Teaching the Fighter Pilots!

True Stories of a WW2 Aussie Flying Instructor: Flight Lieutenant Jim Vickers-Willis

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Flight Lieutenant Jim Vickers-Willis

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The transcription from Jim's original handwritten diaries was painstakingly (and lovingly) done by Jim's 3 children:

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Further editing, adding of photos and footnotes was completed by Tony Vickers-Willis. Photos are from Vickers-Willis Family Photo Collection, except where noted.

We would value receiving further information and photos that relate to this story, which might be included in future editions. Please email: tony@vickers-willis.com

Further Information on the inspiring life story of Jim Vickers-Willis available at:

www.vickers-willis.com

A Few Select Preview Passages

The War diaries of Flight Lieutenant Jim Vickers-Willis provide a unique insight into service life during the second world war. Here are a few select passages from his diaries:

On Aussie Formality:
"At Mess, we are supposed to wear ties and jackets. Although most of the Englishmen, Canadians, Americans, etc. etc. obey this regulation, none of the Aussies do, and turn up in shorts with open shirts. Today, when we arrived for lunch, Corporals were on duty and sent all the Aussies back to put on the regulation uniform. The boys came back wearing their ties as bow-ties, with their hats on sideways like highwaymen, or pushed out at the top cowboy fashion, trousers rolled half way to the knees, etc. The whole Mess was in fits as they came parading in past the NCO's."

***On Flight Training – The Risks**:*
"Two instructors and a pupil were killed in the crashes – some of the others were badly injured. One instructor had to leave his pupil badly injured in the wreck while he walked 20 miles for help. The planes hit the side of a mountain while flying in darkness and bad visibility…."

On Aussies Dodging Early Morning Calls:
"Each morning we are supposed to get up at 6.15 for physical training, but as we don't get enough sleep we dodge it when possible (i.e. usually). Those who go on the physical training parade have to sign their names on a list to show they were there. The list is left in the hall while the instructors are conducting the physical training and thereby hangs a tale. Usually one or two of us get up and wait till everyone is outside bending and stretching then quietly enter by the back door and sign the names of all the Aussies! Deep snores echo from our hut while outside they puff."

On Justice:
"…..flew over a place where a couple of Canadian girls I know live, and looped and rolled, did rolls off the top (immelmans) stall turns, etc… It was just sheer showing off and it is the first time I have done this in a plane, but it made me feel better. Later I found out the girls were not in!"

On Untold Heroism:
"This morning a couple of pupils had a collision while dog fighting and one crashed in flames and was killed and the other managed to get down, but attempted to make a forced landing with his wheels down and pranged badly, going over on his back. However, he got out all right….In that crash the instructor, Flight Lieutenant Patterson, did a pretty good job. When the planes collided, the pupil's cockpit top was jammed and he could not bale out. Patterson could have baled out and left the plane to crash (it was practically out of control) but he stuck to the plane and managed to make a forced landing, and so saved the pupil's life - a good show.

On Teaching Navigation Skills!
"… I wasn't quite sure where we were when we were some distance from the drome, and as I [the flying instructor] didn't want to let him know I was lost I told him to set a course for home and left him to it….We got there O.K."

On Education – Sexually Transmitted Disease:
"Reminds me of the health lecture delivered to a group of airmen. The lecturer started off - "Well boys I'm going to tell you what not to do. The MO's [Medical Officer] coming along after me to tell you what to do after you've done it."

On Tragedies:
"Frank Piercy was killed today. He's from New Zealand and a good friend."

STARS OF JIM'S WAR DIARIES

During military service in Canada, Jim Vickers-Willis enjoyed the company and hospitality of many people - Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and Americans. In his diaries, Jim wrote about over 170 of these people – listed below are their names:

June, Knowle Shrimpton, Helen, Alec Evans, Jim Webb, P/O D. Saunders, Dave Moore, Doug Jackman, Deanne Clarke, Harry Carew, Ralph "Proc" Proctor, Don "Sinc" Sinclair, Neil Howard, Jack Carmody, "K.K" Welsh, P/O "Sleepy" Sleep, "Chuck" Andersen, Colin Mayes, Keith "Mac" McLean, Ed Chesterton, Arch McNicol, Ballew, P/O Trembley, Ben Johnson, Van Wyck, Air Vic Marshall Goble, S/L Desloges, Mary McIntosh, Colin Groff, Constable McKay, Mr. McCameron, Kaye Derby, Eric Williams, Betty Hammond, Alan Noble, Rita, Les Phillips-Jones, Mr. Hopkins, Miss Miller (Mrs. Crawford), Tim Tyler, Law, Sydney H. Cooper, Les James, S/L Hastie, Les James, Mary & Flo, Nancye Cocking, Ray Burgess, Monica Moore, Mrs. Gormely, Peg Ege, Corinne O'Hare, Mary Gormely, Molly, Les, Winch, Pat Miller, Mr. Miller, Miss Leonard, Jim Durham, Hendrie Dziekonski, J.D.Carr, Constable T. Fletcher, Robert E. Cavendish, Mr. Bill Dana, Janette Wiltshire, N. Tirpak, Cedric Hartley, Mr. H.C. Whiteford, Mrs. B.R. Werner, Phil Werner, Margaret "Spud" Murphy, Air Commodore F.S. McGill, Jack Tarry, Ben Johnson, Charlie McCarthy, P/O Bill Taylor, Flight Commander F/L McLernon, Rex Walls, Mr.Nicoll, Ruth McKenzie, Babs, Helen, Mrs. Hutchinson, F/L (Padre) Hadley, Sgt. Pilot Charlie Orphin, Mr. & Mrs. Barbour, Helen Barbour, Beverley Barbour, Bobbie Barbour, Gil, Joe Wilson, Mike Workman, S/L Donald A. Foster, Mrs. Belcher, Mr. & Mrs. McDonald, Blanche McDonald, Warrant Officer Padfield, Wing Commander Loxton, Pat Beeman, Mrs. Henson, Jack (Sport) Palmer, Flight Commander F/L Shearsmith, Col Stacey, F/O "Sel" Sellix, Elizabeth "Libby" Broom, Met Officer Harvey Avery, Miss Dumais, P/O Dick Barton, Barr, Sgt Pilot Ted Turner, Jane Turner, Dick Barton, Nancy Weller, Arthur Walford, Helen Sutherland, F/L Patterson, Mrs. MacLachlan, Bill Bainbridge, P/O Callard, Bob Heath, Frank Piercey, Flight Commander Pip Aldridge, F/L McLurg, Norma Compton, Norma Holland, George Lees, Group Captain Le poer Trench, F/L Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Compton, F/O Lishman, F/O Biggers, "Rocky" De Roeche, S/L Weston, Marjorie & Herb Simmonds, Little Jimmie, Joe Houghton, Mr. E.A. Link, Andrew Warther, Helen McKay, Martha "Marty" Knous, P/O Larry "Scowie" Scowcroff, Mr. Millard, Joanne Hulburt, Molly "Midge" Buchanan, Nev & Pat Johnson, Peter Lake, CO Wing Commander Heycock, CI Wing Commander Hamilton, George Cochrane, Bob Moffat, Jean Crandell, Mr. Ray Kincade, Don Smith, Mrs. Buchanan, Francoise Duchesne.

The groups of student pilots, taught by Jim, mentioned in the diaries are:

First 4: Cattanach, Davis, Crisp, Fretwell
Next 4: Cassells, Bristow, Bushby, Dallaway.
Next 4: Wall, Watkins, Williams, Webb.
Next 4: Mumford, MacPherson, Machin, Morgan.
Next : Grant, Gazzard, unknown, unknown.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD

by Tony Vickers-Willis

This is a transcript of the 'handwritten' personal RAAF Service diaries of Flight Lieutenant Jim Vickers-Willis. The transcript has been done word for word - except for the addition of headings, punctuation, footnotes and over 50 personal photos, and the replacement of abbreviations and clarifying slang by using […….].

Jim was a cadet journalist prior to commencing service. Not surprisingly, he wrote a diary of his service years. The four volume diary is now a unique and priceless historical record, written between 1942 and 1944. Like today's reality TV shows, the diaries reveal the intimate life of a young Aussie digger, proudly serving his country overseas during World War II - his training, his departure to foreign shores, his ab-initio pilot training, his training as a flying instructor, instructing student fighter and bomber pilots, operational flying in the Pacific, and his return home from War service; through his adventures, exposing his naivety, his thoughts about girls and love, his hopes, his fears, his guilt, and the tragedies of his war. Written in flying days when towers controlled circuits with Aldis lamps and signal pistols, you can feel Jim's wonder at being in places, such as the Big Apple, so much larger, faster and more advanced than anything he had previously experienced – where he encounters for the first time automat restaurants, mailomat, and escalators. Providing a unique insight into the day to day RAAF serviceman's life.

The diaries are written with great charm, and more than a splash of Aussie humour - no more apparent than in the very funny story about Kangaroos roaming Montreal. The diaries are written in the language of the day, returning us to such colloquialisms as 'rumbles', 'scrubs', 'washed out', 'fatigue duties', 'drongos', 'greenhorns', 'cobbers', 'clamps', 'the gen', 'rubber necks' and 'gertcha', and the services difference between 'bludging' and 'loafing'.

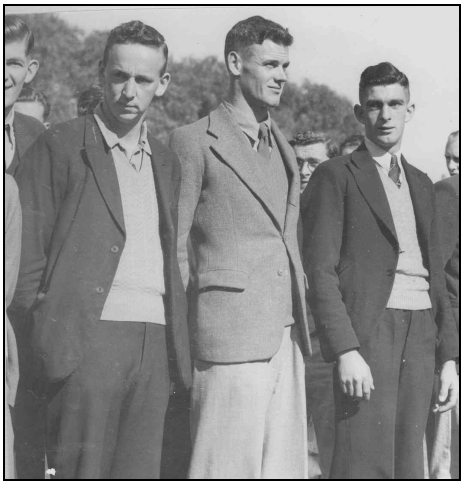
The diaries highlight the tremendous support provided to service men and women by organisations including Australian Comforts Fund, New York City Defence Recreation Committee, United Services Organisation (USO), YMCA, Canadian Comforts Fund, and of course the warm and generous hospitality given by the peoples of Canada and America.

As you read the diaries, please remember this is a personal diary - not a book which has been edited, and drafted and redrafted many times. It is an account of real life - Jim was a primary witness to this history in the making. Because it is a personal diary, it is a truthful (in hindsight, a sometimes 'painfully' truthful) account – I'm not sure there are many other forms of literature where you can say this is the case. We are indebted to Jim to allow us to publish such a raw and indeed very intimate personal account of this period of his life.

So, who is Jim Vickers-Willis? Jim was born in England in July 1918. His family migrated to Australia on assisted passage in 1925 and he grew up in the suburb of Brighton in Melbourne, Australia. His father, a furnishing decorator, was also a well-known Astrologer in later life.

When Australia, Britain, France and New Zealand declared war on Germany on 3rd September, 1939 (following Germany's invasion of Poland two days earlier), Jim was working in the picture department of The Sun newspaper, hoping to gain a position as a cadet journalist – which he subsequently did after he produced a newspaper during early army training, copies of which he sent to the management of The Sun. He joined up for military service on 12th September 1941 aged 23 - three months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. In his autobiography 'The Magic of Life', Jim says "I firmed up my idea of joining the RAAF [air force] after we had our first 16-mile route march in the Army (before breakfast!)" (2005, p.26, Sid Harta).

Jim's initial RAAF training was 20-course at Mt. Breckan, Victor Harbour in South Australia (see photos below). There he learnt about engines, aircraft recognition and other ground subjects. At the end of the course, the trainees had to appear before a category selection Board. Approximately one-third were selected as pilots; one-third as air gunners; and, one-third as observers.



Some photos of Jim during early militia training

When Jim was selected as a pilot he was so excited, he raced out of the parade to be first in line on the interstate telephone to proudly tell his parents.

Then he was sent to flying training at the Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) at Essendon Aerodrome in Victoria, where he went solo in 12 hours in a Wackett trainer (pictured below).

On his first night solo, his instructor was the famous War ace, Roy Goon. Jim was supposed to do two take-offs and landings on this solo. On his first landing, he landed so heavily from about as high as a house, apparently Roy Goon raced up and jumped on the wing of Jim's plane and said "take her in Vickers" - he wasn't prepared to risk letting Jim go round for a second circuit. That was the only night flying Jim did before service training in Canada.

Picture of a Wackett Trainer[1] *(Australian War Museum Photo)*

[1] The Commonwealth CA-6 Wackett was a 2 seat monoplane ab initio training aircraft. It is historically significant as it was the first all Australian design that was mass produced and that saw military service. It was built by the Commonwealth Aircraft Company (CAC), although most manufacture was done by CAC shareholder General Motors Holden. Production was slow due to delays in delivery of Scarab engines (chosen for its availability!) and Hawker De Haviland propellers, and some design improvements needed on both the airframe and engines. 200 CA-6 Wacketts were built (serial numbers A3-1 to A3-200).

Pictured below is Jim's EFTS pilot training class:

Fig 7-06 Pilots 20 Course, Essendon 1940

Back Row: S Sing, R Graham, K Scarrot, J Nelson, M Caffyn, C Mayes, H Carew, J Vickers-Willis, R McLean, R Tiscalini
Centre Row: W Swan, K Trask, C Pickering, C Truscott, A Evans, D More, N Howard, D Bavin, C Smith
Front Row: S Tighe, J Walker, T Tyler, R Heath, F L Proctor, R G Proctor, K Shrimpton, A Syer, G Watkins, W Brown, B Drinkwater

This picture was provided by fellow student pilot Ralph Proctor, who became life long mates with Jim, and who is mentioned in Jim's diaries. However, "Proc" got in the first shot when he wrote this humorous passage about Jim at EFTS, in his own autobiography "Aiming High – Proc's Journey" (2005, P.47: ISBN 0-646-45396-3):

> *"A close bond was formed with the fellow training pilots, and I am still in contact with some of them – Jim Vickers-Willis, Harry Carew, Gordon Andrews, George Treeby, Ray Peate, Lockie Simpson, and Geoff Walker.*
>
> *During the night of the graduation social when all the chaps were sleeping, Jim Vickers-Willis crept into the hut and woke everybody up. We were all looking forward to going on leave the next day and finally finishing the gruelling training course. Not impressed with Jim disturbing us, six of us gave Jim a black boot polishing all over his ears, his neck and face. The next day Jim left the hut with his great coat collar turned up high to hide the irremovable black polish!"*

Within the pages of his diaries, Jim returns the volley of fire to Shrimp "with interest' as he tells the many adventures these great mates shared together – "Knowle's Hate Session" probably does the trick.

In between various postings, Jim (in common with other air force trainees) had the world famous stadium the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) as his home depot. The MCG was used during the War years not only by the RAAF, but also by the US Army

and Marines who called the MCG "Camp Murphy". Jim recalls some air men slept there - laying out on seats in the stands, usually sat on by spectators at major sporting events. These troops, awaiting their postings, were also entertained, and Jim recalled the time he stood around a billiard table in the MCG Members Stand watching the great Australian world champion billiards player Walter Lindrum[2] – once referred to as the "Bradman of Billiards" - playing his trick shots.

Fresh Faced Pilot Trainee – Jim Vickers-Willis – minus the 'boot polish'

Somewhat to his frustration, Jim's War-time job was not front line fighter combat (except a brief period near the end of the War); superiors determined he had what it took to teach others for battle, and he became a flying instructor, shipped on the S.S Orcades to Canada where he served for 3 years – instructing was not without its dangers, with a large number of trainee pilots and instructors killed in training accidents. Jim is known to have successfully trained at least 20 but possibly as many as 28 pilots during his service – and lived to tell his tale.

On return from War, Jim's life took some momentous twists and turns. This included becoming a popular Australian entertainer – a career that was brought to a halt by a life threatening virus, and paralysis. Jim's post-War life is summarised in the final section called "Postscript", which also includes brief post-War stories of some of the main characters mentioned by Jim in his War diaries.

So, without further ado, let's get on with this fascinating real life story of Jim plus "Shrimp", "Proc" "Spud", "Midge", and Jim's many other interesting war time mates.

More information about Jim's life is available on his web site at :

www.vickers-willis.com

[2] Walter Lindrum was born into a family of champion billiards players – his grandfather, father and brother were all Australian champions. Interestingly, Walter lost the top of his right index finger when aged 3 - his father taught him to play left handed. He made a world record break of 4137 in 1932 – it took him 2 hours and 55 minutes. During the War he performed over 4000 exhibitions, rasing large sums of money for the War effort.

LOCATION MAP

These maps show locations mentioned by Jim in his diaries - both the journey to Canada (bottom) and also key Canadian cities near where he was stationed (top):

Flight Lieutenant
Jim (James John) Vickers-Willis

DIARY 1

MARCH to JULY 1942

DIARY 1 - MARCH to JULY 1942

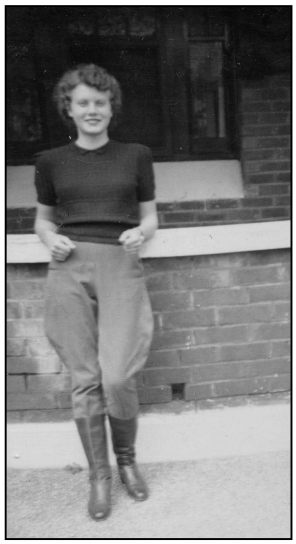
Featuring Shrimp & Co

In this book, I tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God…….if my girl friend ever finds it!

1.1 Au Revoir - Shipboard Tales

March 28th 1942 – Noon. As I write, the shores of Australia are gradually fading in a blanket of rain.

It's hard to analyse my feelings. Ahead there's interest and adventure. I'm one of a draft of RAAF pilots going abroad to finish training: but behind there's something far more precious – my family and the sweetheart whom I would have married but for the necessity of going away to war – and whom I intend to marry when I return.



As is usual departing from a country, you think of the loved ones you are leaving behind. And as I look back down into the wash, behind the stern, the turbulent waters reflect the turbulent thoughts in my mind. Why did I not marry June [pictured right] and make her mine before I left? I curse, and yet I know the reason. So many men in the forces struggling against this natural instinct, to be faithful to a girl they left behind, as a finance or wife. So many girls I have seen left behind at home by sweethearts who had to go away – doomed to suffer unthinking criticism from their friends and relatives if they dare seek the companionship of another man; afraid to follow their natural wishes and seek a little pleasure and entertainment to lighten some of the shadows of wartime life. The only consolation of these girls is a ring – little enough consolation if their men do not come back.

So often have I seen men failing to live up to their own ideas of faithfulness. I know that "out with the boys" it is impossible – yes, that is the word – to keep out of mischief entirely; at least it is for me. So that is why I leave the girl I love behind without restraint of any kind to stop her marrying another. And that is why I curse as I look back; and that is why my mind is turbulent like the waters and says "I want to marry June; she says she will marry me, yet she still may marry someone else!"

"Shrimp" (Knowle Shrimpton, my pal – he's 6ft 3 ½ - hence his nickname) is beside me at the rails.

Jim with "Shrimp" (Knowle Shrimpton)

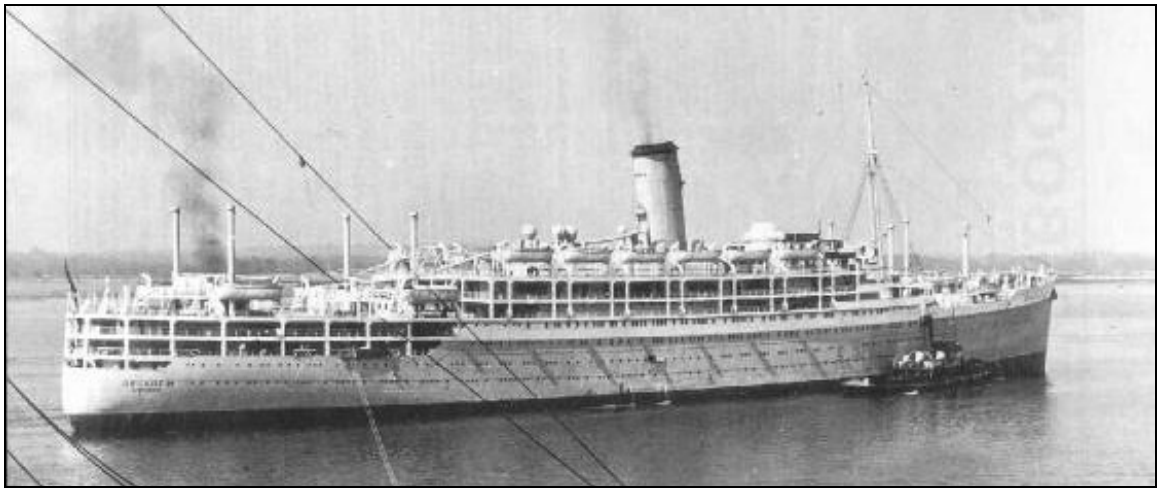
Most of the air force Boys – pilots, observers, air gunners – who are in the draft for abroad, are fooling around on the upper deck.

I wandered down to the crew's deck where it was quiet, and Shrimp followed. I think he felt the same about leaving Australia.

Tho' it seemed ridiculously sentimental, I felt I must watch whilst there was still a chance to see Australia.

