wine bottles. It was like a little French restaurant except I suppose I should call it Spanish. She served excellent steaks with a fried egg on them, hot rolls made with white flour and superb coffee. All of these were so scarce you never saw them even in the best London hotels. Perhaps you could find the occasional roll made with white flour but the normal fare was brown bread which we always claimed contained fifty percent sawdust. We had heard that this kind of food was available on the black market at very high prices and most of us decided that Mrs. G was getting it this way. The whole operation was suspect, especially when she did not charge exorbitant prices, but no one ever asked any questions. A spot like this was a rare find and we kept it very much to ourselves which is just as well because she could only serve a limited number of diners. Only officers were allowed in and no women. You had to be introduced by someone already in the know and Mrs. G. was not above turning a person down. She ran it like an exclusive club and was very selective in whom she invited into her home.

No liquor was served but some of us would stay around afterwards and help with the dishes and then have an extra coffee on the house with a thimbleful of brandy or a sweet chocolate liqueur. Her daughter who was about twelve helped her mother serve the meals and clean up later. She was a stunning looking youngster and we teased her a lot. I must have said at some time that when she grew up I might consider marrying her because about a year after I was back in Canada, I got a phone call at Kodak and who should it be but Mrs. Gibson. I had to think for a moment who she was as she told me that she had married a Canadian officer, was living in the west end of Toronto, and that her daughter (she had a nice Spanish name which I have forgotten) had grown up. Would I like to come and visit them? I had just become engaged to Maud and was able to gracefully decline, although I must admit I panicked for a moment when I realized that some of my indiscretions overseas might easily follow me home and upset my life here.

One day when talking to Mrs. G she mentioned how difficult it was to get workmen to do anything around the place. Because of the war, men and supplies were short and most civilians had to let their properties deteriorate. I discovered that all she wanted was to have the woodwork in her bedroom painted and

offered to do the job on the next weekend. It was not a difficult job and I was progressing well when she came up to talk to me while I worked. I had newspapers spread all over the place at her insistence even though I had told her I was a careful painter and very seldom splashed or spilt paint. The only place where she could sit down was on the bed. I suddenly knew that the whole thing had been set up as a trap. The house was empty and she was now stretched out on the bed with her skirts well above her knees. Since my break-up with Nora I was not interested although like any man I was flattered. She made all sorts of suggestions without actually saying that she wanted me to get into bed with her but I parried them all. Eventually she left and I continued working. I decided I was still very naive when it came to women. The incident, however, did not change our attitude towards each other and I continued my regular visits as though nothing had happened.

About three months after being transferred to Farnham, I was returning from taking a group through the obstacle course and as usual was hot and sweaty and in need of a shower. As I headed for my hut, I spotted a QOR station wagon parked near the course commander's cabin. I wondered what it was doing there as only the colonel had a station wagon. At that moment, Steve Lett came out of the cabin and asked me how soon I could be ready to return to the regiment. He said he was picking up some other officers in Aldershot and would be back in an hour. I rushed through my clean-up and packing and was waiting when the station wagon drove up in a cloud of dust. Steve was in a hurry and we headed south as soon as my gear was thrown in the back. The change was so abrupt that I had to get my bearings and instead of participating in the chatter, stared out of the window thinking.

I had the feeling then, and still have it now, that the decisions and plans I may make are not the ones which will have a direct influence on the course my future will take. During the war I knew that someone else was always calling the shots in my life. Of course, at that time my job was to follow orders but even in peacetime outside events seemed to have controlled me without my direct participation. Perhaps I was not a pawn in whatever game was being played, but probably more like the knight with two moves forward and one to the side or two places to the side and one forward or backwards, but always with someone more powerful than I doing the directing. Occasionally I have made a decision on my own knowing that it will possibly lead to a defined goal. There was the time I took a correspondence school advertising course with my long-term goal being to become advertising manager at Kodak. Or my decision to have a one-man show to see if my paintings were acceptable and saleable to my friends and my long-term goal was to supplement my retirement income. No doubt I could recall other similar decisions but even they have been influenced by the action or opinion of others. But during the war especially, I had no driving ambition to become a commanding officer or aim for a senior position of influence or willing to take all the necessary steps and make all the necessary sacrifices to attain such a goal. I simply wanted to obey orders and do the best I could in whatever situation I found myself. I was only a small part of a larger organization and where it went

I moved also.

The same general tendency has existed in nearly all I have ever done. Although I have tried to be a good husband, father, nephew, worker, manager, artist, I have not studied intensely or applied myself with vigour in any one of these fields with the idea of becoming outstanding in a given area or a leader in a chosen field. This has not meant that I have drifted aimlessly. I seem to have an ability to make short-range and long-range plans and now have enough experience to know that whatever I plan may change because of outside influences over which I have no control. I become very uncomfortable with spur-of-the moment decisions and prefer to advance two moves forward, one move to the side.

How much of this went through my mind during the drive back to the regiment and how much has been added over the years, I really do not know. You will notice that I have had difficulty keeping the tense the same throughout the recording of these feelings which is probably indicative of my problem of fitting them into a specific slot in time. My sudden departure from the commando school without being able to say goodbye to Mrs. Gibson, the Sellers, or the people with whom I had been working made me realize that my life was not in my own hands. And this kind of abrupt change in direction has happened often enough in my life, without me initiating it, that I wonder whether some other force is guiding me. To what goal, I do not know.

Perhaps I am particularly sensitive to this kind of thinking as I write these paragraphs. In preparation for a trip to Greece, I have been reading a number of books which of course include stories of the Greek heroes. Lives were then believed to be in the hands of the gods, that whatever you did was pre-ordained and, to a certain degree, out of your direct control. Against this philosophy I have seen many people who seem to live by a self-made plan and nearly every decision they make is a stepping stone towards a specific goal which they have established for themselves. I admire this strength of character but perhaps it is not for me. I have come to the belief that I would rather act in a supportive role to help someone else achieve what he or she is looking for. Recently, my wife has been asking me what my long-range goals might be and I have had great difficulty answering. The name McLean comes from "the son of the servant of John" and perhaps I am a throw-back to that early definition. All I know now is that I rejoined the regiment with my mind in a turmoil.

I am not sure where the regiment was stationed at this time. It may have been Haywards Heath but I found out why Steve Lett was going around the countryside gathering up QOR officers. The regiment had a number of internal changes. I did not know it at the time, but Jock Spragge had been ordered to name the officers and NCO'S who would be going in on the first assault wave on D-Day. It had been decided that A and B Companies under command of Elliot Dalton and his brother Charlie Dalton, respectively, would hit the beaches first. C and D Companies would follow right behind. I was posted to command No. 5 Platoon in B Company. We had a year to get ready. The tempo of training increased. We learned how to clear

houses in the bombed-out areas of Southampton and other coastal towns. It was dirty work and it did not take much imagination to figure out how nasty it would be if enemy soldiers were hidden in cupboards and cellars. But more and more of our training was concentrated on boats, scrambling nets, landing craft, and keeping control under difficult situations.

In between all the training, which I shall describe in more detail later, I still was sent on courses, two of which I remember well mainly because I enjoyed them so much. The first one was not really a course but a special assignment to act as the administrative officer for a postal course. Norris, my batman, was with me and I had a staff sergeant, a couple of cooks and a section of men reporting to me. Our job was to take over a row of houses in Southampton, clean them up and put in sufficient supplies such as tables, chairs, blackboards, beds and food to house two one-week courses for two officer-instructors and about twenty postal clerks. It meant that we worked hard for three days getting everything ready, had little to do except cook and serve meals while each course was on and then work hard over the weekend between courses cleaning up the place and preparing for the next one. At the end of the two weeks we had to dismantle everything and turn the houses back to those in control.

Luckily I had an excellent staff sergeant who knew the ropes and did most of the work. This was characteristic of any good NCO worth his salt. He only presented me with the various papers, requisitions and other things for signature and made regular reports on how everything was progressing. I made a point of being present when most meals were served and was around when classes ended in case the instructors had any questions about the facilities. Otherwise, I disappeared to my room or out around town. The weather was good and I had plenty of time to explore Southampton although there were dock areas where no one was allowed. The parks, the Guildhall and the downtown areas were interesting even though some parts were badly bombed. About two blocks down the street from my billets was a charming pub called "The Sheperd's Bush" on the edge of a delightful park. It served an excellent lunch and every day that I could get away, this was my headquarters from about one o'clock to two or two-thirty. I had a favourite table overlooking the park which made me think I was in the country. Spotted here and there around the perimeter of the park were large grassy mounds. At first I was not able to figure out what they were but one day some troops were practicing around one of them and I discovered they were anti-aircraft gun emplacements. There was never an air-raid while I was there and as a matter of fact, come to think of it air-raids were becoming fewer and fewer around this time as the Allied airforces began to take over control of the skies. My stay in Southampton was a relaxed couple of weeks and I was able to catch up on my letter writing and reading while waiting to receive my daily reports and papers for signing.

The other assignment which also was not really a course, was even more pleasant. Norris and I took the train to Waterloo, transferred to Uston by taxi and boarded the night train to Glasgow. After having a substantial Scottish breakfast

together in the station hotel, we got a taxi to the ferry dock. Our destination was Castle Toward and we had to find the boat, one of many which ply the Clyde, to take us to the Castle which was not a port of call for many of them. While waiting for most of the morning, we contentedly sat in the sun and watched the bustle in the harbour, fed the gulls and talked. Norris was a good companion and treated me like a younger brother. One of the reasons why he enjoyed being my batman was the interesting courses and assignments we were sent on together which meant he had considerable time to himself and did not have to do route marches, mess duties and kitchen work.

Our little passenger boat puffed its way into the dock and we headed a short distance down the Clyde to the castle. We reported in at the entrance hall and I was given a room on the third floor of one of the towers at the top of a winding narrow flight of stairs. My room had plain stone walls and a slit-like window which gave me a partial view of the Clyde. The personnel, both staff and participants, were a mixture of all the services in the British and Canadian armies and navies. We were representatives of every unit which would take an active part in the invasion of Europe. There were no United States' units represented but a number of officers from the U.S. command as well as from the RAF and RCAF were present as observers. The staff included many women, WRENS, WAAFS and WACS, who added a pleasant touch to the assembly, especially in the evenings when we had dances. Security was tight. Participants were not allowed off the grounds so we had to make our own amusement in off-hours and dances were popular. Our batmen had no idea what we were doing so Norris was allowed to visit friends in Rothsay which he did every day from about nine in the morning to ten at night. He would clean up my room and by the time I came back from breakfast, he had laid out my dress uniform for the evening and caught the early ferry.

What we were doing was playing with blocks! We sat around tables out on the lawn under the big shady trees in glorious warm sunny weather with a bunch of blocks and sheets of paper. We had wooden models of every different type of landing craft or ship to be used on the invasion. Into these simple forms we placed blocks made in the proper proportions to represent tanks, ambulances, gun carriages, supply trucks, or any other of the supporting vehicles, armoured and otherwise. The kind of vehicle was marked on each block along with its weight. Our job was not only to balance the craft by weight, but, more important, put them in the priority we felt was essential not only for the first-wave landing craft but also for the follow-up waves throughout D-day and on through to about five days later. We also had to divide units into different craft in case one was sunk. We did not want to lose all the ambulances, for instance, in one mishap.

We were made up in teams consisting of all the units involved, plus the infantry who would need the support. I represented the infantry in my team and the onus was on me to decide what support the men on the beach would need first and which vehicles could wait for half a day or longer. I therefore had a vital say in all decisions. The other teams

were doing the same thing. At the end of each day our decisions, which had been recorded on large sheets of newsprint, were collected and compared by the staff. It was surprising and heartening to see how few differences existed. Whenever teams did disagree, the staff people would discuss it with all teams gathered in one group and we would come to a consensus after hearing the arguments pro and con.

The work was not onerous but we were fully aware of its importance. The number of each particular type of landing craft needed, the order in which each craft would land on the different beaches, the loading pattern in England, the control of the mixed loads, the orderly feeding of the proper vehicles to the dock areas located in different ports all along the south coast, the need to build permanent loading ramps or supply moveable ones, the timing when a certain vehicle left its unit and headed for a prepared marshalling area, the timing and movement towards the loading ramps without causing congestion or traffic jams, the packing of each vehicle to contain the correct supplies and ammunition according to a weight chart and sufficient to last two or three days before replenishment might be available—all this horrendous nightmare of logistics depended on our decisions made with blocks on a table on the lawns of Castle Toward under clear Scottish summer skies. There was a certain sense of unreality connected with the whole exercise.

For two weeks we worked steadily at the problem and for two weeks we had glorious sunny hot weather in July. One day while sitting around our table, we all stopped to watch a large convoy of passenger ships move slowly down the Clyde. It was the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Canadian Army plus other troops heading for the invasion of Sicily. It was a symbolic majestic omen for they would be the first Allied forces to step back again on to European soil. We envied them and hoped to follow soon after, across the Channel. As they passed Castle Toward, there was a hush among the observers and probably a few silent prayers.

At that time of year the sun set around 11 p.m. or later as we were on double summer time. It rose about 4 a.m. so there was only about an hour or two of real darkness. This had an interesting affect on the group. No one seemed concerned about sleep. Our parties, which I mentioned usually included dancing, would end around one or two in the morning and many of us would be up by five or six to go running. We would have preferred bicycling but as we were restricted to the grounds of the castle it did not give us much scope. So thirty or forty of us would voluntarily run around the perimeter of the grounds for an hour or so, have a good hot shower afterwards and be ready for a substantial breakfast. I guess the desire for exercise was our reaction to counteract our lack of it during the day and as most of us were in top physical condition, it was a natural thing to do. Because the weather was so warm, there would often be a heavy ground mist early in the morning. The low rising sun produced eerie effects sending beams of smoky light amongst the trees like searchlights. It was all part of

producing a feeling that life was good and that we were doing a vital job within a huge overall plan. I look back on those two weeks as one of the happiest times of my life.

I cannot remember where we were stationed when I got back to the regiment but as I said before, training got tougher. There were no more major endurance tests like Operation Tiger but a whole series of concentrated exercises to give us confidence for the job we knew was coming. Throughout the summer and fall of 1943 and the first half of 1944 we were honed into shape. I cannot remember everything we did or in what order they were done, but one thing does come to mind. I was in command of the same men whom I would lead in on D-day for nearly a year. Army training pamphlets say you should know your men so well that you can recognize their voices in the dark and read their minds. During this 1943-44 period, I was able to reach the point where I could do both. It was a tremendous bond and yet to my horror I can only remember now a few of the names of that platoon and I doubt that I would recognize any of them if we happened to meet today. In that one year, however, we became welded together into one compact whole which was shattered in pieces on the beaches of Normandy.

Five or six weeks after my session at Castle Toward I headed for Scotland again, this time with the whole regiment. We took a train to Glasgow and a whole series of small passenger ships took us on to Inverary. Our new camp was again a group of Nissen huts scattered about under the trees on the grounds of the castle belonging to the Duke of Argyll. Here we settled into a number of weeks of hard training with live ammunition. Scotland is a great place for this kind of training because of the boggy peat-like soil into which artillery and mortar shells could sink. The explosion would usually be harmless with most of the blast going straight up and the shrapnel imbedded in the soft soil. It was so soggy there was little danger of being wounded. I remember once running up to the top of a rather high hill and finding that the top was just as wet as the bottom. Our training ground was across the loch and we were transported back and forth by landing craft.

Before going up to Scotland we had received a complement of recruits from Canada to fill a number of gaps in the units. Volunteer recruiting was in trouble in those days and we were getting men who did not know one end of a rifle from the other. They had to do a lot of catching up. Quite a number were posted to D Company commanded by Eddie Dunlop, my former weapons training officer. Ed was an extremely competent and smart young officer who was blessed with a photographic memory. I recall back in Toronto during the days before the regiment was called up for active duty when he demonstrated how well he knew a training manual after reading it through once and then being able to quote sections nearly verbatim and referring us to the page and chapter to check him out. In Scotland he decided his new recruits needed training in grenade throwing and set up a practice range on the hill above the camp. The battalion was electrified when it heard the news that Dunlop had been involved in an accident and was seriously wounded. It seems that a new recruit froze after

pulling the pin from a Mills grenade and then dropped it. Eddie pushed the man down, picked up the grenade and threw it. It exploded just after it left his hand. A piece of shrapnel entered his temple and cut the optic nerve. His hand was damaged and the butt was taken off his pistol. Later we heard that he had lost the sight of both eyes. No stretcher bearers were with him and it was a difficult job getting him down the hill, into an ambulance and to a hospital. After hospitalization he went to St. Dunstan's in southern England which was, and may still be for all I know, a world-famous hospital for the blind. He married his attractive nurse who came from Toronto and whom he has never seen. His photographic memory he transferred to an ability to remember voices. Many months later I saw him about twelve weeks apart and the second time he greeted me by name after I had only said hello. If you had not known ahead of time, it was hard to realize he was blind and there are many an amusing story about this. One of them was the time he was taken to task because he did not salute a senior officer in London. Ed went on to a successful career in the Canadian government with the Department of Veteran's Affairs and is currently publisher of the Toronto Sun.

We had very few accidents other than this one but you cannot be working with live ammunition and expect to go scot free. There were casualties in other battalions which we heard about and we began to understand what action under fire might be like. A major in another regiment had lost both hands when he jumped ashore holding de-capped bakelite grenades which we had just been issued. Even with these few accidents, however, no training really provides a soldier with full knowledge of what it is like to face hostile machine guns, mortars and heavy guns. Scotland only gave us a taste of what was to come.

The most precious possession of the lairds of Scotland is their salmon. The fish and the law make it very tempting for poachers to try their hand at capturing a salmon without being caught and the country's literature is full of such stories. Beside the Duke of Argyll's castle on the edge of our camp was a stream full of salmon. Our boys went about obtaining the fish they wanted by the simple and direct method of tossing hand grenades into the river and then poling the stunned fish to shore. It only happened once because it created the most unholy row. You would have thought that we had desecrated the most sacred shrine in the world. As a matter of fact, I think we could have stolen the Duke's famous art treasures and got off more lightly. As this is the seat of the Campbells and there has never been any love lost between the Campbells and the McLeans, I was not overly concerned about the Duke's loss and said so in the mess. My remarks started an interesting debate on the rights of huge landlords, civil rights and landlords in absentia.

When we were not over on the other side of the loch, we kept busy around camp with weapon training and the study and use of ground. One day I took my platoon on a long run down the road which followed the edge of the loch. When we stopped for a rest before turning around and heading back, many of us took off our boots and socks, rolled up our battle

dress and went wading amongst the rocks. The tide was out and we found all sorts of mussels and other shell fish but were not able to collect them as we had not brought along our haversacks. The men asked if they could make the same run the next day and collect enough to make a stew. I agreed, so the following day at the same time we ran to the same spot and everyone plunged in to fill their haversacks with as many shell fish as we could gather. That evening I was invited to share the stew. Usually when the men planned a party, officers were not included and I felt honoured to be asked. When I got to the hut, a most appetizing aroma was coming from a huge pot where the stew was bubbling on the stove. Someone had talked the cook into providing some onions, carrots and potatoes, plus a number of loaves of bread. As a matter of fact, a couple of men had actually volunteered for kitchen duty, an unheard of thing, in order to get their hands on these extras. Although it was against regulations, they had also procured a small keg of beer from the local pub and it was carefully hidden on a bench covered with jackets and other clothing with only the spigot showing. It was a great feast. The men were quiet not being comfortable socializing with officers. I enjoyed the meal and made sure not to stay too long as they could relax and be themselves.

When our training was over, we boarded the little passenger boats again. For some reason we slept on board even though the trip back to Glasgow was not long. Maybe it was to get us accustomed to ships and what to expect on them. I remember that my small cabin was filled with cockroaches crawling all over the walls. I hope it was fumigated before being put into further service. A few cockroaches or other discomforts never worried us, however. Comfort and cleanliness was always welcomed but you could not afford to be fastidious in the infantry. It would not have done you any good anyway.

