

Yokohama, 1945

Whereupon I, one George Raymond Gayman of His Majesty's Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve do sit utterly bored in my ship, H.M.S. Wager anchored in Tokyo Bay this 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1945; and whereas being of such as maldetrous nature that I can accomplish nothing of material value for my wife as a memento of my years away; and wherefore I should desire to feel satisfied that her leisure hours are well occupied when I return and not spent in idle speculation and mischievous habits toward which a feminine constitution naturally tends; I hereby endeavour to set down a brief account of my journeyings and experiences of the past twenty months since I left her and to preserve for her memory and edification the sterling example of life as it should not be lived ashore and afloat; of course all mention of affaires de coeur, fornication and adultery will be withheld as far as possible and if one or two slip in by mischance, they will refer to no one living at the present moment. See footnote on life of Bluebeard page one.

Halifax, January 1944

We are told that we are fighting a war against National Socialism: Halifax is still as in 1942, fighting the naval war for social favouritism (sour grapes). The same old greeting from the same old gang: "Going overseas eh? Wish I could trade places with you. Sure picked the best time with second front and all coming up. I've been here four years now. Of course I have my wife and family with me and we live in a fairly comfortable apartment but it gets boring you know – quite tedious at times." I express my deepest sympathy while I remember that my wife and I have inhabited a decent apartment in various places from Newfoundland to Winnipeg for a total of about four months out of twenty since I first donned uniform.

Reported to P.M.O.'s office Stadaconia on January 19<sup>th</sup> (one day late as usual) and was told that I'd be leaving for overseas shortly. Instead of going by the accustomed troop transport,

I was appointed to a new destroyer escort H.M.S. Moorsom to work my passage. In the meantime while awaiting sailing orders I was to go through barracks routine for foreign service and then report to R.C.N.H. for temporary duty.

From 19<sup>th</sup> January until February 7<sup>th</sup> when we finally left, I did barracks routine acquiring a tin hat, torch, life jacket, etc, changed my Canadian dollars into British pounds, spent a few days in R.C.N.H. on a medical “crock” ward with which I soon became weary and found that my presence was required in the ship for practically the whole time, visited my friends and acquaintances, took in a couple of ship’s dances and managed to discharge a few Canadian ratings whose anxiety neuroses obtained the upper hand before we had ever put to sea.

Excuse me Margy if I note an unusual fact here concerning anxiety neurosis. This is a term used to denote the mental and physical upsets encountered when an individual’s environmental pressure becomes too great to be borne in a normal manner. It is remarkable that in Halifax from a ship’s company of about 150 in Moorsom, I had to discharge two Canadians in three weeks while in Wager from a ship’s company of 250 in 18 months, I have discharged only one British rating. This might be accounted for by two factors: one, the British rating knows why he is fighting, having experienced a few bombs on or close to his home whereas the war has seemed far away from Canada, thus the Britisher fights for self-preservation; two, the British rating is told by his government to fight whether he likes it or not and all personnel are treated in a similar manner in contradistinction to the Canadian system which regards the average fighting man as a hero and martyr while a fair enough war effort is constituted by doing without as much candy as one likes and by sending cigarettes to the boys overseas. This latter makes for dissatisfaction. It is a regrettable fact that Canada’s most widely advertised and best known contribution to World War II has been the “Zombie”. I’m not being self-righteous because I realize that I’m in the Navy only because I didn’t wish to join the army.

The Atlantic Ocean February 7<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> 1944

Sorry about the above philosophy; guess I must have been tired.

Had an interesting experience just now. Gave a Chinaman from the oiler alongside his injections for syphilis. The Captain brought him over. Think the Captain's Dutch but he talks like a Frenchman. Anyway, his conversation ran thus: "Doctor you should have been here (Yokahama) in peace time. You go ashore to \_\_\_\_2, have a hot bath – they have a fire under the tub while you're in it; then if you want a woman you have her, if not you have a massage; then two geisha girls take you to a room and cook your meal and sing to you; then you go to bed with a woman if you want one. In the morning they shave you, cut your hair and give you another massage, all for 25 bok. Then, you go to work feeling like sit." Oh, to be here in peace time that was!

Now the Atlantic Ocean. Four D.E.'s sailed from Halifax Feb 7<sup>th</sup>. Each had about 30 R.N. ratings, 12 Canadian ratings, English officers and a couple of Canadian officers for passage. There was also a Canadian M.O. in each. I had been out in Moorsom a few times for gun trials and knew that she had quite a decent roll so had procured a bottle of R.C.N. seasick tablets. Took two of these prior to slipping and they made my mouth dry for the first day or so. The North Atlantic swell was at its best under leaden skies and for most of the trip I felt drowsy with a slight headache but no gastrointestinal upset. The diesels failed a couple of times during the voyage but were repaired within an hour each time. These ships receive their motive power entirely from diesels, so when the engines fail, the ship stops. The second occasion was in the belt of highest submarine activity and we had to fire a couple of rockets during the night to attract the attention of the other ships. Apparently this gave the watch keepers a funny feeling in the pits of their stomachs but I was sleeping peacefully and wouldn't have known that such a procedure was dangerous anyway.

I spent most of my days and all of my nights in my bunk – an upper in a double cabin. Didn't miss any meals but often had to take them in the corner of the wardroom seated on the desk in order to keep the food in the dish. Usually managed to visit sick bay daily. Was called back one day to examine a rating who had only escaped being washed over the side by the fact that his leg had been stopped by a guard rail. The leg was tender to touch, a bit swollen and slightly bruised. He could stand on it without undue pain. Put him to bed with provisional diagnosis of severe bruise. In the ensuing days he remained in his bunk most of the time but got

up to go the the heads with no complaints and as the hematoma spread I began to suspect at most a chip fracture. When he was finally x-rayed, fractures of the tibia and fibula were discovered with the bones in perfect alignment. So much for accurate diagnosis by a seasick M.O.

Destroyer escorts were certainly built for efficiency and not for comfort, not the type of ship suitable for an epicurean like me. The medical & technical gear is quite good but the bunks & mattresses are hard, the cabins small & stuffy and the wardroom most inadequate for entertainment purposes. I decided not to stay in Moorsom even if asked.

On the evening of Feb 14<sup>th</sup> the coast of Ireland came into view & we sailed up the river Foyle past the lights of Moville to tie up alongside another D.E. at Lissehalle(?) a few miles from Londonderry. On the Ulster side of the river was total blackout as opposed to the Eire side where peace reigned supreme in Ireland?

#### “A Little Bit of Heaven” for One Day Feb 15<sup>th</sup>

On landing on the 14<sup>th</sup> having not touched mother earth for seven days I felt the need for exercise so persuaded another Canadian to go for a walk in the dark. We went ashore, scrambled up some banks to what appeared to be a pasture & began walking along through the grass. Luckily we finally observed some deep pits in the fields & thinking we might be in a grave yard turned on our torches. We were surprised to find ourselves in the midst of camouflaged gun emplacements, slit trenches etc. but no one seemed to be on guard so we beat a hasty retreat to a nearby road which we walked and managed to get lost. By enquiry we found our way back to the ship about midnight.

The following morning disclosed Ireland in all its beauty. The grass was the greenest I'd ever seen, it rained for a few drops every half hour and afterwards rainbows would appear. The dialect of the Ulster people was the softest & sweetest rendition of the English language that I'd ever heard; what a change from the dirty snow of Halifax at ten degrees below zero!

In the afternoon two of us decided to see Derry. We walked from Lissehalle on a road along the side of which were thatch-covered cottages and one small pond with white swans, to the main highway from which we hitch hiked into the City.

Derry is the enibriates paradise. One cannot stumble without falling into a pub. Had my first Guinness to-day and altho' it was quite palatable I would just at leave have a coke. We visited a bank to change some money, tried to find a gift shop in the maize of pubs in which we had to take refreshment during the intensive search, saw a few places of historic interest and wound up at an officers club for dinner. After dinner saw a flick and then tried to find our way to the railway station which was located on the other side of the river.

Derry will always hold a tender spot in my heart because in that city for the only time in my thirty years of existence I was publicly solicited by a female. I'll have to admit the blackout was very effective so perhaps she couldn't see my righteous profile; on the other hand it may be my lack of sex appeal that had been responsible for my score of nil until that time.

We finally found the station via the pub routine – drink & ask – and returned safely aboard ship after a smoky ride in a 3<sup>rd</sup> class carriage.

On the morning of Feb 16<sup>th</sup> about 400 ratings & 10 officers (all Canadians) bid farewell to the D.E.s & we set out for Greenoch. The first leg of the journey was from Londonderry to Larne by rail.

### Ireland to Scotland in the Most Uncomfortable Way Possible

Our journey through Northern Ireland was uneventful. Some talked, some played cards, others slept. The scenery was drab but perhaps this was due the constant drizzle of rain.

We reached Larne about 5 p.m. & then the fun began. Everyone was hungry & everyone has his complete kit to carry. If you dropped your kit it had to be in a mud puddle so it was a battle between a clean intact kit & the stomach: of course the stomach won. Nothing seemed to

be organized as far as the naval party was concerned and by the time we had had a cup of tea & some uncooked pastry & embarked everyone's gear, we had kept the ferry two hours late in sailing. We saw the last of Ireland as the ferry slipped after dark and began a somewhat choppy voyage across the North Channel of the Irish Sea to Stranraer in Bonnie Scotland.