And so we stood there at the stern rail, and watched and watched until there was nothing left and I turned to Shrimp, who has a sweetheart in Melbourne and is in exactly the same situation as I, and said: "Cheer up old son". And he said: "You don't seem so cheerful yourself" – and I guess we both grinned for about the first time for half an hour.

It is a big ship – in peace-time a luxury liner the "Orcades"[3] [pictured below], now gun and battleship grey with a coat of camouflage paint; most luxury fittings removed; anti-aircraft and anti-submarine guns mounted on the decks; paravanes slung ready to clear mines; blackout screens on the windows.



[3]Six months after this passage was written (10th October 1942), the SS ORCADES was sunk by a German Submarine (U-boat U-562) in the busy sea lanes off Cape Town, South Africa. Picture from Southampton City Museum.

Never-the-less we found luxury cabins awaiting us – private washrooms, etc.

As soon as our kit was aboard, we had our first boat drill:

> *"The blackout is a complete blackout" warned the captain through his loud speaker relay system fitted all around the ship. "Not a light – no smoking or striking matches on deck at night. A match can be seen from miles. Don't take risks of falling over the rails. We can't risk stopping…anyone who falls overboard will be left in the sea. One life is not important in the dangerous waters we will traverse. We can only consider the safety of all, and the ship. Carry your life belt with you wherever you go – to dinner, to bed, even to the bath. If you haven't got it and we are torpedoed I can only say you won't get mine!"*

Just before sunset, Shrimp and I leaned over the rails and watched the propeller carving coloured patterns in the wash. Dusk, we learnt, is the most dangerous time for submarine attack.

Shrimp, who is good natured, and with a sense of humour, but normally quite unimaginative said: "Funny Jim, to look out there and think there may be a sub waiting for us." And it certainly was a funny feeling. I found myself examining every wave-top with suspicion, watching for a tell tale periscope, and I did not envy the look-out his job.

For the first time I felt grateful to the officials who had restricted our communications – even cut off the telephones to our camp before we sailed, so that information about our going should not leak through to the enemy. Previously, I'd joined in the chorus condemning this as red tape.

That first night some of the lads were having funny feelings, but from different causes.

We ran into a fairly stiff Tasman 'blow', and our ship began to sway.

One or two of the pilots who had boasted that after looping and rolling and spinning in a plane "nothing could make them sick", moved to unpopulated parts of the ship and unobtrusively leaned over the rails. Others, at dinner-time, made sudden dashes from the Mess, and few laughed because no one was sure they would not be next.

We were kept completely in the dark as to where we were going, but Shrimp and I had brought a compass with us. We found out the speed of the ship from members of the crew and with our knowledge of elementary navigation learnt as pilots, we kept ourselves amused plotting our "exact" position. I don't know how exact this working was, but we soon found out we were headed for New Zealand, and estimated we would arrive Tuesday night (we did arrive on Tuesday afternoon).

We also had some physical training periods but all these diversions could not prevent us becoming completely bored after a couple of days at sea.

It was in this mood that I noticed a small rather dainty girl in a pair of blue slacks glancing in my direction from behind some knitting. I had seen her at the rails, as we left Australia, and took her to be about 18 (I found out later she was 20).

She was with her mother, and when I spoke to them I discovered she came from England and had been living in Malaya. Her name was Helen and she had an interesting accent.

Helen and her mother and father were heavily bombarded by the Japanese in Malaya before they were forced to leave for Singapore by the Jap advance. Just before Singapore fell, Helen and her mother managed to get away on a cargo ship. The captain did not want passengers but took pity on them and made them his guests for the trip to Java.

Again, as the Japs advanced, they had to leave Java for Australia. The father was left behind in Singapore engaged on war duty and to this day they have not heard of him. The mother and daughter were going to New Zealand to some relatives.

With this pair of interesting companions, much of my boredom vanished.

I had once gone to the roped off section at the stern of the ship to try to have a look at the ship's big guns, but had been warned off by a sailor. However, I found Helen proved an excellent passport to these ship sights. As I expected, when I went along to see the guns with Helen, the sailor was all politeness and not only showed us the guns and how they worked but brought out his ammunition, and allowed us to swivel a big anti-aircraft gun around, sighting it on seagulls.

A cockney, he swapped yarns with the English refugee girl.

He was on board a British cruiser, which cornered a German armed merchant. The British ceased fire on a distress signal from the Germans, and a request that British sailors take out some lifeboats. The British cruiser lowered the boats and Blue Jackets were rowing them across when the German ship opened up on the open boat with machine guns.

"Seven British sailors were killed' said the cockney gunman grimly. "We let 'em have every gun we could turn around and blew them out of the water – the ba__ards !. There were very few prisoners to take".

Armed with Helen, I then asked the Chief Engineer if we could look over the engines but he politely refused saying that, as we were in waters where there was danger of mines, he would not like to risk a woman in the engine room.

In the ways of shipboard friends, Helen and I soon became good pals and we were equally impressed by the awe-inspiring sight of New Zealand's majestic mountains clothed in filmy cloud as we approached Wellington Harbour.

The mountains of Wellington were a deep green from recent exceptional rains, and standing at the rails we both considered the harbour looked even more beautiful than Sydney Harbour, which we had just left – which says a lot.

I began to feel regretful that Helen and her mother were getting off at Wellington; they were good companions to lose.

However, we found out the ship would be several days in Wellington and planned some sightseeing parties.

And Wellington (NZ) welcomed us with open arms. The first night we were invited to go to the main picture theatre free of cost. In a four days stay we ran through a program of two bus tours, two luncheons, two dinners, two dances as well as a visit to the main airport and chief military training camp.

The dances of course, were merely a means of introducing the lads to some of the "nicer" lassies of the town - to prevent the boys getting to know the more accessible but not-so-nice ones. In this they were a roaring success. As dances, they would not rank among the great successes in entertainment.

The second dance we were invited to was the funniest in this respect. At the first dance, some of the slower lads who are not used to these sort of functions arranged for visiting airmen, were somewhat annoyed to find that after a couple of hours most of the prettiest partners had disappeared from the dance floor. They gradually realised these belles of the ball had been lured away to spend the rest of the evening having supper, or 'otherwise engaged'.

At the second dance – at which there were very many pretty girls – no one was slow off the mark. By 10 o'clock, I am told, pretty girls were scarcer than hen's teeth.

I cannot vouch for this as after 9.30, I was not in the hall myself, being otherwise engaged.

And, as usual, the married men amongst us were the ones who found the most attractive girls.

The general strategy in these things is once you are outside with the girl you fancy, invite her to some place as far distant from the dance as possible – whether it be to go sightseeing, for supps [supper], or for anything else.

The dance you must regard as a place of danger. The place of danger - there are possibly several other lads who took a fancy to your girl; they may be better looking than you, and be able to show you points in technique: so you take her far away from the danger place while you are letting her get to know you – showing her you are worth knowing – maybe liking. If you progress well, the road may be smooth and you find you have a girlfriend you can make dates with to your heart's content for the rest of your stay in port. The place suddenly becomes much more like home!

Sometimes these little flirtations ('woos' as the boys call them) are first friendships, blossoming forth into fully fledged romances, and end happily ever after - but that is rare. Usually when the boat pulls out there are expressions of regret at parting, sometimes some tears, but usually quickly dried….sometimes they write, sometimes not.

The boys criticise each others choice in girlfriends freely and without malice. A girl may be told she is the most beautiful creature in the world in the romantic setting of a blackout, but in the July morn she is coldly classified as 'not bad', 'not so hot' or 'pretty fair'.

After Australian cities, we found several new things in Wellington. Phone calls cost 1d [one penny] for three minutes; at the end of that time, you were cut off unless you inserted another 1d. In Australia, calls cost 2d for any length. There is first and second class on the railway, and both are comfortable – but Wellington folk are thrifty; there are about three or four second class carriages to every first. There are many houses of exactly the same pattern – built by the government and rented out at 28/- [28 shillings] per week. Reading around phone dials clockwise they read 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc – opposite to Australia. War time taxis were cheaper than in Australia.

One of Wellington's pioneer Parliamentarians, now retired, told me many interesting things about New Zealand's early history which is written in white and Maori blood.

Apparently much of the fighting between the Maoris and whites was caused by the disputed land grabs. "I'm afraid the Maoris were rather badly taken down by one or two of our missionaries" the politician told me. But they were not the only ones.

Before this, the Maori tribal wars were started by events which are matters reminiscent of present day happenings.

A tribal chief named Hongi – with obvious Hitleristic ideas – was taken to London by a missionary and exhibited there as an example of a Christianised Maori. He was entertained by the King and made gifts by His Majesty and others.

Hongi, on the quiet, negotiated with an overseas firm for the supply of muskets to his tribe; sold many of his gifts to pay for them. Then his tribe were able to terrorise neighbouring tribes, and shot down their rivals at will. Other tribes then came down to get muskets from whites, and so began the Maori Wars which lasted for 20 years, and killed off about a third of the Maori population. [4]

At Rotorua, we found a stream with hot water on one side and cold on the other. We also found everywhere, beautiful spots with long Maori names which have such beautiful meanings – such as a lovely seaside town of Paraparaumu - meaning 'the refuse of the food pot'.

The Wellington folk had apparently seen very few Aussie airmen and regarded us like museum pieces. They would turn around and look as we passed. "Shrimp" used to say at night-time: "Walk in the light Jim and give 'em a good look!"

The boys in blue too were 'the thing' with the Wellington girls during the brief duration of their stay. The ugliest and most ineligible amongst us were treated with some regard. The boys are quite used to this and realise it is the uniform and not the man – least, most do.

[4] Hongi Hika (1772-1828) is one of New Zealand's most famous warriors. A large portion of the Maori population is believed to have been killed during these Musket Wars of 1810 to 1830. Hongi Hika's reputation for invulnerability was helped by wearing a coat of armour - a gift from King George which he retained.

Wellington's representative speakers knew all the hoary old jokes about Australia. We at least showed them we are a polite race.

We even laughed heartily at the old-timer, about the two Aussies who were at the Golden Gates of Heaven, and St. Peter said he wasn't expecting them and told them to wait while he went inside to check his rolls. When he came back, the Aussies had disappeared – and so had the Golden Gates.

The boys have a sense of humour of their own. Returning from shore leave at 11.30 one night they found a lot of the lads in bed asleep. They rushed into the cabins of the sleeping men, woke them up and told them it was 7.45am – time for morning parade. All port holes were closed and shuttered for the blackout so it was impossible to see that it was dark outside. The wakened lads climbed out of bed, dived into their clothes and tore out to morning parade on deck. Then they woke up that it was midnight.

We left Wellington at 10.14 am on Sunday.

Of course, we were glad to be moving again – most of us felt we could not get there soon enough, because we think the sooner we reach our destination and get on with our training, the sooner we will be able to see some action, or see our loved ones in Australia again; nevertheless, I had some regrets as we steamed out of beautiful Wellington Harbour.

A farewell letter from Helen was in my pocket. I had left this diary at the country home where she had been staying on Friday.

She said: "Maybe we shall meet again". I guess she knew tho' that it was not au revoir but goodbye.

How often, in the case of shipboard friends – quickly lost – is one inclined to give them added regard. Perhaps this is because there is really no time to discover their faults?

She finished – "Remember Helen". I shall and I will not forget New Zealand's open hearted welcome; nor it's Prime Minister, who shook hands with us all; nor its unique countryside which relies for its charm on grand mountains, so inaccessible and forbidding that man could never mar their beauty. Here is a land civilisation can never spoil.

The ship now is steering a zigzag course. They say this is because we could show "legs" to any approaching submarine. Hence, a Sub attack would be likely to be a long range one.

To carry out a long-distance torpedo attack it would be necessary for the Sub to calculate our course, so as to fix the point of intersection of the torpedo and the ship. Try changing course every two minutes - and following a zigzag track.

We realise it is almost impossible for such a long-range attack to be carried out.

Private wireless sets are not permitted aboard because it is possible, by means of a direction finder, to find the direction of a ship using a wireless receiver.

A surface raider - there have been some in these waters – could easily pick up our position with its direction finding equipment. However, for a brief period each day, an official set sends the London news bulletins through the ship's network of microphones.

Discussing our prospects of getting commissions (a percentage of us will), one or two lads became a bit heated on the fact that some members of the Air Force are given the rank of pilot officer,etc., when actually they never see a plane – sometimes have only been in service a few days.

A fighter pilot trainee we know as "Tich" said: "I don't give a damn whether I see a commission or not. I'm in this war to do my best to win it". The chorus of approval accorded those sentiments could leave no doubt that these Aussie Airmen have their hearts as well as their bodies in the job.

I guess there are many better men than us without commissions.

Church service on Sunday was well attended. The clergyman perhaps would not have beamed so benevolently on the large congregation of airmen had he known the ways and means used in getting them there.

"We have a church service this morning", the sergeant announced briefly on morning parade. "It is not compulsory…..If a big crowd turns up, it will not be compulsory next week; if not, next Sunday it will be an official parade and you will be lined up and marched into church".

This non-compulsory method of administering religion in the service is reminiscent of the army where no-one has to go to church, but all those that don't are given fatigue duties, cleaning up around the camp.

One wonders if any great spiritual benefit is derived from such services.

We have just crossed the International date-line, and have had two Mondays. Everyone had calculated we would cross the line on Sunday, and thus would have had two holidays - so there was general disappointment.

I have rather a lot of trouble calculating the correct time these days, partly as a matter of interest to see how the time varies, and partly because (ridiculously sentimental tho' it undoubtedly is!) my sweet-heart (June) and I arranged to think of each other each night at 9 o'clock, Adelaide time. I have been keeping my watch at its original Australian time. All other clocks have been moved on as we progress, and I now have some 3½ hours difference in time to calculate every time I consult my watch……greater love hath no man!

I miss my family and June very much and feel worried at being away from them when they are menaced by a JAP invasion. Still there's a lot of stout Aussies and Americans to protect them.

Given there's a whole world of men longing to return to their "Junes".

Still things might be worse. As I lay in a luxurious hot bath the other afternoon, following a physical training session, I thought what rotten luck it would be for the ship to be torpedoed while you were in the bath. With a journalistic eye, I can already see the headlines: "Sole Survivor afloat in Pacific in bathtub…..Drank own bathwater for 25 days".

Talking of getting sunk, I yarned today with "Jock" a steward who already in this war has had four ships sunk under him.

One boat was actually at the wharf when it went down. The crew were about to go off on shore leave and the engineer went below to switch off the degaussing [anti-magnetic mine] equipment. As he switched it off, there was a crashing explosion and the ship shuddered and sank at the wharf. It had been anchored immediately over a magnetic mine.

Another time was at the start of the war; he was aboard an un-armed cargo vessel. It turned to try and ram a pursuing submarine and was hit by a lucky torpedo at the extreme edge of the bow.

One night his ship was sunk by bombs, and another night it was torpedoed while he was asleep in bed. "The explosion did not disturb me" he said, " I was wakened by my mate."

He swam around for 6½ hours before being picked up.

Found a couple of girls up on the top deck on Sunday afternoon. We found some skipping ropes and invited them to join us. Then began a session which would have done credit to a kindergarten – with community skipping, with three or four ropes joined and "high water" and "pepper". Then there were relay skipping races and medicine ball games, the girls finding difficulty in heaving our giant medicine balls. It was noticeable how much more effort the lads put into the work than they do on physical training periods.

Friday April 10th (about 8-9am Melbourne time)

I started writing a novel – will mould the heroin around June.

Have been learning a little Semaphore - there are no flags, so chaps just waved their arms in the required positions. It is an amazing sight with about 50 of us standing on the deck flinging arms around and gesticulating like a lot of lunatics.

On 15th day out from Wellington, the swimming pool was opened. We had to plug ears with cotton wool before going in. Conditions were so crowded that everyone had a bath after coming out! Second pool was opened next day.

Have had to make up comic songs for amateur hour contest heat and semi-final. Am now requested to write another for final. Have insulted the CO, the skipper, and the sergeant etc. in last two. Don't know who is going to be next.

17th Day – woke at 6.30 with yell from next cabin. “Land ahoy – someone run and tell the captain!”

Sure enough there were the hills on the “neck” of the Gulf of Panama.

Half of the boys had been sleeping on decks and so most of ship knew the great American continent was in sight.

One feels a multitude of emotions. Everybody on board is smiling as we enter the harbour. None would admit it, but beneath the normal shipboard activity in the last few days there has been an undercurrent of tension – hardly detectable, but never-the-less present – as we traversed dangerous waters. As we enter harbour, and the bugle calls “stations for anchorage”, instructions are issued that life jackets need not now be carried, and the ack ack gunners unload their shells. U.S. Kittihawk fighters roar overhead.

The hills ahead are rugged and wooded. Porpoises sport in flat waters of the harbour. It is a glorious sunny morning – with a tepid wind off the land – it could be an Australian day.

Later…..

Many U.S. fighters and bombers flew overhead today. Two fighters put on a short “dog fight” for us. We entered Panama Canal anti-submarine net at 1.15pm.

Around are frowning hills – with red soil patches showing in the thick bush.

At night, we were out on deck singing “show me the way to go home” and other things with a banjo accompaniment by one of the N.Z. boys. Just before we left the deck, some U.S. submarines crept into the anchorage. U.S. fighter patrols roared overhead.

About 7am, we raised anchor and moved through the canal to Miraflores Lock. Most of the labour seemed to be Negro. Barrage balloons floated overhead. Boys were particularly interested in the “tram car” land tugs which towed us in and out of locks.

The Negroes appear a cheerful crowd and those we are seeing seem pretty industrious.

There were scrambles on the wharf when the boys threw souvenir Australian half pennies down. A Yank sent back a 5 cent coin.

Much humour passed between the lads and the Yanks and Negroes. The Yanks seem to be able to take any amount of chaffing.

As I write, we are passing through thick tangled tropical bush – almost like jungle. Swarms of birds of prey hang high over the trees. Orange coloured trees make bright splashes.

The houses and barracks are all built high off the ground and have a multitude of windows.

Everywhere along the canal there are cranes and gangs of men with drills, etc. constructing new works.

We passed a submerged forest when passing through Lake GATUN, and as we approached Gatun locks (the third on the route) a U.S. ship about 9000 tons caught up with us and was allowed to go through ahead as it was flying Balbao preference flag - had German diplomats on board I learned.

Some of the Negroes carry big black umbrellas – apparently as sunshades.

One cheery round-faced intelligent Negro I found with a book on Astrology under his arm. He said his house was the water bearer "Aquarius". He had an aspectarian and several astrological text books in his bag.

Native costume is quite astonishing. Such things as light blue trousers, pink and brown shirt and yellow hat. Some go without shirts (fewer Negroes are without shirts than whites) but none wears shorts.

Night…..

Were told we would get final shore leave for 18 days at Colon [Panama] but as ship tied up at oil Wharf, which is an "island", as the only ferry available was for use of crew we did not get off… Boys very disappointed – then heard there was a good "striptease" floor show on in Colon! We may get leave tomorrow. Have just finished 170 pages of the novel.

Managed to get ashore today. The ferry proprietor loaned us a launch, which towed lifeboat loads of lads. CO could only get us two dollars (10/- sterling) but it was good work to get any.

Shrimp and I toured the city together. We found a town of contrasts.

As we walked along, vendors tried to interest us in their wares, but Shrimp replied: "we no speak da English" – and while the vendors shook their heads and puzzled this out, we passed on.

We realised, as we read the various notices in Spanish, that that language is very similar to Latin – anyone knowing Latin would have a good idea of Spanish.

The various traders at Colon at once set out to benefit from our scanty knowledge of prices and American money; but with only two dollars each we were very careful and suspicious. One of the passengers was about to pay 40 cents for a bag when he became suspicious because the salesman was hesitant about the price. The same bag was 25 cents a few doors along.

A horse and cab driver wanted a dollar to drive us around. We beat him down to 75 cents: however we were aiming at 50 cents and he would not bite, so we walked and saw much more on foot.

Cristobel and Colon are next door to each other. In one street, one side is Cristobel, the other Colon. In Cristobel, service men get concession prices at all shops. In Colon cigarettes cost 15 cents for 20; in Cristobel, only 7 cents.

We walked into a shop, and they charged 15 cents; Shrimp said: "Isn't this Cristobel?" the salesgirl said: "no Colon".

So we apologised, put the cigarettes back, walked across the road, bought the same cigarettes for 7 cents.

To get on with the story……..

We were not familiar with the money and when my bill in a café came to 55 cents and after tendering a dollar (100 cents), I received 70 cents change, I queried this. The proprietor assured me this was ok and so it was ok with me – I made 25 cents by my calculations.

Shrimp and I peered into a market fenced in by bars. There, dark skinned women – and some whites who were more dignified – haggled good humouredly with vendors of fish, fruit, etc. Often minute portions of fish sold after many minutes of bargaining, seemed hardly worth the efforts of the 'darkie' salesmen[5].

We went right through the Negro quarter and saw one-roomed homes, often with the only room – sort of bed sitting room – half open to the street. Negro kids without any clothes lay on dirty ground. Their survival of the tropical diseases must be something of a miracle.

As a contrast to the poor Negro types, we saw some beautiful near-white women being driven around in luxurious limousines by chauffers.

Some of the boys met up with a bloke who said he knew the Negro Venus who did the striptease at the local floor show. The boys offered to pay for a private session (!) but the bloke said she was asleep, resting for her night performance.