The landing craft and infested boats of Scotland were just the beginning of our close association with a variety of water craft and shipboard experiences. For instance, one of our exercises was to teach us how to get into landing craft infantry (LCI's) by going over the side of our passenger ship and climbing down to them using scrambling nets. The night we practiced, ten-foot waves were rolling in from the sea and it was pouring rain. The scrambling nets were greasy wet and the LCI's bobbed up and down like corks. When we got to the bottom of the net the deck of the LCI was under our feet one moment and the next it was ten feet below us and about six feet out from the side of the ship. Our weapons and boots kept getting caught in the net. Men slipped and cursed. We lost a number of rifles and there were a few sprained ankles. For people like me wearing glasses, it was impossible to see where you were going, not that it mattered much anyway. I honestly do not know how I was able to get into the LCI. I expected to be crushed at any moment between it and the ship. The only weapons we carried were rifles. We knew we would be loaded down with much more equipment on D-day and if we were having this much trouble with a minimum amount of equipment, what was it going to be like when we had to carry bangalore torpedoes, wire cutters, two-inch mortars and great quantities

of extra ammunition? The marines were superb in their assistance. They would put their arms around us and with a great shout of "now" we would let go and they would literally lift us on to the craft. You only hoped there would be a deck below you when they let go. As an exercise it was a disaster and about half-way through, well before all the LCI's were loaded, someone had the sense to call a stop to the whole operation. I do not know whether this experience was what changed the minds of those in command but from then on we boarded our LCI's directly from the deck. Instead of the normal lifeboats, our LCI's were hung from the davits and could be lowered to deck level. It was a much more civilized way to go.

A more peaceful type of exercise took place when we fanned out across the Isle of Wight each man carrying a wireless set and a script. I had a position to go to on the path beside the seawall about five miles east of Cowes. There I made myself comfortable on a park bench and watched the shore birds and the shipping. I followed what was being said on the air, coming in with my lines wherever they were marked on my script. I had no idea what it was all about and thought it was a test of communications and the reliability of our wireless sets. Later I discovered that I was part of a huge diversionary operation with thousands of wireless sets spread over the whole of southern England to make the Germans think that the invasion was being mounted and to see what their reaction would be. After the actual invasion took place a year or so later, the same plan took place to fool them into thinking that there would be a second landing on the Channel Ports. Churchill even mentioned the possibility in Parliament as part of the overall plan. It seems that both times the Germans held back vital armoured forces in reserve which eased the pressure in the first instance on the Italian front and in the second instance on the relatively weak beachhead in Normandy. They may well have changed the course of the war.

This type of operation occurred quite often when we went through a manoeuvre with absolutely no idea of the big picture. Security was drummed into us. We did not ask questions and we did not talk about what we were doing, had done or were about to do. Dieppe had at least produced this lesson. A security movie was shown to everyone. We had to sign a paper that we had seen it. The plot was based generally on the Dieppe raid and it was called Jigsaw. It showed how a small bit of information from one source when combined with another from a totally unconnected location could make up a complete picture for the enemy and how, as the picture began to come together, spies would concentrate on the one or two missing pieces of information to obtain the full and final answer. It was extremely well done and made a deep impression especially on Canadians most of whom had friends who had been killed or taken prisoner at Dieppe.

Not all our training was concentrated on the sea. We still had manoeuvres with other branches of the services. By the time we went into action we had a good idea what other units could and could not do. There was one with tanks which I remember because of the bizarre happenings in one small English village whose inhabitants probably wished they had not been on our route. The main street was extremely narrow and

twisty. The tanks took up most of the roadway and the poor infantryman had to watch his step in case he was crushed between a tank and a building. The tanks also had problems steering on the cobblestones. The results were that many a garden wall which may have stood for decades if not centuries was toppled and the lumbering vehicles left a trail of crumbled rock and brick behind them. At one of the corners there was a cemetery with the tombstones at the same level as the top of the tank's turrets. One tank slithered around the corner and took out the whole bank exposing coffins and skeletons. At another corner a tank sheered off the corner of a house leaving a gaping hole in the kitchen. The owner was less worried about the damage than what happened next. The following tank had its turret open and as it passed the tank commander reached into the kitchen and took a pound of butter off the table. The owner was extremely angry about the loss of his precious butter. The house could be repaired but butter was worth its weight in gold. I believe the Canadian government paid for all damages caused by troops from Canada but in this case money was not the answer.

Not much of our training could reproduce the effect of coming under enemy fire but someone sure tried his devilish best to come close to it. What we had to endure were live fire obstacle courses. Barbed wire was stretched out about one foot off the ground on a gentle slope fifty yards long. We had to crawl under it all the way down the slope and not get entangled. While squirming along on our stomachs with dry grass and weeds scratching our faces and dust getting into eyes and noses, live machine gun fire crackled over our heads just above the wire. At night tracer bullets were used. During daylight all we could hear was the noise of the guns firing but at night the tracers looked as though they were coming straight at us. As though this was not enough, explosives were detonated, right beside us. The last ten yards was through dense acrid smoke from cannisters set right in the wire. Even though it was hard gruelling work, we knew that unless there was an accident, no one was out to kill us. It therefore was not a real simulation of what might occur in action but it prepared us for the type of difficulties we might well experience. Of course, all of our training was designed for this purpose.

During the winter months of 1943-44 we were stationed in Christchurch, a suburb of Bournemouth. It was the last good billets we were to have before going into action, although we did not know it at the time. The men were in a large hotel. Half a block away and across the street was the very comfortable officer's quarters and mess. This was the only time we were stationed right in the centre of a town.

The men were in top spirits, fighting trim and confident. The colonel took advantage of this and instituted some ceremonies to keep us on our toes and counter the mud, grime and salt water of our exercises. As usual, we had guards posted at the main entrances but here in Christchurch the evening changing of the guard was done formally. The ceremony took about twenty minutes. The bugle band, consisting of drums on which were the colours of the Queen's Own Rifles and our

famous silver bugles, marched the new guard sharply to the main street corner just outside of the hotel where a flag pole stood and our regimental flag flew. The new guard replaced the old and then while the band played, the flag was slowly lowered. The band then moved off at a quick pace with the old guard carrying the rolled up flag. A crowd of local residents plus a good turn-out from the regiment were always present to watch the proceedings. It was well executed and quite a show.

After being in Christchurch for a few weeks, it was noticed that there were no QOR men in the streets or downtown pubs. Jock Spragge wondered what it meant and one night decided to stage a surprise roll-call fifteen minutes before Lights Out and fifteen minutes after. As expected, the hotel was empty on the first inspection except for about a dozen men out of nearly a thousand. On the second one, only two men in the whole regiment were missing and it turned out that the two were delayed returning from leave in London. No doubt the grapevine was working and the men knew that the officers would be checking them and therefore made sure they were in on time. What we discovered, however, was that each man had attached himself to some local family where he could spend a quiet evening writing letters, listening to the wireless, or just talking, or, they might go with the friends they had made to the local pub for a quiet pint. The longer we were in England the more the men settled into this kind of pattern. Home life appealed a lot more to them than local restaurants and movie houses. A strong bond was established between the QOR and the people around Christchurch and Bournemouth. When we had been in action for three or four months, a rumour started in England that the Canadians, who had experienced vicious fighting, would be sent back for a rest. The Mayor of Bournemouth wrote the colonel to invite the regiment to be the guests of the city. He reported that he had enough volunteers from the local population to house the whole regiment at no cost to the government. It was a marvellous compliment and an offer which we of course had to turn down as it was only a rumour and never came to pass.

Life in the officers' mess was fun. We had got to know each other well and as we knew we were definitely slated to go in together on D-day a camaraderie grew up amongst us which was good. We had a cook who could do wonders with the worst selection of food imaginable. It was an established rule in the QOR that the men had the first choice when drawing food rations, then the NCO's before the officers got their choice. When acting as duty officer, it was always a pleasure to eat in the men's mess. The officers' cook came from a lumber camp and one of the dishes he made palatable and featured quite often was an excellent Western omelette made from dried powdered eggs and Spam. He could also slice the worst cut of meat in such a way that you would think you were eating steak.

I played a lot of knock rummy with the paymaster, the dentist and the doctor. At a previous camp I had learned the nuances of the game the hard way, usually losing ten shillings to a pound every night. At Christchurch I came into my own and started to make up my losses. One evening the dentist knocked and I was sure he was taking a chance on his discard on a set of three queens which I had, so I split my queens and of course he was false rapped resulting in a large penalty.

He was Irish, Sutherland by name, and extremely annoyed to say the least. The next morning I had forgotten that I had an appointment with him to my two lower wisdom teeth removed. He swore he was going to take them out without giving me an anesthetic to pay me off for what I had done to him the night before. Right up to the last moment I really thought he meant it. He had a reputation for being rather rough on his patients. Luckily he relented and I had no trouble with the extractions.

As usual we had our Christmas party but I missed most of it because I went up to Andwell Mill instead. Before I left, quite a number of the Black Network were beginning to gather and amongst them was Eddie Dunlop. It was good to see him again and we all marvelled on how well he was getting along. A couple of visiting QOR took over my room so I had to clean things up and leave it ready for them. From what I heard when I got back, the party lived up to its predecessors.

One of our officers was the most caustic character I have ever come across. He never had a good word to say about anything or anybody. The rest of us put up with him and would bait him regularly. When he exploded with a great stream of vituperous comment, we would listen in wonder that one man could spew out so much bile. Our padre decided that if he would only give himself to Christ, he would be born again and become a new man. He worked very hard on the conversion and one evening while having a drink before dinner I was approached by my fellow officer who began to apologize for some normal nasty remarks he had made to me a few days before. It was so out of character that it made me very uncomfortable. I really did not know what to say. I discovered very quickly that I was not the only one being given the new sweetness and light treatment. The change was so dramatic, it was unbelievable. It was also a challenge. The mess was not going to let him get away with it. We rode him, we baited him, we harrassed him. We were unmerciful and he took it for one solid week. Then he broke. Out spilled what had been dammed up for a week, vile, vehement, foul-mouthed words tumbling over one another. The mess cheered to see him return to his normal surly self. It was a lot easier to live with than his conversion to sickening sweetness. Jack Clough was not happy to see his fall from grace.

Another officer provided us with a different kind of amusement. Our young good-looking Signals Officer had fallen in love with the wife of the wealthy owner of the local brewery. The husband did not seem to be around and Sigs took over as head of the house deciding where the children would go to school and helping the lonely women in the running of the business. We were kinder to him than our conversion type but nothing was sacred in the mess and it was wise to keep your private affairs to yourself. I have no idea what the outcome of the liaison was.

We had a constant stream of visitors. Ed Dunlop dropped in from time to time and once we were honoured by a visit from the Hon. George Drew who was running in one of the elections in Canada. He wanted the service vote and tried to curry our favour. The only thing I remember about the visit was that he was a fat sleek civilian and compared badly to the hard keen soldiers he was amongst.

I roomed with Bob Fleming who got married around this time to a charming Toronto gal. Bob was short and pleasant in a cocky sort of way and we got along very well together. Our room was in the older part of our billets with big tall windows with window seats under them. The windows always stuck and it took a good yank to open them. One night Bob had been drinking with the adjutant and they said goodnight to each other in the hallway on the ground floor. Bob made quite a noise coming into our room which woke me up just in time to see him lean over, grab the bottom of the window and suddenly disappear. The window did not happen to stick this time and when Bob yanked it up his momentum carried him forward over the window seat and he shot out of the window head first. I clambered out of bed to see how badly he was hurt. There was no sign of him and I could hear no groaning. I was getting into my trousers when he walked back in through the door as though nothing had happened. I had trouble getting him to bed so it was not until morning that we pieced together the full story. He must have made a somersault in the air and landed on the tarmac surface of the tennis court below. When we inspected the spot we found two one-inch deep indentations created by his heels and Bob stepped into these to prove they fitted his boots. Being totally relaxed he had hardly felt the jar and had not lost his balance. He then had walked through the French doors leading into the lower hall where he passed the adjutant to whom he had just said goodnight and said goodnight to him again as he proceeded up the stairs and back to our bedroom. He left behind him a completely baffled adjutant who could not make head nor tail out of the situation and swore off drink for a week.

A few blocks away from our hotel billets was a public bath. A group of us visited it regularly for a swim and a massage. Because of the war it was sadly under-staffed and the only person around beside a masseur was an elderly attendant who must have been close to eighty but who was in excellent physical shape. One day when I was giving myself a good rub-down with one of their coarse rough towels he got talking to me about a theory he had that people glowed with a colour which indicated the state of their health. I do not remember which colour meant what but he claimed I gave off an aura of brownish-purple which meant that I was not healthy. I took his diagnosis with a grain of salt as I never felt healthier in my life.

There must have been a greyhound race track nearby because Norris would head for it every opportunity possible. He studied the dogs carefully and was always mentioning how much he had won. I decided to get in on what appeared to be a good thing and began giving him a pound or two to bet on my behalf. It was very seldom that he would come back without a few extra shillings for me and once I remember he doubled my money.

Although we stayed for nearly four months in Christchurch, we were constantly out on a variety of training schemes so even though we were in the centre of a town, we kept in tip-top condition. Leaves were regular and it was easy to get to London or along the south coast. I headed up

to Andwell often. It was necessary to take the train up to Woking and then double back on the Southampton line to get to Basingstoke. From there I caught a bus which would drop me at the Red Lion. One night I got into a conversation with two nurses sitting opposite me and missed my connection at Woking. Because trains had to be completely blacked-out, each station had an announcer who told you what station you were in. In Woking, it was a female with a low sultry voice who intoned, "This is Woking. This is Woking." As we pulled out of the station, I suddenly realized that her voice had been saying these words in the background of my animated conversation with the nurses. The next stop was London. When I arrived in Waterloo, the Basingstoke train had just pulled out and the last train would not leave for another hour. I decided to phone the Sellers to warn them I would not be in until after midnight. I always have had a great deal of trouble with British pay phones and even to this day cannot operate button A and button B. Once you get the hang of it though, the British phone system is probably one of the best in the world. In this case I asked for the Andwell number and was informed that the Basingstoke exchange was difficult to reach but would I please hold on for a minute. My call was routed from London to Birmingham to Reading to Basingstoke to Andwell Mill. Judith Sellers said not to worry, she would leave the key to the front door under the mat.

I caught the 11:30 train to Basingstoke but found on my arrival at 12:30 that the last bus had gone. It would have taken me over an hour to walk so I decided to find some place to stay in the town. Everything was locked up tight. Eventually a Bobby suggested I see the USO, an American service officer who was on duty in the railway station. There was nothing he could do for me in the way of a room at that hour of night but suggested that I sleep in a compartment in a train sitting in a siding on the other side of the station. I thanked him and he warned me to make sure I was out of the train by 6:30 in the morning, otherwise I would find myself on the way to Reading. I chose a compartment and made myself as comfortable as possible using my jacket as a pillow. I hardly slept a wink. Trains shunted past my window all night long. Many of them were goods trains being made up and the cars would bump and bang and squeak and groan as they went back and forth six feet away from me. I had no trouble at all being awake and out of the train by 6:30.

These were the days when my civilian clothes and shaving equipment were stored at Andwell and so I had nothing with me except the battle dress I was in. I was a mess. My uniform unpressed and a day's growth of beard made me feel and look like a tramp. Luckily the first bus at 7:00 a.m. was nearly empty so I did not have to show myself to too many people. When I got to Andwell, the Sellers were a little taken aback at my appearance. After a shave and a shower, I told them my story over breakfast.

In March of 1944, we left Christchurch and for the next couple of months were stationed in a series of tented or old army camps located on the South Downs. Each move brought us closer and closer to Portsmouth from where we knew we would

sail as soon as Operation Overload began. The whole area around the port was filling up with invasion forces. Every little copse had a unit hidden under the trees. Trucks, tanks, artillery, scout cars, carriers, gun carriages were tucked away in any place which would accommodate them. Ammunition dumps tightly wrapped in green tarpaulins and closely guarded sprang up in the most unlikely places. Security was stringent. Wireless communications were monitored and kept to normal routine broadcasts. Travel on the roads was restricted. Local inhabitants were told to keep what they saw to themselves. None of our camps were near towns or villages so we had to find our own amusements within the confines of the regiment.

The tented camp we lived in during part of March was well organized but it was a bit uncomfortable because of the very cold weather. Many a morning we would wake up to find a thick coating of hoar frost on the canvas and guy ropes. The camp took on a fairyland appearance in the early morning sun with everything twinkling and sparkling. One particularly cold night a group of us met in the officer's mess tent and decided to try to warm ourselves up by drinking anything which might be considered to have a burning effect. We tried all sorts of concoctions from vodka to brandy and everything in between. The next morning I woke up with a stabbing pain in my chest and thought I was having a heart attack. It was a struggle to get out of bed and walk the hundred yards or so to the Medical Officer's tent. He examined me and found a $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $1\frac{1}{2}$ " indentation under my left nipple. I must have tripped over a guy line and fallen heavily on a tent peg although I had no memory of it happening. The M.O. taped me from my waist up to my armpits and told me to come back in a couple of weeks. When I did, he poked around for a while and decided I could have the tape removed. He cut it up my backbone and then said, "I am a captain and your senior officer. You have to obey my orders. Now, about turn". He had one edge of the tape in his hands and as I spun around there was a great ripping sound and a frightful burning feeling but the tape came off in one fell swoop. I swore loudly but the M.O. only laughed and asked if I would have preferred to have had it removed inch by painful inch.

Around this time we went through a practice landing on Studland Beach. It was not what we would experience on D-day but the whole exercise was close enough to the real thing to give us a feeling for what was involved. Loading into our landing craft, the run into the beach, wading ashore and then moving inland over the sand dunes towards Corfe Castle where our trucks picked us up. I was disgusted at the time to see the English beach party, whose job it would be to keep the beaches clear on D-day, making light of the exercise and boiling tea on their little Sterno fire pots in the middle of the beach. They just did not seem to be taking the manoeuvre seriously. On June 6 they did exactly the same thing but I can tell you I was very grateful to have a Limey hand me a mug of hot sweet tea while I was lying wounded under the seawall at Berniere-sur-Mer.

We knew it was just a matter of days or weeks before the invasion would at last become a reality. It was therefore not difficult to keep the men's morale up. A typical reflection

of this was the refusal of my Sergeant Harris to take an officer's training course because it would mean he would miss D-day. Keeping the men physically fit was a little more difficult. We knew there was not much more specific training we could do. We were at our peak. So we went on fast route marches, and were able to walk ten miles between breakfast and lunch with no trouble at all. We played strenuous games of football in our heavy army boots. We raced each other up sandy cliffs dragging men and equipment up by ropes. In a camp with a large tarmac parade ground my platoon was able to go through twenty consecutive parade ground manoeuvres at the sound of a single whistle without a mistake. Jack Clough, the padre, tried to think how he could help us and, being a practical individual, decided that the men should experience what it was like to be in water over their heads when wearing full equipment. For a whole day he stood in an ice-cold muddy pond while every man in the regiment waded in and swam a few strokes. A surprising number of the men could not swim but this gave them a little bit of confidence in case they had to swim ashore on their way to the beaches. Jack probably saved quite a few lives with this effort. He was literally blue in the face when he returned to the mess that night. the M.O. prescribed brandy but Jack refused as he did not drink.

In May when the moon, tides and weather were just right, we went through a complete invasion drill. It was as close a comparison as possible to the real thing. We entered what was known as the Staging Camp but which we called the Sausage Machine. It was a camp surrounded by barbed wire and it looked like a place for prisoners of war. It was run by Americans and the food was terrific. Ice cream and canned peaches stick in my memory. There was a long narrow hut which baffled us. We entered one end and walked past a mystifying series of now empty cubicles and out the other end. Here we boarded a convoy of trucks and headed for our ship. Our ship and the other passenger ships participating in the exercise then gathered off Portsmouth where we waited until nightfall. Once it was dark we were not allowed on deck and had to obtain information on what was happening from the crew. In the middle of the night the convoy headed out into the calm Channel and came to within ten miles of the French coast before heading back again. The next day we clambered aboard our landing craft named after Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and landed on a muddy strip of shore near Portsmouth. Here we waited for our trucks to pick us up and take us back to camp. I remember that while we waited I had a long talk with Sergeant Harris about sex. It was here too that we worked out our plan to advise our English friends if anything happened to anyone of us on D-day.

For a month or so we had been studying pictures and models of the actual beach where we would land. Some time before a call had gone out to English civilians asking for any pictures or postcards they might have of the coast of Europe from Holland to Spain. The response had been overwhelming and from them and aerial photographs, extremely accurate mock-ups had been made of all the beaches where the invasion was to take place. We still did not know the exact

location but reports began to come on what the sand was like, how fast kind of undertow we could expect, h the beach, what type of defences we of the Germans manning them, and if was taking place. As I mentioned to lead A Company in on the right and Company on the left. I was in B Co

wave troops and any information we instance, Eli was sure something was the pill-boxes in his sector. The from week to week so he asked for he received a set of 3 x 10 glossy enlargements of the whole of our beach taken from about an altitude of one hundred feet and a few hundred feet off-shore. It seems a low-flying Mosquitoe aircraft was sent to take these specific pictures just for Eli. And it was just as well. It was obvious that a lot of work was in progress with the Germans strengthening their defences and placing more obstacles along the beach. We adjusted our plans accordingly.

And so, as May of 1944 came to a close, we were as ready as we ever could be to tackle the invasion of Europe. From now on it would depend upon luck and how each one of us stood up under enemy fire.