Stranraer was not so bonnie. Arrived about 10 p.m. & were told the train was late & would leave about midnight. In the meantime we were to pile our bags in the open (still raining) and march to some place a couple miles away for a hot meal. After a mental calculation I decided that the energy derived from a meal would not equal that expended in walking four miles through the rain. Besides we could keep dry under the station platform & there was a sort of lunch counter there at which one might purchase some sustenance. The lunch counter idea proved to be a flop: too many other people had seen the light before me: however I did keep partially dry. Thank God someone had a bottle of rum. It was almost as cold as Halifax.

The train finally arrived about two a.m. By this time we were all either asleep on our feet or flaked out somewhere in the pile of luggage. We crawled into the carriages & fell into the arms of Morpheus once more until we were awakened at Greenock, our destination in a grey dawn at six a.m.

#### Greenock – One Reason Canada Has So Many People of Scottish Descent

Our Scottish officer in Wager has told me a story of the country's early history, which is difficult to comprehend. Apparently many years ago some foreign King sailed to Greenock & Gourock with an army intending to conquer the inhabitants. These latter stalwarts however set upon the invaders, massacred many of them & sent the remnants fleeing away across the seas. If they had only known enough when the battle was finished to load their household goods into the enemy ships & escape themselves, I'm sure they would have left a much happier progeny: however the Scotch are notoriously stubborn & slow to see the light. Perhaps my red blood corpuscles have not absorbed enough of the national beverage or perhaps H.M.C.S. Niobe in Feb & March of 1944 had a grating effect upon my emotions: I don't know.

We were transported in lorries & station wagons to the administration block of Niobe, a former mental institution. The officer of the watch assigned us to various sleeping quarters and as he went down the list mentioning that certain officers would be quartered in “The Barn”, I became slightly apprehensive but sighed with relief when I found that I was to live in “The Annex”. I sighed later when I saw my room in “The Annex”. I also mentioned a few unprintable terms of endearment but was too tired to go back & complain. Found out later that complaining effected no response anyway. My cabin had no light, no hook or rail for a coat: it boasted of one bed, one mattress, one blanket and one chair: that was all. I fell into bed, pulled my blanket & great coat over me and slept again. War certainly was Hell.

About nine o'clock next morning I was awakened & told to report to a pay Lt. He informed me that I would leave for London the following day and it would be as well to collect all my gear in preparation. When I asked if some more commodious accommodation were available I was told to consider myself lucky that I hadn't been sent to Niobe II. I fully agreed with him later in the day when I saw Niobe II, a collection of Nissen huts floating in a sea of mud about ten miles from nowhere in an old pasture. Spent most of the 18<sup>th</sup> renewing old acquaintances in the hospital where I found that the medical officers were having difficulties professionally comparable to my personal ones in “The Annex”. Niobe had apparently been struggling against red tape for some time and was on the verge of breaking loose and accomplishing something at last. There were definite signs of growing pains and when I returned two months later I was agreeably astonished at the progress that had been made throughout the entire institution.

On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, nearly all of us who had made the memorable trip from Ireland stood ready packed to leave for the “Heart of the Empire”. Everyone went except me. I was told that I would relieve on the M.O.'s in the hospital while he took a two weeks course. I said a few words under my breath & smiled sweetly in grateful acknowledgement well knowing that if I appeared to relish the idea, they would get rid of me in double quick time. The job I had in mind seemed miles away. How was I to know that it was building practically within reach?

The following two weeks passed quite quickly. I was surprised to find that I enjoyed my medical cases, the staff was very congenial & faced difficulty & lack of apparatus with a grin and ingenuity; besides I was now quartered in an officer's cabin in the hospital. Went to Glasgow a few times to hear symphony concerts & met many old friends. Finally about March 6<sup>th</sup> I was ready to journey to London like Dick Wittington – practically penniless – but I had no cat.

#### London – The First Time – March 1944

Gear was always a problem during the days of no permanent address. I hadn't a great deal – just enough that could be carried in one trip with great difficulty: it consisted of one sea bag, one gladstone bag enveloped in my life jacket, two small canvas bags and my respirator & tin hat. Equipped with this I left Greenock at 1900 about March 6<sup>th</sup> & traveled to Glasgow Central Sta.; of course my train would have to leave from St. Enochs Sta., so I journeyed thither in a lorry & finally found my berth for the night, an upper bunk in a 3<sup>rd</sup> class carriage.

Spent an uncomfortable night trying to keep warm beneath one thin blanket & my great coat & arrived in Euston Sta. about 0800 next morning. Some other Canadian officers had traveled down in a different section of the same train, so I waited for them; we called a hotel, booked reservations & took a taxi there.

The Montague Hotel in Montague St. opposite the British Museum was “reserved for junior officers & elderly highly respectable civilians”. I think their card ran a caption like that. Anyway it was reasonable, 10/6 for bed & breakfast & about ten minutes from Piccadilly by tube.

Bathed, shaved, breakfasted, slept, lunched & with another chap set out via the Holburn tube for Piccadilly & S.C.N.O.L. Waited for an hour or so in S.C.N.O.L. for some 2 ½ exec who made an appointment for me with M.D.G. for the next morning and then I was free to look around.



London is the city with the most forceful personality that I've ever visited. It's citizens just take for granted that it is the be all & end all of cities, the centre of the world and several childhood years of British history had left such a marked impression of what I should see that I felt almost as if I had been here before.

That afternoon I wandered about & took great delight in losing myself and inquiring my way from the ever polite and talkative Bobby on the street corner. I did manage to discover Queens House wherein M.D.G.'s headquarters was located. Returned to the hotel, had dinner, a stroll through a small nearby park and retired early.

Next morning I waited almost 2 hrs for my interview with Surg. Rear Admiral Malone. Was finally admitted & asked what I would like in the way of an appointment. When I answered "A new fleet destroyer" I was asked why to which I gave all the reasons I could muster on the spur of the moment. The result was that I was promised one that was commissioning at the end of the month. Then I was asked how two weeks leave would suit me, to which I replied that one week would be quite sufficient. I was nearly broke & already overdrawn with the paymaster. The conversation ended with my being told to report to Chatham barracks on March 13<sup>th</sup> & await my appointment there.

During this first week in London I visited Westminster Abbey, St. Pauls, Madame Tussieu's wax exhibition, saw Buckingham Palace, Parliament buildings, & many places of world renown & historical significance. I was on my own most of the time & lived within my budget by avoiding night life & places of amusement. There were so many Americans in London that one had to line up for hours to see a decent play or movie and beer was almost impossible to those who weren't familiar with the city. I did derive a working knowledge of how to get about in the city & where various places were to be found. This stood me in good stead later when the population was much reduced due to the advent of buzz bombs and the European invasion, and pubs were practically deserted. I entrained for Chatham from Victoria Sta. on Mon March 13<sup>th</sup>.

Chatham Barracks March 1944

Arrived in Chatham shortly after lunch & took a taxi to the barracks. Was much impressed with the size of the institution. Was told in the officer's mess that I would live in St. Mary's block. This turned out to be a Nissen hut & my bunk was beside a stove. If we wanted to be warm enough we lit a fire & choked with smoke, so as a result we usually avoided the hut as much as possible & put up with the cold when we had to be there. Our lavatory was in another hut about fifty yards away so in order to have a bath we had to run from one to the other partially dressed. The wardroom was about half a mile away. In all it was a bit inconvenient. After a week in St. Mary's I obtained a cabin in the officer's mess which I shared with several toothies (dental officers); then I lived in relative luxury for the remainder of my sojourn in Chatham.

There were about 20 of us Surg. Lts. awaiting draft chits in Chatham. Most were new sentries but several of us were seeking re-appointment. Jim Routeledge was the only other Canadian M.O. The medical work was almost nil. My first job consisted of taking the sick parade at St. Mary's daily. This consumed about two hours time from 9-11 each morning and certain nights I had to sleep in various parts of the barracks as an air raid precaution. German planes came over infrequently & not many ventured forth at any one time; however Britain had learned to be prepared at all times. Most of our leisure hours were spent in the billiard room which contained four beautifully smoothed tables. In the evenings we sometimes visited the local pubs & variety shows.

During my second week in Chatham I took a gas course which was slightly interesting but occupied most of the daylight hours at least. Almost every day huge fleets of aircraft roared south to attack the French Coast & German occupied Europe. I saw L.C.T.s, L.C.M.s, & L.C.I.s for the first time in Chatham.

Towards the end of the second week I received a signal to report to H.M.S. Wager in Glasgow on the 27<sup>th</sup>. This made me very happy for I was to have some spot at last with a semi-permanent address. No one knew what kind of ship it was; some suggested a Woolworth carrier & others an Admiralty tug. I didn't care. At least it was a sea-going job & a few days previously one M.O. had been appointed to a sick bay ashore in Archangel for two years.

## Glasgow & Wager Prior to Commissioning

This city of fog, rain & smoke presented itself to my blurred vision on the morning of March 27<sup>th</sup>. First I reported to H.M.S. Spartiate in the St. Enoch's hotel. Here I was vaccinated, told how to find lodgings & informed that Wager or J 1603 was building in John Browns at Clydebank. Booked a room in the hotel for one night, reserved accommodation in the Officers Club situated near Glasgow University and set out to find my ship.