Weather is amazing – what they call spring rains here – pelted this morning; fine and hot while we were ashore; pelted again when we got back.

Some of the lads mixed beer and whisky in too great quantities at the Cantinas and had to be carried on board. It's quite revolting to see niggers watching our chaps pass out. What a pity there's always this few.

Am writing this on the next day (night rather) lying in bed. We have well and truly copped it today because of those silly asses who got drunk yesterday. Unfortunately, we all suffer for a few and tonight some of us went out on deck clad only in shorts (it is very hot) and did we let off steam! We laid our life jackets in a heap on deck and had a corroboree round them. Then we had wheelbarrow races by moonlight. And some dancing with a mouth organ for music. We sang all the worst songs we know.

[5] On reading some passages like this in his diaries some 50 years later, Jim was horrified and embarrassed at some of the now 'incorrect' language he had written. Despite this, he agreed not to change words because he felt it accurately revealed the naivety of the times – his own, and that of the general community.

We heard today 9 S.S. (submarine sighted) signals were received from ships in the locality. The ship's lifeboats are ready slung down beside B deck. The lifeboats have red, yellow and brown sails so that they could easily be seen by searching ships and aircraft.

Some of the lads who imbibed too freely on leave, are in the brig (the ship's gaol) and all they get to eat is porridge and dry bread.

However, some of the other lads have been lowering chocolate, etc., down to them on strings through the portholes, and, as they can get up as late as they like and don't have to go to lectures, etc., they have had a pretty good time!

A number of the other lads are acting as submarine spotters. They go out for two hours each day to various vantage points on the ship and watch an arc of the surrounding waters.

Shrimp is on from 8pm to 10pm, and says in the darkness his eyes deceive him and he "spots" fleets of submarines.

As I write this diary from shorthand notes, we are leaving the cloud covered mountains behind; Colon is visible in the dusk merely as a cloud of smoke. We were told (unofficially – all our information comes through the crew) that we were not leaving today because there were subs out there and the navy were sweeping them up. So this evening, there are quite a lot of eyes watching the wave tops. A moment ago, I put on my life jacket and put my manuscript (I always carry this – in case) under my arm. But apparently the black object I saw rise from the water a hundred yards away was only a porpoise because (touch wood) there's been no crash.

On the afternoon of the second day out from Colon we sighted land to port. We estimated it was Cuba – calculated we had travelled nearly 1000 miles north of Colon. The staff captain confirmed that our calculations were correct when I asked him.

I was looking at photos of some of Alec Evans girl friends, down in his cabin, when we heard the roar of a plane. We rushed on deck eager to get a look while we had a chance. We knew if it were enemy we would be ordered below, and wanted to see the fun before we were sent down. However, it was a U.S. Catalina PBY5 Flying boat patrol which circled the ship low down exchanging Morse code lamp signals with the bridge. It was almost dusk – the danger period – and as we were about to pass through the Windward Channel [passage] between Cuba and Haiti, the flying boat went on ahead to "spot" for subs on our path.

The ship's lifeboats, which are lowered beside B deck (our cabin is No.15 C deck), are being filled with provisions – water biscuits and tins of tablets of concentrated food. I believe you take two of these tablets and it equals a meal.

The day after seeing Cuba, we awoke to find the ship rolling considerably – we had hit the Atlantic swell. This vessel is built for the tropics, and is not very good in the Atlantic, I discovered from an officer – I can quite believe him.

While I was working down in the mess near the galley, I met a steward who was making model planes. He was pretty good at it too, and told me he bought the outfit of material for half a dollar in U.S.

Some of the stewards I meet down there are very interesting chaps – nearly all from England – and have been all over the world.

Have just completed 240 pages of the book, and am held up because the only typewriter ribbon available is in shreds from overwear. Expect to arrive at Halifax in day or two.

Same afternoon: "Action Stations" has just rung on the alarm gongs. Only practice.

Jim Webb, who sleeps in the bunk under me, had to report immediately to the hospital – he's a stretcher bearer. Unfortunately he was in the bath!

He climbed out without drying, dived into his clothes and life jacket and tore out of the cabin leaving a trail of water as he went. He couldn't be wetter if we'd been sunk.

Staff captain told us over the microphone that our wireless had received 7 SOS's from torpedoed ships in the neighbourhood today.

There have been 22 S.S. (submarines sighted) signals since we left Colon.

I am writing this on the afternoon we are due to arrive at Halifax (Canada). We were warned that Halifax was a very foggy place, and it's certainly given us a welcome up to its reputation.

Of course, as we are surrounded by a pea-souper – the ship's siren is wailing as I write and we are moving dead slow – we haven't even seen the shore yet, and don't know whether we have arrived or not. Still our foghorn signals are being answered by other ships, so we must be close to some port. Does seem a bit dangerous using sirens out here – would make it easy for subs – but maybe we're very close in, and out of danger; also collision would be worse than torpedo. Very, very cold; poor blokes on lookout are perishing, and can only see about 50 yards in mist.

Have not been able to get typewriter ribbons to finish book - heroine is moulded on June – hence is an ideal.

In the grand final of Aviation hour last night, I tied for first with two others. Sang verse to June of "It ain't going to rain no more", and composed verse for boys on stage with rhymes suggested by them. Prize for each of us was 250 cigarettes – I don't smoke!

Am looking forward to a lot of adventure, but dearest wish as we approach our destination is that we'll win this war soon, and I'll be able return to my family and June – and God protect them.

April 29th 1942. 9pm (12 noon Melbourne). Wednesday. Pulling into wharf at Halifax; four tugs to get us in, we feel very flattered.

Lots of lights here. Halifax apparently works all night with war work. No attempt at blackout.

Broad beam of searchlight held us as we entered the submarine net. We passed a big convoy on the way out, and wharves here seem to be empty.

The boys had great fun with the tug crews who seemed a good humoured crowd able to take lots of cracks. Boys threw them down cigarettes, and Australian coins.

I noticed entirely new feeling among the boys tonight: brighter smiles, loosened tongues; louder laughs.

Nobody shows any worry outwardly, but I guess inwardly there must have been a bit of a strain – born of the knowledge that all the time one must be ready to take to the boats. More than four weeks of this sub-conscious strain – no matter how light-heartedly it may be taken – must have some effect on the spirits of the troops.

But now we have arrived!

Thursday morning: It's a long while since we left England[6], but as we came up onto the top deck at 8.45 for morning parade something in the sunshine reminded me of England.

The sky was cloudless – but the sun lacked that "burn" we have become used to in Australia. The only way to describe it is to say it had a mellow warmth.

To think that in England tomorrow it will be May Day - and a day or two ago I was talking to an Englishman in the crew, and moaning about the weather, and he said "oh, only April Showers !"

Halifax Harbour has wooded country with low hills surrounding it. It is by no means beautiful, is slightly murky with smoke, and very business like. While flying boats, bombers and fighters roar overhead, warships head seawards. On our starboard side there are factories and scores of what look like wheat silos.

As we leaned over the rail just now one of the lads exclaimed: "look at that guy in spats!"

The Australian liaison officer here – a particularly bright and well informed bloke – told us the Aussies are very well liked, and asked us not to give our buttons to the Canadian girls because of difficulty with supplies.

Our address he told us was RAAF c/o Base P/O Canada. He added that food over here was not too good - Canadians having the wrong idea about food, preferring "dumpy" foods, whatever they are, to fruit and vegetables, as in Australia.

Am writing this in train - just before its starts on 24 hour journey to Montreal.

[6] Jim was born in England, and his family migrated to Australia on assisted passage in 1925.

Very funny carriages inside – though good outside. Seats are practically unpadded – suppose this is fifth class! However, the seats all collapse so that you can lie on them, and overhead are wooden shelves which can be let down on chains – all very hard but will be jolly handy.

Train is moving now. Have just passed a sort of inland harbour with dozens of cargo ships – some loaded, some being loaded from barges.

It is all so vast that it makes you realise just what the Nazis are up against in the BRITISH EMPIRE. One of the boats I saw yesterday was so low with heavy cargo its decks were awash with every small wave.

I'll never forget seeing the CO – P.O. [Pilot Officer] D. Saunders – waving his hat as we steamed out of Halifax in a train with more than a dozen coaches.

These sentences of his I'll never forget either – nor will anyone who made the voyage – though they mean nothing to anyone else: "you won't get mine", "you play ball with us and we'll play ball with you", and "I don't mean maybe".

Stewiacke was the name of the first place where the train stopped. Some girls in a knitting mill blew kisses (in reply to ours!), so we trotted across. They were very jolly and we had to make a dash back and catch the train on the move.

Stewiacke Knitting Mills 1942

We have about 1000 mile to go now. The countryside is beautiful and interesting – silver birch is interspersed with fir trees. Houses have shingle (wood) walls and roofs and are picturesque.

The girls are even more beautiful!

One of the boys just said "I haven't seen a bad girl yet!" I think the fact that we have been on board ship for more than 4 weeks has something to do with it!

Its early spring here but we've just seen our first snow, also a lake partly iced over.

Was just looking at June's photos and was forced to exclaim to Shrimp "God – to think of being 10,000 miles from her". War is an amazing thing when it can make men leave everything precious to them behind, with no possible prospect of personal gain in view.

Our clocks say 8.50pm but there has to be another change in time on the train, so it's probably earlier. They forgot to tell us last night that we had to put the clocks on one hour with the consequence that half of us were still asleep when they were serving brekka [breakfast].

Glorious red sunset has just ended and angry full moon is rising behind clouds over a beautiful land.

It is now 9.35am the next day.

We stopped last night outside a big shingle house in the wild. A girl named Amy – she could not have been more than 16 – made a great impression on the boys. She wore a peaked cap, spoke very well, and when told she was like Judy Garland (she was) was delighted and exclaimed "thank you!"

Later at longer stops at Moncton, we were not allowed off the train and traders brought fruit, etc., put up their prices and made great profits. An apple cost 5 cents; an ice cream 10 cents.

This morning we have passed through much beautiful wood country, daubed with splashes of remaining snow.

Half the people speak French, and half English. Children seem to be very hardy, due to having to live in extreme cold.

Wooded ravines with long ice-covered strips of water at the bottom, and streams fast running with snow waters plentiful. Shrimp took a picture of one of these frozen strips of water. Am leaving space for it (below).

Train is travelling at about 45 mph – and this is not one of their fast trains.

Everywhere we see waterfalls. The St. Lawrence River is so broad around the estuary and inland that it looks like a lake. I'll never dare to talk about the Yarra again!

It is the end of the snow season – and trees, fences, grass, are bowed down from the burden of snow they have been bearing.

As we come inland – we are close to Quebec now – there is less and less snow.

Ground around here is stony. Farmers around here have canny idea in getting rid of stones. Each field has an island strip left down the centre, where all rocks and stones are thrown

Tops of distant mountains – crusted with snow and ice – are truly splendid.

It is like watching a movie as the train roars along, and scene after scene unfolds through the squares of the carriage windows.

Jim with some Friends. L to R - Alec Evans, Unknown, Unknown, Jim, Don Sinclair, Shrimp, Colin Mayes, Unknown, Harry Carew

There are some good churches of early design. Dave Moore just remarked they have a rather oriental design (the churches) and look rather like temples.

During a brief stop at Cap St. Ignas, Dave Moore wanted to know where we were and asked a man "au et nous". He burst out laughing; I don't wonder.

My fingers are tingling as I write from a brief but hectic snow fight when we stopped for 10 minutes at St. Valier.

Lots of blokes stayed in the train to cheer the two warring parties, but as the train began to move and we had to rush back, we all brought snowballs and pelted the onlookers at the doors and windows.

At railway yards where we stopped, a group of us interrogated a French speaking railwayman. He knew a little English. We got him to teach us some phrases. The first we wanted know was: "vous et belle fille (pronounced: voos et bell fee) – you are a beautiful girl! All are practising this phrase.

1.2 Kangaroos in Montreal

It is now the following day – Saturday. I am writing this sitting on one of the comfortable spring beds in a two-storey, well-lined sleeping hut at No.5 Manning Depot Lachine, Montreal.

Jim moving huts at Manning Depot, Lachine, Montreal

We arrived at Montreal about 8 o'clock last night. As we entered Montreal, we came through the poorer regions which, so far as we could see, did not appear very extensive. Unlike slum dwellers in other cities, we saw poor families living in big tho shabby buildings – some having many storeys.

Canadian Comforts Fund made the very good gesture in giving us cigarettes and chocolates in the train to Lachine, where No.5 Manning Depot is situated.

We had about a mile and a half to "march" to the camp. The "march" was funniest I've ever seen – everyone broke ranks and strolled along in cheering singing parties – shouting greetings to girls and others who were waiting to welcome us.

We were fooling and singing Waltzing Matilda, and "our kangaroo, our kangaroo – has anyone seen our kangaroo" – which resulted in quite a number of people, including our own Sergeant Major, believing we had lost a roo. A man who stopped us in Montreal the following day, asked us if we had found our missing kangaroo, and said he thought a message was put over the radio!

The camp is big – like a small village. There is a wet and dry canteen, meals and food, leave every night until 10.30, and long week-end every fortnight – and they say the Canadian girls are so keen on the Aussies they hide behind bushes and jump out at you!

Have now seen some of Montreal on our first week-end leave – 36 hours.

They call this place the "little Paris" because of its night life, and what goes with it. And I'm sure Paris could have nothing to offer you that Montreal does not.

About 80% of people speak French. The French people do not seem to be at all pro British – it seems the Catholic Church which predominates in this district has a lot to do with this – (this of course is hearsay).

After Australia's blacked out cities, the town of Montreal shines at night like a jewel. Shops open till late on Saturday night, and night clubs, pictures, etc. are just as gay and well patronised on Sundays as on Saturdays.

I was nearly killed on Saturday night when a car just missed me as I walked in front of it looking the wrong way. All cars, trams etc, of course drive on the right and its amazingly difficult to cross roads safely at corners. We are very much creatures of habit, and Shrimp and I have many times found ourselves walking across looking the wrong way.

Trams are comfortable and expensive – taxis fairly cheap (if you haggle with the drivers), food is dear – the cost of living is generally high – but we can always go to the YMCA and get an excellent meal for 37 cents (about 1/10). The YMCA incidentally does a fine job all over the world for the service men. Everywhere we go to the YMCA for help, advice, information, free afternoon teas, etc, etc.

As you walk along the streets of Montreal at night, everywhere is life and movement; everyone is catered for – from the people who want to get drunk or visit the infamous "Red Light" district, to those who want to dance, go to the bowling or pictures, or night-clubs, or to the forum where they have varied entertainment as roller skating, personal appearances by Grace Moore (last week), boxing, and wrestling; personal performance by Tommy Dorsey and Orchestra (next Wednesday – May 6).

We always get into the forum free. The week's big ball game (baseball) is played on Sunday afternoon. You can dance the jitterbug on Sunday night, and then hear church music as you pass by a "frat" (fraternity) house.

It's all very cosmopolitan, very lively, very enjoyable – one wonders whether they ever get tired of it; how it effects the nerves?

On our first night (Saturday) in Montreal, Shrimp and I discovered some very novel "heat blowers" for drying your hands and face without towels after washing at the YMCA cloakroom.

Later we happened to overhear a phone conversation, which was really rather suspicious by a man we'd seen earlier acting in an unusual manner. Shrimp immediately said he was a Fifth Columnist and for a bit of fun we followed him.

Outside one shop I'll swear he gave us rather a straight look – don't blame him!

We were trailing along behind him a minute or two later. I was a step behind Shrimp and a dark moderately attractive girl took my right hand and said in a rather frightened voice " please let me walk with you for awhile" – she was glancing in an apprehensive way over her shoulder as tho' she was frightened of someone. As I am not among the lads interested in the "Red light" district, and have a low suspicious mind with these girls (!), I took a firmer grip on a roll of notes I had, stepped back one pace and pushed her forward neatly, so that she was walking

next to Shrimp. I heard her say “please let me walk with you for awhile” – and Shrimp bit!

A moment later she was on his arm, now and then turning back over her shoulder at some mythical pursuer, and Shrimp was turning on his famous sympathy act giving her his whole attention and turning on deep interest and sympathy in the way that only Shrimp knows.

The Fifth columnist (supposed) was immediately forgotten! I followed Shrimp and the girl at a discreet distance; thought Shrimp’s wallet was more important than the “spy”.

Shrimp took her into a café where she burst into tears. I buzzed off here. She really was very clever ‘cos he’s semi-convinced her story about being pursued is O.K. However, all is well ‘cos she wasn’t after his wad – only an Aussie airman. Shrimp quite likes her, and is taking her out.

The chaps are having no difficulty at all here in what we call ‘deer hunting’. In their quaint and Canadian way, the girls you meet tell you to “call them up sometime” – course the chaps realise it is just the uniform.

Here, as everywhere we’ve visited, there’s lots of folk ready to take us down.

When you go in for a hair cut (I did on Saturday), the cut will cost 40 cents (2/-). They will ask you casually would you like a shoe shine (about 5 cents), shampoo (45 cents), hair oil (10 cents). I escaped with 40 cents by carefully refusing all the extras and asking for “just a little water”.

There are certainly some very nice girls in Montreal – Canadian, French, and even Chinese – but the nicest I’ve struck I saw through a glass door while I waited for Shrimp on the phone on Sunday. I grinned a bit and did not get too hopeful a reception. A little later, I managed to get into conversation with an artist in the lobby outside where she was, and so was able to keep her in sight. She glanced across once or twice, and I felt the atmosphere between us had warmed a little!

I had a free evening ahead and was considering bowling up to her and asking her out for the night when she walked out of the door. Did I curse! Slow as a snail!

Then, just as I was about to leave the artist, who was gabbling about something (I don’t know what), she came back – and sat down on a window ledge in the lobby quite close to me.

I was about to cut the artist off short, when a civilian bloke came up to her and spoke to her. Another RAAF chap – from Elwood – Doug Jackman, joined me at this moment. I cursed. Things were getting complicated.

Then – right out of the blue – the civilian bloke came across to us and asked if we would like to meet a couple of girls who were free for the night. Then he took us across and introduced us to the Canadian girl – Deane Clarke was her name – quite attractive, rather well made up (i.e. not too much), with long brown hair (all Canadians have good hair), not a bad figure, and a nice smile (course I’d seen all

this already); her pal arrived later and was not so pretty so I left her to Doug and attached myself firmly to Deane.

We took them up to the top of Mount Royal – where there are five winter toboggan grounds – by horse and jinker (buggy as they call it here). From the top we had a wonderful view of Montreal and the long harbour bridge – across the St. Lawrence River.

Montreal is different, in that nearly all the population appears to live right in the city or in its precincts; you see splendid brick residences of the wealthy almost side by side with business houses.

The train service is non-electric … almost all travelling is by tram (street car they call it).

It was Sunday night, but as we looked down from the railings of the Chalet Square, the whole city throbbed with life – just like a Saturday night in Australia. And yet this population is strongly Catholic … It does make one wonder.

We went into the chalet, inserted a nickel (5 cents) in the electric record player, and danced.

The girls demonstrated some jitterbug dancing, watched by numerous other critical couples (they're experts at the jitterbug here). After an enlightening exhibition – including one fall! – they commenced teaching us the basic steps.

Later, we went to the bowling alley and played skittles! Nearly everyone here plays this game. The balls are very heavy and you see hefty army men belting them down the alleys with tremendous force (and missing completely or scoring one or two skittles) and dainty French misses rolling them down quite gently, and cleaning up the whole set of skittles (pardon pins) in one shot.

Later, ten trams (street cars) were stuck in a violent electrical storm.

Today (Monday), we have had quite a lot of fun. The station is understaffed with Sergeants and Corporals – hence – discipline is not so tight.

Anyway, it never can be very tight with the Australian boys. They have a tremendous reputation for giving the officers and NCO's a handful. Nevertheless, they have a great name and are very well liked.

At Mess, we are supposed to wear ties and jackets. Although most of the Englishmen, Canadians, Americans, etc. etc. obey this regulation, none of the Aussies do and turn up in shorts with open shirts.

Today, when we arrived for lunch, Corporals were on duty and sent all the Aussies back to put on the regulation uniform.

The boys came back wearing their ties as bow-ties, with their hats on sideways like highwaymen, or pushed out at the top cowboy fashion, trousers rolled half way to the knees, etc. The whole Mess was in fits as they came parading in past the NCO's.

On afternoon parade, while officers and sergeants were carrying on the usual serious drill – square parade in front - in the back flight the Aussies had formed a circle and were playing two-up with cents[7].

When told to number from the right the boys called out – 1, 2, 3, 4, etc, then 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, Ace ! The Corporal on parade did not take it too well 'cos the officers up the front could hear the laughs, but later when we tried it on another Corporal, after he'd finished counting the flight, he said: "108 ANZAC BASTARDS!"

He left the boys for a little while waiting beside a gravel drive, and along came a truck, pulled up, and the driver disappeared into a hut. The boys set about chocking his wheels with big rocks; then they stood and roared as he started up and couldn't make out why the truck wouldn't move.

The joke about our (mythical) kangaroo, which we are supposed to have lost, has gone a bit far. The CO and Adjutant had two of the lads up at headquarters today and told them the police were making enquiries to find it. The lads, instead of admitting it was all a joke, got special leave until 2am to go and look for it!