At the beginning of June we were told that our objective was Berniere-sur-Mer in Normandy. The Canadians would go in with the English on their left and the Americans on their right. The date had been set. Only the weather could hold us back--and it nearly did.

We got a variety of send-offs. First we were inspected by King George VI. He appeared to be a shy man but the troops took to him naturally especially as his speech to us afterwards was a simple thank-you for what we were doing. Next came General Ike Eisenhower, supreme commander, with his beautiful red-headed driver who sat in a large black convertible Cadillac a few hundred feet away, waiting for him. Ike was casual and asked where our guns were. It shook us a bit that he did not know our organization well enough to realize that we had separate artillery support. The main drift of his speech was that there would be no German Air Force to worry about. We were not overly impressed. The final member of the high command to inspect us was General Montgomery. He had us break ranks while he wandered through followed by his aides and our senior officers. He was shorter than I had expected him to be. As he walked amongst the troops he would lock eyes with someone and stare him down with his piercing blue eyes. When he reached my platoon he happened to choose one of my toughest and most unmanageable little soldiers. I have forgotten his name but he was about the same height as Monty and had jet black eyes. I will never forget that staring match. I knew my guy would give in to no one, be he general or God and I could see his back stiffen as their eyes bore into one another. I do not know how long it lasted. It felt like an hour but was probably only a few minutes. The competition was long enough to make the situation awkward with aides and senior officers shuffling their feet. Eventually Montgomery had to give up and move on. In his speech, Monty made the

in Normandy
de Berniere-sur-Mer

mistake of trying to tell us how good we were. As he said it, I could see a number of the men squirming where they sat. We knew we were good and did not need a Limey general to tell us.

A day or two later we once again entered the Sausage Machine, only this time it was different. This being the real thing, a certain tenseness developed which the men covered up with corny jokes and loud nervous laughter. Occasionally I would be talking to someone and after a minute or so realize that he was not listening. His thoughts were his own and far away. Bob Hope was there and did a stand-up comic routine from the back of a Jeep. It helped to relieve the tension. Of course, he was and is a past-master at picking up the names of a few of the well-known characters in his audience, and he did it with the QOR, weaving them into his jokes. He made us forget that the next day quite a few of us might be killed or wounded.

Again we marched through the long building which had us all guessing the time before. It had been turned into what looked like a street fair. At each booth we picked up one more item for the invasion. We were issued live ammunition, French francs and maps. There were tins of emergency rations, chocolate bars and cigarettes. The last item was a Mae West. It was a rubber tube of a life preserver which we had to wear from then until we were ashore in Normandy. It only took a few puffs of air to inflate and if you could not puff, it would probably be too late anyway.

It might be interesting to list what I carried. Of course, I wore my steel helmet covered with a sort of fish net into which I could tuck leaves and branches if I wanted to camouflage myself. Under the netting was a first-aid bandage. Most of us had crew-cuts. If you had long hair it could get awfully hot and uncomfortable when you wore a steel helmet for very long. Like everyone else, I wore the standard webbing consisting of belt, braces and ammunition pouches. The pouches held clips of ammunition for my Sten gun, a rather silly, inaccurate little automatic weapon which looked as though it had been made from left-over water pipes with a butt of tubular metal. Also in the pouches we squeezed extra chocolate bars. On my back was my haversack containing my mess tin, cutlery, tin mug, shaving equipment, spare socks and handkerchiefs, extra cigarettes, the tin of emergency rations and my camouflage cape. It required careful packing. In my large trouser pocket on my left thigh were all my maps. In my regular trouser pockets I carried normal things like handkerchiefs, francs, cigarettes, lighter, pen-knife, etc. In my inside jacket pocket were my identification papers, wallet and pen and pencil. In my left breast jacket pocket was the zipped up pocket edition of the New Testament which Baba had given me a year or two earlier and which I still have. On my right hip was Percy's .45 revolver in its holster with a few spare rounds of ammunition. On my other hip was my commando dagger.

It was a slightly awkward load made worse by the addition of the Mae West. We were accustomed to being burdened down with all sorts of extraneous gear. Many of the men, however, carried more, such as grenades tucked into their belts, a Bren gun, a bangalore torpedo, wire cutters or some other important

piece of equipment like the two-inch mortar, mortar bombs, wireless set, or whatever was their particular responsibility. Some of them looked as though they could hardly move but it was surprising how well they could get around. After all, we had had a lot of practice.

In my Bible was the list of all the men in my platoon, including me, with the names and addresses of the people in England to whom I was to write if one of us was killed. There were three copies, one with Sgt. Harris, one with one of the corporals and one with me. We knew that the adjutant would write the official letter to the next of kin but no one would normally be in touch with our English friends. During the exercises in May the platoon had agreed on who would carry the lists, on the basis that at least one of the three should get through alive. As it happened I was the one. The other two were killed. Of course, each person hoped his letter would never have to be written.

At the other end of the Sausage Machine we boarded the trucks which were all lined up waiting for us. A marshalling officer fed us into a huge stream of vehicles three deep all heading for the docks. I sat in the cab with the driver and had a good view of what was taking place. Just in front of me was one of Benny Dunkleman's three-inch mortar carriers. His batman, who was a full-blooded Huron Indian, sat cross-legged on top of the cases of mortar bombs. His head was shaved except for a scalp lock running from his forehead to the nape of his neck. He was going into battle the way his forefathers had for generations before him.

The streets were crowded with people cheering us on our way. How security was maintained, I cannot imagine. The people of Portsmouth knew that this was the long-awaited invasion of Europe and a spy in their midst could have caused havoc the next day. I have heard that there were no German spies in England which is hard to believe, but it must have been true, at least in the town of Portsmouth.

We left the trucks near the docks, formed up by platoons and marched to our ship which was waiting alongside for a change. Usually we had to go out by tender. We seemed to load very quickly for by the time I had made sure my platoon was in its right quarters, found my own cabin, got rid of my excess equipment and got out on deck, the ship was moving out to anchor about half way between Portsmouth and Cowes. Most of the men were on deck too and a mighty cheer went up when we spotted Churchill in his peaked sailor's cap smoking his inevitable cigar and waving his V for Victory sign from a launch which was taking him in and out amongst the gathering convoy. Rumour had it that the Chiefs of Staff had had a devil of a time persuading him that he should not set foot on France on D-day.

We knew most of the crew from our May manoeuvre and they made us as comfortable as possible. After an excellent dinner, Charlie Dalton sat in the salon quietly reading a book while his three platoon officers, Bill Herbert, Hank Elliott and myself played Hearts at a card table nearby. Hank won all of our French francs which proved to be an omen. He was the only one of the four of us to get over the wall in one piece the

following day. We finished up the evening with a great argument on the merits of giving up smoking which was rather stupid when each one of us at that point were in greater need of the solace of nicotine than at most times. It was light-hearted banter which was a good cover-up for our true feelings.

Before going to bed, I checked how the men were doing. They were very quiet and most of them handed me letters to be censored and mailed God knows when. There was very little to say except good night and good luck. I returned to my cabin to read the letters. One of them was very disturbing. It was a last epistle and the chap who was writing to his mother took it for granted that he was going to be killed the next day. It poured out his apologies for any wrong doing he was responsible for in the past and his thanks to her for bringing him up so well. I went down to his bunk and tried to cheer him up but he had a premonition and would not take the letter back or change what he had written. I told him that if the letter was sent and he survived the day, it would be an unnecessary hardship on his mother. At last he agreed that if he lived I was to give it back to him and if he died I would make sure it was posted. So it went into my Bible along with the list. He was killed while still in the water and I posted the letter adding one of my own when I got back to hospital in England.

On D-day, June 6, 1944, I was wakened by the cabin steward at 5 a.m. It was chilly and the ship was moving fast without any roll or pitch. I got dressed quickly having slept soundly, drank the cup of tea the steward had brought and stepped out on deck. Everything was a spooky pre-dawn green colour under heavy grey-green clouds. A corvette was racing past us only a few yards away. I paused for a moment to take in the scene. In front of us were long lines of red and green lights from the buoys laid out by mine sweepers which I could see in the distance. We were one of the lead ships but spread out beside and behind us and going full steam down their own marked-out channels were other ships of all shapes and sizes. On the horizon to the stern I could make out the dim shapes of huge battleships. The moment I took to glance around will stand etched in my memory forever.

I went down to wake the men. Some of them obviously had not slept too well and I could not blame them. Breakfast was at 6 a.m. It was fried eggs and bacon, something we had not seen for years. As I watched the men being served their deluxe food someone made the remark about condemned men and their final meal. It went over like a lead ballon. After seeing that the men were O.K. and making sure that Harris would have them on deck fully equipped by 7 a.m., I had my own excellent breakfast served to me by white-coated waiters in the wardroom.

Little did I know that while I slept my brother Bill had flown in parachuters and gliders to secure our left flank. He had quite an experience when the sergeant who was the thirteenth man to jump got stuck in the doorway of the Dakota. Bill finished the run in with six or seven men still in his plane. The sergeant pleaded with him to make another run, a manoeuvre which was against orders and very dangerous. At

first Bill refused but gave in at last and guided his plane as well as he could over the same ground he had already covered. By this time the sky was exploding with anti-aircraft fire. He dropped the remainder of his men without incident and then had to scoot out of the area flying very low in order to get back to the sea safely.

At 7 a.m. we began loading into the Seven Dwarfs. I have forgotten which one of the dwarfs I was in. B Company filled five landing craft. My platoon was split between the second and third boat. Six were in the second one and thirty in the third. We had done this drill so often there was no hitch and we were lowered away into a very choppy sea. It was cold and wet although not raining and it was not long before some of the men were seasick. Those of us who could stood up to watch the run-in. I could see the distant shoreline of Berniere-sur-Mer just like the models and pictures we had been studying for the last few months. As I watched, a flight of Spitfires flew along the shore nearly at ground level strafing the positions we would have to take. One of them was hit and made a graceful fiery arc as it plunged to earth. A black mushroom cloud arose from the spot where it hit the ground. It was like watching a wide-screen colour movie. We were not yet directly involved.

About half way between the mother ship and the beach, our landing craft reduced speed and we wallowed in the waves. I checked with the Marine who was operating it to find that H-hour had been postponed half an hour. I could see all the other craft had stopped also and like us were bobbing up and down like corks. Two things resulted from the delay. A lot of men became really seasick and we drifted off course which meant we would land fifty to one hundred yards off target.

After one of the longest half hours I have ever experienced, the motors revved up again. We lined up with the other craft and headed for the beach at full speed. Luckily, the railway station on the edge of the seawall at Berniere-sur-Mer was a perfect landmark and we knew exactly where to go in relation to it. We had not gone very far before we came under rifle and machine gun fire. Immediately everyone ducked down below the rail and all thoughts of seasickness disappeared. Over our heads we could hear the whistling of shells being fired from our support vessels behind us and every now and then an "express train" shell would go over as a large calibre shot came hurtling in from one of the battleships. We could not see what progress we were making.

Suddenly the ramp went down and the men jumped into water up to their armpits. I was the seventh man out. Bullets whizzed around us and smacked into the boat and into the men. Being the centre craft we were in the zone of concentrated cross-fire. Men were being hit and disappearing under water. The rather short chap in front of me was carrying the six-foot long bangalore torpedo. When he jumped he went under at once. Not knowing whether he had lost his footing or had been hit, as soon as I was in the water I leaned over to haul him to the surface. At that moment I felt as though someone had struck me with all their power with a baseball bat and I was knocked flat into the water. My left arm would not work.

I started swimming for the beach. I had dropped my sten gun so my hands were free. The main thought in my mind was to save my life. I remembered advice Jack Wreyford had given me, "Don't try to be a hero. Duck when the going gets tough and you may come back in one piece". Before being hit I had shouted to the men to return the fire from the shore. It was a normal reaction to strike back. Now, as the adrenalin pumped into my system, time seemed to slow down drastically and I became much more perceptive of everything going on around me. Returning fire under such conditions was like spitting in the ocean. I called to the men to stop firing and head for the protection of the wall as fast as possible.

It was a slow swim. The under tow was quite strong and I dug my toes into the sand to keep me from washing back out to sea. I was in no hurry as I knew I would need all my strength to make the dash across the open beach where little spurts of sand showed enemy bullets hitting. The platoon got ahead of me, at least those who had not been killed or wounded in the water. I could see splashes of bullets coming across the water and from time to time I submerged in order to swim under what looked like fixed lines of fire. As I got closer to the beach I saw one of my men by the name of Westaway, or Westerly or something like that sitting propped up against one of the big obstacles of railway tracks made into a tripod with a mine sitting on the top. I yelled at him to get to the wall but he only smiled sweetly and said that he had had it. I yelled again that it was an order, get moving. He replied, "You go on, sir, and good luck to you". At that moment another burst of machine gun bullets pumped into him. He gave a great convulsive movement and his head flopped over to one side.

Just before I gathered my strength to run for the wall, I saw Norris lying on the open beach. He looked in bad condition and I thought he was dead. Months later I met him again much to my surprise. He had been patched up and although still limping, he was doing full batman duties at corps or army headquarters. I have never seen him since.

It surprises me to this day just how many I saw being hit as they crawled out of the water. There were gruesome sights which even now I do not wish to record. At the time, they were just part of the action. When I thought of it afterwards, they became for me first-hand examples that war is hell and totally unnecessary. We still settle our arguments with clubs. I wonder when we will ever learn.

I ran at a low crouch as fast as I could across the beach, possibly twenty yards, and collapsed face down against the foot of the sloping seawall. All sorts of things were going on around me but at that point I was exhausted and not interested. I heard someone say that Charlie Dalton had been hit. Later Charlie told me he thought I was dying. Then one of the men came up to me and asked if I could get the pin out of his grenade. It is interesting that even though I was obviously wounded and out of action, the men still expected me to solve their problems. My left arm was nearly useless but I was able to extract the pin with my teeth. I then persuaded him to let me throw it over the wall from where I thought rifle fire was

coming. I could see he had his doubts. It showed in his eyes but he let me do it anyway. It was the only action of anger I took in the whole war. Then the man took another grenade from his belt, pulled the pin himself and went off to join the fighting.

A short time after this, a stretcher bearer came up, cut off my webbing and eased off my jacket and shirt to expose the large hole in my shoulder. He worked quickly and gently liberally covering the wound with sulfa powder and then using the bandage from my steel helmet to bind it up. As he did so, he turned me over and propped me against the sloping wall from where I had a ringside seat to watch what was going on along the beach.

On the rising tide, hundreds of ships and landing craft made the approach, discharged their cargoes of men or machines, backed off, turned around and headed back to England. The firing along the beach had stopped so disembarkation was orderly but hectic. The beach had to be kept clear and the all-powerful beach commander, a tough bearded navy type carrying a shillelegh, cursed, shouted, shoved and kept the traffic moving. The engineers had successfully blown a gap in the wall and one of the bulldozers we had put on an early-arriving landing craft back at Castle Toward, had made a roadway off the beach through the gap and on to the esplanade. Through this narrow passage streamed infantry, carriers, tanks, trucks and ambulances. The vehicles were dumped off in water anywhere from four to eight feet deep. For years they had worked at perfecting their waterproofing and it now stood in good stead. As the huge tanks rumbled past me only six or seven feet away, there would be a muffled report and strips of waterproofing compound all over the tank would be blown off by the exploding wires imbedded in the plastic waterproof material. Even though there was a breeze, the stench of cordite was overpowering.

The tide was rising rapidly and all walking wounded were told to get off the beach. We gathered in an out-of-the-way place to one side of the gap. There is a small memorial there now indicating that this was The Street of the Queen's Own Rifles and the Chaudieres. I doubt if very many sun bathers at Bernier-sur-Mer notice it today and, if they do, they probably do not realize that through this "street" the complete advance force of one of the few parts of the huge invasion army to reach its objective poured for over twenty-four hours.

The beach party was brewing tea and having not eaten since 7 a.m., I welcomed a mug. I still had my haversack and I spread the contents out in the sun to dry. Cigarettes were my main concern and once dried out they did not taste too bad even though they were a little salty. I was also able salvage a couple of chocolate bars which were edible.

German prisoners were being rounded up. It annoyed me to see them being loaded on the returning landing craft before the wounded. As someone explained, though, it was important to have them out of the way and also good to get them back to England fast for propaganda purposes.

During the long afternoon with the fighting going farther and farther inland, a medical officer came by and checked each one of us. He had set up an emergency medical centre in one of the empty pillboxes and those who were

stretcher cases were taken over there immediately. My wound was not considered serious so I was one of the last to be given attention. He redressed it and put my arm in a sling. My shoulder ached badly but I was still mobile. I lay in the sun getting used to the buzzing flies around the dried blood on me and others, the smell of the dead and of cordite, and listened to the sounds of battle in the distance which I could hear at times over the constant roar of vehicles in low gear as they came off the beach and headed inland.

In the late afternoon, I was told to report to a stranded landing ship on the beach where I would spend the night. As I climbed aboard the captain met me and took me to his cubby-hole of a wardroom. There to my surprise sat Bill Herbert who also had been wounded but not seriously. The captain was from Vancouver and told us how he had drifted on to one of the tripods which stove in the ship's bottom because of the rapidly receding tide. He produced a bottle of navy rum and poured slugs of a good four ounces each for Bill and me and insisted we drink it straight. The effect was immediate on our empty stomachs. All I wanted to do was go to sleep. He took me below decks, helped me into a bunk and threw a couple of blankets over me. As he left he mentioned that my companion in another bunk was a German officer but that he was out like a light and not to worry. I do not know where Bill slept.

Next morning I was ravenously hungry and feeling much better although my shoulder ached and was very stiff. I had slept like a baby only waking once when I heard bullets striking the metal deck just a couple feet over my head. A single low-flying German aircraft was strafing the beach. The captain gave me a bowl of hot water and I had a good shave and wash. Then he served up one of the best breakfasts I have ever had. It started with porridge covered with canned milk and brown sugar, followed by eggs and bacon and gorgeous white bread and pure butter. We finished up with excellent coffee.

Bill and I then went ashore. The dead were piled up off the beach with a guard over them. It was sickening work but I decided to identify as many as I could. To my horror, out of the thirty-six in my platoon, I found eighteen dead. Fifty percent had been wiped out. I noted their names on my list because both Sergeant Harris and the corporal carrying the other lists were among the dead. Later I heard that twelve more of my platoon had been wounded. Only six out of thirty-six had got over the wall to continue fighting and all six had been in the other boat; everyone in my craft had either been killed or wounded. It was a sobering morning. I could not really appreciate the bright sunny day. The sea sparkled beyond the frightful debris. Smashed landing craft, discarded weapons and lonely steel helmets stretched out along the beach as far as I could see. All was quiet except for the sound of the waves and the buzzing of the flies. I presume some other beach was being used to send in the build-up troops and support units because Gold Beach looked as though it had become a back-water of the invasion.

Later that morning of D + 1 a burial party arrived. I was able to talk to the officer in charge to make sure the

Star of David was put over Sergeant Harris' grave. He had decided to wear dog tags showing Church of England affiliation in case he was captured by the Germans. He had left a request with the padre, the adjutant and myself to change the marker on his grave in case he was killed. I was glad to be able to take care of his request.

Around noon trucks arrived along with ambulances to move us down the beach to Courselles, I believe. A temporary harbour had already been established there and a number of Liberty ships rode at anchor just off shore along with protecting corvettes and destroyers. The action of landing vehicles and troops had been switched to this location and the place was busy. Infection must have been setting into my wound because I was feverish and dizzy and definitely not interested in food, not that there was very much food around. The walking wounded were ferried out to one of the LST's (Landing Ship Tanks) and as soon as I got there I found my way to the officers' small wardroom. I made myself as comfortable as possible in an over-stuffed chair and fell asleep. Sleep has always been my answer to sickness.

It was beginning to get dark when I woke up. I felt groggy and uncomfortably hot. There is no deck on these kinds of ships so I went looking for a galley and eventually found someone to give me a cup of tea. In my wanderings I came out on a catwalk twenty or thirty feet above the floor of the ship where its load would normally be piled or its vehicles parked. One end had been turned into an operating room. There under harsh blue-white lights like arc lamps, a doctor and a couple of orderlies were working feverishly trying to take care of the emergency cases. I have never seen so much blood in my life. It was running almost continuously down a drain a few feet away from the operating table. The brilliant scarlet colour of red blood, the dark green gowns of the group around the patient, and the brilliant white light in which they worked, is a scene indelibly stamped in my memory. I could not watch for very long and decided to go down to the deck level to see if I could find anyone I knew amongst the rows of stretchers which were suspended like shelving three deep along the sides of the ship.