John Brown's is one of the largest ship building concerns in the British Isles. Its reputation for sound construction ranks high in the Royal Navy. The shipyards extend for a mile or so along the north shore of the Clyde and in the maize of cranes, derricks & steel girders not a foot of space is waste. The Queen Mary was built in this yard and when I arrived on March 27<sup>th</sup>, three destroyers and what was to be the world's largest battleship were under construction while several cruisers & destroyers were being repaired.

On arrival I inquired at the gate for Wager or J 1603 & no one seemed to have heard of such an insignificant entity but I was told it might be along the waterfront somewhere. I set out in that general direction & walked aboard a fairly large ship which seemed to be in the last stages of completion & looked like none that I'd ever seen before. It turned out to be H.M.C.S. Prince Henry, an A.M.C. Further search revealed three destroyers in various degrees of readiness lying side by side in the Clyde. The outboard ship was swarming with dockyard maties some almost moving while the majority flaked out dozing or smoking. By perseverance I discovered from one of them that this was job number 1603 & that one of the ship's officers might be around somewhere. I walked around for half an hour or so & at last bumped into the Gunner (T).

Guns conducted me to a dingy office in a building near the gate & here I was introduced to the Cptn, No. 1 pilot, the G.P.B. & another sub. Met Chief an hour or so later. The Cptn. said he had requested that I be sent a week before commissioning so that I might take a short cypher course from the Wren cypher Officers in Spartiate. This sounded interesting so I replied that I had always wanted to know how cyphers were made up & broken. Then, the Cptn. said that

M.O.'s in destroyers usually kept the wine accounts & he would be glad if I would assume that responsibility. Another Canadian Surg. had told me that the proper reply to this was the confession that I have always been unable to understand arithmetic and that the conversion of dollars to pounds, shillings & pence was utterly beyond my comprehension. I ventured forth of this explanation but it turned out later to be wasted effort. Was also told to find out if my medical supplies had arrived.

The course was disappointing but this was no fault of the fair instructresses. A sub also had to attend the lessons with me & he was a neurotic young man who persisted in asking foolish questions which must have aggravated the Wrens until they were as glad to see us go as I was to escape. Chief told me it was all right because he had been cyphering for the past four years & we'd be doing them together in the ship.

Wager was to be commissioned on Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Before that date our As.C.O., the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. & 2 midships arrived as well as several P.O.s. On Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> the ship appeared much as she had when I first viewed her. Maties were slowly moving about, no one hurrying and it looked to me as if we'd surely be held up for a further week at least, however on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> there she lay spic & span, entirely finished as if a fairy had waived a magic wand during the hours of darkness.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> the advance party of ratings arrived including cooks & stewards. The wines, tobacco & minerals also appeared that day & began my job as wine caterer. My medical supplies were still missing in transit somewhere so I obtained some antiseptics & bandages by local purchase. The skies as usual were teeming & the prospect for decent commissioning weather was very remote.

#### Commissioning & Trials at Greenock – April '44

Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup> dawned in a deluge of rain which maintained a steady drizzle for most of that day. About 200 troops arrived and we all moved our gear into the ship and tried to stow it.

In the afternoon the chaplain of the Fleet arrived & we had a simple commissioning service in the forward mess deck. In the evening we had a party for docky and officials in the wardroom.

Our real commissioning celebration was scheduled for the evening of Apr. 4<sup>th</sup>. I invited two charming ladies who devoted a good deal of their time to the efficient management of the officers Club. We conversed pleasantly for a couple of hours sipping the P.O. steward's cocktails; then they decided to leave. Many other respectable people left about the same time, the Cptn's wife taking her husband by the arm & leading him out of the ship. Then the party began and – well nearly all subsequent parties in Wager have been like the latter end of the first one: such is the price we pay for having a steward who cannot resist the temptation to mix things.

About April 5<sup>th</sup> we said farewell to Glasgow & sailed up the river to the Firth of Clyde opposite Greenoch; from where our trials were to take place for two weeks. Several of John Brown's foreman & technicians remained aboard to finish odd jobs & to see that the ship was seaworthy. My medical supplies arrived & to my mind were inadequate so I spent much time scavenging Canadian medicines & equipment from Niobe & signing forms in quintuplicate. During this time the wardroom officers decided they would like to meet some Canadian nurses so I arranged a party which was a success I think; my memory is not quite clear concerning the events of that evening.

Finally about the middle of the month, the Admiralty accepted & signed for H.M.S. Wager as seaworthy & we sailed for Scapa Flow to undergo our "working up" period.

#### Scapa & "Work Ups", Apr-May 1944

Scapa Flow is a system of waterways among many small Islands of the Orkney group. These islands presented a rolling countryside of heather & grass, and an occasional hill thrusts a rounded summit into skies which are usually cloudy grey and wet. Small stone farmhouses are sparsely scattered throughout the islands and the farmers raise vegetables and some livestock.

The British Navy during thirty-odd years of occupation has managed to erect a few storehouses & offices, workshops, canteens (the most important) and dilapidated playing fields for sports. Quite a number of Wrens were living in the base.

Two sister ships of our flotilla-to-be had preceded us & with them & our depot ship, Tyne, we enjoyed many congenial evenings in the days ahead. The flotilla Gunnery & Torpedo officers came aboard & lived with us while we practiced firing our guns, running our torpedoes, oiling at sea & many other jobs in which perfection was a necessity if we were to become an efficient, fighting unit. While we were based on Scapa two other "W" destroyers arrived making a total of five with two to come. Ourselves & Whelp, which immediately followed us, formed one sub division & in subsequent days we usually traveled together.

For recreation ashore we played games, went for walks and drank beer in the Officer's club, which had recently been opened primarily for destroyers. This club was comfortably equipped with a billiard room, a bar & reading room combined, and a restaurant. It was one of the brighter spots and provided an incentive for going ashore.

#### Our First Op – Off Norway, May 1944

Our first operation was a prototype of nearly all that were to follow while we were based in Scapa Flow. These usually consisted of the dispatch of two aircraft carriers, Victorious & Furious escorted by a cruiser & several destroyers to a point about 50 miles off the Norwegian coast which planes of the fleet air arm would try to seek out and destroy enemy shipping and installations. The weather was usually chilly but not bitter, we were well protected in our duffel coats and in calm seas these voyages were quite pleasant.

During this first trip however the sea was quite rough and a fair percentage of the ships company was suffering from mal de mer. In addition the carriers were of the smaller Woolworth type from which flying is much more difficult than from the larger flight decks of the fleet carriers. I remember that I was feeling a bit unsteady and trying to avoid a gastric turnover by keeping flat on my back on the wardroom settee as much as possible.

The first striking force of planes flew off about 0900 & were due back 3 hrs later. Meanwhile the wind came up to gale force (about force 80 & when the aircraft returned & we did our 20 knots into the wind for flying on, the ship was rolling & pitching like a water-logged log – mostly under water.

One of the returning planes signaled that it had been hit by A.A. fire & could not land and the pilot was told to crash dive his plane near us & bail out. He did this drifting slowly down in his parachute but on reaching the surface of the sea, was caught by the wind had dragged along being unable to unfasten himself from the chute. We made several attempts for over an hour to rescue him. The gale was now force 10 and we were within twenty yards of the green splash with yellow centre on 2 or 3 occasions. Grappling lines were thrown, a whaler's crew was sent away (I personally never expected to see it's members again) but the boat could not approach sufficiently near the flier. We were finally told to give up & rejoin the fleet. I think the pilot had been killed when pulled through the water on first landing because at our first approach within the first ten minutes his head was bent forward in the water: however we all felt very discouraged to think that we should never know but what we might have saved him with a bit of luck & decent weather.

On our way to rejoin the fleet at 30 knots, the ship fairly flew through sea & sky and one of the crew slipped & fell on his right shoulder. I was asked to come at once & attend to a dislocated rt. shoulder in the T.S. (gunnery control transmitting station). On arrival I found the advance diagnosis to be correct, gave the patient morphia & waited until the pain was relieved. An attempt at Kocher's method of reduction availed nothing except pain so lay on my back, put my foot against the patient's side near the axilla & pulled. After what seemed like hours I felt the head of the humerus give & slip into the glenoid cavity. We put him to bed in the Cptn's day cabin because the upper deck could not be navigated in such a storm. Immediately afterwards my stomach gave way to the inevitable. I had been forced to lie in the products of similar accidents while reducing the dislocation.

At the conclusion of this first operation Heaven itself could not have looked more appealing than Scapa Flow. Took my patient to hospital ashore & found that he had fractured the greater tuberosity of his humerus as well at the time of dislocation. I was not surprised.

#### Spitzbergen, June 1944

Our one unusual & quite the most interesting trip was made in company with the cruiser Jamaica and our sister destroyer Whelp to Spitzbergen in the far north for the relief of the garrison there. The cruiser was loaded with one year's garrison supplies and a few score Norwegians who would take over the wireless sta. until their reliefs appeared a year later.

We set out for the Faroe Is., which would be our last oiling base. These Is. owed sovereignty to Denmark but since the war had been taken over by the British. The attitude of the inhabitants toward us varied; some were politely friendly while others were definitely not pleased to see us. I was lucky to get ashore & this was made possible only through an unfortunate accident to a petty officer who fractured a bone in his hand. A fairmile was sent from the main seaport to our ship (about 10 miles upstream) to transport us to the army hospital for an x-ray. While waiting for the results I did some shopping (there was no rationing) & talked to a few civilians who could speak English. When the fracture had been set & encased in plaster we pushed off in the fairmile back to the ship. While we had been away one of the stokers had suffered a sharp pain in his right inguinal region and the M.O. from Whelp had reduced a strangulated hernia for him.