Perhaps the greatest thing about coming to Montreal was meeting Harry Carew and Ralph Proctor [aka "Proc"], our pals who were parted from us when they went on a different ship in Sydney.

I'll never forget Shrimp and I hearing a tremendous yell "Vickers-Willis, where are you" as we came in the gate on our arrival here. And a minute later old Harry and I were hugging each other like a couple of schoolgirls. Proc, of course, was out with some girls, but we saw him later. Didn't realise how much we'd missed them.

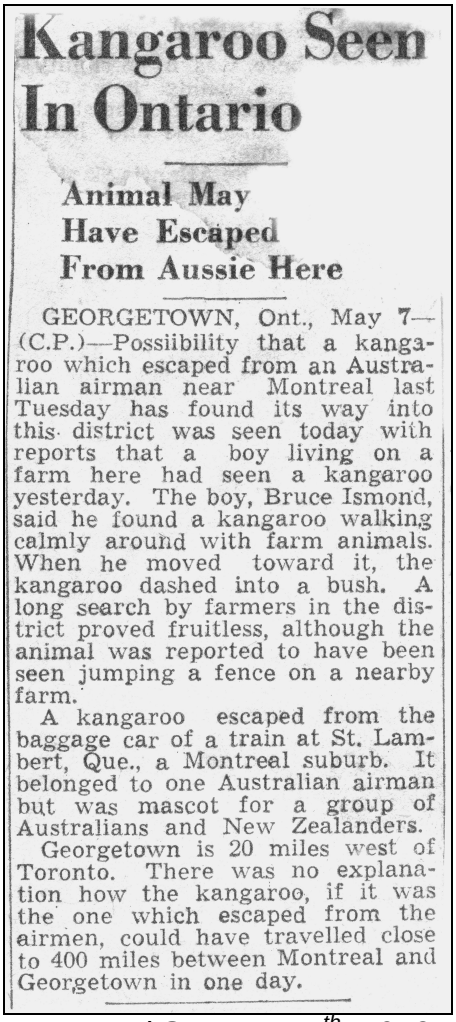
The Canadians have the same funny ideas about the English language as the Yanks; the girls are frails, hen-hussies, soul sisters; if your feet are very tired your "dogs are barking."

I agree with every one of the boys who say the Canadian girls are the most attractive and interesting and the quickest off the mark they have ever struck (they should know!), but I find none of them comes anywhere near my estimates of June – my heart is well and truly in Adelaide. As Shaw [George Bernard Shaw] said: "Love is a gross exaggeration of the difference between one person and everybody else."

Still, there it is, and no one will ever take June's place.

The mythical "missing kangaroo" joke [page 32] has gone further with publication of a paragraph about it in the Montreal Star! (also in the Gazette – May 7):

[7] An illegal Australian service game in which two coins are tossed and bets are made on how they fall – heads, or tails.



Kangaroo Seen In Ontario

Animal May Have Escaped From Aussie Here

GEORGETOWN, Ont., May 7—(C.P.)—Possiibility that a kangaroo which escaped from an Australian airman near Montreal last Tuesday has found its way into this district was seen today with reports that a boy living on a farm here had seen a kangaroo yesterday. The boy, Bruce Ismond, said he found a kangaroo walking calmly around with farm animals. When he moved toward it, the kangaroo dashed into a bush. A long search by farmers in the district proved fruitless, although the animal was reported to have been seen jumping a fence on a nearby farm.

A kangaroo escaped from the baggage car of a train at St. Lambert, Que., a Montreal suburb. It belonged to one Australian airman but was mascot for a group of Australians and New Zealanders.

Georgetown is 20 miles west of Toronto. There was no explanation how the kangaroo, if it was the one which escaped from the airmen, could have travelled close to 400 miles between Montreal and Georgetown in one day.

Montreal Star, May 7th, 1942

Some things which are unusual to an Australian, I have noticed around Montreal – cafes advertise Luncheonettes (whatever they maybe); you will see a sign "Groceeteria" outside a grocers shop, and pop-corn carts on the street. After a city picture show, I heard the National Anthem played with syncopation in the background – and it seemed like absolute murder to me: almost everywhere, of course, signs are in French as well as English.

Women over here, unlike those in Australia, appear to be able to wear glasses and still retain their charm. The glasses they wear are mostly of the concave variety and many of them wear fairly large soft looking hats (brim drooping down) which seems to take away from the hardening effect of the glasses.

Many ways and means are being devised of wangling leave. I have become quite expert at forging signatures of our Corporal and Squadron Officers on leave passes made out by ourselves. They get us past the guard. Other lads have holes dug under the back fence, and ladders to get over the barbed wire. Still others have purchased some ink eradicating material and they merely use an old leave pass bearing the required official signature and rub out the old times and dates and fill in new ones.

On Friday May 8, we were informed we were being posted to another unit – St. Hubert's, No.13 Service Flying Training School, about 10 miles east of Montreal. We had expected to go to Calgary or some other flying school out west, and many

were the rumours that we were merely being sent to St. Hubert's to do tarmac and fatigue duties.

I'll never forget on the last day at Lachine, an officer inspected us and said about 30 out of 40 needed haircuts. As the camp hairdresser charged 25 cents for a trim and most of the boys – myself included – had had a haircut a week or less ago, we objected on masse when the Corporal marched us all up to the camp hairdresser, who is known to be a "butcher."

After some palaver in which the officers showed up, half a dozen (who almost needed haircuts) were sent into the barber. The rest of us were let off, and in the few who were done, the result was amazing; poor old Shrimpton came out with an appearance something like a coconut. One bloke, who was not too polite to the barber, looked as tho' he'd slipped while shaving. Did we laugh!

The "Nickelodians" – machines which play records for you for a nickel (5 cents) and are very popular and numerous here, are said to be foolproof, but the Aussie boys have found a way to work at least one make, with single cents.

Looks like they may need our finger prints - which they took two days before we left Lachine - after the war!

They took impressions of each hand and each finger and thumb singly. The finger print man from the Police Department who supervised, told me the fingerprints are filed according to the whorls, coils, deltas, loops, etc characterising each print.

The Aussies have placarded their hut with notices such as "10,000 miles to Griffiths Bros." etc. Looks very funny.

Have heard some more quaint sayings; apparently if you don't hear what someone says you say "snow again – I don't get your drift." U.S.A. too, they tell us stands for 'Un Safe Airmen'!

1.3 Posting - No. 13 SFTS St. Huberts (May, 1942)[8]

1.4 Learning To Fly Harvards

May 9th 1942. On Saturday May 9th we arrived at St. Hubert's by train. It was just getting dark and we watched a trainee pilot taking off and skimming very low over a house (deserted) near the drome. Made us long to go up.

Immediately we got to our new school, the boys changed. Since we arrived at the flying field there has been no more foolery at all. All realise there is hard flying and solid work ahead.

The day here starts with physical training at 6.20am and finishes at 5-45pm. Half day is spent on flying and half on ground subjects – navigation, meteorology (very interesting), airframes, engines, airmanship, signals, armaments, etc.

[8] By May 1942, in the first 6 months following Pearl Harbour, the War in the Pacific was not going very well for the Allied forces with Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines falling to the Japanese.

May 12th 1942 - Today I had my first flight (in a HARVARD[9]) for more than two months. This plane is much more powerful than Wacketts we have been used to.

To my surprise, the instructor told me to take off on the first trip. Not knowing anything about the plane, I took off with 35 inches of boost. However, the instructor was in the back seat to keep us in the land of the living.

We did rolls, loops and rolls off the top, spins and a bit of mock dive bombing on a truck until I felt quite sick of flying. Felt like this when I first flew, but I soon got over it.

Don Sinclair & Dave Moore on a Harvard

Tonight we watched some jitter bugs in action through the window of the WAAF's recreation room which was opened with a dance, etc. They wiggle their hips, wobble their knees in a most peculiar - almost stealthy fashion – the girls particularly. It looks quite fascinating when it's done properly, but very tiring.

Just as we did when we first learnt to fly on Wacketts, we are all busy swotting up cockpit drill seated in Harvards in the hangers. This drill (sequence of checking instruments and controls before take off, in the air and after landing) is very necessary for safe flying. To give an idea, in checking the cockpit on the tarmac it is necessary to examine and adjust gas caps, gas gauges, gas cocks, undercarriage levers and indicators, flaps lever and indicators, trim wheels, mixture and pitch controls, vacuum and Venturi valves, generator switch, test warning lights, carburettors heat control, magneto switch, cylinder head temp, fuel air ratio,

[9] Known by many as the "The Pilot Maker" the Harvard was a twin-seat trainer with a completely enclosed glass canopy, a low-set rectangular wings, with a 550 hp Pratt & Whitney radial piston engine. The student sat in front with their instructor in the rear. Also known as the T-6 Texan, it filled the need for a basic combat trainer during WWII. 17,000 were built. The required flight hours for combat pilots earning their wings was 200, of which about 75 hours were logged in the Harvard.

carb temp, air speed and altitude indicators, gyro horizon uncaged, directional gyro caged at zero, fuel and oil pressures, oil temperature, suction gauge, manifold pressure and revs per minute gauge, priming pump (locked), and then test controls.

This is only one part of the cockpit drill one must know off by heart and carry out each time before taking a plane up.

No wonder one of our lads after flying today, apparently cracked and told his instructor he wanted his flying training discontinued. He is to cease flying immediately. Don't know that I admire this, because after all there's a war on, but there maybe some reason behind it that we don't know about – some personal matter.

The mystic word "GUMP" helps you on your down-wind leg of the aerodrome circuit prior to landing. By remembering it, you ensure that you prepare the plane for landing.

> **G** stands for gas – check the fuel, gas caps and cocks.
>
> **U** stands for undercarriage – don't forget to lower it before landing (anyway a horn blows in your ear if you do forget).
>
> **M** stands for mixture – ensure the mixture control lever is in full rich position correct for landing.
>
> **P** stands for pitch of the propeller blades – full fine, in case anything gets in the way as you come down and you need the "full fine" revs to get off again.

Poor old Shrimp broke his toe while chasing Neil Howard in the hut last night. He's had to go to Montreal Hospital. We're all scared it might hold up his flying and put him out of our course.

Have lost the fountain pen given to me by June, so will have to use this one.

One of the boys smashed up an undercarriage this afternoon and slightly damaged a wing when he ground looped after landing. He blocked the runway in use for half an hour, while about 40 Harvards roared round and around the drome, like so many angry hornets, waiting to land.

Am trying to get early nights because it's dangerous flying when you are tired. All very well to lay down your life for your country (!) but it doesn't do much to winning the war if you smash up a 250,000 pound plane and waste all the training you've had.

While Shrimp and I were waiting on a corner of St. Catherine Street, Montreal, one Sunday afternoon, a couple of girls (sorry, about 28-30) drove up and stopped opposite us with the red light against them. They grinned and we did ditto. We thought nothing of it after they'd driven on, but four or five minutes later they appeared again from the same direction having, to use their own words, "driven round the block to have another look at us!"

Asked if we were busy for the afternoon we said we were. Then they got the green light (not from us!) and drove on.

May 20th 1942, Wednesday. I did my first solo in the Harvard – took just over 5 1/2 hours; minimum time for solo is 6 hours on this unit, but I told my instructor I'd had "about" six hours and he let me go.

Was cut off, and had to go round again in first solo circuit and did moderate landing.

The Harvards tend to ground loop after landing cross-wind, and in my third solo landing I had a close shave from crashing. A gust caught the plane as the wheel touched, and despite the fact that I kicked on hard opposite rudder, she did a high speed whip around at about 55mph, and just in time I caught her with a burst of full throttle. The power gripped her in time to prevent the undercarriage collapsing and the wings going into the ground, and I carried on and took off across the grass, 60 degrees to the asphalt runway, praying I wouldn't hit a rut. I actually gave her so much throttle that I went "through the gate" on the throttle controls.

Later, one of the other boys did the same thing. Unfortunately, he didn't get his throttle on quick enough to pull her straight and smashed the undercarriage, wing and propeller (about 500 pound damage, I should say!).

I suppose girls are girls the world over and always moderately unpredictable, but the boys have all found they have to adjust their own ideas slightly for the Canadian girls.

There is much more surface sham here than in Australia. Whereas if, in Aussie, a girl (the average girl) asked you to come in for supps [supper] after taking her home, much more often than not everything would be OK, she would think nothing of it and it would be just an innocent little supper. Here you don't get asked in for supper quite so soon after meeting a girl, but when you do you can be fairly sure it's not for an innocent supper party.

That comment is based on experience and impressions of several of the Aussie lads in Montreal.

Although we are all inclined to grin at the American way of pronouncing things – coffee is 'carfee', etc – listening to Canadians who speak with a definite American accent makes one realise that their way of pronouncing words is very much closer (in more cases than not) to correct pronunciation (more careful) than our own way.

To get back to the Canadian girls – they like you to be decisive with them. They don't like to be asked where they would like to go out. They like you to pick your entertainment and take them.

May 23rd 1942, Saturday. Poor old Jack Carmody is very worried. He's just been up for a "Scrub Test" – check flight with the flight commander to test whether the pupil is progressing fast enough for his flying training to be continued (i.e. to

decide whether he should be scrubbed). Jack's wandering around looking like a bloke awaiting death sentence.

Jeff Thomas also has had about 14 hours in Harvards without going solo, and is going for a similar test. It'll be rotten if they have to take the axe; man has to take a very firm grip of himself if he gets to this stage. If you let it get you worried, you fly worse and then of course you do get scrubbed. Have been close to this stage once myself (when first went solo in a plane) and remember gritting teeth and praying everything would be O.K. coming into land – knowing a bad landing or two at this stage might result in being sent up for a scrub test.

Yesterday, we had second weekly CO's parade and inspection (we call them Bulls_ _ t Parades). You'd think there wasn't a war on to see these astonishing red-tape ceremonies, with everyone polished and creased, gold braid everywhere, a gramophone relay system playing martial music. Yesterday, it wasted 1¼ hours of our flying time.

The inspection was the most ridiculous part. We were marched into open order for inspection. Then the inspecting party came round.

Right in front were the OC [Officer Commanding] of our squadron and the 2nd in command, making sure everything was correct before the commanding officer and entourage reached us.

Then came the CO, looking at every chin to make sure it was properly shaven, at every collar to make sure it was clean, at every trouser crease, trying to detect a speck or two on highly shined shoes. With the CO was the Adjutant, behind them a squadron leader, a Flight Lieutenant, a flying officer, a pilot officer, and each officer in turn looked at us from head to foot like a lot of dummies - instead of airman who came 10,000 miles to the war.

One or two collars were adjudged insufficiently clean, and shoes not shined bright enough.

The CO pointed them out to a warrant officer at the end of the party. The W.O. asked the unfortunate victim "why?". His reply always was unsatisfactory, which resulted in his name being noted down by a Sergeant bringing up the rear (suppose this is what they call "chain of command!"). Those whose names were taken, lost their next fortnightly 36 hour leave. We laugh, but we feel very disgusted.

Have just found these words written in my flying helmet, apparently by some humorist among its previous users: "Famous last words – You have control." For those not in the know, "you have control" is what the instructor says when he hands over control of the plane to the pupil.

We've just been told Alan Mitchell and Jack Carmody have been washed out (i.e. scrubbed). The class was a bit stunned when it was announced. Poor blighters…they're both very popular and they'll be missed. "Mitch" actually got off solo, but his landings were a bit "rickety".

"K.K." Welsh is missing – has been since 11 o'clock this morning. Hope he's O.K. It's now 4.40 and we've had no news of his plane.

Shrimp *and Don Sinclair in cockpit of Harvard.*

Its 7pm now… there is a story circulating that two men – instructor and pupil – from this school were killed today, but I rang K.K. up earlier and he said he'd turned his plane over on its back but was O.K. Amazing how these rumours get around – hope there's nothing in this one.

June 3rd 1942. Have been swatting for progress tests and have had no chance to write anything. That rumour was partly right. An instructor who went out to K.K. in a Stinson landed beside the crashed plane but in taking off later crashed his own plane. However, all are alive and well, so what's the odds.

I had a little adventure in a plane that had just been overhauled.

I had an instructor in the back seat (it is regulation instructors must be on board for first flight after overhaul). I went round the circuit keeping normal air speed with great difficulty. The plane felt as tho' it was threatening to stall because of too low an air speed, but my indicators read the right speed. I did an astonishing (super precautionary) landing with the nose held high in the air – but the air speed indicators still read correct speed.

Instructor then changed seats with me and took it up for test flight. He found the air speed indicator was reading 25mph fast! He told me I had been within a couple of miles per hour of stalling close to ground on my circuit – (struth!) – stall and spin close to ground is almost impossible to recover from.

Shrimp has gone solo today in six hours. He's managed to get out of hospital in time to stay in our course - thank god.

Have had news from Harry Carew and Ralph Proctor. They are at No. 8 SFTS MONCTON, New Brunswick, and are on Harvards. They have a dislike for runways, have had to fly without helmets, goggles, etc., and are suffering from ground loops and cross wind landings. I can sympathise – these have been our chief woes so far.

One of the Ashley brothers has just been scrubbed. Its rotten luck as the other one is going strong and now they'll be separated.

Have had some wonderful letters from June that make life worth living. In one is good news that her ma – who has not been well for a long time – is sparking again.

Have had news from home that my motor car is falling to pieces from lack of use. Also, some very rotten news that Joan, my sister, has had to separate from her husband – poor kid she's had a rotten run.

The Air Force is famous in this country for "RUMBLES". These are FINES which pupil pilots must pay for various offences. Late for a lecture does not mean you get guard duty - you pay a Rumble of 10 cents. Throwing cigarette butts on the floor costs you 25 cents. Wearing incorrect dress costs 5 cents. Sleeping during lecture or appearing to be asleep costs 5 cents. Late for flying costs 25 cents. Leaving prop in fine pitch costs 15 cents. Taxying too fast - I've been caught for this - 15 cents. Over staying or under staying time in air, 10 cents. Arguing over Rumble, 25 cents! Laughing at the poor X &X! who got Rumbled 5 cents.

June 4th 1942[10]. Today, June 4th, a wings parade for one of the courses ahead of us was held. The wings were presented by Air Marshal Bishop – the ace who had 70 odd planes to his credit, also the V.C., D.F.C., D.S.O., M.C. in the last war. He's a small fairly plump man now, but he had plenty of punch in his speech and told the graduating class he wished he could turn the clock back 20 years and join them.

The mother of one of the lads, who was killed a short time ago in a collision with another plane, was presented with his wings.

Newsreel and army cameramen were present in good force. They took some photos of the Aussie boys among others.

June 5th 1942. Today, June 5, I was due to go up with my flying instructor, P/O [Pilot Officer] Sleep, but for some reason I was sent off to the Link Trainer instead.

My instructor took up "Chuck" Anderson, another pupil instead. And while they were low flying they hit a tree-top, very badly damaged the plane, and were lucky not to be killed.

[10] This was the date of The Battle of Midway (June 4 to 7) when the US Navy defeated a Japanese attack on Midway Atoll (Northwest of Hawaii), destroying four Japanese aircraft carriers. This battle is widely regarded as the most important naval battle of the War, permanently weakening the Japanese Navy, particularly the loss of over 200 naval aviators. Strategically, the U.S. Navy was able to seize the initiative in the Pacific and go on the offensive.

June 7th 1942. Last night a Squadron of Kittihawks landed here. One smashed an aleo leg in a bounce landing and eventually had to land on one wheel when one half of the undercarriage folded up – quite thrilling. The pilot held his wing up well, but eventually the tip hit the ground and the plane slewed around violently and eventually skidded to a stop smashing a wing and the propeller. The pilot was lucky to be unhurt cos' these planes land at 110 mph.

Picture of one of the Kittihawks

June 8th 1942. Today, June 8, we have changed huts again. We've been shifted backwards and forwards from hut to hut in this camp – carting our belongings with us.

So, after that our clothes and bags are getting worn out from sheer wear and tear – not as worn out as we are though!

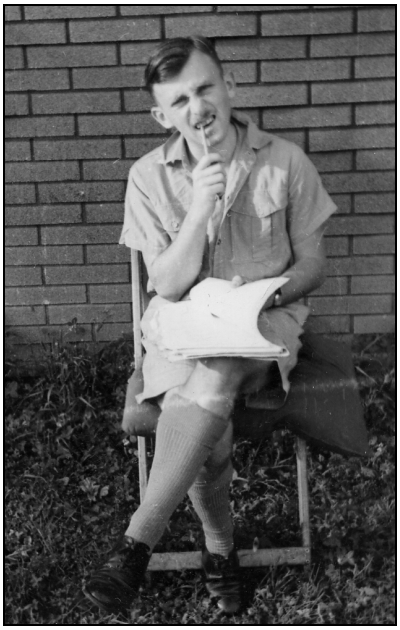
There's a lot of unnecessary ceremony goes on here. There is an attention area through which you must march one behind the others like so many sheep; and every time you pass the flag you must salute it. There's nothing like discipline, but this sort of thing (too much of it) can be very annoying.

One big curse here, too, is (or are) radio sets. By the way, over here you never call them by that old fashioned Aussie name 'wireless sets'. The Yanks and the Canadians here will open their eyes wide and say "surely you mean radios don't you?" – and you haplessly say "yes, wireless sets."

Anyway, they're a curse at night-time. It's quite impossible to get to sleep early 'cos some of the huts have about a dozen going at once – nearly all different stations too! As I write there are three or four blaring. I decided it was not worth trying to sleep with the din. It's about 10.30pm.