As I walked along in the gloom, I found that most of the men were in restless feverish sleep and it was hard to see if there was anyone I knew. All of them had a couple of day's growth of beard on their faces and many were covered in blood and dirt. I suddenly heard my name called and found Charlie Dalton lying on the second tier about half-way down the side of the ship. Like the others, he had what looked like an ordinary shipping tag attached to his battle-dress which described his wound and classified its importance for attention. A bullet had creased his helmet and turned the metal downward so that a gouge had been taken out of his scalp. Scalp wounds bleed like blazes and although someone must have washed his face, his uniform was dark brown from encrusted blood. I asked him if I could do anything for him and the only thing he wanted was to urinate. I hunted around and not far away came across a milk bottle of all things. Charlie used it with great relief. I then helped him get his cigarettes and

left him as others began to ask to use the milk bottle or have me light a cigarette for them. I used up all my supply of smokes and went hunting for more. The same crew-man who got me my tea came up with a package of Wild Woodbines and this kept me in business for a while.

I do not know how long I spent acting like a Red Cross gal, but it must have been a couple of hours. My legs began to feel like rubber and I knew I had to go and lie down before I collapsed. I remember hauling myself up the steep metal steps to the catwalk using my one good arm and dizzily finding the wardroom and my chair. Here I slept fitfully for the night and have an idea that I may have been slightly delirious. I recall hearing a tremendous explosion at some point but I was in no condition to find out what it was. The next morning I looked out and there was a nearby corvette broken in two with its bow and stern pointing up in the air at a sharp angle. It seems that one lone German plane had swooped in and dropped a bomb right down the smoke stack. If the pilot had chosen our ship instead, I shuddered to think of the frightful mess it would have caused with a couple of hundred stretcher cases on board.

Some time that morning we raised anchor and sailed for England. I found a small triangle of deck space just big enough to hold one person and it was good to feel the stiff channel breeze on my face, watch the sparkling waves and see England appear on the horizon. My fever seemed to have left me but I felt awful.

We landed in Portsmouth but in an unfamiliar part of the port. Trains with huge red crosses on them were waiting for us as were all sorts of reporters with movie cameras. It took quite a while to load the train and while we waited Red Cross girls moved from compartment to compartment handing out tea and biscuits and cigarettes. At last the high-pitched whistle blew, the carriage doors were slammed shut, and we moved off at a very slow pace through the lovely green English countryside.

Our destination was Basingstoke, so near and yet so far from my friends the Sellers at Andwell Mill. We were met at the station by a long line of khaki coloured ambulances. I was so tired and feeling so groggy that the long wait to board one of them did not bother me. But all was efficiency at the huge hospital. Nurses bustled about taking care of each one of us as though we were the only patient being checked in rather than one of hundreds arriving all at once. One of them took my good arm and walked me down a long corridor to a bright sunny ward. Without any to-do she undressed me completely putting most of my clothes in a laundry bag but throwing out my shirt and underwear. She then dressed me in a hospital gown with a great gap down the back and proceeded to give me a hot sponge bath from head to foot. Moments later a doctor was taking my name, regiment and history. Another one followed him, looked at my chart where the ink must have still been wet, and removed the bandage from my shoulder. He gently cleaned the wound and put on a new dressing. A minute or two later a hot meal arrived, the first since my breakfast the day before with Bill Herbert. I had no sooner finished

it when a short chubby red-headed freckle-faced nurse appeared, ordered me to turn over and gave me a couple of needles in my rear end. We were then told to go to sleep! Throughout it all I got the impression that I was the only one being taken care of. The ward must have held twenty men and the hospital hundreds if not thousands but I felt as though I was the most important patient there. Such efficiency certainly helped my confidence and my morale.

The next day I had x-rays and more consultations with doctors. The wound was clean, infection had disappeared and the x-rays showed that the bullet which had entered the back of my shoulder and come out near the top of it, had left a small V-shaped indentation in my collar bone. During the day we kept getting needles so often that it became a joke. Every time our plump little red-head appeared in the ward everyone who could would turn over on their stomachs, kick down the covers and show our bare backsides to her. The first time we did it, she laughed, but about the third time she did not think it was so funny. None of us in the ward were in too bad condition and a lot of banter took place. We complained about the meals but it was really just for something to do. They were plain meals but good and no one left anything on his plate. Actually, the couple of days I spent in Basingstoke were as pleasant as hospital life could be.

After more than thirty years, those four days of my life can be recalled almost on a minute-to-minute basis, and if not with absolute accuracy for some of the minutes are blurred, at least on an hour-by-hour sequence. I presume that others who have gone through similar experiences can do the same but I have come across those who have deliberately blotted out such memories from their minds. Personally, I do not think this is a good thing. They will always try to surface and gain recognition. The result can be an inner struggle which can be upsetting and even warping for the personality. Therefore, the old war stories which can be so boring to the young or to those who have not gone through similar nightmares should be tolerated. They are psychological safety valves to keep old soldiers sane. Some of the memories are so horrible that if we do not tell the stories of the exciting times, the ugly ones will fester and make bitter old men of us.

On the third day after being admitted to Basingstoke, I was told that I was to be transferred to a hospital in Maidenhead. This meant nothing to me but some other officers going with me were very pleased as it was on Lady Astor's estate and supposed to be one of the better hospitals in England. I must have been issued a new battle-dress but do not remember who sewed on my pips and Canada and other badges. Also somewhere along the line my trunk and bedroll must have caught up with me because I wore my dress uniform quite often at Maidenhead. How they connected up with me, I do not know, but looking back I must admire the army's records because I do not recall any case where there was trouble matching the correct baggage with the proper person.

As I checked out of Basingstoke, I was handed a large brown envelope containing my papers and x-rays; each one of us carried one with him. An ambulance picked us up at the

front entrance and we drove to Maidenhead which was located on the Thames north of London. Here in a group of low-lying gray buildings we were checked in and allocated beds. There was no one I knew in my ward but Charlie and Eli Dalton had beds side by side in another wing nearby. Eli had a leg full of shrapnel and Charlie's head was covered with bandages. At Basingstoke the doctors had taped a figure eight bandage under my armpits, over my shoulders and across my back in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. It was designed so that my bad shoulder was immobilized. As soon as I was in my bed, a doctor removed it, examined and cleaned away some chips of bone which had worked their way to the surface. He seemed satisfied with the progress I was making and put the figure eight on again, only this time it was tighter. It was not too uncomfortable except one night when it kept me awake causing a painful burning sensation under my left armpit. I persuaded the night nurse to cut a slit in it which she was loathe to do without permission from the doctor. The slit relieved the pressure and I was able to sleep.

Very soon after I arrived some gal was interviewing me about my experiences on the beaches. I was in good form and teased her considerably especially in relation to the strawberry teas which I heard Lady Astor served regularly up at her mansion. My inane remarks got into the Toronto Star and I was a little embarrassed how they were reported when I saw the clipping which Uz sent a few weeks later. However, it assured my family and friends back home that I was not in too bad condition.

Lady Astor came barging in shortly after we got there. She considered the hospital her own private preserve and made noisy conversation and gave orders to everyone. She was a small intense woman with bright blue eyes and was a dynamo of energy. A number of us were invited up to the main house for tea and sure enough she served strawberry shortcake but without whipped cream which even she could not obtain because of rationing. The house was a huge place designed in Italian Renaissance style and obviously perfect for entertaining. Lord Astor was there and was much quieter than his rambunctious wife. He gave us a tour of the ground floor which was like going through a combination of an art gallery, museum and the foyer of the Empress Hotel in Victoria! I was fascinated with the magnificent portrait of Lady Astor painted by Sargeant. It was full length and about eight feet high showing her in her glowing young womanhood years in a diaphanous white full-length dress. She seemed to like it but I had an idea she was sorry to recognize that she was losing the beauty the painting depicted. I was not the most perceptive person at the age of 23 but I registered a wistful sound of sadness in her voice.

She loved Canadians mainly because we would talk back at her and argue if necessary. We had tea with her at other times and of course she was constantly in and out of the wards. Quite often we were able to talk politics which was of course her only real interest and she would make disparaging remarks about various members of parliament including "Winnie". She was a lot of fun and sure livened the place up whenever she was around.

A cute red-headed Red Cross gal delivered books to the ward one day and I asked her to get me a pile of stationery. I had to get started on my list. It was not that I did not want to write the letters, but I knew it would take time and up until then time had not been available. For hours I sat at a table in the lounge writing each of the eighteen letters carefully trying to be as honest as possible. If I had seen someone killed, I said so. If I had not seen it actually happen, I assured his friends in England that most of the men who were killed had not suffered. In the few cases where I knew the man had been badly mauled by machine gun fire, I did not go into details. Because I had commanded the complete platoon for nearly a year and knew each man well, I was able to give an honest appraisal of his good qualities and the pleasure it had been to be associated with him.

I am glad I had to write the letters. It was a real purging. Without them I may have bottled up a lot of unpleasant memories. It seems they were appreciated. I received replies not only from those in England but also from parents in Canada to whom many of the people I was writing had forwarded them. I also received visits from three of the men's girl friends. One was a stunning brunette and a warrant officer in the CWACS. She propositioned me right there on the spot. Maybe I was a fool not to accept her offer but I was taken aback and did not especially want a gal on the rebound. I turned her down in my confusion as gently as I could.

Another visitor was my brother Bill who suddenly appeared along with his co-pilot. He had been working behind the scenes to get the full story on what had happened to me and forwarded a full report to Uz. I often wonder if I would have done the same thing if something had happened to him. He found me horsing around with my red-headed Red Cross gal and seemed to be surprised and relieved that I was in such good spirits. What he did not know was that I had just finished writing the last of my letters and I felt as though a great black cloud had been lifted from my shoulders.

The red-head and I had a lot of fun together. For instance, quite often we would borrow bicycles and pedal down to a charming pub situated beside one of the locks on the Thames. I still had my arm in a sling and steering the bike down the steep twisting road to the river was a little hazardous. July was a lovely month and we would drink beer in a shaded garden watching the punts on the river. We also spent lazy afternoons together lying out in the sun in a secluded spot where there was a magnificent view of the Thames valley. We also formed parties with other nurses and officers and had lunch or supper at an excellent little restaurant in the town of Maidenhead. I remember one superb meal of cold lobster and Sauterne wine which cost a small fortune but was worth every penny. I enjoyed her company but I have an idea she was getting serious about me and I may have escaped just in time when I was discharged from hospital.

Once when we were seeing "Gone With The Wind" at a local movie house, a notice was flashed on the screen that a V1 Buzz Bomb was approaching and those who wished to could go to

the air-raid shelters. Some left but we stayed, heard the putt-putt of the VI go overhead which indicated we were safe. A few minutes later the sound stopped and we heard the distant crump as it hit. These nuisance bombs were the size and shape of a torpedo and had a motor mounted on brackets on top. They were being launched by the Germans from the Channel Ports and directed indiscriminately towards London. However, they were not too reliable. They could be blown off course by the wind or the motor could conk out early and they would come down anywhere. When the motor stopped the bomb would arc towards the earth and explode on contact.

We had been in hospital for only a few days when we were visited by Queen Elizabeth. She made the rounds of all the wards, shook hands with each one of us and gave us her warm and friendly smile. In our ward, those who could stand did so beside their beds and she had a pleasant word to say to each one of us. Then she was introduced to the nurses. One of them, with the unlikely name of Sister Golightly who came from Edmonton, had been practicing her curtsy for hours with many a ribald comment from members of the ward. When she was presented she made her deep curtsy but she happened to be standing directly in front of one of those deep sinks used for washing out mops. As she dipped low she sat on the edge of the sink, lost her balance and fell in backwards with her legs sticking straight up in front of her towards the Queen. The ward burst into a roar of laughter but the Queen only smiled, reached forward with both hands and hauled the poor girl out. She was blushing beet red. After the Queen left we gave Golightly a rough time and teased her unmercifully. However, being a cheerful soul, she took it well. She was always very nice to each one of us and really did not deserve the treatment we gave her. Because of her sunny personality the ward was a happy one even though some of the guys had a bad time with various operations.

Lady Astor was a teetotaler so in typical British fashion someone built a large pub right out in front of the huge main gates of her estate. We, the walking wounded, would often head up the hill after supper for a few pints together. We pushed along a number of patients confined to wheel chairs. Feeling merry on the way home, the guys in the wheelchairs would race each other down the long gentle slope leading back to our quarters. Considerable speed could be attained but steering was difficult. Many would land up in the ditch or against the stone wall surrounding the estate. One chap with both legs in casts lost control one evening and smashed into the wall. He wrecked the wheelchair completely (they were made of wood) and shattered his casts. He had to have his broken legs reset and the casts replaced that night. He had had enough to drink that he did not care. A few days later a strongly worded directive came around to all wards that no wheelchair was to be removed from hospital premises.

I think I was at Maidenhead for around five weeks and as far as I am concerned it was a holiday. My wound was healing nicely, I was gaining strength in my left arm, and the brace on my shoulders became just another thing to be lived with. Towards the end of my stay I spent a weekend at Andwell Mill

and was able to fill the Sellers in with details of the landing. Mr. Sellers, who had been inclined to treat me as a rather raw Colonial, changed his attitude considerably and seemed to think I was some kind of hero.

About the middle of July my bandage was removed for the last time and the wound was given a few days under a heat lamp to harden up. I was then transferred to a special officer's convalescent hospital called Garnon's. After an all-day train trip across the middle of England, I was picked up by a station wagon at the station in the town of Hereford. We drove north into gentle hilly country to a beautiful more-or-less modern castle set in the Wye River valley overlooking the inky blue-black hills of Wales. Garnon's had been rented by Vincent Massey, then High Commissioner to England, who donated its use to the Canadian Army. As a matter of fact, now I come to think of it, it looked very much like Hart House.

I had a small comfortable room looking out over the valley towards Wales. Many a time I watched mist, rain and storms come over the distant hills and across the low country in front of me to hit my windows and blot out the scene. Wales looked like wild country and some day I would like to explore and paint there.

We were a select group of a dozen or so. I was one of the more junior officers and how I won Garnon's, I do not know. I cannot remember whether Charlie Dalton took the train trip with me or whether he followed me there later but his company was always welcomed and enjoyable. We were the only QOR officers present. I now had to go through a lengthy period of physio-therapy, mostly on a rowing machine, under the tutelage of a delightful Toronto girl, Liz Walker. She made sure I exercised regularly and little by little I began to regain strength in my left arm although it was a good year before I could exert enough pressure to brush my boots properly. I remember when Liz tried to get me to play badminton with my left hand. I am very much a right-handed person and normally would be at a major disadvantage if I tried to use my left hand in any game but add to this the considerable muscle deterioration caused by my wound and my game of badminton was a fiasco. To me it was totally frustrating. To the spectators it was hilarious.

Years later I was in the gallery of the Arts & Letters Club in Toronto operating the slide projectors for one of their Spring Revues. Wentworth Walker was taking care of the follow spot. At intermission he asked me if I knew a Liz Walker and after a moment's hesitation the memory of Garnon's came flooding back to me. He said, "Well, she's my sister and she's here tonight. She would like to see you." I went down to the Hall and we had a great five-minute reunion. She was still good looking even though her hair had turned grey. In the few minutes we had together, she introduced me to her husband who was with some U.S. firm and with whom she had been in Europe for most of the time since the war. They had no children and were in Toronto for a short visit.

One day Bill appeared on the scene. How he kept up with my whereabouts always surprised me. I never knew where he was or what he was doing and did little to find out. He

suggested we take a trip over to the beach-head. I was game and got permission to take off for the day. Bill flew me in a little Anson over to his base near Reading and there we boarded a Dakota being made ready for the short hop. He had to do some explaining to get me past an inspector, "Oh, he's a Canadian Army liaison officer" or something like that, while I waited in the plane and kept my mouth shut. I sat up in the co-pilot's seat and admired the confident way he handled the flying. The beach-head was still small. Caen had not been cracked yet. We landed on temporarily expanded-metal runways laid out on the sand dunes not far from the sea and within sound of the guns. As I was not supposed to be there, I stayed close to the plane while it was loaded with stretcher cases. I think we had taken over supplies, but I am not sure. On the way back, we flew low over the sparkling Channel. It seems there was still the occasional German fighter plane loose in the sky and Bill took as few chances as possible. He mentioned that he thought there were some QOR types on board and I went back to find out. There were a number of them who had been shot up in the dirty fighting around Caen and the Carpiquet airport. Some were in no condition to talk and all I could say was that they were on their way to Blighty and from my experience the care they would receive in the next hour or so would be good. From those who were not too badly wounded, I got news about the regiment and how B Company was faring as we shared a cigarette. I also heard about the counter-attack which the German tanks had launched shortly after D-day in which George Bean and his sergeant had done such excellent work. They both received medals later. I also heard that Bob Fleming had been killed.

After we had landed and the wounded transferred to ambulances, Bill flew me back to Hereford in a small light plane. For some reason he had to keep at tree-top level which meant we bounced all over the place. I was deathly ill. When he got me back to the very small landing strip near Garnon's which may have only been a farmer's field, I was never so glad to put my feet back down on firm ground. Before I left for the short walk up the hill to the castle, I apologized for the mess I had made of his plane. The trip was strictly against all procedures so I could not talk about it, but I had the impression quite a few people knew where I had been.

Once or twice or maybe more often, we were visited by Vincent Massey and his wife. Dinner with them was formal and afterwards we would sit around the table with port and cigars discussing Canada. One of Massey's pet projects was the opening of Ontario House in London. I remember a long argument on the subject with Charlie Dalton ridiculing the idea on the basis that before long there would be nine "houses" representing each province and the importance of the Canadian presence would be thoroughly diluted. Vincent did not like having someone criticize something he had set his heart on and the discussion became quite heated in a gentlemanly sort of way. Other subjects were also covered and opinions expressed. Having been away from Canada for three and four years gave us all a different perspective. We were much less provincial and parochial in our thinking and proud to be known as Canadians. Being called

British subjects was fine if your family roots were in the British Isles but many of us felt that it was about time people born in Canada should be known by the rest of the world as Canadians. This led to all sorts of tangents or other threads interwoven into the problem. What would be the position of the Royal Family? Did we have a flag or didn't we? What about the national anthem? Were not all these just symbols which made us look, feel and act like a colony? Above all, what about the French question? I do not think Massey liked what he heard but it made excellent conversation material and I know I enjoyed those evenings.

Slowly the strength in my left arm began to return and there came the day in August when I had to report to a staging camp for further orders. I was sorry to leave Garnon's. It had been a marvellous place for recuperation and of course I was sorry to have to say goodbye to Liz Walker.

The train took me back to some place north of London where my case was thoroughly reviewed by a panel of doctors.. I was called in by one of them whose first question was to ask if I were a Roman Catholic. I replied no and asked why he asked. He said, "Well, if you were you would go out and burn plenty of candles". Again I asked why, at which point he wanted to know if I had seen my x-rays. I told him I had but only knew that a bullet had nicked my collar bone. The doctor then carefully explained that the bullet had gone through my left scapula and in order to get through at that particular point had had to press aside the main nerve and the main artery running down the left side of my body. If it had been a sixteenth of an inch higher, he went on to explain in very careful measured terms, I would have been unconscious in eight seconds and bled to death in fifteen. If it had been the same distance lower, I would have been permanently paralyzed down my left side. I had no idea I had come so close to death or disability. My knees gave out on me and I had to sit down while the doctor offered me a cigarette. His next remark was, "You have done your share and I have a good case to recommend you for an easier job. Would you like to be sent back to Canada? or would you like a cushy job here in England?"

Again I was somewhat taken aback. My reply was that I had done nothing, just got myself creamed before I could do any fighting at all and could I be sent back to the regiment? His reply was, "Sure, if you're sure that's what you want". I said, "Send me back".

This was one of those rare occasions in my life when I actually made the decision which would affect my future. It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened to me if I had opted to be sent back to Canada or if I had taken a soft job in London. However, the dye was cast and such speculation is fruitless. Actually, if I had not gone back to the regiment I may have always felt that I was shirking my duty. Anyway, except for some weakness in my left arm, I felt fine and there was no reason in my mind why I should not return to the fighting in France.

The other question which kept niggling me in the back of my mind was, "Why was I spared? Did it mean that my time had not come yet because there was some purpose I had to

accomplish first"? I still do not know the answer.

Once the decision was made, the wheels began to turn. I spent the night at the staging camp and next day took a train to London and another one to Portsmouth. Here I immediately boarded a passenger boat for the Channel crossing. I carried papers and passes which made the trip easy and quick. By the middle of the afternoon we landed at the fascinating temporary harbour which had been constructed with floating blocks of cement right off the edge of the beaches. I did not have much time to examine it in detail but it probably won the war for us. The Germans were positive that we could not supply an army without capturing a major port. We decided to show how wrong they were. From what I heard, Churchill was the person behind the whole scheme taking a personal interest in the construction. Huge hollow blocks of cement had been fabricated in England and then towed across the Channel by tugs on D+I. At their destination they were placed on steel posts which had been driven with perfect accuracy into the ocean floor. The posts fitted into sleeves in the cement and were thoroughly greased. The blocks rose and fell with the tides and it would have taken a major storm to have broken them loose.