The following day at sea a seaman began to experience generalized abdominal pain accompanied by vomiting. His temperature was normal so I diagnosed him as seasick and gave him excuse duty. The following morning the pain had localized to the rt. lower quadrant of his abdomen, he was acutely tender over McBurney's point and his temperature was slightly elevated. I returned him to sick bay, allowed him only water by mouth & wondered what I should do next. I had two sterilizers, one a spirit one which exploded starting a fire in sick bay every time it was lit & and an electric one which didn't work at all; I hadn't sufficient instruments for an appendectomy; anyway I decided to sit on him for a few hours & see what happened. His leucocyte count was slightly elevated. The third morning, temperature was



normal, pulse normal, & pain almost gone; I decided that this was a case of subsiding appendicitis; however in the afternoon, the pain returned accompanied by an abnormal rise of temp & pulse and the W.B.C. was doubled. We had arrived in Spitzbergen then & were alongside the cruiser; so the patient was transferred and while the supplies were being sent ashore three of us proceeded to open the patient's abdomen. We found a ruptured appendix. He had an uneventful post-operative recovery and the appendix was removed later.

After the operation I went ashore in the motor boat to look at the scenery. There was not much to see except snow, rock, barracks, and a battle scarred coal mine where I believe Canadian troops had battled with Germans & where at a later date German warships had poured a few salvos at their opponents. There was the wreckage of one Messerschmidt on a sandbar.

The return journey was uneventful. Spitzbergen from what we could see appeared to be composed of mountain ranges of snow & glaciers. Various types of sea birds flew about, the sun set about 0330 & rose an hour later, I took several snap shots at 0230. We returned to Scapa with one souvenir, an Eskimo husky puppy six weeks old.

#### The Battle of Scapa Flow – June 1944

Better left unwritten.

#### Leave – London – Edinburgh – Glasgow – Greenoch Including the Battle of Great Harbour

About July 1<sup>st</sup> we arrived in great Harbour, Greenoch & tied up alongside the depot ship Sandhurst. D day of the invasion of Normandy had found us doing a boiler clean in Scapa Flow & since the ships of our flotilla were among the very few who did not take part in the invasion, the buzz had spread & was now confirmed that we were going to the Far East. We came to Greenoch to give two weeks foreign service leave before sailing.

I was invited to spend leave at the homes of various officers in the ship but since I had never seen a falling bomb & thinking that civilian hospitals in London, the centre of the pilotless

bomb target might be glad for temporary help, I decided to go to London first & make plans later. Accordingly most of the officers & ratings of four ships of the W class entrained for London about July 5<sup>th</sup>. Five from our wardroom met at a pub near Piccadilly the following morning one minute before opening time. I had decided to call M.D.G. & ask permission to take some surgical training in a Civilian hospital during leave so after much difficulty I called from the pub & made an appointment for that afternoon.

I haven't the faintest idea of the identity of the person with whom I fulfilled the appointment. I remember he was a civilian & convinced me that K.R. & A.I. had no clause covering surgical appointments in Civilian hospitals during leave but he would be glad to arrange a tropical medicine course for me. I had brought up the question of tropical medicine myself to further my efforts to secure a microscope for sick bay. Finally I accepted fate & agreed to try the tropical medicine. I took some detailed instructions of how to get to the school and left to find myself back in the same pub with the same people a few minutes later. We were just in time for the afternoon session.

Sometime that day we booked in at the Strand Palace Hotel & sometime we reserved a table at the Lansdowne (nightclub). The wife of one of the officers arranged a dinner party with some Wren friends of hers. This finished about midnight & we terminated the day's & night's activities by eating tins of canned fruit (bought in the Faroes) & drinking whiskey & raw eggs (smuggled off the ship). The chambermaids wondered next morning which black market we knew when they saw empty tins & egg shells scattered about our rooms.

I never did get to that tropical medicine course or to a civilian hospital – not even as a patient. Somehow something always seemed to happen. I moved back to the Montague which was a temperance hotel to see if that would help but it was only more inconvenient. It was full of Frenchmen who couldn't speak English & my oral French had never been very efficient. I did visit Hyde Park one afternoon & the Tower on another. Saw a couple of movies & variety shows. After a week my money was running so low that I decided to go to Edinburgh & economize.

The last thing I remember seeing in London was a huge billow of smoke & dust as another buzz bomb struck a mile or so away from King's Cross Sta. I had seen enough of these & was glad to get away from them. So had many others for altho' I arrived at the Sta. ten minutes early I could not get near my train: however a special was being run an hour later & I managed to get a seat in it. All London seemed to be evacuating at the same time. I stood or sat asleep on my bag in a corridor for almost half the journey to Newcastle where we changed trains. Of course the Edinburgh train was late – about five hours & instead of arriving at 10 p.m. we pulled into Princess St. Sta approximately 3 a.m. the next morning. The one object of scenic beauty which made the whole trip worth while had been the sight of the magnificent Durham Cathedral.

Fortunately I met a Scottish business man on the Edinburgh train. He also had not booked a room in any hotel. We tried several on arrival & found them all overcrowded. Finally we slept in the lounge of one for a couple of hours until daybreak. Shaved, washed, had breakfast & began a search for accommodation. There was just none to be had & in the hotels along Princess St. I was so tired I made up my mind to take the afternoon train to Glasgow & return to the ship. In the meantime I did some shopping & absorbed the scenic beauty of Edinburgh's Princess St. as well as I could. It was difficult to assimilate with tired eyes & an almost empty stomach.

My sea going haven of refuge was pleasant to look upon that evening. In the course of the next few days we were towed to Glasgow's Goven dry-dock & back. By this time people had returned from leave & the Battle of Great Harbour burst forth into a barrage of parties. These were bigger & better ones than ever before with the result that our wine allowances were stopped when only ten drinking days in the month of July had passed. We sailed for Gibraltar on the 26<sup>th</sup>, most of us in alcoholic daze.

Such is one method of spending leave: I'm sure it is not the right one: however as a reward, a few weeks later I received a printed official form stating that I had satisfactorily attended a tropical medicine course in London for ten days. Perhaps I did: I wouldn't know.

## Gibraltar – The Stairway to the Orient Aug. '44

Gibraltar is an impressive & fitting stronghold for the key to the orient. It arose from the sea blue & majestic in a soft blue haze one morning early in Aug. and that same afternoon I was introduced to the crowded streets packed with jabbering, polyglot masses of humanity that go to make up centres of civilization in the near east. Over all pervaded a variety of odours, the universal one of eastern Cities, that of amassed human excretions for untold centuries plus those of wines, fruit, flowers, coffee, and artificial scents.

We with Wakeful, a sister destroyer had escorted SS Sterling Castle, a transport loaded with evacuee women & children from Gib: these had been taken to Britain early in the war when danger to the Rock from enemy action was imminent. The rumour went that the previous group that had arrived, had caused a major riot because irate husbands found their wives returning with three or four children where they had gone away with only one or two: however our group must have been of a different character or else husbands had become accustomed to the inevitable for no untoward incidents happened to us as far as I know.

We stayed in Gib. for a week during which we went swimming nearly every afternoon at Sandy Bay on the Mediterranean side of the Rock, we wine tasted several times at Sacones until I am sure they were sick at the sight of me, we loaded the ship with the best Spanish sherry, ate all the fruit our stomachs could hold, danced at the yacht club, sipped John Collins in the Capital where a girl danced with castanets to some dubious music, visited other ships etc. I met two Canadian Docs. from Toronto, visited a hospital half way up the Rock & had a fly by the fleet air arm over Gib, Spain, & N. Africa.

The Gunner who had an intimate knowledge of Gib. introduced me to an Indian souvenir shop & gave me lessons in oriental bartering.

This was a very interesting week & we were sorry to leave when two more ships of our flotilla arrived escorting the battleship Ramilles. We slipped one afternoon, joined forces after sunset & set course for Algiers.

#### Algiers – The Perfect Run Ashore – Aug '44

We arrived off Algiers one morning near midday and entered its harbour which swept in a gradual concave curve facing the sea and which was built up of white stone buildings on a higher level shoreside. All ships of our group were fortunately tied up alongside the jetty and early in the afternoon, three of us M.O.s in our capacities as wine caterers, proceeded ashore to see what the market had to offer. We had not gone far when great warehouses obstructed our way, so we entered & tried to explain in pidgin French that we had come from afar to buy wines but would like to sample the wares before purchase. This request was granted with all celerity and to our amazement & apprehension, great beakers of vin rouge, vin blanche, & vin rosier were thrust upon us. After an hour or so of such innocent amusement we sought our way to the office above and opened negotiations for purchase. We were told to return with empty bottles & they would be filled for us.

Accordingly we walked to the motor transport pool on the jetty & asked the officer in charge for a car to visit the local naval or military hospital to discover what precautions we must take to avert malaria & other tropical diseases. He was a bit difficult at first but later relented as the tears rolled down our faces while we related the deleterious effect our lack of knowledge might have on the health of our ships companies.