However, all round, this is a much more comfy and convenient hut than the last one we were in – hence we don't expect to be left here long.

Jim modelling regulation RAAF shorts



Don "Sinc" Sinclair

Each morning we are supposed to get up at 6.15 for physical training, but as we don't get enough sleep we dodge it when possible (i.e. usually). Those who go on the physical training parade have to sign their names on a list to show they were there. The list is left in the hall while the instructors are conducting the physical training and thereby hangs a tale. Usually one or two of us get up and wait till everyone is outside bending and stretching then quietly enter by the back door and sign the names of all the Aussies!

Deep snores echo from our hut while outside they puff.

On Saturday night, while staying at Dorval on a 36 [36 hours leave], I had an insight into what goes on in a Montreal "Suburb" on a Saturday night. Talk about night life.

This suburb has its own night club, but we went off to a dance at the YMCA, near where I was staying. The whole place appeared to be alive with canoodling couples. Myrtle – and Bill – went for a swim in the river at midnight and came back wet (struth). They had not had a dry evening all round. One party sang "Here's to good old whisky knock it down, knock it down, etc" in Dorval's main street.

A couple of others, who had been imbibing a little freely, were strolling around the house offering "scotch" to all comers. Luckily, the lass I was with did not drink.

Over here they don't tell you to be good, they say: "if you do anything wrong – name it after me!" – well…

Today, June 16, was waiting to go up for flying when I saw a moth turn up on its nose in landing. It was very lucky not to go on its back – the wind catching it just in time as it stood on end.

A few minutes later, I saw one of the boys parading around the drome with sandwich boards on his back. On one of the boards was written: "Ask me why I'm doing this." On the other: "I'm dumb". He said he'd been caught by his instructor low flying, and this was the penalty!

June 17th 1942. Today, June 17, we are all very worried. Last night when I returned from a trip into Montreal to see one of those Canadian girls, the aerodrome control tower was shooting off red "Recall" star signs to some planes which were late in returning from night flying.

This morning we heard four of these planes had still not come back – long after they must have run out of gas.

The ceiling is very low today. Each plane had an instructor and pupil on board. Our aircraft are out searching for them. One or two of the instructors, whose friends are among the missing, have been out searching all day. One came back with only a cupful of petrol left.

We have been told now that the four planes have been found – all crashed in the mountains S.W. of Ottawa – one man is believed dead and there is no sign of life beside two of the planes.

June 18th 1942. Next day now. We were supposed to fly last night but as the weather was not so hot they called it off – think the crashes have them worried!

Two instructors and a pupil were killed in the crashes – some of the others were badly injured. One instructor had to leave his pupil badly injured in the wreck while he walked 20 miles for help. The planes hit the side of a mountain while flying in darkness and bad visibility; all our boys have agreed that if we get lost at night like this we're not going to come down and look for a crash landing ground but are going up high to bail out and let the plane go on and hit mountains and things on its own – doesn't sound very brave but the chances of bringing off a successful forced landing at night are almost nil.

Yesterday – June 17 – sent a cable to June for her birthday, bless her. Had a cable from home saying all are well. Have replied – tho' scope is limited by stereotyped phrases allowed in service messages.

All of us yesterday received our first mail from Aussie for two or three weeks. I had 10 letters – was like Christmas! There was just a group of about a dozen rather wistful Aussies sitting on beds in our hut eagerly reading and swapping news from home.

It's not so good, but we would be nowhere else but on our way to where we can do our bit against the Nazis.

Tonight in the paper, I saw a picture of some terror stricken Frenchmen who had just been arrested by Nazi troopers. They knew their fate, poor devils. Makes you impatient to get over there and hand something back for these tortured people, but I guess we must just work our hardest at training, so as to do the job more efficiently when we do get the chance.

Flying tonight – weather has just cleared. I start at 11pm.

June 23rd 1942. What a dreadful job I did make of that night flying – bumped all over the aerodrome in making landings – will have to do much better if I am going to get off solo night flying. Ground is very difficult to judge at night.

On Saturday June 19, felt very fed up late in afternoon. Was tired, had had several hours flying and a period in the "HORROR BOX" (i.e. the LINK TRAINER) So, flew over a place where a couple of Canadian girls I know live and looped and rolled, did rolls off the top (immelmans) stall turns, etc… It was just sheer showing off and it is the first time I have done this in a plane, but it made me feel better. Later I found out the girls were not in!

On Saturday morning, I went off on a cross country flight to Ottawa and managed to get lost. Visibility was not so hot, but nevertheless it was poor navigation on my part to get lost on a 100 mile flight.

Anyway, I flew around for a long time trying to find my way. I was hampered a bit by low cloud. I was getting through my gas, and was wondering if I'd have to make a forced landing (not usually very successful in these fast planes).

I saw a railway station, and flew down about 50 feet from the line, just clearing telephone wires, etc. to try and see the name of the station. Twice I swooped down but could not pick out the name as I roared past at about 150 mph. Third time was lucky; I edged in as close as I dared, went right down close and managed to pick out the name – Merrickville. Did I feel elated! Now I wasn't lost!

I reached Ottawa about 15 minutes later, and turned round and headed for home. I had just enough gas left to make it and after a couple of minutes flying I ran into thick cloud. It looked as tho' it might be bad weather ahead and as I hadn't enough gas to fly around bad weather I turned back and landed at Rockcliffe Airport (Ottawa) to refuel and get a weather report.

Later I flew back to St. Hubert.

In a letter home – in an effort to reassure them I am quite safe - I have just written: "I have a very safe instructor. He's pretty young but he has a lot of common sense, and is trying to instil some into me" - kept my fingers crossed as my instructor is a bit of a daredevil and always after a "dog-fight"!

Jim in flying suit - The "Romance" of Flying!

June 24th 1942. Heavy rain clouds hanging low overhead but I've just come out of the sunshine. At 2500 feet there is clear sky. On my first solo period for the day I climbed up through the clouds to practise aerobatics at 7000 feet (I always like plenty of room!). Tho' there were nimbus clouds lower, most of the cloud at the top was composed of big puffy cumulus. Above a cloud layer like this, reflected sunlight from the clouds imposes a severe strain on your eyes. Dark glasses – good ones not just ordinary sun glasses – should be on issue to all trainees. I haven't any and fly around up top semi-blind.

June 25th 1942. Just before leaving on cross country, I saw half a dozen student pilots parading up and down outside the hangars – helmets and goggles and flying suits on besides parachutes on backwards so that they knocked on their knees as they walked. The man in front carried a board "We wake late" – This was their punishment for not getting up early enough and arriving late for flying.

I encountered icing in the carburettor approaching Cornwall today and thought I might have to make a forced landing when the engine started spluttering and coughing quite alarmingly. I applied carburettor heat and changed tanks and corrected it in time.

Have just returned from a 36 – and what a 36!

June 29th 1942. It is now June 29. After a somewhat hectic Saturday night in which the car owned by Don - an Air force bloke - broke down. I spent Sunday playing tennis and badminton, swimming, and on the Archery range at the Dorval YMCA.

Also tried to catch minnows by hand with no noticeable success.

June 30th 1942 – Last night there was a party given by the WAAF's in their recreation hall, but I decided not to go because I wanted to write to June and also get an early bed.

Was just climbing into bed at 11p.m. when someone came in and said there was a wonderful supper being served at the WAAF's party. "Shrimp" and Colin Mayes and I dived out of our pyjamas and arrived before all the food had gone. Shrimp wore slippers, I wore sandshoes; neither of us wore socks and we went in shorts. A service policeman sent Shrimp back to put his shoes on!

We had a great supper and shook it down by doing the square dance and the conga and other energetic dances they have here. It was a very jolly party and we crawled back to our bunks about 1 a.m.

A Lockheed Hudson doing transport work

I am writing this while waiting for night flying on June 30.

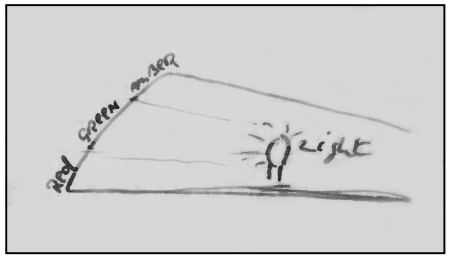
The instructors have just come in from testing the planes. During these "test" flights they always put on a great display of flying – doing all the things they forbid us to do!

It's a pretty sight - flares laid out in two long lines, flickering on the runway. Green and red lights on all their aircraft. Red lights on all air obstacles around the drome, signalling lights passing between planes and the control post on the ground.

As the lighted planes roar along to take off, circle and land, it all looks very pleasant and everything goes smoothly; but I find night landings very difficult. So often, everything seems OK as I land and I have the flares lined up correctly, and then, just when I think I'm about 6 feet up, the ground rushes up and hits the wheels and I'm fighting the controls to prevent the plane from cleaning up the flare path.[11]

[11] Editor's Note: Jim later commented: "The control truck with Control Officer in charge sat at the top of the runway on the grass between the runway flare-path and the taxi strip. Sometimes pupils mixed up the flare path with the taxi strip and this could be dangerous. On one landing, I taxied around up the taxi strip realising I had landed in the wrong place and narrowly missed hitting the control truck. As I came around past the control truck ready to take off again, the Control Officer shouted out "some silly bastard nearly killed me; he almost rolled his wheels on my roof!" I took off without telling him I was the one who had nearly killed both of us."

One clever device they use here is a glide path indicator which is placed at the head of the runway and shows red if you are approaching too low, green if your angle of glide is O.K. Amber if you are coming in too high – very helpful (see diagram at right).



July 3rd 1942. At last I seem to have got a grip of night flying. Last night I did half a dozen solo circuits and landings without doing anything particularly dangerous. It's quite a relief to have got over this big (for me) obstacle, on the way to those wings which are now only about six weeks ahead.

Some of the lads seem to find night flying quite easy – others like me are quite thankful every time they bring off a landing without crashing.

Taking our course as an example, it seems about (slightly less than) 2/5th of selected pilots are scrubbed out in the RAAF before getting their wings. Of about 54 who left ITS as pilots, we now have 33 left.

Of the 40 Aussies who arrived here, seven have been washed out. Some more Canadians have too.

Neil Howard has had a lucky escape. He was practically scrubbed but told the chief instructor he'd not had a fair go because he had had much more solo than dual. He has been allotted to a new instructor who is said to be very good, so we are hoping Neil will survive O.K.

July 4th 1942. Today, I had just taken off for some formation flying when I noticed very bad weather approaching rapidly. The bloke in the plane ahead flew on and I chased him and pointed to the ground.

However, by the time he'd got my signal and turned to follow me back the storm had closed over the drome.

Then we copped it! Teeming rain made it almost impossible to see (these conditions are very dangerous around a training drome because there is big chance of a collision in air with visibility almost nil and about 20 or more planes in the air around the drome at once); lightning split the sky tho' you could not hear the thunder for the engine. I flew with the glass coupe-top partly open because you could not see through the glass for water.

It was good experience of landing in heavy rain. I slid in with plenty of motor and great care and brought off one of my few perfect landings.

Great splashes of water went up from the runway as planes behind came tearing in almost on top of each other's tail; all in a great hurry to get down.

It says a lot for all the thorough training that, for all the need for hurrying and the fact that quite a lot (most) of the lads have never had to make a bad weather landing before, there was hardly one bad landing made.

"Mac" (Keith McLean), who got cramp in the leg while in a spin and only just managed to pullout in time the other day, was examined by specialists today. They tested his nerves reflexes and said he had something wrong with a nerve in the spine. His flying is stopped and he is being kept at Montreal Hospital for observation.

L to R – Colin Mayes, Unknown, Unknown, Don Sinclair, Shrimp, Neil Howard (minus his trousers).

Its rotten luck, and we'll all be very sorry if he has to drop out of the course because he's such a great chap, but as he's married and missing his wife no end, it might turn out for the better and result in him being sent back to Aussie.

July 5th 1942, Sunday. Had a merry old dog-fight with Ed Chesterton this afternoon. I got on his tail and stuck there while he whirled all over the sky trying to escape. When he did break away he got on mine and I did rolls off the top, flick halfs, stall turns, wingovers before we broke it up on the approach of another plane which we were afraid might contain an instructor (dog-fighting being forbidden).

July 6th 1942. Today I had a very narrow escape from ground looping. The runway into wind was under repair and we were having to use a runway with a cross wind.

After I had touched down at about 80mph the plane swung into the wind and I failed to correct it quickly enough. In seconds it was whipping off into a ground loop. I kicked on hard rudder and opened the throttle and tho' the wing dipped it did not hit the ground and the plane pulled straight 90 degrees to my landing run – phew! Mechanics examined the plane but grinned and said "no damage"

Arch McNicol & Dave Moore getting 'stuck into' each other, watched by Jim.
On the back of photo inscription states:

"Macs words: I live for one thing only – that's today… I don't give a damn for tomorrow or yesterday".

July 8th 1942. Today is June 8th. The day before yesterday my instructor P/O Sleep suspected I had been up "dog fighting" with one of the lads, and warned me it was very much against regulations to dog-fight.

Today I was returning to the drome when a plane dived down viciously past me obviously inviting a dog-fight. Remembering what "sleepy" had said I ignored it, but it came back and had another go, so I started throwing the plane about to show whoever he was he could not sit on my tail. However he flew so well I could not shake him off as easily as some of the lads and, as my heart was not in it this morning, I let him stay there triumphantly after about 8 minutes or so of flying all over the sky.

I waggled my wings to signal him to come up into formation on me and when he drew up beside, who was grinning at me from the cockpit but P/O Sleep, my instructor!

Apart from something of a shock, I felt a bit disappointed I had not tried harder in the fight and I gave him the thumb signal to come up and have another go. However, as we climbed up side by side he rocked his wings and then gave me a lesson in close formation flying – and oh boy can he fly.

Was flying on Friday night, July 10 when there were three crashes – not by me thank goodness.

First, Ballew from our flight, ground looped just as I was about to go out for a check flight with P.O [Pilot Officer] Trembley. The instructor grinned at me and said "Don't you do that with me."

A few minutes later Ben Johnson swerved off the runway and headed straight for Ballew's plane. He had to ground loop his own plane to miss collision. Ballew's plane had a smashed wing and undercarriage; Johnson's plane was not damaged. Both climbed out unhurt.

After I had flown for 1 hour 45 minutes solo till about 1.30 am, I stood at the control post at the head of the runway watching the planes land, and I saw something which will stay in my memory always.

Van Wyck also from my flight (D flight) came into land without his wheels down.

I yelled out to the control officer – but he was very slow in responding and did not shoot off a red Verey light to signal him not to land. The WAAF who was at the control post screamed – it was quite a nasty feeling not to be able to warn him. He hit the runway in a perfect landing on the fuselage and sparks shot up from the asphalt in a shower as he scraped along at 80 mph. He slithered along an incredible distance and stopped, unhurt. The propeller and engine were damaged. I am afraid poor old Van might get scrubbed for this.

July 11th 1942. Saturday July 11 – While on my way out to Dorval for a week-end, I stood on the corner of the main road to Montreal waiting for someone to give me a lift for the 10 miles to Montreal. There is no other means of transport from the aerodrome and it is necessary for you to wait for someone to give you a lift.

I waited for half an hour while bloated millionaires roared past with V for victory etc on their windscreens, and empty cars.

At last, an old French truck driver slowed down and let me climb on the back. All the way into Montreal he picked up more airmen who had been ignored by the folk with empty cars.

On Saturday night, I went to a dance and met a couple of other Aussies. We finished up at 4am eating fried chips, sandwiches and apple pie – twelve of us all sitting on one double bed at a girl's place; it was good fun and quite harmless tho' one or two of the boys were getting a bit under the weather by that time (note: thought while having picture taken, that girl who takes picture strips would make good story – this for future reference).

Forgot to mention that on Friday night, I had my closest escape from getting killed yet.

I was just waiting to taxi out, sitting in the cockpit while the engine ticked over. Exhaust gasses from the exhaust pipe were flickering in blue flame in the usual manner over the top of the starboard petrol tank which had just been filled up with 40 gallons of gas.

I glanced down in my usual check to see if everything was O.K. and, in the darkness, the cap on the tank did not seem to be in position correctly. I called the tarmac hand over, and he discovered he'd left the tank, full of petrol, open by mistake; if I'd started to move off with the petrol cap off, the exhaust flame would likely have caught the petrol fumes from the tank and the whole lot exploded. As it was, I was very lucky it

did not go up. I didn't report the tarmac hand for his carelessness tho' I guess I should have.

July 12th, 1942, Sunday – About 4 pm today, one of the planes crashed and caught fire on the runway. It was a nasty crash and the pupil was killed and instructor badly hurt. It is rather interesting to notice that whenever anyone is killed here, people are not quite so cheerful around the camp. It is always interesting to see how, when a crash occurs the wreck is merely dragged off the runway and training carries on as usual, while the ambulance, fire truck do what they can. Shrimp had taken off from the runway a moment before. He looked around and saw the plane below blazing.

Van Wyck fortunately did not get scrubbed. He had to walk around the aerodrome the following afternoon bearing a board "I landed wheels up" – and had various other punishments including, a nasty entry in his log book , but its good not to lose him through his mistake.

Colin Mayes has bought a tin whistle for a couple of dollars. We would all like to buy it from him so we could jump on it:

Colin Mayes plays the tin whistle which Shrimp doesn't like.

July 27th 1942. Haven't been able to write anything in this diary for 15 days owing to swatting for the wings exams, which are now over. At the moment, I am writing this in the flight room waiting to get a plane and members of our course are collapsing with shock all over the room owing to the fact that the meteorology marks are out and no one failed!

We had a visit from the top Australian officer Air Vice Marshall Goble the other day. He asked the boys if they had any complaints about the station, etc. and the lads had quite a lot. It was rather funny as the CO was sitting listening.

Air Vice Marshall Goble visits. Jim is centre with Bob Heath on right.

The Aussie officer also told us to be as careful as possible so as not to wreck too many planes. He implied things had reached a stage when planes were just as precious as pilots.

I had my flying wings test and afterwards, as I climbed out of the plane, the testing officer gave me the thumbs up signal so I knew everything was O.K. – tho' I know my flying is only average.

There was also a flying navigation test and instrument flying test.

In the instrument test you fly blind (i.e. under the hood) and the instructor puts the plane over on its back, and in all sorts of other unusual positions, and you have to recover level flight blind, using instruments – great fun, especially as all the instruments go haywire and leave you uncertain whether you're on your nose or your tail.

The ground school exams were carried out with great care and ceremony. The exam papers sent from command H.Q. were kept in a sealed envelope and the seals were broken by the chief ground instructor (Squadron Leader Desloges - who has 8 Nazis planes to his credit and some wounds) immediately before each exam began.

The navigation exam was a real test of stamina – lasting 3 hours and a few minutes extra which they allowed us, as everyone was racing to finish.

As soon as the exams were over – at 2.30 pm on Saturday July 25th – the lads all decided to go out and get drunk.

1.5 Visiting Ottawa

I went off to Ottawa to visit a girl named Mary McIntosh who invited me over when I met her on the train on our first day at St. Hubert, 11 weeks ago.

I wrote the next bit in shorthand as I travelled in the comfort of an air conditioned car on the train to Ottawa. The fare (service concession) was only 3 dollars 25 cents for a return journey of about 260 miles.

I am only travelling standard class. Of course, I was lucky to get an air conditioned car – not all standard class is air conditioned.

Seats have feet cushion covers and also slip covers of linen to rest the head on (a thing they go in for a lot over here). There are bright coloured blinds on the windows and in the buffet car where I have just had afternoon tea. You sit down in comfort at small white linen covered tables and are treated like an honoured guest by the flock of waiters – till you get up without tipping them – and you can get quite a nice (1) sandwich and cup of coffee for the mere expenditure of 30 cents.

These trains have first class (very, very comfortable and I am told, very expensive), standard class, tourist class and colonist class. In the last class, where you have sleepers, the beds are provided but you have to bring your own bed clothes. In the tourist class you cannot get meals served, but kitchens are provided and if you bring food, you can cook it on board!

These facts were told to me by Colin Groff, of 4131 Cote Des Neiges Road, Montreal (apartment 2). He is a private in the army and living over the other side of Canada in Alberta. When he had to come over from Alberta, he smuggled his wife aboard the troop train (they've only been married a short time) and aided by a Sergeant, who winked his eye she was able to share his bunk with him. During the train trip he has said many things which indicate his dislike of the French inhabitants here. He says grudgingly that a few of them are O.K. but the majority are a pretty low lot. This seems to be the view of a great many Canadians.

There are coloured blinds on the windows. Through them are green trees and yellow hay fields, bathed in soft, mellow July sunshine. As I write, this smooth train is flowing through brown fields of wheat, green patches of corn tho' of course not as much grain is grown here as in Alberta and places out west. It is a wonderful scene, with haymaking in full swing in the golden sunshine – soft, soothing, somehow very lovely and satisfying.

After a really pleasant trip I arrived at Ottawa, the capital of Canada.

It is a really beautiful city – slightly spoiled in one place at present by "temporary" wooden government buildings which were built at the start of the war for war

government officials, apparently on the assumption that the war would not last long. They are beginning to look a bit shabby.