When I got there, enough wharfing had been built to handle about ten good-sized freighters at one time. Control was everything. Large tankers and Liberty ships stood off-shore until they were called in. As soon as they tied up, a swarm of men began off-loading their cargoes on to trucks which were able to drive out on the cement blocks over metal strip roads. As soon as a truck was loaded, it moved off and another one took its place. Many ships disembarked trucks which contained a full load designated for a particular unit. A steady stream of loaded trucks along with tanks, guns and carriers moved inland. A huge compound of trucks waiting to be loaded could be seen parked about fifty yards from the shore.

Our little passenger boat snuck in easily between some bigger ships and we walked along the roadway to the sandy shore dodging vehicles. I was directed towards a truck which was going to the regiment and climbed into the cab with the driver. Throughout all of this I had to carry my bedroll and haversack which I found very tiring as I could only use my right arm. In my various sojourns in hospitals and staging camps I had been fully re-equipped. I had refused the issue Sten gun.

The regiment, or what was left of it, was at rest in tents near Falaise. The dusty trip in the truck took me along the coast road and every now and then I caught a glimpse of a beach still covered with the debris of abandoned equipment, everything from landing craft with their sides stove in to ammunition boxes, steel helmets and rifles. We went through Caen where the only thing left standing in the middle of the town was a pillar with an angel on top of it and a few shattered walls. Later I did a painting from memory of the angel high above the frightful desolation of the wrecked town.

I reported to the adjutant and was sent back to B

Company. Here I found Hank Elliott sitting cross-legged in a tent idly whittling on a stick. He had aged ten years. He was gaunt and hollow-eyed and must have lost twenty pounds. He was as nervous as a kitten and obviously was near the breaking point. I was shocked. Hank had gone through hell and looked it. He had had to command a decimated company in the wicked fighting from the beaches to Carpiquet to the Falaise Gap. It was amazing that he survived. I felt scared to see what war could do to a young healthy blonde giant of a man.

There was no tent for me or the other reinforcement officers who were dribbling back at the same time so we bunked down in a large marquee which was empty except for a few crates of supplies at one end. The next day was my twenty-fourth birthday and I remember it mainly because we received an issue of warm beer. It should have called for a party but no officer's mess had been set up so four of us sat on our bedrolls and drank our beer and wished ourselves twenty-four more years of living knowing that we would be happy to get safely through the next twenty-four months.

After nearly three months of continuous fighting with very few rest periods, all the regiment wanted to do was sleep. There was a deathly hush over the whole camp and wherever you walked the sound of snoring came from the tents. At meal-times the food-line was small and hardly anyone could be seen in the camp for the first day of the rest period. A tremendous toll had been taken on the spirit and physical condition of the men and sleep was the best antidote. But after the first day, inspection parades were called and we began the chore of re-equipping the men and taking care of those that were sick. Thank God we were young. It was amazing to watch how resilient the troops were. After a bath, new uniforms and some good meals, they were ready to check out their equipment, welcome newcomers to their ranks and face the enemy again. After five days of rest we were prepared for whatever came next. It was during this time that the false rumour spread that we would take our rest in England.

The German front had crumbled and we now took up the chase. The Canadian Army was given the job of clearing the Channel Ports on the left flank. We went through Rouen the first day. I was on a stretcher on top of an ambulance jeep typical of a situation where every man in the regiment grabbed whatever space was available on whatever QOR vehicle they could find. From my vantage point I had a good view of the cathedral in Rouen and the magnificent French countryside as we raced along through the full green of summer. The weather was perfect, thank goodness, otherwise the mad dash for the Channel would have been miserable. We ate off the land. The cook truck was somewhere in the huge convoy, all going in one direction but I never saw it. When passing through one small village we were greeted with flag-waving convent children and a bevy of nuns. They threw tomatoes and biscuits to us. Many of the tomatoes splashed on the sides of our vehicles but we caught enough to enjoy some. The biscuits were hard-tack and full of maggots. I just tapped them on the side of the jeep and was glad to get something into my empty stomach. Others were more squeamish and threw them away. In another

village the jeep in front of me ran through a flock of chickens and I admired how one of the soldiers was able to grab one of them and wring its neck all in the one motion of throwing it into the back of the jeep. By the time we got to the same spot the chickens had dispersed so we missed the chance for a chicken dinner. There was no question of pausing, we were moving too fast. Sometimes the vehicles occupied the full width of the road as we raced along side by side. If anyone wanted to go in the other direction, he could not have done it. The one thing we really missed was our rum issue. Our company had added a good-sized keg of Calvados to our cook truck supplies. The rum was issued first thing in the morning whenever possible and the Calvados, the last thing at night. The best meal I had during that mad dash was a mess of scrambled eggs and SPAM when we paused once for a mid-day meal and were able to get some eggs.

I do not remember stopping until we reached the outskirts of Boulogne but we must have spent at least one night out in the open. Somewhere along the route our new division commander watched us go by. In his eyes it must have looked like organized confusion. And yet control was maintained as divisions and brigades began to peel off and bottle up each one of the Channel Ports. The 1st and 2nd Divisions had rejoined the Canadian Army and were given the pleasure of taking Dieppe. The 3rd Division had Calais and Boulogne to contend with. Someone from the QOR was involved with the liberation of Calais. We heard the story at first hand about the farmer who welcomed the Canadians by informing them that the day the Germans took over he had buried a bottle of champagne in his orchard promising himself that when the Allies returned he would dig it up for a celebration. This he proceeded to do and when he had ceremoniously toasted the officers present, it was discovered that the champagne had turned to vinegar. However, everyone drank in response to the toast as though nothing was wrong.

We paused to study the layout of Boulogne and prepare our plan of attack. Steve Lett was now our commanding officer and he reshuffled his officers. I became a captain and my company commander was Tony Cottrell. I believe our company was D but I am not absolutely sure. As captain I was second in command of the company and in charge of the A Echelon vehicles which included the cook and ammunition trucks and the ambulance jeep. In an attack we stayed behind to follow up later with a meal and supplies. At this point, however, we were all together and moved up to a school on a height of land to the east of Boulogne. Between us and the main town was a wide low valley of the outskirt buildings interlaced with German defences and open plots of ground. On the other side of the valley and the high ground of the main town were the chalk cliffs overlooking the Channel from where on a clear day you could see the white line of the cliffs of Dover. This was to be the cockpit for our next action and Tony spent most of his time at briefing sessions as the battle plan was refined.

A steady stream of civilian refugees were being allowed to leave Boulogne and as they passed our position we checked anything which looked suspicious. One man who spoke good English asked if he could go back to his house for his bicycle

now that he saw he could get through with it without too much trouble. The guard called me to get my permission and after I had heard the story which sounded reasonable, I allowed him to do so. As he moved back down the hill, he glanced over his shoulder and gave us a long hard look. I suddenly had misgivings and called the sergeant-major, Bill Ives, to warn the men that we might be attacked or shelled because I now thought the man was a spy. Sure enough about an hour later three rounds of 88 fire crashed into our position. I was reading on a bed and Ives was on another one opposite me. It was my first experience of 88's which was a deadly weapon and used with great accuracy and skill by the Germans. By the time the third round exploded near us, and they came almost simultaneously, I was on the floor between the beds and Ives was on top of me. When it seemed that no more shells would be fired, we got up and I found that my glasses had snapped in two across the nose bridge. Later I taped them together and wore them like that until I was able to replace the frames. The CSM and I went outside immediately to inspect the damage. One shell had ripped off a corner of the roof of the building where we had been and the others had hit the road directly in front of the gates where the guard had been standing. The guard was not hit but his rifle had been knocked out of his hand and the butt had a large wicked-looking piece of shrapnel buried in it. I was very wary of civilians from then on.

In the middle of the valley as part of the German defence system was a tall cement tower. From time to time a gun would slowly rise out of its top like a cobra out of an Indian basket. We would watch it with fascination. It fired either at planes flying overhead or slowly lower its muzzle towards us and send a huge shell in our direction. It never did hit us but must have come very close to the roof tops of the school. The second or third day, it appeared as usual and as the Germans seemed to fire it at certain specific times, we were gathered around to watch it go through its usual ponderous manoeuvres. When it was about three quarters of the way up, it suddenly tried to go down again. A moment later a Typhoon fighter plane shot out of the low cloud cover and a stream of rockets hit the gun. A cheer went up from those watching as the large barrel bent in the middle and the whole gun slowly sagged over the edge of the tower.

At last we received our orders for the attack. We were to go in immediately after bombers laid what was known as a Tedder's Carpet across the valley. The name came from Air Marshall Tedder and The Carpet was one thousand pounds of bombs for every square yard of ground. We watched in silence and in horror as wave after wave of bombers flew in low and dropped their loads. Huge columns of smoke and dust rose out of the valley penetrated by red flashes where the bombs exploded. We could not hear a sound. It was an eerie effect but the lay of the land must have bounced the sound over us. We stood transfixed staring at the silent and systematic havoc. All civilians were supposed to be out of the area. The Allies had warned them and it was the reason for the stream of refugees which had filed past us for the last few days.

Shortly after the bombing ended and with the stench of

cordite and dust in my nostrils. I watched the company move off and wished them luck. The fighting turned out to be vicious. The Germans were well-trained Marines and they had their backs to the sea. That night I got word to bring forward the food-truck and we picked our way over the churned up ground to a house where Cottrell had set up his headquarters. When I got there and we began handing out the food, I was sickened by the sight of so many dead and dying men. The company had been caught in an ambush and had to fight its way out. I immediately sent back for the ambulance jeep and the stretcher bearers. Tony was in a bad way, not wounded, but his nerves were nearly shot. He tried to hold an Orders Group but each time a shell passed over our heads, he would stop talking and grip the arms of the chair he was sitting in until his knuckles turned white. I had never before watched a man literally fight for control of himself over something impossible to control. War is hell. The O Group ended nearly before it started as the colonel called an Orders Group of his own and Tony left with his runner. Half an hour later the runner returned bearing compliments of the colonel and would I please take over the company. Tony was being sent to the rear for a rest.

I got a fast report on our situation from the officers and NCO's in charge of platoons and found out we had lost about twenty men killed and about a dozen wounded. I then replaced Tony at the colonel's O Group. The fighting had stopped but an occasional shell swished over our heads. The house where we spent the night became a medical centre as stretcher bearers did what they could for the wounded. No prisoners had been taken. The Germans had fought to the death.

In the dark, the enemy abandoned the city and withdrew to a huge bunker on the edge of the cliffs which had outposts located here and there around it. We were ordered to move to a huge brick barracks which backed into the hill holding the bunker. It was large enough to house the whole regiment and my company was in the part nearest to and overlooking the docks and small harbour. The boys raided the supply room and came up with waxed cardboard containers (new to us) of petite pois and apple sauce. They had also heard that a huge sow was roaming the streets not far away. One of them went down and shot the animal and then had the devil of a time getting it back to where we had established our cook-house. When a jeep tried to drag the huge carcass, the rear end was torn out of the vehicle. A Bren gun carrier could not budge it and in the end we had to call a tow truck from the LAD, Light Aid Detachment, which was capable of lifting a tank. For a portion of the sow the LAD driver delivered it to our door. The cooks immediately started to prepare a feast of pork, peas, potatoes and apple sauce.

While this was going on, and because I had no second in command, I had to go out with the jeep and pick up the dead. The bodies had stiffened into grotesque shapes and the stretcher bearers and myself had difficulty placing them on the vehicle. On the way back with my gruesome load I passed Steve Lett and he ordered me to at least cover them with

blankets. It took quite a while to find blankets but we covered the bodies up on each succeeding trip. This was the kind of job I disliked intensely but in battle you develop a hard veneer quickly or else you go nuts even more quickly. Of course, Boulogne was my first experience with actual battle conditions. Others seemed to be able to treat it like a game. They planned their moves, made contact, roughed the enemy up and depending upon the outcome of the play, advanced or retreated and moved into the next plan. I never was able to do this. First of all my concern was oriented towards the individual man and not the overall problem in which the man was only a pawn. Secondly, I could never get into the spirit of the game. Coming into active action after a stint in hospital gave me a different perspective of war. I saw it as suffering, with men being mutilated for a cause which was not that clearly defined. I had difficulty giving orders knowing I was sending men to be killed. Sometimes I think that my mind was not as sharp as it should have been to play the dirty game but this may have been a reaction of self-preservation and an attempt to keep myself sane. It also may be rationalization.

While we were eating our excellent pork dinner, Ben Dunkleman who never touched pork was firing his three-inch mortars towards the bunker and a large ammunition storage building located on the hill behind us. As usual he finished off his shoot with a phosphorus bomb which the regiment knew was his signal that it was the end of his mortar barrage. This final bomb happened to go right down the ventilation pipe on top of the ammunition store room. The whole regiment turned out to watch the massive cement block house rock from side to side on its base as the ammunition exploded inside. From that time on, Dunkleman was known as Stove-Pipe Benny.

The same day I was given the job of clearing out a pocket of Germans which was holed up in a tower at the end of a long narrow wharf at the entrance to the harbour. I gave the job to Norm Manchester, one of my platoon commanders. While planning how we would go about it, we came under a heavy barrage of artillery fire from inland where our own troops were supposed to be. We found out later that the Chaudiere's were mounting an attack against the very barracks we were in not realizing that we had captured them a good twelve hours earlier. Steve Lett had some nasty words to say to the colonel of the Chaudiere's who was all Gallie apologies. It was the first time I had come under a heavy artillery barrage and it is ironic that it should have been our own guns. No one was hurt but everyone was angry.

Once we got this straightened away we went on with our little action. From a vantage point part way up the cliffs I took a position with some Bren gunners who would try to give covering fire, and we watched the platoon as they tried to put in the attack. The men did not have a chance as they had to run about fifty yards along the wharf in the open with no cover from the withering German fire. Norm was wounded and the men withdrew. The sergeant who took over got hold of a Bren gun carrier equipped with a flame thrower.

It rumbled out on to the wharf with the platoon following under its cover. Half-way out, it stopped and belched a wicked sheet of flame towards the enemy. Then it moved closer for another go. At that moment a white flag appeared and the Germans came out with their hands over their heads. This cleared the way for us to move up to the higher ground closer to the bunker which we could now see as a hump on the edge of the cliff.

Before attacking the bunker we had to study the ground and I heard two stories later from the reconnaissance parties which I should record. One was that there was a cul-de-sac with the buildings forming a U, the open end of which pointed towards the sea and the German positions, our reconnaissance group were in the street studying the bunker through binoculars. Suddenly a hard-nosed anti-tank shell was fired at them. It hit the side of the buildings above their heads, caromed off them, hit the buildings at the end of the street where once again it bounced off, hit another house and headed back towards the Germans with a high-pitched whine. By the time the group had taken cover it had made the complete round and was heading out to sea again.

The other story was about one of the QOR officers who decided he could see better if he got up on the roof of one of the buildings overlooking the bunker. As he stepped out of a dormer window, A German sniper hiding behind a chimney not more than thirty feet away took a shot at him. Our man was carrying a loaded Very pistol and thinking quickly fired a phosphorescent signal cartridge directly at the sniper. To his surprise he hit the German who lost his balance and fell to the street below.

A hundred little actions and experiences like these take place in every battle. No one knows about everything and if each man wrote his own story, it would be different. Often when we relaxed after a fight we would trot out a yarn. Some of them became embellished with the telling but usually they were quite accurate. If a man had no story to tell, we worried about him. His silence could only mean trouble and that he was bottling up his feelings inside him.

We moved up gingerly towards the bunker. The ground around it was riddled with cement trenches connecting store-rooms and pillboxes. Someone found a bottle of banana liqueur and offered me a drink. I took a couple of swigs but it tasted like nail polish and made me very sleepy. It was getting towards evening and we watched a flight of Mitchell bombers break in at zero altitude and pound the living daylights out of the bunker. I set up headquarters in one of the store-rooms and fell sound asleep. It was not the thing to do. I should have reported my position to battalion headquarters, set a guard and made sure everything was ship-shape. I suppose I thought this was normal routine and would be done automatically without me being personally involved. However, I was wrong. Steve Lett had expected me to report in but I was dead on my feet and was only interested in sleep. In the middle of the night we were rudely awakened when an officer from the company next to us along with a couple of his men burst into our store-room with guns at the ready

thinking it was full of sleeping Germans. Luckily no one fired a shot before we recognized each other. The story was told afterwards with delight and derision which did not add to my reputation as a company commander.

The next morning I was called to the wireless set while eating my breakfast and was told in no uncertain terms by Steve Lett what he thought of me. Of course, everyone who had sets could hear me getting a tongue lashing. Steve finished up by ordering me to attack the bunker at once and without knowing the over-all battalion plan, which was my fault, I held a hasty Orders Group and had my only remaining officer, who I believe was Georgie Bean, lead his men up the road towards the bunker with the rest of the company in position to give him covering fire if he needed it. Dunkleman was laying down a barrage of mortar-fire and we also turned a couple of Light Anti-Aircraft guns which we had captured on to the hump of land which the bombers had hardly dented the night before. With this minimal assistance, Georgie started walking up the road with his men trailing behind him. I watched with a sinking feeling in my stomach and waited for the German reaction. I thought the enemy would fight to the finish and it could be a dirty struggle with them so well entrenched behind solid walls of cement.

Georgie got closer and closer to the main mound of the bunker and still no one had fired at him. Dunkleman stopped his barrage but the LAA's kept up sporadic bursts. Suddenly like a huge garden spouting instant flowers hundreds of white flags went up as though on a given signal. For one moment we were stunned and then I moved forward quickly knowing that I would be followed by nearly the whole regiment. As usual, the Germans were organized. They had thrown all their weapons into the sea the night before. In an orderly manner, hundreds, if not thousands, of all ranks poured out of the ground and marched towards us, most of them with their hands up. A party of three German generals approached me looking for the most senior officer present to officially make the surrender. Out of respect for their rank, I saluted them, although I must admit it was not as smart a salute as I would have given my own generals. They returned the courtesy with the Nazi salute and a "Heil Hitler". It set my teeth on edge. The only question one of them asked me was why had we bombed them the night before when they intended to surrender. I thought this was a rather stupid question and luckily I did not have time to say so as Steve Lett appeared on the scene and I turned them over to him. I then put my mind to the job of keeping my men under control as the long line of prisoners began walking to the rear.

In the middle of all the confusion, one of my men came running up to me in a very excited state of mind. It was fair game to remove watches from prisoners but nothing else. I had an excellent Rolex and so was not interested but some of the men were helping themselves. The man who was so excited said, "Look sir. Look at this", and showed me the watch he had picked up. On the back was an inscription commemorating his own brother's eighteenth birthday and a message from his parents. The brother had been taken prisoner at

Dieppe two years before. He could not get over the coincidence and showed the watch to everyone around him. When I thought of the chances for this to happen I agreed it was one in a million.

Once the Germans had cleared the area, we inspected the bunker. I have no idea where the prisoners went or how they were handled and guarded. The bunker was a mess and stank of the sweet cigarettes the Germans smoked. From the look of things, it must have been extremely crowded in these underground quarters. How they had enough air to breathe, I do not know. Perhaps that is why they surrendered so quickly and easily. I came across a magnificent set of doctor's equipment made of excellent German steel. I had the signals man call the M.C. who came forward to collect them. He was delighted to get his hands on such a good set of knives, scalpels, probes and other beautifully crafted tools. There was nothing which interested me and after an hour or so we called off the men and had lunch.

There was one more pocket of resistance along the Channel to be cleaned up. It was a huge gun at Cap Gris Nez which could and did fire regularly at the town of Dover about twenty miles away. The regiment proceeded in this direction on foot. Colonel Lett had gone on in advance and set up battalion headquarters in an empty block-house in the sand-dunes beside the road leading up to the gun emplacement. From here he called his company commanders to come in for an O Group. I was in a jeep and with my driver left the company and headed for the map coordinate which had been given.

The road went through low sandy scrub land and eventually made a turn towards the high ground on which the gun was mounted. I had seen no signs of other vehicles or any QOR identification sign and I had an uneasy feeling that I had gone too far. Even in a foreign country and using its maps for the first time, my map reading instinct was still with me. The road led straight as an arrow to the gun and I decided to stop and check my bearings. The Germans must have spotted me and considered one lonely jeep worth their attention. The monster of a gun slowly swung around and pointed its huge muzzle directly at us. We had not come to a complete stop yet and I told the driver to pull over. We jumped into a slit trench which happened to have been dug into the sand next to the road at that particular spot. Very often these abandoned German trenches were mined but we were not going to take the time to check this one out. A moment later there was a loud explosion and when we looked up we saw the smoke billowing from a gun barrel on the road a few yards ahead of the jeep. The driver and I figured that we would have been at that exact spot had we continued on our way. We turned the jeep around promptly making sure we did not leave the road because of possible mines and scuttled back the way we had come. At the corner, a QOR man appeared and showed us where to park the jeep. There were a number of vehicles behind the block-house on the blind side from the gun and I found the colonel and the other officers inside.