Later in a car loaded with empty bottles we found that our warehouse only sold to wholesalers: however they gave us the address of a retailer who would be happy to accommodate us. The driver found the retail wine store and then ensued a lively discussion while the proprietor agreed to accept some of our bottles but refused others. Our business was finally concluded & we returned to our ships with the wine.

That evening I was late in getting ashore & by the time I arrived at the Hotel Alette from whence all our expeditions began, the rest of our crowd had disappeared: however I found a Br. M.O. rather the worse for wear & began talking to him. After a few minutes of conversation he collapsed so I was forced to do the decent thing & assist him back to his ship. That ordeal completed, weariness urged me to seek my bunk & sleep only to be disturbed several hours later by an inebriated mid who insisted in rolling on the desk while he extolled the virtues of some performance called “the Exhibishe”.

The following morning was Sunday & we went to the naval Chapel in a warehouse on the jetty. After church we asked the transport officer of the day before aboard for noontime gin. He was so impressed with our gin that he gave us a lorry that afternoon to take us swimming. This traveled about 20 miles into Algerian countryside through olive groves & vineyards tended by Arabs and arrived at a sandy Mediterranean beach flanked on one side by a hotel where one could sit in the shade drinking wine & eating delicious peaches. The beach itself was crowded with French females in attractive bathing costumes. We said adieu in the late afternoon.

That evening three of us decided to see the town. We began in the Alette to get up flying speed and nine o'clock, the official closing time found us in a small café miles away drinking coffee & cognac. The café locked up for the night & we were compelled then either to return to the ship or seek the more unorthodox places of business. Somehow we discovered the latter first. I remember being dragged from a wine house because I had decided I didn't like the fat French proprietor. Later we walked into “the Sphinx”, the most popular brothel reserved for ratings in the afternoons, officers in the evenings. The hag who tended the door was the perfect caricature of a witch from MacBeth. It was in this establishment that “the Exhibishe” was enacted. We talked to a couple of subs from our flotilla who wanted to borrow money to see the fun: while we were explaining that we were flat, a Can. R.C.A.F. officer came through a door & I entered into conversation with him only to discover that he hailed from the same small Ontario hamlet as my wife. I decided to leave & dragged my two companions along.

We entered a few other places of doubtful reputation & terminated the evening in the Arab quarter arguing with a group of white sheeted Mohammedans about the prices they were charging for a pile of watermelons.

The next day we left Algiers. It was just as well.

#### Malta & Old Lace Aug. '44

Four "W" class destroyers escorted Ramilles to a rendezvous 50 miles south of Corsica where she was taken over by some "T"s, to bombard southern France during the invasion there a few days later. For this effort we were credited in an official publication as having taken part in the invasion of Southern France and qualified for the Italy medal.

After we left Ramilles we set course for Malta and passed such interesting North African cities as Bizerta & Tunis: however I slept thru all this but awakened in time to see Pantellaris, the most completely bombed island on earth at that time. The following day we passed thousands of landing craft on their way to the attack: then Gozo hove in sight quickly followed by Malta. We tied to a jetty in Dockyard Creek on the opposite side of the harbour from Valette during the late afternoon.

Malta had been photographed so frequently during the war that in the evening when I went ashore with the Gnr, many of the sights seemed familiar. The City had certainly been bombed unmercifully but the adaptability & resilience of the inhabitants was remarkable. Business was being carried on briskly in all sorts of partially demolished buildings & the people seemed cheerful & happy. The lift from the water to the ramparts of Valetta was working fortunately & on arriving at the top we walked through the town & found some briar pipes & cigarette holders. These were difficult to obtain at the time. A few cool drinks gave us the courage to walk through "The Gut", the peace-time shady side of Maltese civilization, but everything was very quiet. A shop which sold fine lace made by a famous convent displayed its wares for our perusal: however we deferred purchase until we had looked further. The lift had ceased operations for the night when we returned so we walked down the thousand & one steps

& were taken back to the dockyard in a dghaisa (a small boat size & shape of a canoe highly decorated & propelled by twisting an oar in the stern).

The naval hospital in Malta comprises several separate buildings spread out in a flower strewn park on the summit of Bighi Is. I visited it the following morning to collect medical supplies. In the afternoon we had a cricket match in what appeared to be a stone quarry. The sun beat down relentlessly on the white rock & only a case of cool beer made the game bearable. That evening some of us were invited to a dance in the E.R.A.'s club which had been partially obliterated by bombing. After the purchase of some lace in a dilapidated shop situated in a small out of the way street, we found the club with its bar where beer seemed unlimited. In the adjoining hall room the dance was in full swing and those who cared, could weave about the floor with young Maltese girls some of whom could speak English fluently while others knew only a few words. The remainder of the population of Malta seemed to be watching the dance through the large, open, ground floor windows.

The next morning we began another leg of our voyage. Port of destination was Alexandria. As we passed by Valetta an Italian cruiser was tying up to a jetty. It seemed fitting that its crew, almost blood brothers of the Maltese should now be prisoners of the people they had bombed for so long.

#### Alexandria – The Seat of Learning – What? Aug '44

That ancient seat of learning, Alexandria, seems to rise flat out of the Med. & presents itself with amazing rapidity. First you see a lighthouse on the horizon, then some palm trees & in a flash the harbour & City are there. This City's present claim to culture is exemplified by the first greeting you receive on stepping ashore: a sniveling, skulking male, he may be of any race, approaches you & inquires whether your interests extend as far as dirty pictures: if they don't & you are of a more practical frame of mind, his little brother & little sister, his father, mother, uncles, aunts, cousins & all his friends will be only too happy to satisfy your utmost wants of a sexual nature for a price of course.



Luckily we tied to a buoy in the harbour. I'm sure if we had been alongside, the ship would have been stolen en masse by nightfall. Swarms of feluccas (single-sailed twenty foot boats) charged down on us & wanted to do our hobeying, mend our shoes, sell us sandals etc, or take us ashore for one acker (Jack's term for the piastre). We got rid of them with a fire hose.

Our stay in Alex. lasted for about one week during which the famous Mohammedan feast of Ramadan was being observed by some Egyptians & all Arabs. To reach the central portion of the City where the shopping district & places of amusement were located we had to traverse the Arab quarter. Here amid dingy, filthy, malodorous alleys thousands of dusky evil countenanced Arabs existed in the uttermost squalor & poverty along with chickens, sheep & cattle. This district had a bad reputation & we were warned never to pass through it alone either on foot or in a taxi or gherry (horse-drawn vehicle which holds four passengers). The price of life in the Arab quarter was extremely cheap. A good wristwatch was of infinitely more value. Passing along these streets at sunset one would hear the Mohammedan call to prayer broadcast from a mosque & amplified artificially. Then the streets would be almost deserted & white clad figures could be seen bowing towards Mecca from the roof balconies.

The Med. beaches of Alex. were crowded every afternoon with hordes of people representing almost every nationality on earth. Some days we added our quota & other days we enjoyed the fresh water pool of the Alex. Sporting Club where all athletes could be indulged & social amenities abounded. In the evenings we could go to one of the service clubs or enjoy the gay nightlife from cabaret to nightclubs. In these latter one met the real riff raff of Egypt, the black marketers who had made fortunes from the war & were spending them in entertaining French & Greek beauties. If one only had the money!

One afternoon I took a case of atypical pneumonia to the 64<sup>th</sup> Gen. Hosp. This had been the official hosp. for the famous 8<sup>th</sup> Army but when they had left for Italy, the Navy had taken over a section of it. Here I met a Can. Naval M.O. who invited me to dinner & we spent a very pleasant evening "shooting the bull". Returned from the hospital via tram to Ali Pasha square. Arrived about 11 p.m. I then proceeded to look for a taxi with only one occupant remembering the warning to never engage a taxi alone after dark if it contained two people. Found one open

touring job with a driver & little boy who I suppose was the son & heir. Having settled back in nervous apprehension all ready to jump & run if any funny work were attempted, I was surprised to hear the little boy (about eight years old I suppose) ask; “Meester, when you think the war end?”

Jokingly I answered “To-morrow.”

“Bad day for Egypt when war end.”

“Why?”

“We all be poor again..”

“You’re all too rich now.”

“No. You rich Enleeshman. Egyptian poor. You make \$100 a month. Meester, when you become Mohammedan?”

“Oh, when the war ends, I guess”. Laughing.

“No, you no become Mohammedan. You burn when you die.”

Of all the Egyptians I met, this was the only one who didn’t try to sell something or steal something & who was most interesting. We returned to the jetty & I was sorry the trip was finished. I was not sorry to leave Alex.

#### The Suez Canal, Port Suez & Aden Aug-Sept ‘44

The Suez Canal is not especially attractive. It is as a thin blue string stretched almost straight across a hilly sand table with a few specks of green along one side of the string and wider splashes of blue near the lower end. The green specks represent oases & wayside stations & the blue splashes are the Bitter Lakes. At the upper end of the Canal is Port Said & at the lower Port Suez.

We traversed this waterway during daylight hours having left Alexandria before dawn. I was not up in time to see Port Said & when I walked forward on the upper deck at my usual 0830 I could see pure desert on my left and the same on my right with the exception of a few trees along the water’s edge & a motor highway some yards back. At intervals of a few miles would arise wayside stations where various nature & military personnel might be observed, working, resting, or bathing. At one station there was a pure white camel: at another, one of the natives

performed gymnastics with his sexual organs for our edification & amusement. I believe this display has acquired world-wide fame & is one of the features of a Suez cruise.