The rest of Ottawa is magnificent. The government there is in the habit of buying up any unsightly building in the city and demolishing it to make way for lovely gardens. The result has been a real garden city where trees must be as numerous as buildings, tho' I am told there has been rather a strain on government funds, particularly as often if a building – though not unsightly – does not fit in with the government's scheme of decorating it will be bought and demolished. This was so in the case of a big block of offices which was across the road from the beautiful government owned hotel, Chateau Laurier.

At parliament house I met a red-coated member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Constable Mc Kay.

We jokingly called out to him from the car "where's your horse?" And so he went to the trouble to explain to us that the Mounties, nowadays, were unmounted and were used to guard government buildings, etc. He had been a Mountie for more than 20 years – back in the days when they rode horses and things were more exciting.

I saw the House of Commons sitting. It was a special war debate and the House had been kept back on Saturday afternoon especially for it, but as usual half the members were semi-asleep.

Spent a very pleasant week-end at Mary's house [Mary McIntosh] – her father has a big farm at Templeton (near Angers) and they took me out in the car on Sunday to a beautiful spot at the riverside where we went canoeing and picking berries.

I had my first experience of driving a car on the right hand side of the road and found it quite difficult at first.

On the way back to Montreal, I met a Mr. Mc.Cameron with his nephew and doctor, and niece Kaye Derby who is very nice and has a date with me on Thursday – a happy combination!

There are lots of girls here who are very nice - Mary McIntosh is one, but they don't seem to compare with the one girl in Aussie.

July 29th 1942 – Last night (Tuesday) the WAAF's had a fancy dress party and ball in their recreation hall.

I was just getting into bed when I decided I'd like to go, so I went over in pyjamas and a dressing gown (Shrimps) with a notice on my back "JUST MARRIED – KICKED OUT." First time I've ever been to a dance in pyjamas.

There has been a big improvement in our messing. Every pilot now puts in a dollar a month and so we have a separate Mess (formerly used by the Sergeants) with cloths on the tables and somewhat better food.

August 10th 1942 – Now that the wings tests are over, I occasionally spend a period roaming in the clouds – diving into narrow passages in puffy mountains of cumulus, twisting in and out the "holes" which appear in the clouds. It's really exhilarating at 150 mph, tho' you must keep the carburettor heat adjusted to prevent icing caused by the moisture in the clouds. On one afternoon, I headed into some rain clouds at about 6000 feet and looking down saw a perfect circular rainbow ringed completely around the plane below.

On Friday July 7, I had my first experience of dive bombing and it was great.

You get in "close" to the target, a red pyramid in the middle of the range; cut throttle to 15" boost; then reducing air speed to 100 mph, do a semi-stall turn and wing over and let her plunge down gloriously, lining up on the target and gathering speed. At 1000 feet with everything aligned correctly you press the bomb button and then open the throttle to pull out of the dive and roar away, turning as you climb to observe the accuracy of your bomb; then around again and another whistling dive.

Dive bombing is a most natural manoeuvre; the swift downward plunge to strike at the target is one of the most beautiful and exhilarating experiences I have had.

On Friday, I did not experience "grey out" in pulling out of the dives. Usually I "grey out" fairly easily. "Grey out" is a milder form of "black out' caused by centrifugal force driving the blood from the head. In 'black out" you become temporarily unconscious. In "grey out", which I experienced, your eyes go black and you cannot see out of them tho' they are wide open. Crouching in the cockpit helps to prevent these.

On Saturday, July 8, I went over to have a look at The Star newspaper office. Of all the literary staff, there was only one sub-editor left on the premises. He had been cleaning up some cables for the Star's Sunday paper, the Gazette.

I had a quick look around the office. All round it did not seem to be as up to date as the Herald in Melbourne.

The sub-editor told me over a couple of pots that only the front page and one or two other pages in the paper are laid out. For the rest of the pages, the onus rests largely on the compositors to fit the news in where it will fit! In this way there is very little overmatter, which he said is considered an important aim. He was critical of this policy.

The "rounds" we have in Aussie are called "Beats" here. Hence you have police beat, hotels beat (watching for any interesting tourists, etc). There's not much big crime for the police beat but a good deal of minor crime. Although Montreal has plenty of facilities for vice and gambling, the police are not troubled over much because a great deal of it is more or less legalised. In some ways, this seems better than our own method of continually treading on vice but never properly squashing it.

At least the occupants of the legalised establishments in the Red Light district are subjected to periodical inspections!

There are approx 1¼ million people in Montreal and about two thirds are French and a third English.

One good thing here - when you go into a public house ('tavern' they call it) you do not stand at a bar and drink as in Aussie. You sit down at a table and a waiter brings drinks. Makes all the difference, tho' some of the Aussie boys say they'd rather stand at a bar and drink. One of them said "at least you know when you've had enough 'cos your legs start to sag; also, you don't have to tip any waiter, but here, if you fail to tip the waiter, he gives you a dirty look and it takes you ages to get served!"

Early on Saturday evening (about 6pm) I went swimming at Montreal swimming club which is on the north east side of St. Helens Island. Beside the Jacques Cartier bridge, the club which is for men only has a great position on the river bank. There are diving boards and you can swim out to rafts in the clear water of the mid-stream; that is, providing you can tackle the current. It is a pleasant spot with broad lawns.

After a swim, I wandered through the wooded Ile St. Helene which was empty of people. Scores of squirrel played around in the quiet woods. I saw an old Indian block house and peered through the barbed wire of the prison camp on the west side of the island, where about 250 Italian internees are confined. It looked a pretty grim place – surrounded by barbed wire and with guards patrolling. I felt rather sympathetic for the prisoners. To be imprisoned like this would almost send one mad.[12] There were a couple of lawns but the whole place looked very drab.

The prisoners may work if they care to – for 40 cents a day (just about enough to keep them in cigarettes).

I was on forbidden ground – not the first time – and a guard, who caught me, told me it was a good job it was not yet dark because "we shoot first and halt afterwards." I too, am glad it was not dark.

[12] A rather prophetic comment by Jim given, after the War, he was to be imprisoned in an iron-lung when he contracted polio.

Flight Lieutenant
Jim (James John) Vickers-Willis

DIARY 2

August 1942

DIARY 2 - AUGUST 1942

2.1 RAAF Training, Bludging, and other Aussie Service Colloquialisms

August 19th 1942, Wednesday. 9.15am - "Bludging" 66/5. We are at the moment engaged in that popular sport of the Australian Services known as Bludging. Bludging is another name for dodging work or stealing a march on the other guys. Judicious bludging is a definite art. Every man in the Air Force bludges at some time. If he didn't he'd find his life was full of fatigue duties and other little unpleasant extras and, likely as not, all he'd get for his gains would be to be dubbed a crawler by the rest of the lads.

I remember when I first joined the Air Force, although I had been in the Army, I had the impression that RAAF men were governed by a more 'gentlemanly' spirit and I volunteered when sergeants called for volunteers for dirty jobs, just like any other greenhorn eager to do his best in the Service! (We call it "mad with the service!")

There was a very long meal queue each day outside the cookhouse, involving a lengthy wait for lunch. There were sergeants and corporals patrolling the queue to see that men did not "bludge in" to the line (i.e. break in). For the first three weeks, I was in the Air Force, I walked on to the end of the lunch line and found myself gradually getting further away from the cookhouse where meals were being issued; all along the line old hands at the game were breaking into the line.

The queue ran past the shower room and as soon as the nearest corporal's back was turned, men inside the showers would suddenly cease their ablutions and dive out to where a cobber [a friend] offered a forward position in the line. There were various other dodges for getting in and, of course, some men were caught and given fatigue duties – but that was all in the fun.

However, after 3 weeks of being last in for lunch and often not having time to finish before rushing out to afternoon parade, I woke up. Eric Williams, one of the old hands, defined a drongo (the name given to a greenhorn in the RAAF) as a man who gets on the end of meal queues; and so – like all other airmen I graduated from the DRONGO stage and became a confirmed and enthusiastic bludger – breaking in to meal queues, getting in the back rank whenever panic (fatigue) duties were being allotted, not attending any of the red tape Bulls_ _t parades, whenever I was fairly sure there would not be a roll call check up of who was absent, etc., etc.

And I found this spirit was not frowned upon. Of course, the sergeants were all out to catch you, and if they did it was too bad for you, but their attitude was "if you get caught you'll go for a row. If not well good luck to you; we'd do the same."

So this morning we should report to the flight room. However, it is unlikely there will be a roll call and the weather is too bad for flying, so we would probably be given a job of washing aircraft, cleaning up the flight room, etc. Hence we are bludging, i.e. I am in bed, so is Don Sinclair. Dave Moore is sitting on his bunk keeping an eye out of the window for officers. Knowle Shrimpton is sitting on his bunk reading and watching the door also for officers. If any come in, Don and I will go under the sheets

and they will probably leave us undisturbed, assuming we have been night flying; Shrimp and Dave will vanish into the lavatory and remain there till we pass the word to them that the coast is clear – well organised.

Bludging, which is applied only to dodging fatigues and various other jobs not connected with training, is quite distinct from loafing on the job of training to be a pilot, either in ground school study or flying practice. Anyone who loafs on the job of training is not doing his duty and is also a fool; anyone who fails to bludge and hence lets himself in for all the dirty jobs is, too, a fool. That is the Aussie view.

August 20th 1942, Thursday. Tomorrow week we get out wings. One of my ambitions is to get my wings without damaging a plane. So far, touch wood, I've not even scratched the paint on one. As Harvards (the planes we are flying) cost 35,000 dollars each – and planes are becoming really precious – it seems as good an ambition as any.

I am writing this in the flight room. There is bad visibility today and only a few of us are able to go up at once because flying is confined to practising low (300') circuits of the aerodrome. The periods of bad visibility we have here are quite amazing. Dirt and smoke laden air from Montreal's factories blows across when the wind is in a particular direction and around the drome the visibility is reduced to a dangerous stage, while on the other side of Montreal the atmosphere is quite clear.

Another reason I am not flying is because I have 180 hours up in Harvards – more than anyone else in the flight.

As I write there is the usual roar of engines through the windows.

Today there is the unusual sight of quite a few aircraft standing on the line. Usually almost every plane is in the air all day – except for a few minutes between flights for refuelling. There are quite a lot of lads in the flight room too – joking and smoking; some are organising a baseball game for tonight – Canada v Aussie (last night in a cricket match the Aussies won by 1 Run); others are resting on parachutes on top of the lockers; some are reading books or writing letters, others studying maps.

Some planes are taxying out to the take off point like so many giant beetles. Others are landing in a continual stream. A control officer in a tender at the take off point directs the traffic with Aldis lamps and a signal pistol. It is in his hands whether he allows a plane to land if it is close on the heels of another plane, or sends it around the circuit again with a red light from the Aldis lamp. It is all very busy and very well organised.

On Saturday night, I managed to induce Shrimp to come out on a "blind date" with a girl, named Betty Hammond, whom Kaye knew. Kaye had told me she was very pretty and one of our Canadian flying officers was keen on her, but she considered him a twerp. I dragged Shrimp along more or less against his will and he was glad I did because Betty turned out to be very attractive. We went to a night club and imbibed quite a lot of Scotch & Rye and Collins (a jigger of Gin and lemon), which were not particularly nice, cost us quite a lot of money and made us feel slightly brighter than usual. The dance floor at the night club – the Tic Toc, one of the best here – was about large enough to accommodate two or three couples comfortably;

there were about 15 couples on it, so the dancing was nothing to write home about. Just the same, we had a great night and Shrimp arranged to fly over Betty's house on the Sunday morning and do a few stunts for the benefit of Betty and Kaye (Kaye was staying at Betty's house which is at St. Lambert, near the drome).

However, Shrimp could not get a plane on Sunday and, as I was flying, I went over and tossed a loop and half a dozen rolls and wingovers, etc. for them – good fun at a safe height.

Yesterday (Wednesday), I had my interview with the Chief Ground Instructor and he was surprisingly complimentary; told me I came 6th out of a ground school class of 58. I had already found that out by spy work! Afraid my flying report won't yield any compliments though.

On Monday, we had an Inspector General's inspection and, for several days before the inspection of the unit was due, a state of semi-panic existed. The Inspector General comes round Canadian Units annually and he inspects all the personnel and every part of the Unit. He even asks for the key to certain lockers and checks up that they are clean inside. He inspects the food (we had turkey on Monday for the first time since we've been here!), the planes and barracks, etc.

Sunday afternoon, we spent washing the floors of our flight room, the instructor's room, the O.C.'s room, etc and dusting and generally polishing everything, washing aeroplanes and the hangars. Sunday night we spent washing our barracks. Monday morning we paraded for 2 ½ hours for the Inspector General with buttons shined and trousers creased, then the brass hats looked us over like so many sheep.

In the barracks, we had to spend endless time lining up the beds with mathematical exactitude, folding blankets so that pattern lines were dead in the middle, lining up shoes on top of the lockers, etc. Perhaps all this helps to make the station efficient, but a lot of it does seem unnecessary and a waste of time in war-time.

Harvards on line at St. Hubert's Aerodrome

August 21st 1942, Friday. 9.15am - It's one of those beautiful Canadian summer mornings – the sunlight from a clear sky is made mellow by the slight city haze – a haze which is worse up top and has caused flying to be temporarily washed out. I'm sitting in the back cockpit of a Harvard writing. There is a big group of lads around the plane; in the front cockpit the lads are having a contest to see who can abandon ship the quickest – six seconds is quickest so far. You have to sit with one hand on the control column and one hand on the throttle as in flight and have to disconnect the inter-communication tube, open the coupe top, pull the quick release on the safety harness and jump with your chute to the ground. Geoff Thomas has just reduced the record to four seconds.

A couple of days ago we had an interesting moment when a plane came in to land with only one wheel. The control officer fired him a signal red light to warn him not to land and he flew around the drome trying to get the other wheel, which was stuck, to go down. Eventually he managed to get it down by doing very steep turns and rocking the machine violently. Then he showed good common sense by skimming in over the ground and bumping the wheels down to test them for security. When he was sure they were fixed he landed on the grass and the fire truck, ambulance, crash crew and audience who were waiting for the crack-up, dispersed somewhat disappointed!

2.2 A 48 in Montreal

August 24th 1942. Monday morning without the slightest trace of Mondayitis after a wonderful 48 hours leave spent mostly in Montreal. This is the first 48 hours leave I've had on this station. Late on Friday night, Shrimp and Dave and I decided we'd like to visit a really low dive for fun. We'd heard of a place called the (San) St Michel, where there was a pretty hot floor show and we walked about two miles, after being wrongly directed, before giving up looking for it.

We decided to go to the American Club, another moderately low dive. When we tried to get in, the doorkeeper said we had to have ladies with us. Immediately up popped a guy from the sidewalk and offered to find us these "ladies" around the corner. We said the usual "no thanks" and as we walked off were buttonholed by a middle aged man who asked us if we'd like to "see the circus".

We're wise to "the circus" (some of our lads have seen these shows) in which young and not so young females perform quaint little tricks sufficient to disgust even the roughest of our lads, hence we told the guy what he could do with his circus. However, he was persistent and followed us up saying "all very young and nice", and when we had brushed him off we were immediately assailed by another of these guys who wanted to know if we would like some girls and offered to lead us to them. Dave began chanting something rude which must have discouraged him and we had a more or less clear path to the next dive, which also informed us girls were essential before you could get in. And then up popped another lad with unlimited numbers of spare females. I think they're all in league!

Another guy who offered us a "circus", advertised it by saying "nice and young; show you things you've never seen before" – to which Shrimp retorted "That's all you

know!" So we gave up and wandered into a Tavern to sit down to a couple of pots before heading for home.

On Saturday afternoon, while swimming at Montreal Swimming Club, I took part in a duck chase. We were all lined up and a duck was carried out into the river in a boat. Then the duck was dropped overboard and we all dived in and went after it. And oh boy, what a hunt it was. I almost touched the duck once before it streaked away. Fortunately, there is a rule that if the duck is not caught before it stops three times it goes free, so nobody was drowned from exhaustion before the hunt was declared off and the duck shook its feathers and joined a cobber [a friend] unmolested in the shallows while a large crowd of weary humans used their remaining strength to flounder back to land.

There was a duck chase for juniors and one young lad caught the duck. The one who catches the duck can keep it for Sunday dinner if he likes, or can sell it back to the swimming club for a dollar.

On Saturday night at about 10.50, I found out from a Canadian who had seen the list ,that Shrimp and I were both getting commissions as pilot officers. He told me I got a large number of marks for airmanship, character, etc – I thought it couldn't have been for flying!

Crash siren has just gone – crash truck, ambulance, fire truck are all tearing over to where one of the planes has ground looped; not one of our flight's planes, thank goodness.

On Sunday afternoon, we (Shrimp and I) met Kaye Derby and Betty Hammond and went over to Betty's place at St. Lambert for dinner – and what a dinner it was. Best meal I've had in Canada – more like home.

L to R – Kaye Derby, Betty Hammond & Mary McIntosh

We gradually realised that we were regarded as a type of show piece. During the brief time we were there, at least 20 girls – some married, some unmarried – casually 'dropped in' to the house to see the family.

Today (Monday), I went up for a period of formation flying with Alan Noble. Before we went up, we both agreed not to take any risks with close formation as it was so close to our wings and an accident now would be a tremendous tragedy and possibly mess up any chances of commissions. However, I think I rather surprised him because I kept a full span between us and took no chances at all. Usually, I like to fly right in close with wings almost interlocking.

We're all anxiously awaiting to hear our postings. I'm very worried Shrimp and I will be sent to different places. It'll certainly be pretty lousy without him around. We've both put in preference to become fighter pilots, but I have an idea he may be made a flying instructor.

Nearly all the lads are worried in the same way. We're all hoping a lot of the Aussies may be sent somewhere in a bunch and everyone hopes he'll be in that bunch. One of the boys came in just now and reported he'd landed too fast and overshot the end of the runway. A boy on a bike, who saw him coming, ran into a bush and went over the handlebars getting out of the way…. No damage.

2.3 Gaining Wings – Becoming A Fighter Pilot?

August 25th 1942, Tuesday. At 12 noon today we were all told to assemble in 'C' flight room. We guessed it was to hear our postings. I landed in a great hurry and in my haste to not be late made one of my few perfect landings! There was a tense silence as the Chief Instructor read out the list of instructors (elementary and service), fighter pilots, bomber and reconnaissance pilots, army cooperation and a group who will be posted overseas. They started with instructors and I gulped a bit when they read out Shrimps name in the 8 service flying training instructors 'cos I was sure I would be a fighter pilot. Then they read mine as service instructor too! Ooh!

Shrimp and I nearly sank through the floor – still Shrimp's posting was no surprise to me because we've always considered him a sound flyer and likely to be made instructor, but mine – well!

However, theirs is not to reason why. If we're going to help win the war by teaching other people to fly we'd best just make as good a job of it as we can. Just have to adjust your thoughts I guess that's all. I was thinking of doing my bit in terms of knocking Nazis out of the skies; now I'll have to think of it as putting more of our men up there, and teaching them what to do when they get there – though I know I've got a lot to learn myself before I'll be capable of doing this properly.

August 28th 1942, Friday - 2pm. I'm writing this just before going out to parade for our Wings.

August 31st 1942, Monday. We've just been to Henry Morgan's to be measured for officer's uniforms. I rather shocked the tailors by turning up in a khaki shirt of which I had torn both sleeves and with a big tear out of the back. Did they stare when I took my coat off!

At 11.30 on Friday we (Shrimp and I and several other Aussies and Canadians) were told to report to the Squadron orderly room. We soon guessed it was to be told officially about our commissions and it was. We were all lined around the Squadron Commander's desk and he handed us each a slip of paper saying we had been selected for commissioned rank. Everyone said nothing until the Chief instructor had left the room then we all woke to life and there were grins and joyful handshakes all round.

Another officer who gave us the low down on one or two little points of etiquette in the Officer's Mess, told us it was necessary to come to attention before entering the Ante-room, and advised us not to get drunk at the bar. Because of bad weather, it was decided to hold the Wings Parade inside No. 2 hangar. Aussie, English and Canadian flags were rigged up around the big hangar (they forgot to put up Yankee flags!) a dais with the Air Force insignia on it, a Harvard a/c [aircraft], and seats to accommodate the audience completed the decorations. We were marched on and formed into the usual hollow square before the dais. Junior courses and ground crew personnel formed up behind.

Air Vice Marshal S.J. Goble, the Australian Liaison Officer in Canada, before presenting the Wings, gave us a rather more human talk than is usually put over at these affairs. He declined to use the microphone. Then one by one we marched up, halted in front of him, saluted, stepped forward a pace, had our wings pinned on (at which stage a woman photographer took a flashlight photo of each of us). Then the Air Vice Marshal said a few words – particularly to the Aussies. He remembered me from a previous occasion; asked me how I liked the idea of being an instructor and when I said I didn't and wanted to be a fighter pilot he said anyway it would probably be only a temporary measure; then he shook hands.

Jim is presented his Wings by Air Vice Marshal S.J. Goble

In the evening, we had our Wings party at the Ritz Carlton Hotel – said to be the very best here. But the meal was certainly not the very best. Apart from the food generally being pretty poor and scanty, the waiters forgot to bring in the sherry ordered for the toast and so we had to drink to 'The King' in water! Seeing that every student put in 5 dollars (Aust 30/-) to pay for the dinner, it was a pretty poor show by the hotel. However, there was not much water in the gallons of liquid consumed during the rest of the night.