This little episode reminded me of the nightmare dreams I used to have in Scarborough when I was five years old.

The colours and circumstances were different but the feeling was the same. The road leading up to Cap Gris Nez could have been the terrifying road I remember.

As we started to plan how we might attack the gun, two orders were received by wireless from the brigadier. One was that the job would not be given to the QOR and the other was that we were to head towards Belgium as fast as possible. We found the regiment on the road not far away and diverted it into a field. Here we brought up all our trucks and other vehicles and packed the men on to them. It did not take long to get on the road again and we raced for the Leopold Canal.

Late that afternoon we drove fast through the lowlands of northern France. By nightfall we were inside the Belgium border. I have forgotten what kind of billets we had but it seems that one of the largest crap games ever was taking place among the men and they played all night. One of the sergeant-majors cleaned up and as the next day was his wife's birthday, he decided to cable flowers to her. What he forgot was the difference in value between French and Belgium francs. It seems that the next day a florist truck drove up to their small bungalow in Toronto and unloaded a full truck-load of flowers for her. As she gasped in surprise and pleasure, the driver told her that he would be back in an hour or so with the second truck-load. The poor wife had to redirect him to her neighbours, the church and the local hospital to spread the overflow. The story was written up later in the regimental paper, called The Big Two, and the whole regiment had a hearty laugh.

The next day we travelled through that part of the country over which most of our fathers' had fought in World War I. It was green and peaceful, but as we passed near Vimy and Ypres, I had an eerie feeling. This was where my father had been gassed. The trees were only twenty-six years old. In another generation the scars of our war would also mean very little to the land. It was hard to understand the purpose of the whole thing.

That night I was told by Steve Lett that I would be commanding officer at a brigade weapon training school in Boulogne. Our problem was that we kept running out of corporals. A corporal usually led the advance. If he did not know what to do and stopped, the whole army stopped behind him. In preparation for the fighting we knew was coming on top of the dykes of Holland where such a situation would prove even worse, the brigadier decided to run a training course which I seem to remember lasted two or three weeks. I suppose I was chosen to head it up because of my training and experience on the same thing in England.

The next day I turned the company back to Tony Cottrell who had just rejoined us and with a truck-load of men for training and some others for office and kitchen duties, I headed back to Boulogne leading the way in my jeep with my batman as driver. The school was located in Admiral Raedar's headquarters which was a huge undamaged chateau just outside of the town. It was three storeys, built of stone and had all sorts of out-buildings around it. I met the sergeant-major instructor who was obviously extremely competent and knew what he was doing. He wanted to run the whole show

so I let him do so. He had a complete training programme ready and prepared, a group of sergeant instructors, a staff for administration and general operation, and about sixty trainees. He had surveyed the area and knew exactly where he would carry out the training. It became apparent very quickly that I was only a figure-head and he would prefer if I remained so and not interfere with what he was doing. It sounded like the postal course in Southampton. I told him to tell me what he wanted me to do and when, and from then on we got along famously. I was to make the opening day remarks from notes he gave me, sign necessary requisitions, make sure the meals were satisfactory, inspect the trainees from time to time and take disciplinary action if necessary.

My sergeant-major was such an eager beaver that with little to do I was able to accomplish a lot of reading. I had the best room in the castle, huge and empty with only my bedroll in it along with two old leather easy chairs in front of a cavernous fireplace and a small table against one wall. My batman was able to provide a good supply of wood for the fireplace and also happened to come across an ample quantity of excellent cognac. In the evening the sergeant-major would report in after dinner which I often had in my room alone and present me with papers to be signed. He would also give me a run-down on the day's progress and what would be done the next day. After these formalities were out of the way, I would invite him to join me for a glass of cognac and we would sit in front of a roaring fire and talk. I looked forward to these informal chats, as otherwise I found the job rather lonely. The only other duty I had to perform was to take the Protestant church service while the Roman Catholics marched off to a local church. I kept the service short and simple.

News filtered back on what was going on at the front. The regiment was having a rough time crossing the Leopold Canal and Tony Cottrell was out of action. The next news I heard was that the QCR had entered Holland and were fighting in the Polder country. All the roads were on top of the extensive dyke system. There was no cover except for the occasional stunted willow tree or small farmhouse. The banks of the dykes were mined and the low-lying land between the dykes was both flooded and mined. It looked like another dirty one.

At the end of the course I headed for Holland. Once again we drove through the peaceful land of our fathers' battlefields. I was within a mile or two of where the QCR was located when I came across a cluster of vehicles held up by a row of willow trees which the Germans had chipped down to make a very effective roadblock. Our new brigadier was examining the mess with about twenty of his headquarters with him. He was impatient to get going for we knew that it would be only a matter of time before the Germans would start shelling us and there was no cover nearby. Luckily someone had an ax and we began lopping off the branches to make a corduroy road over the soggy flooded ground beside the trees. We encountered no mines as we negotiated our Canadian-style road-way but we held our breathe as the first

vehicle drove slowly over the branches. The rest of us followed and even though the by-pass became very mushy, we were able to proceed. While there, I discovered that the whole area had been deliberately flooded with sea-water by the Germans as they retreated.

Also while working on the trees, we paused to watch a lone Dutch farmboy riding a large white dray horse cross the horizon which in that country is the top of the next dyke. The sight caught our attention because the rider was the only moving object in the vast empty landscape and because the land is so flat he stood out like the steeple of a church. It was a beautiful day with a pale blue sky and powder puff clouds. The white horse and his blonde rider stood out against the blue background and were reflected in the mirror of the still floodwaters. They seemed completely unconcerned about the war going on around them and we thought that if it were one of us we would make an excellent target for an enemy sniper.

I found the regiment in the small village of Oosterbeek. The houses of the village had been built along either side of a dyke about two hundred yards long. A single storey faced the roadway but the back of the houses were three floors high. At both ends of the village the dyke, and the road on top of it, split into a Y. The one at the north end contained a cemetery.

The regiment was decimated. Besides suffering the normal attrition of dead and wounded, sickness was rampant. Nearly everyone had a form of 'flu with high temperatures and diarrhea. It was caused by the constant wetness and lack of food. The food truck, or any other trucks for that matter, could not get anywhere near Oosterbeek without being shelled off the top of the dykes. I brought my jeep up by travelling at night. Hot food could not be delivered so the regiment had been living on rum and cigarettes plus the occasional meal of biscuits and hardtack which were carried up at night. On this kind of diet and under wet dirty conditions it was not surprising to find half the remainder of the regiment down with sickness.

When I reported in full of piss and vinegar, I was told to remain in battalion headquarters and act as adjutant, duty officer and signals officer. If necessary I was to command the regiment if no one else was around. And so began four or five days when I got hardly any food and very very little sleep. I was also uncomfortable because the dampness was playing hobgoblin with my left shoulder.

We held the buildings in the village but the Germans were in the cemetery from where they could fire right down the roadway. My first night was hectic because I found out that German patrols would move down the back of the houses, enter the basements and catch our men unawares in the upper rooms. Without enough men to post guards all over the place, we worked out a system of consolidating the sick at the bottom end of the village and protecting them with a full complement of guards. The middle of the village became our base out of which we operated and the top end near the cemetery was handled by outposts and patrols.

The first day was more or less quiet. We did launch

an attack on the cemetery and were able to drive out the Germans. However, we did not have enough men or fire power to hold on to it the following night. On the second night, I was called out because of a rumpus going on at the bottom end of the village. Normally, I had to stay in headquarters near the wireless set and try to run things from there. Ben Dunkleman and his Huron Indian batman were having their own personal battle and when I got there they were circling each other with commando daggers drawn. What worried me was that they were completely silent and meant business. The other thing was, they were in full view of the enemy from the other end of the street and why they had not received a hail of bullets before I got there, I do not know. I tried to reason with them but was told in no uncertain terms to fuck off. There was no way I was going to tackle them personally so I warned them that I was going back for a section of men and if they were still there by the time I got back, I was putting both of them under arrest. I collected my men and headed back keeping in the shadow of the houses. There was a full moon ducking in and out of clouds and I had no intention of making myself a target for the Germans. We arrived just in time to find the two of them shaking hands and drunkenly stumbling back to their quarters with their arms around each other.

Next day three Churchill tanks joined us. Who ordered them for our support, I cannot remember. I think Steve Lett was still in command from his bed and I only followed his orders. As the monsters rumbled into the village the Germans fired at them with light guns. One shell missed the tank it was aimed at and exploded in the window of a shop just beyond it. A whole shower of fountain pens was strewn all over the road. The tank stopped and in the middle of the firing out clambered the crew to scoop up the pens. It happened so fast that a minute later when some of our guys tried to collect some (we called it "liberating",) there was hardly a pen left. The tanks then proceeded up the street and over-ran the cemetery. It was a good place to park and for the first time in days we had a peaceful night.

The tanks were part of the Buffs. We were affiliated with them and got along famously together. It was not long before various pieces of our men's clothing were laid out on top of the engines to dry and some partying began. A side-light of interest was that the Buffs always had a kettle wired on to the engines and whenever they were running the heat would boil water for a cup of tea. I have often followed a tank in a convoy or into action and been amused to see the steam rising from the spout of the crew's kettle.

Plans were made at once to take out a pill-box around a corner near the cemetery and to proceed from there to a large farm from where the Germans were firing. Steve was still giving his orders from his bed and I had a constant group of runners going back and forth from the sick bay to the headquarters. The fourth day from the time I had rejoined the regiment we moved forward with our tank support. A Churchill tank known as a Flail led the way. It had a contraption mounted in front of it which spun around like a water-wheel and flailed the ground ahead of it with heavy iron chains. This detonated

any mines lying on the road and even set those off which were buried. Our men followed along behind. The flail was hit on one of its treads and threw a track. It stopped and came under intense machine-gun fire. A number of our men were caught in the open and wounded.

We had a very gentle short little Italian stretcher bearer with us. He ran forward and was able to drag one of the more badly wounded men back behind the tank but in so doing he himself was hit. Ignoring his wounds he went out again under the continuous heavy fire and rescued another man. Back in headquarters I received the full story. His company commander and I wrote him up immediately for a Military Medal.

The second tank was a flame-thrower. It squeezed by the first one and slowly rumbled towards the pill box. The Germans had a French .75 mm gun which they fired at point blank range. The hard-nosed anti-tank shell entered the front of the Churchill between the driver and co-driver, continued on between the legs of the commander standing in the turret and sliced through the rest of the tank between the two banks of engines without causing any damage except to produce a nice neat hole from one end to the other. At this point it belched forth its sheet of flame and enveloped the pill-box in fire. Maybe a couple of Germans survived but that was all. Most of the enemy troops we were up against were young Hitler Youth and SS. They were fanatics and willing to die for the Fuehrer rather than surrender. They were also fighting a vicious rear-guard action allowing the bulk of their comrades to escape into northern Holland and back to Germany. We had to fight them on their own terms.

Once the pill-box was out of the way, we turned to the right and approached the large barn where we were sure many Germans were hiding. It was to be a two-pronged attack with the tanks and a supporting company coming down the dyke and another company in position on the edge of the dyke directly opposite the farm. To get there one of the company commanders, I believe it was Dick Medland, had to lead his men through the heavily mined low-lying ground between Oosterbeck and the farm. Each man following him made sure he put his foot in the exact footprint made by Medland. The whole company covered the one hundred yards or more without anyone being blown up. Because they were in the low ground and the Germans did not expect anyone to be foolish enough to try to cross a heavily mined area, they did not come under fire. When they reached the dyke, the men set up their nine Bren guns with plenty of ammunition behind each one. When everything was ready, Medland fired his Verrey pistol into the sky and the tanks started their attack.

From Oosterbeck I had a good view. The Flail had been fixed and moved in first. It was interesting to watch it setting off mines but never stopping in its lumbering approach to the farm. The first building was a huge wooden barn surrounded by large hay stacks. The flame-thrower moved into position and with one quick squirt the whole area was ablaze. What seemed like hundreds of Germans began running for the main farm-house. Medland's Bren guns then came into play and they mowed down the running enemy. The fire was so continuous

that it was necessary for the gunners to remove the barrels from time to time and dunk them in muddy water to cool them off. Behind each gun a row of men were frantically reloading magazines and passing them forward. It was a slaughter but there was no sign of surrender.

The third tank then moved up and began pumping shells into the farmhouse. The Germans still resisted and fired back so the flame-thrower came forward again. Even with the house on fire, the fanatical Germans would not give up. It was going to be necessary to send our men in for hand to hand fighting. The mopping up was dirty. The enemy was still defiant and even the wounded threw grenades or fired their pistols and rifles at our men. There were very few prisoners taken.

What we were up against were sixteen and seventeen year old types who had lived their whole life under the Hitler regime. They had been thoroughly indoctrinated into the belief of a superior race and the future of Germany. I suppose that if I had had the same background I too would have acted in the same way. From our point of view, however, they made vicious enemies. The fighting in the Lowlands probably broke the back of this core of fanatics, but we kept coming across pockets of them as we advanced into the Fatherland. Later, they were mixed in with older home-guard types who seemed to understand the futility of wasting their lives for a cause which appeared to be crumbling. There must have been difficulties in the German Army to meld the two opposing viewpoints together into an efficient fighting machine, especially in the infantry.

After the slaughter of Oosterbeek, resistance lessened. As mentioned before I later discovered that we had been pitched against a rear-guard delaying action and that a large German force had been able to extricate itself through Holland and back into Germany to fight another day. But the QOR were withdrawn to the town of Bruges in Belgium for a week's rest and refitting.

We loaded on to trucks which now could drive along the top of the dykes during daytime without worrying about coming under fire. As we entered Bruges we were given a hero's welcome. Schools had been given the day off and hundreds of children lined the streets waving small Red Ensigns and Union Jacks which they had made themselves. There were some surprising designs among them but they waved them strenuously and cheered loudly. I do not know what the thought of us when they saw us. We were unshaven, covered in mud and dead tired. I had a pleasant room in a small house in the residential area of this attractive old town. The regiment was billeted all around a small cobblestone square which we used as an outdoor workshop and parade ground. The first day was devoted to baths and sleep. The second day we took an inventory of weapons and issued new uniforms and equipment. The third day we made a thorough inspection of everything-men, weapons, maps, trucks, carriers, jeeps-the works. Reinforcements joined us and the rest of the week was spent in training and making sure we were back to fighting trim. It always amazed me how quickly we recovered from filth, dispendency, lack of sleep and food,

and loss of equipment.

The officer's mess was in a large tent and on the normal Wednesday parade night back in Toronto, we held a formal mess. Naturally, we were in battle-dress but otherwise all the traditions of the mess were upheld. One of these was, of course, that no smoking was allowed before the toast to the King was made at the end of the meal. Ben Dunkleman was a little worse from wear having had his full share of drinks. He broke the solemn tradition by lighting up between courses. There were a number of us who egged him on. After the toasts and other formalities were dispensed with, retribution took place. The president of the mess ordered him to shinny up one of the poles supporting the tent. To our surprise, delight and ribald cat-calls, he did it, which for a man his size was quite a feat. Ben might have looked heavy and slow but he was not; he was one of the strongest and toughest men in the regiment.

One small episode must be mentioned. When shaving one morning by candle-light, my razor slipped and I was suddenly left with half a mustache! There was only one thing to do and that was to shave it all off. A superstition had grown up in the regiment that to shave off a mustache, or for some men, to shave at all, was bad luck. Too often in action the person who had shaved had been killed immediately afterwards. We were not in action in Bruges but you would be surprised how upset I was. It was the only time I ever removed my mustache from the time I started to grow it at the age of eighteen until just after my fifty-ninth birthday when once again I took it off, maybe for keeps.

Antwerp was still holding out. The Allies desperately needed it as a supply port and therefore did not bomb it but tried to capture it intact. Until it was in our hands, supplies had to come up to the front lines all the way from the Normandy beaches. I am not sure but I do not think that the Channel ports were being used too much. Tanks often ran out of gas and because of this and the approaching winter our days of rapid advance appeared to be over. We gradually ground to a halt on the south bank of the Rhine. If we had been able to take Arnhem, which Montgomery was gambling on, we might have been able to sweep into Germany and to have ended the war by Christmas. But even so, we needed a huge supply port close to hand and as long as Antwerp held out it was impossible to move ahead. I heard later that brother Bill had been involved with the huge paratroop drop at Arnhem and in dropping supplies to the beleaguered troops later.

The QOR by-passed Antwerp and aimed for Nijmegen. The trip was treacherous in that we were striking north along a narrow corridor on the only open road available. We travelled over flat country interlaced with canals. Every bridge had been blown. Bull-dozers filled in the small canals but the engineers had to build Bailey bridges over the wider ones. We could only travel as fast as the bridges were made ready for us and we were getting very low on gas. Even so, we made the trip in two days. From time to time we came under shell fire but none of our vehicles were hit.

We stopped one night in a small town where the only

thing I remember was my surprise to find that the Dutch actually did wear wooden shoes when working in the fields. They parked them in rows outside their front and back doors and then walked around in their stockings or slippers in their houses. I tried a pair on and found them remarkably comfortable. Also on this stop, there must have been a special occasion to celebrate because we were issued an extra tot of rum which was served up with an equal part of hot water. I remember inhaling the fumes from my brown enamel mug and becoming very sleepy.

We reached Niemegan in the late afternoon. As we drove through the city we could see the huge steel girdered bridge was still there. The trouble was that the next set of bridges leading into Arnhem were blown and under intensive German fire. As the book which has been written on this operation has been entitled, it was "The Bridge Too Far". We had reached the end of our dash across northwest Europe. This was as far as we were going until Antwerp fell.

We continued through the town to the high ground east of it. As we drove in, American paratroopers walked out. This was the first time I had seen Americans since England. Most of this particular group, which I believe was the 101st Airborne Division mainly from Texas, were big blonde men and they looked in tip-top shape. They had come in on gliders and been dropped by parachute to hold an area east of Niemegen under tough conditions for much longer than they or anyone else had expected.

I was again in command of the company and we moved into an area which was a wooded estate on a spur of land overlooking the flats of River Waal. The Americans had built a number of fox-holes around the ruins of what must have been an attractive house at one time. In typical American fashion the fox-holes were as comfortable as they could make them. They were deep, lined with straw and each one had an electric light-bulb with the electricity being supplied by a generator back at the main road two or three hundred yards away. Battalion headquarters was set up there in what must have been the estate manager's house. My headquarters was in the basement of the ruined main house and it did not take long to discover why it was a ruin. The Germans had it pinpointed on their artillery map and every once in a while a shell would come whistling in and either explode in the house over our heads or very close to it.

The weather changed into typical fall weariness, miserable and wet and not very warm. Luckily, the Salvation Army, which every so affectionately called "the Gilly Ann" moved their truck up beside the generator and an outbuilding which they set up with showers. Here you could scrub off the dirt, get a change of socks, pick up free cigarettes and buy chocolate bars, razor blades, handkerchiefs, shoe laces and other needed items. We worked out a system whereby one-third of the companies could go back at a time and spend a few hours out of the fox-holes.

The first night we were there, a German patrol came marching up the road right into our position. The road was a dirt track which ran through the estate down to the low

ground in front of us. The Germans must have been tramping up it for weeks without any opposition which was understandable because the Americans could not have taken care of prisoners and were not in a position to get into a pitched battle. The Germans were surprised when they were stopped and were paraded in front of me. From the looks on their faces, it was the last thing they seemed to have expected. As a matter of fact, they appeared to be rather annoyed that we had interrupted their regular evening stroll.

The same thing had happened along the whole front and obviously the Germans had patrol initiative. Steve Lett ordered us to reverse the situation. For the first few days and nights this meant we sent out fighting patrols until the enemy realized we meant business. Their patrolling stopped. Our next move was to send out listening patrols which were comprised of a small group of well-armed soldiers who would move to a certain point and listen and observe. There were a whole series of these along our front and each one would take a compass bearing on the German movements in daytime and on machine-gun flashes at night. Putting these bearings on a map meant that we could pin-point a position and have the mortars and artillery take care of them with great accuracy.

There were no cement pill-boxes in this area to protect the Germans and when our guns zeroed in on their positions we must have caused havoc because we did not hear from those particular posts for quite a few days.