The Bitter Lakes at the lower end lie dead & flat beneath a burning sun. Two captured Italian cruisers were tied to the desert at the base of a hill on which rose an impressive monument to the Anzacs of the Great War. On the opposite side of the canal lay an internment camp housing, rather tenting, thousands of European refugees so I believe. Mount Sinai of the ten commandments rose in the distance behind the camp.

Port Suez was reached at dusk & we anchored in its harbour over night. It seemed to be a sizeable City but we were not allowed ashore.

The next day we entered the Gulf of Suez & later to the Red Sea. I remember little of the latter except that it was a brilliant blue mostly & not red, that the weather was very hot & that several ominous fins could be seen gliding through the water each day. No one had a desire to go swimming outside the confines of a shark net after that.

I seem to recollect a hymn entitled “The Dreary Rocks of Aden” or words to that effect. It is no lie. Aden juts out from the western end of the southern Arabian coast as a tangle of hilly sand & rocks with sparse vegetation. Its buildings did not impress me with the exception of a small white mosque of perfect symmetry. The inhabitants were a conglomeration of Arabs, Jews, native boys from Br., Somaliland, a few white civilians and Br. troops.

We remained in this fuelling station for two days during which we bathed several times inside a shark net, bought sandals, pith helmets and coloured shirts and argued with the little beggar boys who wanted “one ana for bread, one ana for meat: no father, no mother, no brother, no sister.” We left one morning on a submarine search: a tanker had been torpedoed a few hundred miles away.

Addu Atoll & Colombo – Sept. ’44

The hunt for the submarine lasted for three or four days, carried out by our four destroyers & several frigates. No submarines were contacted but I had my first experience of being transferred at sea via whaler. An M.O. in one of the frigates had an infected hand & required medical assistance. I found his sick bay in complete readiness for opening an abscess of the thevar space so I put him to sleep with pentothal & drained the pus. When he had regained consciousness, we talked for half an hour following which I pushed off back to my own ship.

In succeeding days we crossed the equator and finally arrived in Addu Atoll, our first tropical island. Our 'crossing the line' ceremony had been deferred until we made harbour, so that evening Neptune's herald arrived aboard & told us to prepare for strange events the following afternoon. These were duely observed with great amusement to everyone and I think I can say with certainty that no one escaped including those who had crossed several times previously and some visitors to the ship who chose this inopportune moment for business, the amazed looks with which they greeted the information that they were about to be ducked, were very mirth inspiring.

Addu Atoll seemed to be a flat annular reef of sand & palms enclosing a deep lagoon in which we anchored. This seems to be true of all atolls that I have seen. I did not have time for a run ashore but heard considerable about conditions there on our way to Colombo from a passenger M.O. who traveled with us to have his yearly leave in Ceylon.

We joined the Eastern Fleet in Colombo one Sunday morning and were inspected by an Admiral. In the afternoon we took a stroll around town marveling at caste-marked Hindus with various coloured paints dabbed on their foreheads, at yellow-robed Bhuddist priests, at veiled Mohammedan women and sari-wrapped Singhalese maidens, at rickshaws, ivory and jewel shops etc. Mad Englishmen were playing cricket in the afternoon's heat while their darker-skinned neighbours looked on & grinned. Tea in the Galle Face hotel with its cool corridors, high vaulted ceilings and noiseless, black waiters gave the finishing touches to a delightful afternoon, our first in the Far East and we thirsted for a deeper penetration into the novelty of this new environment as we walked back to the ship amid, the rickshaws of wealthy Hindus, Chinese and of course "Jack" stimulating his coolie to race while he flashed a pair of ebony

elephants or a pure diamond ring for the admiration of his friends. We sailed for Trincomalee next morning.

### Trincomalee, Sept '44 - Jan '45

As I write the word Trincomalee & think of it & Ceylon in general, I feel almost homesick. I don't know why: I was certainly happy enough to leave last Jan. Perhaps it is because it was there that I first became acquainted with the East, perhaps I learned a new philosophy of life there: I don't know. I do know that in Dyatadawa where the hills of the gods rise, high, mighty & regardless of puny man, I experienced feelings within me that had not hitherto been aroused; but of that later.

Trinco could be "Jack's" paradise if more beer were available & some lovely maidens imported. In this base he can go ashore, hire a rickshaw & ride in style to a wayside fruit vendor & haggle about the price of bananas to his heart's content, eat his fruit, stop at a Chinese restaurant for "big eats", go swimming, get tattooed by a "wog" under a Banyan tree, watch a snake charmer, even buy the snake if he likes or a small monkey from a little boy, tour the native village with its toddy and arrah shops, rare jewels, ebony carvings, ivory souvenirs, horrible brothels and malodorous food shops, he can play about any sport, visit Bhuddist temples, Catholic churches, old forts, sail to jungle-covered islands & watch the wild monkeys or any other animals that happen to be present, climb palm trees for coconuts, in fact do most of these things that haunt the dreams & desires of all boys in their growing years. What is "Jack's" reaction? He'd far rather be having his "pint" in the "Red Lion" amid the fog & rain of Britain. Personally I don't believe him for if this were so, there'd be no sailors for the world's finest navy, finest because of "Jack".

During our first month in Trinco, we used to go swimming nearly every afternoon until the monsoon accompanied by its intense electrical storms, made the undertow too strong for safety. Sandy Bay was appropriately named & we would lie in the sand in complete exhaustion having been carried for fifty yards by small breakers and tossed up on the beach. Following this, we would walk to the officer's club for tea and look with envy at the shore-based, transport

officials who invariably managed to cadge any white female with the afternoon off duty. On our way back to the ship we would stop & argue with the Singhalese fruit vendor boys about the rising prices of bananas, pineapples & coconuts. These boys had an immense sense of humour & would rather bicker & laugh than sell their goods. “Jack” had so much money that he could spend no other way, that he maintained market prices of fruit at a prohibitive level for officers. These were good afternoons.

Of course, being a fleet destroyer with a consistently high record for sea time, we spent relatively little time in harbour. Many of our days were filled in escorting fleet carriers and cruisers on air strike and bombardments against Sumatra & the Nicobar Is. These trips as a whole were dull, as far as I was concerned and my time was consumed in cyphering, reading, sleeping and long discussions with Chief. We usually managed to pick up a few pilots who had to crash but fortunately none of them was ever seriously injured. I began a course of lectures in first aid to a certain proportion of the ship’s company and this helped to pass the time as well as being of benefit later.

44 years later, March ’88

#### Appendicitis & Dyatalawa, Jan ’45

My second attack of acute appendicitis occurred like the first one – at sea – and in each instance I was the only M.O. aboard. We had been on one of our trips to bomb the Nicobar Islands.

On our return to Trico. I went aboard the hospital ship Tjitjalenska and asked the duty M.O. to book an operation. He refused so I asked to see the surgeon who on adequate explanation acceded to my wishes.

At the same time another lieutenant, Jerry Kent, had a kidney problem so we boarded the hospital ship on the same day. I had my operation, Jerry had his antibiotics and after a week or so we were discharged to “sick leave” – convalescence in Dyatalawa 7000 feet up in the hills of

Ceylon. We went up by road transport and came back by train if I remember correctly. On our way up we had lunch in Kani where a young boy tried to sell us a young monkey. I almost bought it but was afraid I would lose it on admission to the convalescent ward.

Our stay in hospital was uneventful except the convalescence entailed the salubrious effect of the consumption of a quart of ale a day – Black Horse Canadian if you please. Jerry didn't like ale so to save face I downed two quarts a day. This enhanced my recovery in leaps & bounds so that in a few days we asked leave to walk to a village a few miles distant. On the way to the road ran through tea plantations and in one of these was a slow flowing clear as crystal, mountain stream. No one was around and we decided to bathe in the clean water and dry in the sunshine. While drying we discovered several black moles on our shin that seemed novel: also they moved. We had never experienced leaches before. They leave bleeding points on the skin when removed.

In the village lunch consisted of soup and dessert for me and green salad & dessert for Jerry. We returned to our convalescence & then back to our ship which in our absence had made a trip to Bombay.

In Bombay the ship had acquired among other things: cockroaches, bed bugs, weevils in the flour and VD in the troops. As we were preparing to leave Trincomalee and the Eastern Fleet for Sydney and the Pacific Fleet Jerry Kent came to sick bay complaining of abdominal pain and fever. He remained ill and confined to bed for the several days of the voyage with severe tenesmus and when we arrived at Frewantle, the results of a test done prior to leaving Ceylon proved positive for Amoebic dysentery. We were told never to eat green salad outside the ship while in the near or far east. Jerry joined the casualties that were transferred to hospital in Perth.

#### Australia, Feb '45

As we weighed anchor in Trincomalee our chief signalman Burnse who was a workaholic, very conscientious and never sick came to sick bay complaining of shoulder tip pain. His temp was 104 and the stethoscope findings suggested pneumonia & pleurisy. He had a

persistent non-productive cough so we put him in one of the sick bay bunks and treated him with our only antibiotic sulfadiazine. Burnse improved for a few days, dramatically and then settled down to a state of low grade fever, night sweats, persistent productive cough & weakness. I asked Barley, the S.B.A. to do a Ziel-Nielsen stain on Burnse's sputum. I had never seen so many tubercle bacilli even from pure cultures in medical school so I told Bailey it must be a mistake in preparation of the slide; so we did a few repeats all with the same result. Not till the engines shut off in Sydney harbour could I hear the tell-tale fine rales and percus the cavity in the upper lobe. The x-ray in hospital showed a huge cavity. Bailey and I had lived in the same small sick bay with Burnse for 3 weeks. I later found that my previously negative Mantoux skin test to tuberculosis protein had become strongly positive.