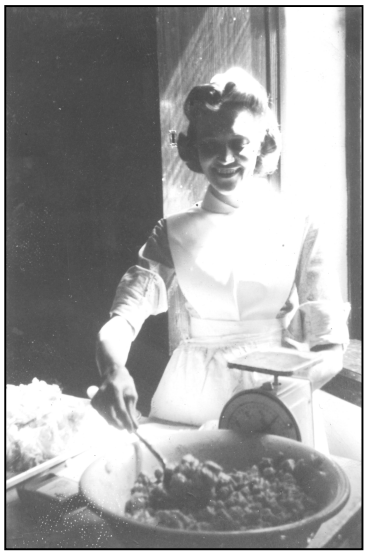
P.O Sleep, my flying instructor, gathered his own pupils together with a bottle of Scotch and the party began to get a little brighter. However, some officious guy from the hotel began to get a bit hostile towards our party, so led by Sleepy we hied across to the Liquor Commission, purchased some Scotch, gin, etc, took a room at the Int. Royal Hotel and settled down to a steady drinking party.

I don't take to these drinking parties for a pleasure but Wings night is a different matter. Anyway, I knew better than to not look as though I was drinking solidly – anyone who looks as though he's not enjoying himself or says he doesn't want to drink is constantly plied with drinks till he disappears under the table.

However, at 3.30 am, I managed to escape leaving the rest of the boys to sleep it off in the room we'd rented. On the way home, I met some of the lads and just as we were getting a taxi, they managed somehow to get into an argument and start a fight. However, there were eight of us and four of them so nothing much had developed when the police arrived and everyone decided to depart in peace! I went to bed about 4.15am and found that someone had borrowed my bedclothes, so I 'borrowed' someone else's for the night and settled down, but not for long – Shrimp came in and woke me up to tell me how many gallons he'd consumed in the night and all the meals he'd lost to make room for them. Neil Howard came in about 5am blowing a trumpet and shouting with the express purpose of waking the whole hut – Hell.

I went to breakfast at 7.15am and could have eaten as much as I liked, there were so few chaps there; however, I seemed to have lost my appetite. Looking back over the whole proceedings I can't see what it is that makes people enjoy getting drunk so much! The least said about Saturday the better.

2.4 Lessons Learned – Money & Girls!



A guy who owes me ten dollars and was posted to Embarkation Depot to go overseas, left without paying me back – a chap I was sure could be trusted too.

I left my leather case, containing some clothes, in a taxi and have not yet got it back.

Finally, we (Shrimp and I) hired a car and took Kaye and Betty out; Kaye and I driving alternatively. Shrimp and Be in the back seemed quite happy, but I was not feeling the best after the previous night and Kaye was worried about a patient in her care who had died suddenly in the afternoon [Kaye was a nurse - the photo at right shows her preparing some food in the diet kitchen]; result was we spent most of

the evening getting on each other's nerves, to which unfortunate situation I contributed NO little! We stopped in the car for a snack about 7pm at a roadside café where all you do is pull the car up outside, toot, and a waitress appears, takes your order and brings it out on a tray which is made to fit on the side of the car – good idea, quite common over here. Apart from the fact that relations between Kaye and I were somewhat strained (!) the evening was chiefly notable for the fact that Shrimp and I spent too much money. I always feel a bit guilty when I waste money (specially on girls) because I feel I'm tossing away coin which is partly June's; with everything unsettled after this war we're going to need any spare cash that can go into the bank to make things a bit more secure when we get married.

Hence, I'm not asking Kaye out this week; she'll probably think I'm still huffy over Saturday but actually it's because of the cash situation.

On Sunday, while returning from a very enjoyable tea time visit to Betty's home in St. Lambert (which is a really beautiful bit of old English country), Shrimp and I saw a man bowling at a great pace along the street in Longuevil in a little buggy drawn by two huge dogs. He told us the dogs were crossbred Alsatian and Great Dane. He said the French word 'marche' to them to start them; 'cuche' to make them sit; the letter 'G' to make them turn right and 'oh' to turn them left. He said they did not tire easily and could average 15 mph over quite a long run.

On Monday, we went into Henry Morgons to be measured for our officer's uniforms. Over in Canada, Australians can get only one blue uniform and one drab. We are told we can get another blue when we go to England or Aussie, but, as we're likely to be here for a long time, we are putting P.O [Pilot Officer] rings and wings on all our uniforms.

On Monday night, we made our entry into the Officer's Mess. It was quite funny – we did not want to appear to be pushing our way in, so we dined in the Airmen's Mess for a few days after getting our commissions. For once the Aussies were all well dressed. None of us forgot to come to attention before entering the ante room and generally we ate dinner in an atmosphere of stiffness – to which the presence of the CO at our table contributed – displaying our best table manners and keeping our usually enormous appetites under control despite the presence of biscuits, cheese, celery and other unaccustomed luxuries on the table.

On Sunday, Shrimp and I received our first salutes as officers. I'll never forget; two WAAFs passed us outside our hut and with broad grins on their faces tossed us a couple of snappy salutes. Shrimp returned the salute saying "Gertcha" over his shoulder; I said "blow me down" – the WAAFs passed on their way with chuckles.

On Tuesday night, we had a game of tennis on the officers' courts. We'll all be much fitter if we can get some tennis. It's one thing we've missed more than anything else since we've been here.

I'm feeling very thankful to have reached my Wings without damaging a plane – one of my chief ambitions so far in the RAAF. Our course is one of the very few to go through SFTS [Service Flight Training School] without having at least one fatality. I think this is largely to be credited to the Aussie flying instructors who (so far as I have seen) are generally more conscientious than those over here.

On Tuesday, some of us went over to the dive bombing range to act as markers. In marking the accuracy of the bombs dropped on the target, sights are taken from bearing plates at two quadrants, on the puffs of smoke from the bombs. The readings are phoned to the plotting room where the intersection of the two bearings on the bomb plotting chart gives the position of the bomb. On the way to the range in an RCAF wagon in the morning, we passed some girls on the road and gave them a hoi; they must have come to the quadrant hut after we'd left because the following morning we found this note on the door…

Bonjour les amies.Comment allez-vous. Nous sommes
Rachel, Lucille, Noella and Bea

Hello Friends,
How are you. We came to visit you in your absence.
That's bad. Good-bye and good luck. Some Friends
Rachel, Lucille, Noella and Beatrice

On Friday September 4th, I did a bit of burglary. My earphones were swiped by someone just before I was due to hand them in, and as they were on my charge the flight commander told me to get a pair from somewhere "no matter how" or I would be charged 20 dollars for them. So I ransacked all the lockers in my old flight room; but unfortunately, the new students using them were wise to the need to guard their phones 'cos there were none in the unlocked cupboards. So I went into the instructor's room and swiped a pair off the chair next to the flight commander's desk; hope they weren't his but anyway he told me to get a pair "no matter how". I disguised them with adhesive tape before handing them in.

On Saturday night there was an informal dance in the Officer's Mess, but I decided on an early bed; however just as I was leaving the Mess about 8.30 'Sleepy' (P.O. Sleep, my flying instructor) pulled up in a big car and called me over and introduced me to some people. He asked me what I was doing and unsuspectingly I said "nothing". Next thing I know I was being introduced to a Yankee girl named Rita (who was apparently a 'spare') and was shanghaied into the party by 'Sleepy' who gives you no chance to get out of these things once he gets his hands on you. I was not a bit keen on going even tho' Rita was really a very nice 'spare', but I soon found myself drinking Rye in the Mess and without giving me a chance to have a shave or get properly dressed we all jumped into a car belonging to Mr. Frederick J Smith a wealthy Yankee from Newhaven Connecticut, who seemed to have the party under his opulent wing, and went off to spend the night drinking and dancing at the El Morocco – one of the most expensive nightclubs here.

I spent most of the evening dancing – which is NOT the usual thing at the night clubs. Most people sit around and talk and drink and eat and watch. Some look dead bored and are obviously only drinking to try to infuse some enthusiasm into their own pleasure-jaded selves. Most of the women smoke; I think it would be safe to say the women smoke more than the men. There are all sorts at this club. The fairly wealthy out-on-the-spree – they order lavishly and leave after having consumed about 2/3 of what they asked for. There is a sprinkling of young service men lured to the place of lavish spending by gold-digger girl acquaintances of a type very numerous in this city. Those lads will probably get a shock when their garcon hands them the bill – and I'll warrant the garcon will still expect his 10% of the bill tip or will treat the young

service lad with open contempt to make him look silly before his girlfriend (not that she's worth a cracker anyway, but the lad's not wise to this yet).

Then there are of course, those girls you will see sitting at the bars of nightclubs – alone. An obvious invitation they will pay for one drink and make it last all the evening, or until some 'client' arrives on the scene. Compared to Australian standards of entertainment costs, the expense of the nightclubs is terrific. At some clubs there is a cover charge (about a dollar fifty for admission usually). At others there is no cover charge, but you will sit down to a round of four drinks and it will cost 3 dollars 70 cents. After about four rounds of drinks have been consumed, you are up for a bill of about 15 dollars (Australian - 4 pound 5 shillings approximately) then there are tips and if you have something to eat you'll be lucky to escape under a dollar fifty per head even if both the men upon sighting the charges on the menu, suddenly decide they've lost their appetites.

Fortunately on this night, the Yankee insisted on footing the bill and would not hear of us splitting it with him; fortunately, as I had only a little money and the bill must have been about 30 dollars. We had our picture taken by flashlight and it was fairly good, but I'd better not send it to June 'cos I was sitting next to Rita, tho', as a matter of fact, I did not even get her address.

2.5 Discovering The Big Apple – The Place I've Always Wanted To See

Shrimp and I made a round of the Montreal banks and finished up at the Foreign Exchange Control Board trying to arrange to get our Canadian money changed to American. We got lots of sympathy but little else. Eventually it was arranged for us to get 19 American dollars each. I already had one, so that made 20 dollars – 6 pound, 12 shillings Australian - for a 14 days holiday in New York.

Despite all our work, when we got on the train to New York, and Canadian and U.S. Customs and emigration men made their examinations, we were found to be short of our 'H' Form, a bank authority we were supposed to have, besides our CO's permission to enter the States and our identification cards.

However, tho' he led us to believe he was going to put us off the train before crossing the border, the Canadian customs officer let us go through. I had quite a yarn with him; he'd been on the job ever since coming back from the last war and he told me that, out of revenge, whenever he found a passenger of German origin on the train he went through his bags with a fine tooth comb. He only glanced at ours and it would have been possible to smuggle anything we'd wanted. When I asked him if many people got goods through he said "we don't know about those that do get away with it, but we know about those that don't; it costs them the value of the article plus the duty".

Several other passengers were put off the train before the border because of lack of documents; some had passports but no visas from the U.S. Consul. I am writing this in shorthand on the train journey to New York. The first Yankees we have seen on the train all seem very bright and keen types of folk. The train travelled across the long bridge over Lake Champlain above which we have often flown and in which one or two of the lads have killed themselves low flying.

We crossed the Border into New York State, at Rauses Point, at 11am (Sept 12, 1942) I climbed down to the ground and collected my first American soil in a piece of paper. It was rather stony; hope this is not an omen. We are travelling through the Green Mountains – rather beautiful with thick timber. Lots of the trees are just turning red; it is still early in the Fall but the signs are obvious. When we first saw the Hudson River we thought it was a pretty puny little stream for the famous Hudson, but as I write it has broadened out into a majestic river. It varies remarkably in size from narrow in places broadening out to the appearance of a lake in others.

The sun is throwing beams flushing across the water through cloud holes and it is becoming noticeably warmer (New York is noted for its sticky heat in summer), as we head into America. We have just passed Troy, where U.S.O. [United Services Organisation] girls gave us cakes and coffee and candy and apples, and wished us good luck – a nice welcome.

Whatever we say about the civilised part of America, without seeing anything else the land itself is beautiful – all that we have seen so far, which is not much, rich in timber, ferns, and wildflowers. It is very like Canada.

We passed through a place called Berlin. Can't help thinking that this is the only time I'll get a chance to see Berlin; but still you never know we might get our chance to go overseas yet. A year ago, I would have laughed at anyone who said I'd be heading for New York right now. We have passed two huge steel bridges over the Hudson River – typical of the American style of workmanship – slim, high, and cleanly built, all metal girder work even to the pylons resting on stone bases. It is rather wonderful to be heading towards New York – the place I have always wanted to see. In two more hours we will be there.

They say this is the best way of entering New York, and it certainly is nice country. The railway runs alongside the Hudson which is flanked by high hills. On top of these cliffs we have just passed the West Point Military Academy – a famous spot and an impressive sight with square looking buildings outlined against a dark sky. Almost next door to it on the cliffs is a big ladies college – most convenient – and one suspects this college would be popular among the girls.

The river has now broadened to a size more than a mile across. The train is racing along at about 50 mph – not one of their fast trains but a good one and there is little noise in this comfortable air conditioned car. Our fare for the return journey of a little more than 1000 miles between Montreal and New York was 11 dollars – a big concession. It is interesting to notice that although cars run on the right hand side here, the trains run on the left, as in Aussie.

All along the Hudson there are little boats out fishing and there are men and some women in little fishing parties at the edge of the river. The first three advertising signs which caught my eye were a building supplier's sign 'We Sell It!', 'Learn to Fly' and the 'Royal Pet Co'. We are approaching the outskirts of New York and the only noticeable thing so far is a fairly thick industrial haze ahead. I hope New York is not as smoky as Montreal.

This is written later…..

We did not see much more as the train went underground and we arrived at Grand Central Station – an immense place – about 8pm. We discovered an electric train – and not a steam engine – had been pulling us from 20 miles out – to prevent dirt entering the city (nevertheless New York has a certain amount of dirt from oil burners heating apartments, etc).

As Les Phillips-Jones, a fleet air arm lad from Llandaff (near Cardiff, Wales) whom we met on the train, and Shrimp and I walked out of Grand Central I wore my big fur hat for fun. Did it attract attention! New York's millions were audibly interested and amused as we walked the busy streets that Saturday night. Had Lady Godiva staged her famous ride into Times Square, she could hardly have attracted more attention than that battered old Aussie hat when we arrived there among the theatre and nightclub goers, the dancers, the shoppers, and the strollers who make Times Square like an ant hill on Saturday night.

A Yankee Corporal decided off his own bat to guide us, and guided us along all sorts of avenues and streets until we were well and truly lost (somewhere about the corner of 42nd Street and 5th Ave) and then having found nothing he accepted our fervent assurances that we could find our own way and left us. We wandered around until we found the YMCA (Sloane House) where a harassed young lady poured out information. Some New Yorkers recognised my fur felt hat. As we walked out of Grand Central a girl called out "Hello Digger!" one young woman fairly yelled to her escort "There is a cowboy!" Then hastily concealed her face on the sleeve of her escort as she realised it was just an Aussie. Everyone seems to be very bright and happy in New York. Apart from the fact that everyone seems to be friendly to anyone in uniform, the war seems to have hardly brushed the population.

We were shouted some drinks at the Astor Hotel in Times Square and danced a while at the Stage Door Canteen, where actors and actresses entertain servicemen. At about 1am, I strolled down 5th Avenue whistling Waltzing Matilda, and felt quite amazed when the roar of 5th Avenue's traffic drowned our national Australian song.

On Sunday September 13th morning, walking down the hill in 5th Avenue – about 37th Street – I could not help noticing a resemblance to Collins St., Melbourne. Even the street lamps were the same design, although of course the buildings were much higher. It is all I can do to keep from looking up continually. Nearly all the streets are broad and most of the public transport traffic is taken off the road by the subways which run for miles and miles, and on which you can go anywhere for a nickel (5 cents – about threepence Australian). Cotton goods, cameras, suitcases and trunks, shoes and many fancy goods seem to be much cheaper here. Of course, the Canadian dollar is only worth 89 American cents.

You've only got to see how bus drivers, conductors, etc., treat people to realise that here probably more than anywhere else, all men (or most anyway) are equal. On an 8th Avenue bus I heard the driver call out "stand off the step" – without adding the word please. And he became quite menacing so that the passenger when he realised he was the offender, fairly leapt off the step and permitted the closing of the middle door. I understood this attitude of New York's busmen when I discovered from a conductor that he earned 42 dollars a week (about 13 pounds a week). He was rude and very unhelpful to Shrimp and I when we first climbed up on top, but later when I had a yarn with him he turned out to be quite a decent chap and took the trouble to show us various places of interest on the bus route which he had been

travelling for more than 20 years. I have formed the opinion that New York's busmen work on the assumption that all the members of the public are complete idiots.

On Sunday afternoon, I went to New York's playground, Central Park, and really I could write pages about this wonderful place where men and women of almost every race and creed are present.

The park which is 52 city blocks in length has softball and baseball grounds and 'pick up' teams of lads draw big crowds of baseball fans. There are swings, etc. for kiddies, a bicycle track (I thought it was a footpath till a girl cyclist fell off in avoiding me and I had to pick her up - sound work!) There is also a horse riding cinder track, a zoo and museum, in fact the whole works in free healthy entertainment. Of course too, there are broad lawns and shady paths with lakes and ducks and pigeons. There are lots of strollers and sitters and those like me just looking and seeing how a big slab of New York's huge population spends Sunday afternoon.

I paused by the drinking fountain memorial to Sophia Irene Loeb[13], the lover of children, and read the inscription:

In the deepness of despair may I never lose hope.
Spare me from judging harshly.
May I never fail a friend nor fight a foe but fairly.
Her greatest wealth was her heart of gold.

This modest little monument with its message is probably far better known to New Yorkers than many of the imposing bronze statues of city founders, newspaper editors, etc which clutter up the City Squares. Later in the day we went to a tea dance by Princeton University Women's Club at 39th Street, just off Park Avenue. There were gallons and gallons of beer and lots of pretty girls to dance with.

Shrimp and Les went off to Staten Island by ferry with a couple of girls for the evening. I met one – just very moderate – from a magazine office and as she knew someone in the New York Times offices, she agreed to take me over there (it's a bit hard to get in, in war time). The Times has about 100 reporters. New York is divided into districts. A district police roundsman covers each. Brooklyn district has four men, which goes to show! Copy is phoned in. For feature stories the reporters are usually paid a flat rate of 75 dollars an article – there is no lineage rate.

The paper is comparatively poor pictorially. Associated Press photos are used chiefly. The Times used to have the Wide World Photo Service but surrendered it to Associated Press some time ago. There are only four staff photographers. The Syndicated Dept interested me; here are all the correspondents from various countries, Sweden, etc. I met a Mr. Hopkins, a file expert who would delight the heart of any newspaperman with his enthusiasm for his work. He has a wonderful filing system in operation. Every day, everything is cut out of the paper and it is filed not only under subject but is filed separately under every name mentioned in the article. It is the most elaborate and comprehensive newspaper filing system I've ever seen.

[13] Known as the "godmother of American children", Sophia Irene Loeb was an early 20th century journalist who wrote articles advocating for state welfare support for widowers with children.

There are of course at The Times teleprinters and electric telegraphs by the dozen, receiving and sending news from the four corners of the earth. I saw a copy of the first edition of The Times in 1852…. It was beginning to fall to pieces. Nowadays Rag paper copies are turned out each day for records purposes. These copies are also on sale for 75 cents. From files we noticed that half tone ads only began to appear in the paper after about 1930; before that it was all line ads. As a safety measure in case files are destroyed the newspaper files of The Times are being committed page by page to strips of film; by placing the film in a projector you can read the pages - a sound measure in case of air raids.

Later, I travelled out to 324th Street in the nickel subway. Subway services are divided into 'local' and 'express' trains. The local stops at about every second street, and subway entrances run up on to the footpath so that they can be used much the same as trams. The expresses run out for miles – through Long Island, Brooklyn, etc. The cars are fast, not very comfortable and noisy. On New York's famous 'sticky' days they are very hot. Still, they get you places, fast and cheaply and that is the big thing in New York.

I learnt this same night that apartments on Park Avenue (the good end) cost around 2000 dollars a year. Near 324th Street the apartments cost about 600 dollars a year (50-60 dollars per month) these were three-roomed apartments. I discovered too that the railway line along which we entered New York from Canada runs right under Park Avenue, and the small vessels I noticed under construction near the railway line on the way in were naval 'E' boats and sub chasers building at the Manhattan Ship Yards.

We ate our first meal at an automat on Sunday morning. The automat is a type of restaurant I have never seen before. You deposit nickels in slots to get whatever you want to eat. If you want rolls or coffee you go to little glass plated compartments with these things inside. By inserting a nickel you can open the compartment and take out what you want. It is much like a cafeteria – the chief advantage being that you can see everything you are going to have before you buy it. Automats usually charge about the same as a moderately priced restaurant – perhaps a little cheaper. Because of this, and because you can get a meal so quickly, they are very popular among city business folk.

I noticed there were deep grooves in the marble counter at Stone and Hardart's automat when I was getting some nickels from the girl. And I was quite amazed when she told me the automat had been going for 25 years and the grooves were from coin wear.

As I walked towards Broadway and Times Square that night I saw my first 'Sandwich Woman' – she was with a sandwich man, and together they were advertising a tea leaf reader who read the cups at a 'Gypsy' Café nearby.