In front of one of the QOR companies there was a chicken farm half-way between our lines and the Germans. This "no man's land" was very flat and the enemy held the rise of ground on one side and we the other. The first day the company took over its positions, a German patrol walked out to the farm and started to select a few chickens. The QOR withheld fire in order to observe what was going on but one rifleman with an itchy trigger finger took a pot-shot at the group. The Germans immediately scurried for cover and a moment later an officer approached our lines with a man following him flying a white handkerchief at the end of his rifle. The officer asked for the Canadian officer in charge and wanted to know why we had fired at him when they had been collecting a couple of chickens for days without this kind of insult. Our officer replied that there was a war on and it was quite legitimate to shoot the enemy. He agreed but thought there could be a civilized understanding when it came to finding food. After a discussion on the niceties of acting like gentlemen even if the rest of the world had gone mad, an arrangement was made whereby the Germans would go out for chickens on even days and the QOR would go out on odd days. And so it continued until no chickens were left.

Our pressure on the Germans began to have an effect. We eased our front lines forward wherever we could and took over a section of flat land in front of us out towards the Rhine. Our company was posted there once. It was so flat that any movement could be seen for miles. We had to walk in at night and all food was delivered after dark by hand. Again my headquarters were in the basement of a former house, the walls of which had been levelled. Luckily, the weather was mild and

sunny and we spent most of the days sitting around with our shirts off sunbathing. Naturally, guards were posted but as the enemy could not move either without being spotted, it was peaceful and pleasant. At night, our outposts were moved closer to the dykes holding in the Waal River but while we were there we never came in contact with any enemy. As we were so cut off, it was considered a hardship post and anyone who had it was relieved after three days. I whiled away the time with a couple of the men by collecting loose bricks and building an enclosure where we could move around carefully without being seen.

One day while there it was a Sunday and I watched a company of Canadians, not QOR, form up for a church parade. For some unknown reason they did so at the bottom of the high ground where we had formerly been stationed. They were right out in the open and even though a mile away from me, I could see them clearly. I thought what absolute bloody fools they were because if I could see them, I knew the Germans could too. They made a marvellous target. I was just about to get my signaller to tell battalion headquarters to send a message over to them to get the hell out of there, when a silver streak in the sky caught my attention. I recognized it from my Farmham days. It was a jet-powered fighter. It swooped out of the clear sky north of Arnhem and travelled so fast you could not hear it approaching. It dropped a bomb in the middle of the church parade and disappeared in the direction from which it had come. I heard later that casualties were high. I hated having to stand helpless and watch men being killed. It was an engineer unit recently posted to the area and I suppose on that peaceful sunny Sunday it never entered their heads that they could be seen by the Germans. I knew we were being watched constantly and had to admire how quickly the enemy had identified a worth-while target (they seemed to be rationing their shells in those days), got a message through to an airport and a plane in the air before the unit had marched off.

As usual, after a stint on the forward lines, we were pulled back into the town of Niemegen for a week or so and then sent to another section of the line for a spell. On one of these "rests", my sergeant-major put one of the men under arrest and he came before me for discipline. I could have easily given him a couple of days C.B. (Confined to Barracks) but for some reason I remanded him to the C.O. When he was brought before me the next day, Steve could not figure out why he was there and I was left in a very embarrassing position of my own making.

I mention this because I was coming to the conclusion that I was not cut out to be a company commander. When in charge of a platoon, I enjoyed my job mainly because it was manageable and the unit was small enough for me to know each man and have direct control over what they did. Also, it was a position where usually I only had to follow orders and did not become involved in major tactical decisions. I guess I did not like the challenge of planning an action enough to put up with the fact that I could possibly be sending some of the men to their deaths. Others seemed to be able to take

this in their stride and exhibit an aggressive optimism. As I have said before, they treated a fight like a game where you tried to out-think and out-manoeuvre the opposition. I usually played games for the exercise. The finer points of taking a company into action and trying to win by hook or by crook did not appeal to me.

To a certain degree, this meant that I was not one of the boys. I joined in on high jinks and was part of the gang when to be otherwise would be noticeable, but really I preferred to be alone with a good book rather than in some drinking bout telling exaggerated stories about my exploits or the exploits of my men. As I look back, I think having half my platoon of men, whom I considered my friends, killed on the beaches without a chance to fight back or defend themselves made me afraid to commit men into battle. This was reflected in my less than enthusiastic approach to being a company commander. However, in all of this I must also admit that I did not have the make-up to make a difficult decision when under pressure.

Steve Lett, who knew men well, probably recognized my qualities and my weaknesses. It was in the early winter of 1945 that he made Ben Dunkleman commander of my company and I became his second-in-command. I welcomed Ben and his new majority with a sense of relief which surprised him, as he thought I would resent having someone junior in length of service promoted over me.

During one of our rest periods, our new brigade whom I believe was Blackader by name, ordered all the officers of the brigade to a sand-table exercise on how we might be able to cross the Rhine and enter Germany. There must have been at least one hundred present and it may well have been closer to two hundred. Before starting the exercise he proceeded to introduce every officer by name and rank. He had only been in command for about six weeks and it was a tour de force. I do not think any of us had ever seen such an amazing display of memory and we were all suitably impressed. Along with the ability to remember names and faces, he had the endearing talent of being able to get along with all ranks. His friendliness made him very human and not some distant general who operated at arm's length which was more Montgomery's style. After the war he became personnel manager for the Bell Telephone in Montreal and no doubt used these abilities in that position also.

Winter set in and we had snow during December and January. Patrols were issued white snow suits and when they went out into no-man's land they wrapped their weapons in strips of white canvas or linen. One such patrol was to go out to one of the disabled gliders where they were still strewn about in the flats between our lines. It was absolutely against orders to smoke on these patrols because the light of a cigarette could be spotted about half a mile away and the smell of smoke could be identified at three or four hundred yards if the breeze was right. One of our guys decided to take a chance and asked the soldier next to him for a light. It was a German, and with a shout both patrols, having somehow arrived at the glider at the same time, took off for their

own lines without a shot being fired.

In December I got a three-day pass for a leave in Paris. Extra time was allowed for travelling but not much. I was driven to some town south of Niemegen where I caught a train for France. The countryside looked desolate with the ground covered in snow and everything else in dull browns and blacks under gray clouds. Paris was the same. I stayed at the Canadian Officers' Club where French hostesses answered our questions and suggested how we could spend our time. My main interest was to see The Louvre, but it was closed with most of its valuable collection still in underground vaults. So I spent a great deal of time walking around the central part of the city, saw Napoleon's tomb, climbed the Eiffel Tower (the elevators were not running) and admired the statues and buildings around the Place de la Concorde and the Champs Elysee. The only entertainment was the Folies Bergeres which had never missed a performance no matter who was in command of the city. I enjoyed it immensely but was surprised to find that it was customary to tip the hag of an usherette who showed me to my seat. She gave me a tongue lashing in loud French, which I did not understand, and kept it up until I gave her a few francs.

One of the hostesses was Marie La France, a pleasant girl who spoke excellent English and looked English. I teased her about her unlikely name but she assured me that it was for real. She invited me to her home one evening for dinner. Her parents lived in a house on one of those streets which run like the spokes of a wheel out from the Arc de Triomphe. We entered through a small door in the large wooden gates which was all you could see from the street except for some small windows on the second and third floor. Inside the gates was a covered carriageway which opened on to an enclosed cobblestone yard with a stable converted to a garage off to one side. Of course, there was no car, just a couple of bicycles with tires worn through and held together with rags. Under the covered part broad steps led up to the main doors. Here I met her charming and obviously well-educated parents. Dinner was very simple but because Marie worked at the club they had more food than most places. They drew my attention to the fact that you could not find a dog, cat, pigeon or squirrel in the whole of Paris. The people were starving and eating anything they could. There was a rumour that even rats were being caught for food. I felt as though I should have brought some with me. After dinner I heard of the horrors of living under the Nazis. M. LaFrance had been a school teacher and as he would not teach the party line, he became a persona non grata and could no longer draw ration cards. The Allies reached the city just in time to save his life and he talked as though I was personally responsible. Marie was able to buy a candle once a week at the club and that was the only light in the place. As the chill of the December evening began to penetrate the house, they obviously wanted to go to bed to keep warm so I said goodbye and thank you and walked back in the dark feeling very unhappy.

A few shops were open and I was able to buy a book called The Prelude. It was about a man who had married a young

virgin and decided he would not make love to her until she demanded it. For two hundred pages it went into detail on how he educated her and titillated her. I read it all the way back in the train and could not put it down. Someone borrowed it when I got back to the regiment and I never saw it again.

The underground Metro was running in Paris and as I took it to the station to catch my train back to Holland, I was approached by a most attractive young girl who could not have been more than fifteen. She offered to sleep with me for a can of bully beef. Of course, I had to turn her down as my train left within the hour. The encounter shook me, though, when I realized that the people of Paris would do anything to obtain food. It all seemed so unfair, with those in the forces having everything they needed while the civilians starved. I was to come up against the same plight for as long as I was in Europe.

It was not too pleasant a leave but at least it was a rest and a change. I decided that I would head for England in future.

When I got back from leave I found the regiment in a new area of the front which was wooded and hilly and covered with a foot of snow. Our company head-quarters was in a large dugout lined with bales of hay arranged in such a way that alcoves were built in around the walls for beds. The hay kept the cold out but our Coleman filament lamps made the air very dry and many of us got colds and coughs. We had to be careful of fire and smoking was restricted. There was a huge barn nearby but, as the Germans plunked shells into it regularly, we only used it for parking vehicles.

One of the first things which happened after I got back was a visit from the brigadier to present the Military Medal to the little Italian stretcher-bearer whom we had recommended from Oosterbeek days. He had just rejoined us from hospital a week or so before. The brigadier came into the dug-out with his aide and our adjutant. I was there along with others so it was very crowded. When the sergeant-major paraded our stretcher bearer before us, there was hardly any room left and Ives had to stand on the bottom step of the entrance with the blanket which was our "door" draped over his shoulders. The brigadier made an excellent little speech and pinned the ribbon on the chest of the stretcher-bearer and gave him the box containing the medal. By the time everyone had shaken his hand, the little guy was in tears. He kept insisting he was only doing his job like everyone else and did not deserve a medal.

Battalion head-quarters was located in a farm-house on top of a hill about a mile or so back from the front-line. It was getting on towards Christmas and a small party for the Black Network was arranged. Ben Dunkleman had just been promoted to major and he asked me to hold the fort at the company as he had been commanded to attend the party. The party was considered a great success in that everyone got stinko drunk. Four jeeps were wrecked as the officers they belonged to tried to drive them out of the farm-yard. As a result they were "written off" and later fixed up by our mechanics

to become buckshee additions to our supply of transport.

On New Year's Eve I was out in the big barn near our dugout inspecting supplies with my quartermaster sergeant when our artillery suddenly began firing. At first we were completely baffled because no attack was taking place and all was quiet on the front line. We then remembered that it was New Year's and our watches showed it was one minute to midnight. Our shells must have been from large calibre guns because they sounded like express trains going over our heads. I would have hated to be on the receiving end. It was the signal for everyone else all along our line to welcome in 1945 by firing everything we had towards the German lines. The response came exactly at midnight which was typically German who were very rigid about timing. It was the first time I heard the dread sound of Moaning Minnies. These were mortar shells with their tails cut in such a way to produce the most blood-chilling banshee wail possible to imagine as they travelled through the air. No wonder the men who had been subjected to them around Caen and Carpiquet talked about them so much. You could never forget the sound once you had heard it. With all these explosives flying it was surprising nothing came down in our area. Our company was in reserve at the time and the shells were aimed at our front lines or back where the artillery was located. The fireworks lasted for about five minutes then all was peaceful again. The silence in the snow with no wind was much more noticeable once the furor was over. It made me think of Man and his wars. He thrashes around making a great deal of noise usually to no avail and then nature brings everything back to normal and peacefully patches up the mess that Man has made. I was reminded of the Psalmists question, "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?"

Throughout this winter period, we experienced a mild dose of what trench warfare must have been like in World War I. Of course, our conditions were vastly superior to those suffered by our fathers. There were no over-the-top attacks or huge artillery barrages or bottomless pits of mud, but living in dugouts and trenches was not pleasant and we moved regularly to provide a break from the cramped uncomfortable quarters and the monotony of standing on guard most of the day. Again, the Sally Ann was there to make our breaks as pleasant as possible. They even showed movies if they could find a place to do so. I think most soldiers have a soft spot in their hearts for the Salvation Army. I have heard of many who support them quite substantially even though they have no particular direct contact with them in peace-time. They were always there when you needed them the most.

What we were really doing in December, January and February was to hold on to what we had while the necessary build-up took place behind us for the break-out into Hitler's Germany. Antwerp had been opened and our supplies were pouring in through this major port. We in the front lines were not filled in on the big pictures but the little infantry man soon gets the "feel" of the enemy. We knew that the Germans were defeated. It was just a matter of time before they collapsed completely. But we also knew that they were desperate and

wanted to save their country. They were good soldiers and clever. It did not come as a surprise, therefore, when we heard of the Battle of the Bulge against the American front. We, too, would have concentrated our best remaining troops in one last valiant attack and we, too, would have defended our country trying to do the most harm possible to the invaders. But in early 1945, we felt sure the enemy was on the run and it would not be long before he surrendered. We knew what the Americans were going through but no one really believed that the Germans would reach the sea and cut the Allies in two.

Before going on with this long narrative, there are a number of episodes I should relate. They fit into this general period but I do not remember just when.

The little rifleman who would not drop his eyes for Montgomery became something of a legend in the regiment. He had been transferred to the Support Company and become a sniper. His rifle was equipped with a powerful telescopic sight and he knew how to use it. Quite often he would literally crawl a mile or more behind the German lines and pick off a lone German. To prove his success, he would bring back his papers and Iron Cross. We all expected that some day he would be captured but he survived the war and I met him a few years afterwards on the corner of Eglinton and Oakwood at which time he said that he was having difficulty settling down and talked about finding another war somewhere in order to get back to what he liked best.

One of our officers gave himself the project of clearing out all the booby traps in front of his platoon's position. Every day he would gingerly move forwards through the wooded area and systematically remove trip wires, grenades, shoe mines and other devilish traps which had been set there by either the Germans or the American paratroopers when they occupied the same ground.

I remember one night when one of my platoon officers wanted to inspect the line of barbed wire which stretched from his position over to the next company. He persuaded me to come with him. The two of us tramped through heavy snow with our pistols drawn and made sure all was in order. Eventually we were halted and found ourselves at an out-post of the next company who had had their guns trained on us the whole way. Foolishly we had forgotten to advise them what we were up to. Luckily, no one had an itchy trigger finger because it seems we made a perfect target against the snow.

At some time during the fighting which may have been back in the Scheldt pocket, Jimmy Auld was leading his Pioneer Platoon in an assault on two haystacks from which considerable enemy fire was coming. We had the support of the Air Force at our call. Typhoon fighters were used as flying artillery. Auld was having real trouble with his haystacks and called for the Typhoons. A few minutes later two of them swooped in and released their rockets from behind the platoon. Auld said he was sure he was going to be scalped, the rockets whistled so close over his head. The haystacks burst into flames and revealed cement pill-boxes under the camouflage hay. The Germans who survived came out with their hands up.

As I said before, there must be a hundred stories like these which were the individual experiences of the men and officers of the QOR. War becomes a personal affair and success in battle depends upon the actions of thousands of little decisions and actions. Of course, my story is the memory of one person. It might be interesting to compile a selection of the memories of ten or a hundred soldiers and fit it in with the official report of a battle.

We began to prepare for our break-out into Germany. The first objective for the QOR was to attack across the flat open ground and take the Waal dykes up-river from the Niemegen bridge. We practiced moving over the flats where there was no cover except for shallow ditches which would be little help if we came under fire. The ground was frozen with large patches of glare ice. It was difficult to keep our balance and we knew it was going to be a tough job to cover the couple of miles under these conditions. Ben Dunkleman included me in all of the training even though a 2i/c would normally stay behind and make the necessary preparations for support. At the time I did not know that he was about to leave the QOR to fight for the establishment of an independent Israel.

The night before the break-out, the artillery fired continuously and we moved up to our starting line with the sky full of noise and blue flashes of the guns. The Germans would have been idiots not to have known what was about to take place. They opened the flood-gates holding back the Waal River and when we reached the edge of the flat land, we were greeted with a broad expanse of muddy water. Our commanders must have foreseen this possibility. A whole fleet of amphibious vehicles known as DUKWS was waiting for us. A "duck" was a boat made into a truck or a truck made into a boat, take your choice. We jumped aboard and slowly plowed our way towards the dykes stopping at two or three farm-houses which stood like stranded ships in the middle of nowhere. The houses were empty as were the cluster of white-washed farm buildings on the edge of the dyke where we disembarked.

On the other side of the Waal was a high promontory which I think was called the Hoch Elton. From here the enemy could watch our every move. We had just reached and checked out the farm-houses when we were subjected to vicious heavy artillery fire. The house I was in butted up against the next one with a very narrow passage-way behind the fire-places of the two. A bunch of us squeezed in and waited in the falling plaster and dust until the bombardment finished. As soon as it let up, I was able to get to the dyke and saw a number of large barges full of German soldiers floating downstream towards Arnhem. The Germans were obviously moving a large force out of our front but why they were heading back into Holland, we could not fathom. The bombardment covering the movement of the barges had caught a few of the company out in the open and my friend George Bean was killed. I do not remember when he rejoined the outfit after hospitalization after his brave action in the counter attack back on the beaches but he wore his Military Cross with justifiable pride and was held in high regard by everyone who knew him. We were upset by his death.

We then moved back to the Niemegen area to prepare for the next stage of our attack. The south shore of the Waal/Rhine had to be cleared and it meant fighting our way through the Hoch Wald, a large wooded area. It was going to be tough getting there and tougher getting through it.

An episode has just come to mind but I cannot place where it occurred or what action we were in. All I know is that we were fighting along a stretch of dyke and had taken over a large barn for the night. It was full of hay and someone dropped a cigarette. A whole area suddenly burst into flame but by smothering it with blankets and stamping out flying sparks we were able to put it out before any serious damage was caused. A few of the men got their hair singed. Smoking in the barn was banned from then on. I set up my bed next to the wall and slept soundly for the whole night. When I went out to the barn-yard to relieve myself the next morning, I noticed that the side of the barn was plastered with manure. It seems that shells had landed in a huge manure heap piled up against the side of the barn and the explosions had sprayed the whole area. I suddenly realized that if the manure had not been there the shells would have landed right on my bed. When I inspected the inside of the wooden walls, I found it full of pieces of shrapnel. And I had peacefully slept through the whole thing. Someone was still watching over me.

Before we entered the wooded part of the Hoch Wald, it was necessary to clear the ground in front of it. We were now on German soil and we expected a hard fight. The plan was to make our first attack on a series of farms in a valley and along a road leading up a far hill towards the woods. We were to go in just before daylight with tank support. To help us get into position in the dark searchlights were bounced off the low clouds, producing sufficient light for us to see. Heavy artillery was to open up the attack and as we moved forward we passed a number of anti-aircraft guns, huge monsters with long barrels, which were to be fired horizontally over open sights. The roar of tanks manoeuvring into place against the back-ground of guns barking was deafening.

I had a special job to do. I was to lay a roll of one-foot wide white tape down a forward slope towards the farm-buildings in the valley which was our company objective. It was to provide a guideline for the tanks and the company. Another man and myself held either end of the pole through the core of the roll and slowly walked down the slope in full view of the enemy. Another man came along behind with a mallet and nailed the tape down with regular six-inch spikes. Off to either side were Bren gunners who were supposed to protect us with covering fire in case someone opened up on us. The search-lights made the tape glow as though it was phosphorescent and I felt it was like a great big arrow pointing directly at me, the target. Why the Germans did not wipe us out, I do not know. I have never been so scared in my life. It was a great relief when the tape ran out and we were able to scoot back up the hill to cover.

The attack went in as planned. The group of farm-buildings was filled with young German fanatics who fought until dead. It was dirty and vicious. We suffered a lot of

casualties. When I joined Ben after the attack, he was getting reports in from all the platoons. One of the sergeants, and I am ashamed not to remember his name--no, it just came to me, it was Sergeant Aubrey Cousins or Cozens. This top-notch soldier had done an absolutely outstanding job. He had been involved in the hand-to-hand fighting and when it looked as though there was no way the enemy was going to give up, jumped on the top of one of our tanks and personally directed the fire of the 25-pounder. He stayed on the tank as it crashed into the walls of the building to shake loose the defenders. On his way to report to Ben he had been killed by a sniper.