On our way to Australia our destroyer flotilla accompanied cruisers, battleships, and aircraft carriers. Our aircraft destroyed the Japanese navy planes at Palenbang in Sumatra and returned to their carriers but seven Japanese army planes came out to bomb us and these were shot down by our anti-aircraft guns. In doing so the K.G.V. put a shell into the Illustrious killing about 30 men and wounding 30 more. It was our job at Fovewaite to carry the 30 wounded from the carrier to the jetty ashore. This we did with the stretchers on our upper deck.

The Tasmon Sea between South Australia & Tasmania proved to be very rough but eventually we pulled into Sydney harbour and tied up to the jetty at Vancluse. For the first time in nine months we could enjoy good beer and the company of unlimited Caucasian females not to mention symphony concerts, good food and decent movies; but no more cheap but delicious Cheroots, bananas or body surfing.

#### Pacific War – Sakishinia Gunto, Formosa, Philippines, Mar-June '45

Our short stay in Sydney was much enjoyed apart from having to receive a few new vaccinations for Cholera, Yellow Fever etc.



Our British Pacific fleet as I remember it was made up of 2 battleships, the D of Y and KGV, 4 carriers, Illustrious, Indefatigable, Indomitable, and Victorious and various cruisers and destroyer flotillas of which ours was one. Our flotilla called New V&W's comprised Kempenfelt, the leader, and Wager, Whelp, Wakeful, Wessex, Wrangler, and Whorund. Wrangler had been damaged in the Battle of Scapa Flow and we would not see her again until after the war in Hong Kong.

We sailed north from Sydney and oiled first at Manus in the Admiralty Islands, then at Ulithi Atoll and then took up positions south of Okinawa centred on Sakeshyme Gento Island: from there we patrolled the east side of Formosa and sent our planes in to bomb installations in that island and elsewhere. I can't remember whether we bombarded the island or not. The Japanese attacked us a few times with their kamikaze suicide bombers one of which went through the flight deck sick bay of Indefatigable on Easter Sunday killing the medical officer, Al Vaughn who was a friend and classmate of mine at U. of T. We had had dinner together in Wager sometime before and Baley, my S.B.A. in Wager had been Al's S.B.A. on HMS Wooster, mined and sunk in the English Channel a few years earlier. Also on Easter Sunday a few Japanese planes flew back with ours returning from a bombing mission to Formosa. One of the planes dived on one of our destroyers and damaged it severely with loss of life to its officers and crew.

We were at sea for 3 mths, our longest stretch ever and our chief diversion aside from Kamabatsis was playing Monopoly at night. Some of our officers were allowed to exchange ships with Flat Air Arm officers from the Illustrious for a few days to break the monotony. These Flat Air Arm types always seemed to win at Monopoly and we couldn't understand why until we found out they were engaged in barefaced cheating from the word "go". After that the game became much more exciting.

On our way south from the theatre of war, VE day was declared & we celebrated by shooting of hundreds of rockets. We were diverted to the Philippines to restock provisions and refuel and pulled into anchor off Leyte beside an American supply ship whose officers were happy to trade frozen turkeys and other food for English cigarettes & booze. Had a short visit ashore at either Tacloban or Tacoma or both with our American liaison officers.

In Leyte we received orders to proceed to Sydney and then to Auckland for a 6 week refit in Devonport across the harbour from Auckland.

Six weeks leave seemed too good to be true but dutiful souls of the senior service we, braced ourselves for parties on the ship & ashore and for leisure time to enjoy the pastoral scenery of the North Island.

#### New Zealand, June & July '45

Our social introduction to Auckland was quite auspicious. The Padre from the naval base came aboard and asked the Captain for permission to arrange a party in Wager. Since we had all the ingredients for a party except female companionship the Padre just happened to know some really fine young ladies who might enjoy our company.

The party was held. My job was to supply the liquid refreshments. We had two cocktails – port and starboard. Each was made of a base of one part Australian Whiskey (awful stuff), one part Australian gin (equally awful perhaps because of wartime), one part of lemon squash, one part soda. The port variety had a bottle of cherry Brandy added and the starboard a bottle of green crème de menthe. The first sip of either of these concoctions anaesthetized the gullet so well that both drinks were fairly palatable thereafter. The effects were dramatic. We needed neither food or entertainment for the rest of the evening – only our whaler which could transport about a dozen bodies in the horizontal position. It was an enigma ashore to sort out where the bodies belonged: however our guests seemed to not tire of coming back for more.

Tobacco and spirit rationing were very strict in N.Z. Long lines of people waiting for a little of either or both and I think they required coupons to be eligible to buy.

The hospitality of New Zealanders was immense. We were invited into private homes to stay for a week or two or more. I was fortunate to go to Te Amutsi(?) to the ranch of Alan &

Billie Kay who had several hundred acres of lush green meadowland. They cared for about one thousand sheep, five hundred beef cattle and fifty race horses with the help of some young maori adults and numerous sheep dogs. I was expected to learn to ride but must confess that only the horse seemed to know what to do for which I was thankful.

We were escorted to places of interest such as Rotorua hot springs as well as initiated into the practicalities of farm life - i.e. the dogs sorting out a sheep for slaughter at a few words and gestures from Allan, the actual slaughter and dressing of the carcass and sampling the mutton two weeks after hanging. Mutton in N.Z was far superior in flavour to any lamb I had ever tasted elsewhere.

It was winter in June and everyone was quite excited one morning to find a thin layer of ice in a water bucket. We picked our lemons off the tree in the yard next to the house.

On our return to the ship we readied for our return to Sydney and after several farewell parties and sad good-byes settled down to life in Wager again.

On our journey back to England after the war we received many letters from the Padre stating that this and that young lady was pregnant and Able Seaman x & y named as the father. This annoyed the Captain and me because we had to write a letter of reply to the Padre.

#### Guam, Aug '45

On arrival back in Sydney we learned that our destroyer flotilla was to accompany KGV & D of Y to Guam where Sir Bruce Fraser, Admiral of the British Pacific Fleet would pin a medal on Admiral Chester Nimitz of the American Navy.

Accordingly we proceeded to Guam again where hospitality was exceedingly high. We were offered any material thing in the food and clothing line as lend lease and enjoyed several

social gatherings. Lined along the beach of Guam were miles of super fortress bombers wing tip to wing tip prepared for the final assault on Japan.

Near the end of August we were having a beer in the offer's mess with some news correspondents. They told us some big news was coming up which might have some effect on the war. They were so right. The atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan sued for peace.

The British Pacific Fleet was ordered to sea with the U.S 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet commanded by Admiral Halsey. We sailed into Sagami Wan or Tokyo Bay one evening and there in the distance was the beautiful silhouette of Fujiyama blocking out a good portion of the sky. It was quite humbling to see such an impressive work of nature and we could understand why the Japanese revere this monument that guards their beautiful islands.

#### Tokyo Bay – Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> '45 – 1700 hours

Arose this morning at 0600 in preparation for what I thought might turn out to be a “wild goose chase”. Shaved, dressed, breakfasted and pushed off in the boat at 0715 for H.M.S. Duke of York.

Yesterday at various times signals had arrived in the ship and been dully shown to me. These requested that I attend the peace signing in U.S.S. Missouri with C in C B. P. F, Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. My function was to represent Canada as senior Canadian present in case the officially appointed representative did not arrive in time. I was uncertain as to the authenticity of the signals supposing that I was “having my leg pulled”, but knowing no way of proving them without making a general nuisance of myself, I prepared to wait and see what would happen.

Arrived at D of Y about 0730, found the Flag Lt. to C in C & discovered that the signals were real ones after all: however, I was not the only Canadian in the Tokyo area, for Colonel Cosgrave had flown from Canberra, arrived last night and would officially represent Canada at

the forthcoming ceremony. I was kindly invited to go along with C in C fsas Canadian Naval Representative.

At 0815 the majority of the Empire contingent piled into C in C's barge and set out for Missouri. Those present included C in C, General Blamey (Australia), Air Vice Marshal Isitt (New Zealand), Captain Wheeler (Senior U.S. Naval Liaison Officer) Captain Russell of D of Y, three or four commanders one of whom was pay Commander Cartwright (South Africa), an N.Z Lt. & myself.

The ceremony was to be held on what the Americans call the veranda equivalent to the starboard side of our B gun deck. There seemed to be thousands of officers & ratings in multi-coloured uniforms draped wherever the eye could see. In the central deck was one steel table covered with a green cloth. A chair was on either side of the table. The deck space forward of this area was reserved for the Japanese delegates and that aft for the Allied representatives. On the right was a raised platform for the press. The skies were grey with heavy clouds, the sea was grey & calm and to port was the once busy city of Yokohoma grey, silent, dead.

The Allied representatives were ranged in columns with the signing member in front. From outboard in were the Americans, the Chinese, the British, the Russians, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand. In our column from fore to aft were C in C, Cmdr \_\_\_\_\_, Cmdr Cartwright, I, & Flags. The Canadian Colonel stood in a column all by himself. I was not introduced to him but C in C told him my name & as I was probably the most junior officer in the whole show I thought I'd better stay put.

While waiting for the Japs to arrive the marine band on the deck below played a few marches and we talked to the Russians & Chinese on either side of us. The Russian beside me was naval attaché to Tokyo & had been interred there since Russia declared war a few weeks ago. He knew most of the Japanese delegates when they finally arrived & spoke English quite well. I don't know who the Chinese on my right was. His English was not so good & my Chinese is nil.

The Jap. Representatives arrived in an ordinary American motor boat at 0930 & were led aboard by the foreign secretary. Prince Naruhito in morning coat & top hat. The Prince had a young attaché similarly garbed, one other civilian was present and the rest of the contingent was composed of service personnel, mostly army. With the exception of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the officers had the facial characteristics and emanated the attitude of the Jap depicted on Canadian posters for the promotion of the sale of war bonds. They looked like Hollywood's idea of a group of gangsters. The foreign Sec. was a very dignified soul, had a game rt. leg & used a walking stick to protect it. His attaché gave the impression of being the efficient servile Jap who does well in the civil service.

The actual ceremony was quite brief. General MacArthur made a short impressive speech & invited the Japanese to sign. The foreign Sec., after some difficulty because his pen seemed to be out of ink, signed, followed by the Chief of Staff. Then Gen. MacArthur signed for all United Nations with Generals Wainwright (Corregidor) & Percival (Singapore) as witnesses; he used about five of the ten pens present on the table leaving only five. Admiral Nimitz signed for the U.S.A. with Admiral Halsey (3<sup>rd</sup> fleet) & \_\_\_\_\_ as witnesses. A Chinese admiral signed for China. C in C (Sir Bruce Fraser) signed for the British Empire with Admirals Rawlings & \_\_\_\_\_ on his left & Cdr. Cartwright & me on the right. He tried the pen trick too but failed to make them disappear. Then came Russia, Canada, France etc.

The Japs left as soon as the signing was completed. There was a temporary delay with a slight discussion because someone signed on the wrong line but this was ironed out. As soon as the Japs. disappeared all Allied officers were invited into the wardroom for coffee & doughnuts but knowing that there would be a crowd & that C in C had something better awaiting our return in D of Y, South Africa & I stayed on deck & talked to various people. A mighty air armada passed over our heads, & "The Sidewalks of New York" & everyone was happy except Japan.

#### Yokahama – Sept. 7/45

Today I was fortunate enough to have an excuse for going ashore. We were duty destroyer & an M.O. from D of Y came aboard to be transferred to custom's house steps. He had

some dispatches to take to Gen. MacArthur's H.Q. so I decided to be his bodyguard along with an American liaison officer.

We did our duty by the General & then Heaven smiled & presented us with a jeep for the afternoon. The driver really knew the locality well & proceeded to take us on a sight-seeing tour.

Never have I seen such utter destruction anywhere as was evidenced in Yokohama. It is reported to have suffered only one raid, an incendiary one by B29's lasting for an hour. Malta looked bad enough but then it was built strongly almost entirely of stone & only those buildings fell which received direct hits: Yokohama must have been comprised of many frame structures for almost the entire City had been scorched to the ground. Burned wrecked automobiles littered the sides of the streets, small stone shrines & steel safes depicted the former sites of homes (I suppose) & office buildings. Acres of tangled steel wreckage were invaded and being used by the homeless for the construction of dwellings of corrugated iron.

If the environmental conditions were appalling, the state of the people themselves was even more so & their attitude toward us amazing. Entire households pushed what appeared to be their entire worldly goods about on a cart to God knows where – father in front, children at the sides & mother with baby on her back papoose fashion bringing up in the rear. Their clothes were very shabby, their footwear consisted either of straw sandals or wooden clogs. They did not appear to hate us; they looked curious & friendly & bowed if we noticed them individually. The kids yelled, smiled & made V signs. They were very pretty. Whether this was a pose or whether these people have never actually understood what the war was all about, I do not know. I like to think that the latter is the true explanation.

The driver was keen for us to see the brothels so of course we had to show our appreciation for his courtesy. These consisted of shacks rising out of the midst of the debris. At the first one we visited the Madame was having a meal of rice, fish & some black sticky lumps which looked like chewed licorice. She informed us that the girls didn't begin work until 3 o'clock. At the next one there was such a crowd of enveloping G.I.'s that we could see nothing:

however the third seemed more illustrative. A group of coloured G.I.'s stood at one door & whites at another. We stopped the jeep and talked to the latter while a couple of beauties came out & motioned to us. They appeared haggard from working overtime & certainly weren't pretty. The other Doc. took a snap of the establishment & we drove away. Thus do national industries recover after a war.

We visited the only shop we could find open & bartered cigarettes & chocolate for a few worthless curios. The keeper had nothing to offer but junk. We drove around a huge naval base & boarded a partially-finished destroyer. All work of an industrial nature seems to have ceased even in the few buildings which escaped the effects of the bombing. Many people were walking around collecting bundles of faggots and sticks of wood, some were standing in a queue for a cinema, the few trams were literally bulging with Japanese, only a surprisingly small minority sat in dejection appearing as if they had nothing to do. This country will recover quickly given half a chance.

#### The Long Journey Home – Sep '45 – Jan '46

The peace signed, we were assigned duty in Hong Kong to keep law and order and chase Chinese pirates along the coast. The Chinese seemed quite happy to see us and began to come into Hong Kong by junk, sampori and anything that would float.

Wager was detailed to take Admiral Fraser up the Pearl River to Canton to celebrate the feast of the full moon. I didn't go ashore.

After six weeks of pirate chasing and several trips up and down the coast of China we returned to Sidney, then back to Frewantle and Singapore. Between Frewantle and Singapore I was put ashore at Xmas Island, a phosphate mine to assess the medical supplies: then on to Columbo Aden, and Port Said. We had spent Xmas 1944 in TorinioBualeo(?). We spent New years 1946 in Port Said and Doe Martini and I spent the morning shopping for leather goods.



We left Egypt, stopped at Gib and then on to Portsmouth where most of the officers and ratings disembarked for home in Britain. I was told to report to the Isle De France in Southhampton and in really luxurious surroundings returned to my native land at Halifax where my wife awaited me.

The navy personnel were not allowed off the Isle De France the evening we arrived, but a friend of mine ashore manufactured a signal to the effect that a severe case of measles was to be landed forthwith. I came ashore on a stretcher with the blanket pulled over my face. This was the briefest case of measles I ever encountered.

## Index of Terms<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> As.C.O.	Asdic Control Officer
A.A.	Anti-aircraft
A.M.C.	Armed Merchant Cruiser
axilla	armpit
Br.	British
B.P.F.	British Pacific Fleet
celerity	Rapidity of motion or action; quickness; swiftness.
C in C.	Commander in Chief
D of Y	Duke of York (another destroyer)
D.E.	Destroyer Escort
fairmile	A patrol boat
glenoid cavity	Socket shaped cavity in the shoulder blade
G.C.O.	Gunnery Control Officer
M.D.G.	Medical Director General
H.M.C.S.	His Majesty's Canadian Ship
H.M.S.	His Majesty's Ship
L.C.I.	Landing Craft Infantry
L.C.T	Landing Craft Tank
L.C.M.	Landing Craft Mechanized
mids	Midshipmen. Midshipman, a sort of naval cadet, appointed by the captain of a ship of war, to second the orders of the superior officers, and assist in the necessary business of the vessel, either aboard or ashore.
M.O.	Medical Officer
Niobe	H.M.S. Niobe, a gun cruiser
Nissen Hut	A prefabricated structure of a steel frame clad in corrugated iron. Semi-circular in section they were used as accommodation for the armed forces and, during WWII, as emergency housing for bombed out civilians. Also used for storage.
piastre	A fractional monetary unit in Egypt and Lebanon and Sudan and Syria
Percival	Lt. General Sir Arthur Percival of Singapore

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P.M.O.	Principal Medical Officer
P.O.	Petty Officer
rating	Non-commissioned naval personnel
Ramilles	H.M.S. Ramilles, a battleship
R.C.N.	Royal Canadian Navy
R.C.N.H.	Royal Canadian Naval Hospital
slip	To leave the berth and sail away. ie. "The ship slipped at 0800."
stoker	Marine Engineers. The term "stoker" derives from the days of coal-fired boilers and steam engines.
sub	Sub-lieutenant. Sub-lieutenant is equivalent to Lieutenant in the Army and Air Force, and in the Royal Navy is between midshipman and lieutenant.
S.B.A.	Sick Berth Attendant
S.M.O.	Senior Medical Officer
tenesmus	The constant feeling of the need to empty the bowel, accompanied by pain, cramping, and involuntary straining efforts.
Tjitjalenka	H.M.H.S. Tjitjalenka, a Dutch Hospital ship
Wardroom	The wardroom originally was known as the Wardrobe Room, being the place where officers kept their spare wearing apparel and also any loot they won while on service. It was not until years later that it served its present purpose and became the officers' mess-room.
'Woolworth' Carrier	Carrier-Vessel-Escort. American classification for US built escort carriers which were converted merchant hulls pressed into war service.
W.B.C.	White Blood Cell Count
Wren	A member of Women's Royal Naval Service
S.C.N.O.L.	
G.P.B.	