As we discussed what he had done, either Ben or myself, I have forgotten whom, suggested that we write Cousins up for a post-humous Victoria Cross. There was quite a lot of red tape involved and we started right away to get the full story down on paper. Our recommendation had to be turned over to our adjutant and the colonel. Statements and further information had to be collected from the tank commander and the final application had to then go up through the chain of command. It proceeded to brigade, division, corps and army where further questions could be asked and checked out before it received authorization. I believe General Crerar had to actually inspect the site before final approval. Eventually all this was accomplished and the V.C. awarded. It was the only one won by the QOR in World War II.

Cousins came from the town of Tweed, a beautiful village south-west of Ottawa. As a memorial to him the citizens built a passenger-supply boat which was needed to ply Stoco Lake east of the town. For all I know, the Sergeant Cousins is still servicing the people who were his friends in this area.

There were a whole series of short fiendish attacks as we pushed into Germany. We were up against the S.S. At first we took prisoners but after a number of them came forward with their hands behind their heads holding one or two stick grenades which they threw in the faces or stomachs of our men, we began to fight fire with fire. We continued to take prisoners but one false move and they had it. In one case, I had again come up with the food and found Ben with a dozen S.S. lined up in front of him. He ordered them to put up their hands in English and then in German. They were a cocky sullen lot, all under twenty years of age and would not obey. Ben was at the end of his tether. The fighting had been especially bitter. He reached forward and grabbed the senior man who was a corporal around the throat. When he dropped him, he was either dead or unconscious. The rest of the group immediately put their hands up and they were marched off under a couple of guards.

We then entered the heavily wooded area of the Hoch-Wald. It was full of shoe mines. Quite a few of our men stepped on them. I saw Dick Medland with flesh missing from one foot and ankle and I thought he would never walk again. A number of months later I met him in Holland and although limping he was doing fine. Our company came through not too badly as Ben devised a method of jumping from the roots of one tree to the next where mines could not be dug in.

I was constantly entering and leaving the scene of action. My main job was to bring up the food and ammunition and take

back the wounded and dead. At one point in the woods, we were hit by artillery and the shells were exploding in the tree tops. Shrapnel showered down around us and everyone wore his steel helmet which was not the usual practice. Most of us took cover under trucks or wherever we could but there were a few who defied the odds and set marvellous, or stupid, depending upon your point of view, examples of bravery by walking through the barrage as though nothing was happening. I hugged the earth. I did not want to be a dead hero.

After the Hoch-Wald was cleared, the regiment was given a few days to catch its breath. We had suffered quite badly with many wounded and quite a few killed. Reinforcements arrived, many of whom were Zombies. They were the Canadians who would not volunteer to fight and had to be conscripted. The volunteers disliked the Zombies and made life miserable for them. However, if they survived one action, and many did not, they learned enough to become fighting men and blended in very well. Actually, we had little trouble with these reluctant soldiers, whereas we heard that other units had great difficulties integrating them.

As usual, Steve Lett was trying to get the battalion back into fighting shape as quickly as possible. We were in tents and the camp under the huge beech trees with their new yellow-green leaves in warm spring weather made you think you were on a picnic. Steve took the opportunity to talk to me about my future with the regiment. I remember sitting with him in his dug-out with a large brown engraving of a reclining nude in an ornate frame over his bed. He knew that I was not comfortable commanding a company and suggested that I might be happier as adjutant of the regiment or on a staff job with one of the brigade or division head-quarters. I was torn on the subject. I felt that I would be shirking my duty if I did not stay on as a fighting officer but at the same time knew that I would probably be better doing staff work. It was left that Steve would think about it and let me know.

Our next job was to cross the Rhine. Ben Dunkleman had left the regiment and I was appointed acting company commander. We had a whole series of briefings. I vividly remember the day we were taken into a room where two large easels were standing covered with cloth. The officer explaining the plan removed the covering on the first easel. It was a large-scale map of Cleve, the city of Ann, one of Henry VIII's wives. Across it was written "DESTROY". I felt as though I wanted to vomit. The Royal Air Force was to destroy Cleve, the Americans, Emmerish. A day or two later I led a company through Cleve. There was hardly anywhere to walk. It had been churned up as though some huge plow had gone through it. It was sickening. The two towns were the hinge around which we would pivot across the Rhine swinging up into Germany and back into Holland. I suppose it would have taken too long to attack them and maybe it would have pinned down too many troops but what a waste, what a waste.

On the other side of Cleve we boarded trucks and slowly wound down a long embankment to a floating pontoon-bridge the engineers had already built across the Rhine. It was at least a half a mile long and bowed in the middle where the

current pressed strongly against it. I was extremely tired and must have snoozed in the overheated cab of the truck as we crawled our way in a long convoy across the river. I suddenly came to to find myself on the other side and I gathered the company together to start marching back towards Holland.

As we walked along the side of the road which ran along the north shore of the Rhine, the Germans kept lobbing in shells at regular intervals. They had the road pin-pointed and it was necessary to spread the company out as far apart as possible to reduce the chance of casualties. As it was, we did lose a few men anyway. Not long after, we walked through Emmerich. It was like a ghost town, not a soul to be seen but the Germans had already cleared the streets of rubble and there were rows and rows of neatly piled bricks on each side of every street. Otherwise only chimneys stood higher than five or six feet.

Our destination was a small town just beyond Emmerish. The houses were still intact and we could bed down for the night. As I inspected my quarters, I had a queer feeling when I came across a Nazi arm-band with a black swastika on a white circle on a red background. Once we had established our location, I called up our carriers and the food truck and sent a runner to guide them in. The runner missed the carriers which proceeded up the road instead of across the open stretch of ground over which we had marched. There was a frightful explosion not far away and a column of black smoke rose up above the houses. A white-faced sergeant major reported to me a few minutes later. It seems he had been in the lead carrier and had not noticed the runner. At the corner leading to my head-quarters, he had skidded to one side so the other carrier passed him and took the lead. The driver did not notice the mine on the road. The explosion blew the tracks off the carrier and the driver had every bone in his body broken. He mercifully died very quickly.

This kind of thing I found awfully upsetting. I felt personally responsible and also felt that others silently blamed me for something which should not have happened. I even got the impression that the men thought I was bad luck to the company. You become very superstitious in war. I could not eat too much that night. In many ways, this was made worse because I had just heard from the colonel that I was to be posted to 3rd Division Head-quarters as a liaison officer the day after next.

In the morning we moved towards the Hoch Elten. This would be my last action with the regiment. It was nearly the last action of my life.

Two companies had preceded us up the road towards the remains of a huge house where we were to join them. I thought it would be just a matter of following along as they had got there with no trouble at all. As we came to a bend in the road, we were suddenly shelled with a combination of high explosives and phosphorous shells. We dove for the ditches but one shell had landed on top of some men and I had my signaller call up the ambulance. The shelling did not last long and we proceeded on our way. We had not gone twenty paces

before we were hit again, this time without casualties. Again we got to our feet and for the third time we were bombarded.

After you have been under shell fire a few times, you can tell by the sound a shell makes how far away from you it is going to explode. That is how someone can walk through a barrage as though nothing was happening. The one you do not hear is the one which gets you. On the third bombardment I was in the ditch up to my chin in water when I heard the shell with my name on it. I squeezed down as far as I could. It landed in the roots of the bushes not more than three feet from my head. If the bushes had not been there, it would have landed on top of me. The last thing I remember is watching the steam rising from a huge piece of shrapnel which had sliced into the muddy bank beside me. It must have missed my head by inches.

I must have suffered a concussion because I heard the rest of the story from others later. It seems I first told the signaller to tell the colonel to lay down fire on the German Observation Post which was watching us. I presumed the O.P. was in the water tower which still stood at the top of Hoch Elton. The signaller could not send the message because a piece of shrapnel had sliced through the side of his wireless set missing his back by about an inch. I was so mad it seems that I told the company to stay where they were and walked back the half mile or so to battalion head-quarters. I heard later that I bawled out the colonel in the presence of the brigadier who happened to be there and asked him in no uncertain terms to give me the necessary covering fire. As I walked back our artillery were firing and I was able to lead the company the rest of the way even though a sniper was trying to get us from somewhere.

Two things about this should be mentioned. One is that the company was now sure I was a jinx. The other is that often a person who was about to be transferred to go on leave was killed or wounded in his last action. My guardian angel was working over-time.

When we got to the huge cellar of the house or castle where the other companies were, one of the officers noticed that I did not look or talk right and made me lie down. When the food came up that night, the staff sergeant insisted that I take a good slug of rum which he always carried in his water bottle. This made me pass out and the next morning I woke up wondering where I was. I began asking questions and slowly pieced the story together. I was extremely hungry, ate a large breakfast and turned the company over to my senior lieutenant. I then reported back to battalion head-quarters and heard the rest of the story from them.

I gathered all my staff together, said goodbye to a few people, including Steve Lett, and headed for division headquarters which was not too far away. There I reported in for duty and was allotted to one of the five officers's messes. From then to the end of the war a couple of months later, I ran important messages or visitors from one head-quarter to another as well as taking care of a number of records and regularly acting as duty officer.

The first thing I had to do was pay a visit to the Medical Officer who went over my record carefully and asked what I had been doing lately. When I told him, he did not

take long to recommend a week's leave in England which pleased me very much. It had been a long stretch since my last one in Paris and now that he mentioned it I felt it was exactly what was needed. He asked me where I would go and when I told him of Andwell, he seemed pleased as he was afraid I might live it up in London which was not the purpose for granting the leave.

I packed my bags and along with others going on leave got on a truck heading for Antwerp. I was not the most senior officer so I rode in the back sitting beside the tailgate. The north bank of the Rhine had been cleared which meant we were able to go through Arnhem. I tried to figure out where Bill had dropped paratroopers and supplies but we must have gone through the town by a different route from what I had expected. Outside of Arnhem the engineers had built a Bailey bridge over the branch of the Rhine which replaced the blown one which had stopped the Allied advance in the fall of 1944. There were signs of the frightful fighting which had taken place around the bridge even though the Dutch had cleaned up a lot of the mess. We then crossed the long bridge into Niemegen which had never been blown and which up to then I had only seen from the other end. At the south end of the bridge was a large cemetery with white wooden crosses row on row and the occasional Star of David. It contained mostly Canadians. The grass was a beautiful green and well manicured. The Dutch had placed fresh flowers on nearly every grave. It was a lovely sight but a chill ran up my back as I remembered the QOR men whom I knew lay there.

On the road into Antwerp which ran along the high ground south of the Polder country, we spotted a buzz bomb about a hundred feet up following along beside us and obviously heading for Antwerp. We in the back banged on the window of the cab to tell the driver. He replied to let him know when its engine stopped and he would pull over to the side. The bomb pattered past us and arrived in Antwerp before us.

Antwerp was a busy port. The great cranes were working unloading war material from what appeared to be fifty or sixty ships. Stevedores and army personnel were everywhere. Our party caught a small passenger boat in a quieter part of the port which took us directly to the Port of London. It surprised me to have to go through Customs. It was a sign that the British were getting back to "business as normal" which was the typical practical attitude they always took. It seemed like years since I had last been in England and in some ways I felt as though I was returning home. I grabbed a taxi and headed straight for Waterloo. There was a short wait for the train to Basingstoke and I took the opportunity to phone the Sellers to tell them I was coming. In Basingstoke it was a real pleasure to board the familiar green bus. When I got off at the Red Lion, there was Judith and Gay and the dog waiting for me. I breathed in the fresh spring air in great gulps as we walked and talked down the lane towards Andwell Mill. I was beginning to feel better already.

The very lazy week started off with me sleeping the clock around. Gay got a couple of days' leave and Mike was on the scene for a while also. It was like a family reunion and spirits were high because the end of the war was in sight. I walked,

dug in the garden, gathered fresh green beech branches for the large vase in the living room, read, wrote letters and listened to music. But most of all I slept. By the end of the week I felt like a new person.

When I reported back, the M.O. must have thought so too. He seemed pleased with my condition and authorized me for full duties. Fighting was still going on in small ugly pockets. With rumours flying about that the end of the war was in sight the troops were taking extra care to survive and yet there was still opposition and fighting to be done. To my sorrow, I kept hearing of men getting killed or wounded. John Pickup, who had taken over my company, had been badly hurt when he was caught between a carrier and a tank and rolled between them as they moved past each other in opposite directions. His hips were smashed. This happened with only a week or so to go before the war ended.

One day I was told to take two gas officers up to the 9th Brigade Head-quarters where there had been a report of Germans firing gas shells at our troops. The war was moving so fast in those days along the northern border between Holland and Germany that the various head-quarters were practically on top of each other. Division at that time was less than a mile behind the brigades and the brigades were about a hundred yards behind their battalions. When the report on the use of gas was made, it was treated as top priority and went straight back to army head-quarters where the gas officers were on staff. So far they had lived a soft life. I believe this was the first and only report on the use of gas during the whole war. An official investigation had to be made at once in case it was a last desperate resort of the Germans to change the course of the war. The job of the gas officers was to make the investigation immediately, which meant the same day.

I picked up the two rather fat types as soon as they were delivered to us from corps and drove them myself to the front along the route which was clearly marked all the way. The trouble was that many of the bridges over the canals were destroyed and therefore it was necessary to drive on three sides of a rectangle in order to get there. We had to travel nearly five miles to get to a spot only half a mile away as the crow flew. All along the route we could hear artillery and small arms fire which worried my passengers but not me. I had to drive rather slowly so the trip took even longer, and the longer it took the more nervous my passengers became. One of them asked me if I had not made a mistake and perhaps we were now behind the German lines. A few minutes later I delivered them safely to the brigadier's caravan which was located on a slight rise of ground with the fighting in full view. The occasional shell exploded fifty yards or so away and the gas officers scurried into the caravan as quickly as their fat legs could carry them. As I took my leave of the brigadier, I saluted him smartly and gave him a big wink. He returned my salute and my wink.

Before driving back I decided to find out as much as possible about the gassing in case I was asked questions by the general staff officer back at division. I was also very curious. The carrier which had been hit by the gas shell was

parked beside the caravan with a guard posted on it. The Germans had fired a hard-nosed shell at it followed by one which immediately spread a green cloud over the vehicle. One of the occupants had choked to death at once but the other found his gas mask, put it on and survived. No one, but no one, was known to have his gas mask within reach and this gave the story its main interest to our troops. Later it was decided that it was not a deliberate act on the part of the German command but rather a mistake which some soldier had made on his own. What fascinated us was that this deadly weapon was actually available to front line German troops. According to the Geneva Convention no gas was to be used in this war but the Germans were known to have broken the convention before. We must have given them the benefit of the doubt and decided it was an accident because it was never publicized or brought to the attention of the public.

During these last weeks of the war, V2's were being launched against England. The Canadian Army was on the left flank for most of the whole operation in Europe all the way from the beaches. This meant that we had the job of clearing the coast-line and it was from here that the V2's were being launched. We kept coming across launching pads for these destructive weapons often abandoned or not yet ready for use. The V2 was a rocket which was shot up into the high atmosphere and came down almost vertically and nearly at the speed of sound on London or in the counties nearby. With the regular high explosive war-head they did quite a lot of damage but Hitler kept boasting right up until the end that he had a secret weapon which was going to win the war for him. And he might have been right if he had been able to get a nuclear war-head on his V2's. The full story of the commando raid on the heavy water plant in Norway and the bombing of special factories making nuclear devices was not told until after the war. All we Canadians knew was that we were helping our friends in London by getting rid of these nuisance weapons.

We fought all the way up the border of Holland and Germany and swung into Germany to the town of Essen just as the war ended. Already plans were being made for rehabilitating various areas we had been through and for a huge programme of education for anyone wanting it while waiting in Holland before we went home. I was responsible for the education part for the 9th Brigade and was to liase between the division and the brigade and the educational institutions in England. I had my own office, male secretary, jeep and driver. But more on that later. First let me tell you how we celebrated the end of hostilities.

The 3rd Division established its head-quarters in a former German marine corps training school in Essen on May 7 VE Day (Victory in Europe) was on May 8 when the Germans signed the total surrender papers. There had been no fighting for two or three days before this. On May 7, one of the divisional liaison officers heard that there was a large supply of liquor hidden in a block-house on one of the Frisien Islands. He talked some navy types into providing a landing craft for him and a small group of officers to go hunting for the hoard. Whoever informed him was correct and he liberated the works.

After giving the navy their share, he was able to load five 60-hundred weight trucks with a mixed selection of champagne, white and red wines and a wide range of different liqueurs of the highest quality which the Germans had taken from France and Holland. Every bottle was stamped in red across the label in German, "For German Officer Use Only". One truckload was delivered to each of the five divisional messes. It turned out that we had enough to last us from May to September or October!

The champagne arrived at the same time we heard that the war was over. We had survived! That was the predominant thought in the minds of everyone of us. It made us slightly giddy and light headed. We laughed at the silliest little things and slapped each other on the back. Some of us hugged each other. To touch another man and to have him touch you seemed to assure us that our bodies were in one piece and we were still in the land of the living. Unless you have gone through the hell of fighting, seen men, good friends and comrades, killed right beside you, lived on the razor edge between life and death and never know from one day to the next which side you might fall, you cannot ever appreciate the tremendous, over-powering, exhilarating feeling of release when you find out for sure that it all has come to an end and you have survived.

To celebrate, our mess had a party. It started around four in the afternoon of May 3 when we broached the champagne. We were in a former German officer's mess with light-coloured oak furniture and chandeliers built in the form of a Nazi swastika. It was decorated with busts and pictures of Hitler and Nazi trophies. We were just starting supper at six o'clock when someone ran in to say that King George was speaking on the radio. We turned on the good German model, found the station and listened quietly while the King spoke in tired measured tone. At the end of the speech we rose and toasted him and the end of the war in Europe. From then on the champagne flowed even more freely than before.

After supper someone got a couple of Jerry cans. These, for those who do not know, were rectangular metal cans for holding gasoline and every vehicle had at least one strapped on somewhere. Today the same design is used but they are made of plastic. We poured the gasoline into a large Nazi trophy which had a cup on it about two feet high and could contain about a gallon. This we lit and using the empty cans as tom-toms proceeded to have a wild Indian war-dance around the flaming torch in the middle of the room. When the gasoline burned out and we were hoarse from shouting war whoops, we let the trophy cool down and then passed it from man to man so that each one of us could solemnly urinate in it. The Germans were on the floor below us loading up their horse-drawn wagons preparing to move out. We poured the contents of the trophy out the window on top of them and then tossed the big silver cup out also. Then we tossed out the bust of Hitler and anything else that was Nazi and moveable.

Attached to our mess were a number of Intelligence Officers. One of them climbed up on the wide mantelpiece of the stone fire-place and proceeded to give us a Hitlerian harangue. We Seig Heil'd him and when he finished he jumped

down and grabbed the chandeliers to swing across the room. The whole thing came crashing down on his head and we fused all the lights in camp. We decided this was the signal to end the party and stumbled down the stairs to the parade ground below. Our quarters were at the opposite end of the parade ground and we goose stepped the full distance roaring Deutschland, Deutschland Uber Alles at the top of our voices. When we got to our rooms we went into the office and woke up the duty officer in case he wanted a pee. At that moment the phone rang and I answered. It was the general's aide and he wanted to know what the noise was all about. I told him the war had ended to which he replied, "Well get the hell to bed!" So we did.

The next morning we all had frightful headaches. Long cold showers did not alleviate them. And it is true that if you have a drink of water on top of a belly full of champagne you get drunk all over again.

There was not a great deal to do for the next day or so. We heard the story about the mayor of Essen complaining to the general on the release of the women from the barracks. The Germans had a system whereby one woman roomed in each dormitory for seven men. Besides keeping it clean, making beds, darning shirts and socks, and doing the ironing, she slept with a different man each night. We had turfed everyone out of the barracks when we took over and these women suddenly found themselves on the streets of Essen with no where to go and no one to sleep with. The mayor was highly incensed with having a large number of what might be termed prostitutes as part of his city population. We said it was not our problem, it was his.

Orders had been circulated to advise us that under no circumstances were any Canadian troops allowed to fraternize or collaborate with the Germans. We were to ignore them completely and keep to ourselves unless we had official business as an army representative. I personally had no intention of mingling with the enemy but I suppose there were those who at least wanted to sleep with a fraulein.

Actually, we did not stay in Essen for very long. Within a couple of days we were heading back into Holland. The Canadians were to be stationed there until sent home. The length of time would vary according to the number of points we had accumulated. Points were gained by the length of time you had spent overseas and the number of times wounded. There may have been other criteria but I have forgotten what they were. I was quite high on the list but it would be months before my turn came up. If you were part of a regiment, all the points for every man was pooled and the unit as a whole received a priority based on this. In the meantime, we reverted to peace-time type soldiering. Plans had already been made on how to keep the men busy throughout the summer and well into the fall.

As I mentioned before, part of the plan was to offer education services and allow anyone who wanted to to up-grade their schooling. Teachers were recruited, books and examination papers were made available from Khaki College, a Canadian establishment located outside of London, and a great number of