The following day (Monday) Shrimp and I travelled by bus along winding Broadway to Wall Street. I went in to the Stock Exchange and spent about 2 hours there talking to anyone I could get to talk. It was obvious business was slack. I learnt that formerly there were 3200 active members; now there were 1300 of which about 600 were present each day. Wartime Wall Street is a scene of long lunch hours, and you see members of the stock exchange engaged in horseplay on the famous 'floor' where in the pre-war hey day fortunes changed hands hourly.

There is little business (only a few thousand shares change hands daily). Just the same there's plenty of activity on the 'floor'. The 3000 odd persons – members, clerks, pages – all seem to have something to do even if it is only engage in playful boxing matches.

As usual, the day I called, the floor was thickly littered with scraps of paper. These scraps are cancelled orders. They are torn up when cancelled to make sure that some other party does not make use of the information contained therein. Before the war, after 'official' trading had closed at 3pm, the records section used to often have to keep working till late at night to keep up with the volume of business.

Earlier still, when things were really booming, members used to carry on trading in the lobby of a nearby hotel long after the Exchange had closed, until the Stock Exchange (which was becoming overloaded) threatened to expel any member trading after hours. The Brokers, themselves, do not speculate now. They cannot afford it. The same machine which operates the film ticker tape throwing current quotes and bids on to the screen at the Exchange also transmits these prices to 200 tickers operating simultaneously in stock brokers offices throughout the city. At 3pm, the bell to signify the end of trading for the day starts ringing indicating the last 15 seconds of time; when it silences, all business is finished.

I did not worry about any lunch. Shrimp meanwhile had returned to the centre of the city and on his way in the bus had met a New York business man who took him to lunch. When I met him later we called in at the Pepsi Cola Canteen in Times Square where you can buy hot dogs, etc for 5 cents and drink as much Pepsi Cola as you like free! You can also go downstairs here and have a free shower or shave, or call in at a rest room and listen to the piano played by other troops or volunteer girls, or play card games, etc. with the girls. There are many places like this in New York where anything a soldier wants (within reason – and sometimes that!) are available to him.

Miss Miller (also known as Mrs Crawford) of Sloane House, who has a son in the U.S. Air Corps, asked us to call to her office today and told us she knew some people who would like to ask us down to stay at their home for the weekend. She said they had a lovely home, and the last lads who went down, they had taken to the Stork Club. We said we'd love to go!

That night we were given free tickets (worth 2 dollars 20 cents each) by the U.S.O. to go to 'Ice Capades of 1943' at Madison Square Garden. I think it was probably the best presented show I've ever been to. Madison Square Garden has a big oblong floor – on this occasion covered with ice with coloured patterns implanted in it – and a stadium of tiered seats ringed around. There was an astonishing number of lime lights which followed the speeding skaters - bringing them into brilliant relief on the patterned ice. There were one or two falls during the evening – but I noticed that it was only members of the ballet who lost their feet; none of the stars fell, although they were performing very difficult feats. The New York City Defence Recreation Committee (in co-operation with the USO) who gave us the tickets, also have available each day for service men hundreds of free best seats to almost any show in town. These seats are given each day as a patriotic gesture by producers, theatre owners and managers, etc.

At 99 Park Avenue – the headquarters of this patriotic organisation – you can obtain free admission tickets to amusement parks, dances, golf courses, tennis courts, fishing and boating trips, all sorts of parties including tea dances, museums, the chief city observation roofs, big N.B.C. radio broadcasts, also for baseball and football matches. The USO volunteer girls, too, about whom the Americans have written a song, are always around at 99 Park Avenue (corner 40th Street) to hand out information, advice and help to service men, particularly visitors to the city.

We were too busy seeing New York to waste much time going to shows, but Ice Capades was well worth the evening. It was a most graceful exhibition; the spectacular qualities of the show were brought into their best relief by excellent lighting effects and a good master of ceremonies. Americans make good masters of ceremonies; I think they have the gift of oratorical publicity. One scene, which struck me as particularly good, was a mouse scene in which a little lad on skates played the part of a mouse trying to get a hunk of cheese. The final scene – a patriotic one – too was impressive, particularly as the entire audience rose to its feet immediately the American flag entered on a float. One felt a wave of spirit through the audience as the star spangled banner – the US national anthem – was sung.

When we came out, I told Shrimp I was going to invest 60 cents in a good meal – I had only had two meals since Saturday morning, and it was Monday night now, preferring not to waste time and our little American money, eating. We were just sitting down revelling in this extravagance when Tim Tyler, one of the Aussie lads who was at Essendon with us – a great chap too – came in and asked us to join him in a party. I said cautiously: “It’s not going to run us into money is it?” and he said “No” so we went – and what a party it turned out to be.

Apparently an Englishman, Mr. Sydney H. Cooper (son of Sir Daniel Cooper, Bart Of Greenways, Chippenham) had rung the Piccadilly Hotel during the evening to ask some Aussie boys out for the evening. He had already taken Tim and his pal Law out to Ice Capades and he took us all into the Diamond Horseshoe – Billy Rose’s nightclub which is one of the most expensive in New York – though a textile exporter I spoke to there who had been around the world a bit said “You get the best drinks here and see the best floor show at more reasonable prices than you would pay anywhere else in the world.”

The exporter, who was with another lad of the same calling, had with him a Canadian girl who was an RCAF, WD Officer – Alice. The two men were apparently showing her around New York. As we had no girls with us I ‘borrowed’ her and danced with her for about half an hour. I really think she was quite pleased ‘cos they were a bit old for her. I said to one of them, Alice had told me she had been having a good time, and he replied with American frankness: “Oh yes, we’re giving her a damn good time.”

We had our photographs taken (see below), before the drinks and eats arrived, by one of the girl photographers whose skirts, cut almost to the waist, would be a riot anywhere but in a nightclub where they rarely raise a comment.

The floor show and stage show was the best I’ve seen in a nightclub. Roy Fox and his orchestra played for tall beauties clad mostly in feathers. Many old New York stage celebrities gave turns. Billy Banks, the great Negro singer, brought the house down. He really is fine, with amazing white teeth.

Celebrating "Wings" at Billy Rose's New York "Diamond Horseshoe" Nightclub
L to R - Sydney H. Cooper, Knowle Shrimpton, Jim, Tim Tyler & Law

The waiters, unfortunately, were of that variety who hover around the back of your chair trying to catch you with your eye off your food or drink for a moment so that they can sneak it away unobtrusively on your blind side. Some chicken of mine was whipped away in this fashion, also a glass of Rye and an ice cream in periods when I transferred my attention to the floor show. I gave my waiter a hard look when some more Rye turned up and kept my hand on it while watching the show – which deterred him.

The Secretary of the Anzac Club in New York (Bill ????) appeared at a late hour just before the club was about to close and he personally led us in singing for the benefit of everyone within two or three blocks: "We are the boys from way down under" – and we then roared out the other Aussie song 'Waltzing Matilda'. Everyone at the nightclub was more or less under the weather so they took it well, and then sang an American patriotic song which we cheered. Some New Zealand lads then did a Maori Haka dance and sang, and the attendants appeared quite pleased to hand us our hats as we tumbled out into 46th Street with loud cheers still echoing around the Diamond Horseshoe.

After we had said goodbye to our host and been invited to his home in England any time we go over there, we wandered along the street, Shrimp talking to some Aussie civilian he had met. While I waited on the corner of 46th Street, an American who was a bit sozzled (a word that always interests the Americans) came up and related to me his feats in the last war. I gave him a sympathetic hearing; matter of fact he was rather badly wounded in France.

Another lad on the corner produced a pack of those French cards which are like ordinary playing cards on one side and depict men and women in various indecent scenes on the other. I pretended to be highly amused with the result that the lad offered to sell them to me for a dollar and a half! The returned soldier by this time had reached the stage of asking me in for a drink, and as we'd had quite enough to drink for one night and it was 4am I fended him off while I got hold of Shrimp and we went home to bed – I turned in at 5am.

On Tuesday I awoke at 11.40 – far too early. Les James of the Fleet Air Arm was knocking on the door; cursed him roundly – immediately decided on having early bed tonight! Les said he was going to see Joyce, a (more or less) society lass he had come to know. She had a flat and he'd decided, too, on having an early bed so he was going to suggest she accompany him and then he'd either get the early bed that way or else she'd kick him out and then he'd be able to come home to bed early! Psychology of a sailor.

We had our photographs taken free at the studio of a New York photographer. He did not seem to have too prosperous a business, but said he thought everyone should do their bit. As I said, we had decided on an early bed, but for Australians in New York it is like running the gauntlet when you decide to go home early. Folk you've never seen before stop you in the street – lots of Aussies or folk who have been there or just New Yorkers who like Aussies – they will ask you to shows or to dinner, ask you into the nearest hotel for a drink. And if you are not careful you find the day goes by without you having much spare time to do anything but talk and drink. These folk are so nice it becomes quite embarrassing sometimes to break away.

This afternoon, after visiting Squadron Leader Hastie, of the Australian Comforts Fund (he does lots of work fixing up arrangements for the visiting Aussies – finds folk who will look after them for the weekend, etc.) and being given tickets for Horace Heidt's performance over the NBC from Radio City Studios, New York, we listened to Artie Dunn and the Three Suns playing in the Piccadilly Hotel Circus Bar. We have often heard this program on the radio in Montreal and looked forward to seeing the trio in action in real life. I was particularly struck with their signature tune – 'The Things I Love' – and asked them to play it right through – they obliged, and the squeeze box man, whose expressions were almost as interesting as his playing, grinned at us two or three times. He and Artie Dunn at the organ were really wonderful; the third in the trio with guitar did little more than supply the rhythm.

Here, as in Canada, you see a lot of women drinking. One of two friendly Yankees, who joined Shrimp and I, told me that in the south, women are not permitted to enter the bars. The two Yankees set about buying us beers while we were there and only after a struggle did I manage to pay for the beer which I had ordered myself to start with. I said to Shrimp as I paid it "Do you think I can afford to tip the waiter?" and that lad who had come up behind me handed back my tip and said: "That's ok" – sort of thing you appreciate even though it was only a minute tip.

Earlier in the afternoon while walking towards Times Square, I came across a woman 'astrologer' – least she called herself that – who in alliance with a 'professor' was telling the fortunes of a group of passers by from a stand outside a garage off the footpath. She looked an intelligent and tough specimen – was inclined to fat – what in astrological parlance would be called the Scorpio type. The professor was a

sharp elderly man who moved round the circle with great speed collecting ‘fees’. The pet trick was that a member of the crowd handed over a fee and told her his Christian and surname and date of birth to the professor. The woman astrologer then told the ‘client’ her or his Christian name and answered a question – using these phrases “The question you have in mind is …..” and giving the answer.

Once she slipped and began answering a question only to receive hurried interruption from the professor saying that the client had not yet thought of a question! Later I asked the ‘professor’ if he knew where an Ephemeris could be procured and he said “I can’t rightly say” and brushed me off. I think any astrologer would know where to get an Ephemeris, so I conclude they were not really astrologers.

At night, we listened to Horace Heidt and Frankie Carle and the Musical Knights. We sat in comfortable padded seats in a studio which was more like a picture theatre with a broad stage, footlights and a big glass fronted control room at the right hand side. Although it was his first program for some time in New York, Heidt did not conduct at all himself. He spoke over the microphone and generally ran the show. Before the show, he and his second conductor criticized one or two things and had a couple of run throughs on one number ‘for temp’. A 17 year old find of Heidt’s who (so Heidt said) had been working in a drug store 8 weeks before when Heidt walked in for some pills, sang a song off the air and was given such a good reception that Heidt commended him on being a ‘great bower’. Frankie Carle, in a great solo, did not appear to look at the keys most of the time while playing. Like the squeeze box man at the Piccadilly Hotel, I saw him talking to someone while playing beautifully at the same time.

Heidt is a good showman – rather like Norman Banks – he is broad, dark and has a strong straight featured face. His wife is fairly pretty and when he introduced her with “Take a bow darling” he commented that her red hat “was a new one”.

Later, we met some Aussie merchant seamen from the Queen Elizabeth in port. One was a chap named Salmon who was leader of the orchestra at the Australia Hotel, Sydney, before the war.

Wednesday morning: the hard bitten appearance of the Yankee copper with his thumb stuck in his belt and chin stuck forward is somewhat belied when you see him – whilst on traffic duty – directing a young woman and holding up the traffic while she reaches the safety of the footpath. If you stand and watch him in action, as I did, you will probably be amazed (after watching British policemen) at the small informal gestures of the fingers with which he shows the motorists what to do.

A twiddle of the fingers indicates to come on (practically never do you see the full majestic sweep of the arm of the British constable). He seems in this way to have the traffic right at his fingertips. There is never any hesitation on the part of the drivers in obeying the easily understandable signals which are often accompanied by a nod of the head. You may see him (as I did) cock a questioning eye at some motorist who has anticipated his signal and gone ahead on his own bat – as though to say “I’m letting you go this time but remember I saw you.” These Yankee coppers are able to hand summonses to appear in court directly to motorists who break the regulations. One told me he only dishes out summonses for flagrant breaches of the law; however, he said this was not so with all the New York City coppers.

After ascending at 1000 ft / min – same speed as Harvard plane – in the Empire State building lifts – first 80 floors in 1 min, 102 floors all told (I said 'Good Lord are we here already" when we changed lifts at the 80th floor) – we looked down on a New York which was veiled in grey industrial haze, of the type we've become accustomed to in flying over Montreal. It was not very thick, but spoiled the distant view. However, we could clearly see the surrounding skyscrapers – a peculiar view looking down at those great towering walls of windows after straining our necks to look up at them.

For the first time, I noticed Welfare Island (just off Manhattan Island on which New York City is mainly built) where most of the hospitals, institutions, etc are situated. We could just pick out the giant hull of the gutted Normandie lying on its side[14]. Rockefeller Centre, Grand Central Station, the Chrysler building (second highest in the world – 1000ft), the Flatiron building (some years ago New York's highest building but now not in the first 20) were all easy to pick out. We could see 5th Avenue, the better shopping district of the city and the dividing line between east and west in the naming of Manhattan Island streets (Manhattan is from an old Indian name by the way).

Central Park with its 850 acres of public playgrounds stretched away to the north, and we could pick out the theatrical and nightclub district around Times Square.

Les James took a photo of a charming little girl, on duty at the top of the Empire State, who found out for me the cost of sending a cable to Australia from the top. It was too expensive. Later we went to lunch at the Edison Hotel where we were told we could get meals at half price; we could, but even so they were much too expensive for us. However, we had to stay once we were in there and as it turned out some nice women voluntary workers came along and danced with us, and then the New York Tribune cartoonist came along and caricatured us all free, and the women voluntary workers took a flashlight photograph free and will send us prints. It cost me 90 cents for lunch and Shrimp and Les 75 cents, so all round it was worth it. The cartoonist – a quiet chap – was particularly clever. Shrimp and I were impressed by the way everything in busy Times Square stopped (including the trams) when the star spangled banner was played at a war funds meeting. The whole populace stood to attention as the strains of the US anthem rang through hushed Times Square; all servicemen stood at the salute. It was very impressive to see. From what I have seen of Americans, they have lots of respect for these things.

Then we took a one-hour subway journey to Coney Island. It was near 6pm and the carriage was very crowded and hot, tho' eased by big fans. We travelled through the rather battered appearing suburb of Brooklyn out to Coney Island where we found a broad beach backed by a board walk promenade with, of course, all the usual holiday trades in waffles, ice creams, drinks, wheel chairs, besides an endless variety of side shows. Then of course, there was Luna Park with the usual 'Thrillers' which appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. The Cyclone (a big dipper) outside Luna Park is the steepest I've ever been on. It is just a shade deeper and a good deal steeper than the one in Melbourne. On the Cyclone we met two girls Mary and Flo. We went around with them. When we met them, I decided immediately that Mary was by far the best and dived into the seat next to her while Shrimp was talking

[14] The Normandie was the most powerful steam turbo driven passenger ocean liner ever built – the biggest of its day. It caught fire and sank in New York harbour as it was being converted to a troop ship in 1942.

to the attendant. However, this filthy work did not avail me much 'cos we only knew them for an hour or so tho' we arranged to ring them "in a few days" having not the slightest intention of doing so. They introduced us to frozen custard – which is something like ice cream – is advertised to cost 5c a cone and cost us 40c for four – saw us coming!

We saw our first 'Blimp' U.S. observation balloon, on patrol off the coast. Later in the evening we went on to the Shubert Theatre to see the end of the play 'By Jupiter' in which Monica Moore[15] (Nancye Cocking, Australian actress of Adelaide; very beautiful – dark with big and deep eyes – something very nice about her – I think she has a good heart) – was playing. She and Ray Burgess, who is in love with her (she is separated from her husband), took us to Sardis Hotel which is the rendezvous for a great number of New York's theatrical folk. Nearly everyone present was more or less well known on the stage or screen – tho' we didn't know any of their names. I recognised one famous English screen actor but cannot recall his name. We had some drinks and among others were introduced to a millionaire.

Monica believes in looking after Aussie boys in the service and asked us out to her apartment 322 East 55th Street (Plaza 9-4172) to have a real home cooked Aussie dinner of roast lamb the next day (cooked by herself). I went to bed that night at 4.15am. The next day we took a No. 4 Fifth Avenue bus to the end of the route and back – to see a bit of the city. I wrote the next bit as we travelled along.

As I write, I am riding on the top of a Fifth Avenue bus along Ft Washington Avenue north-west of the city. We have just passed the Washington Bridge and 183rd Street. We have been travelling along Riverside Drive which has lots of tremendous blocks of apartments. We are looking down on a convoy in the Hudson waiting to take shipments to sea, probably to England. We have passed the Rockefeller church and a Rockefeller Hospital – both magnificent modern buildings. These open top buses are ideal for sight-seeing – although a little hard of seat.

We have just passed a trailer with four cars packed on it in the amazing way they have over here. Apart from the bus and slower traffic route there is a motor car speedway out to the western suburbs. This allows motor car traffic to travel unrestricted along Riverside Drive. Pedestrians in New York very rarely wait for the green traffic light before crossing. There is a joke in New York which defines a motor crash as when two drivers aim for the same pedestrian; but I think pedestrians are the chief traffic offenders.

[15] The stage name of Nancye Cocking

Flight Lieutenant
Jim (James John) Vickers-Willis

DIARY 3

September 1942 to July 1943

DIARY 3 – SEPTEMBER 1942 to JULY 1943

3.1 Roast Lamb in New York with The Stars

September 17 1942, Thursday. We had our Aussie meal cooked by Monica Moore, the Adelaide actress. She had a small and very comfy apartment and when she bought in the roast lamb and baked potatoes and cauliflower plus apple pie and cream, we could have all got up and kissed her.

Matter of fact, Monica Moore has been kissed rather a lot by Aussie airmen. 56 of them once lined up at a Hotel when they were leaving and insisted on kissing her goodbye. Eventually she was in tears when she found after kissing them all that they were going out of one door and coming in another, and joining on the line again, and she ran into her room to find another of the Aussie airmen waiting for her there and of course he offered her his shoulder to weep on – and she did… How could she do anything but kiss him after that?

Monica Moore had to leave us early to go to the theatre and we played rummy; later, we met her at the Onyx Club – a small but well known night club in West 52nd Street.

We listened to Pete Brown who is said to be one of the best Negro sax players (alto-sax).

There were the usual crowd of folk who haunt the night clubs including plenty of pale women, beautiful but rather worn-looking with plenty of make up which did not hide it.

I find the rhythm of the Negro orchestra and musicians (except for the girl singers it was all Negro entertainers) quite fascinating. There's something about it that gets you. They have a seemingly unfailing confidence in their ability to entertain. Because they have no embarrassment in what they play, this rhythm is wilder and very interesting.

Their lack of embarrassment causes them to be unafraid to express exactly what they feel in music. And what the average Negro feels in music is expressed more in rhythm than in the tone and beauty of melody.

September 20th 1942, Sunday. We have been travelling around all the week-end in motor cars, and I was only just thinking how much I would like to take a walk around this beautiful countryside of New Rochelle, where we have been staying since Friday.

I'm afraid I enjoyed all the simple things in life too much when I was young to ever become used to taking my pleasure the way that folk we are staying with, who have piles of cash, do.

I think they miss such a lot, but then probably they have learnt to find enjoyment in the things they do.

On Friday night when we all arrived at New Rochelle (17 miles from New York) “Winch” Winchester and I were dropped off in the car to stay at Mrs. Leonardi’s house, while Les and Shrimp went on to Mrs. Gormely’s house. Both were beautiful homes.

We had a private bathroom, etc. but Mrs. Gormely’s house where Shrimp stayed had most surprises. The front door bell played “Home Sweet Home”, there was a shower room, which quite had Shrimp baffled, with five showers – hot and cold – which you used simultaneously. The shower nozzles were directed at you from the sides and from above, and when Shrimp first went in and started twiddling with the multitude of knobs, all he managed to do was drench himself with cold water from all directions.

We went to Mrs. Gormely’s house on Friday night to dance and we danced in the basement where there is a private bar.

Before supper (tea) I had only three glasses of Rye old fashioned but they made me quite the life of the party at teatime.

Rye old fashioned is a lively drink and is made of Rye with a little bitters, a little sugar, a dash of water and a piece of lemon and a cherry, plus some ice.

Mrs. Miller danced very well and Peg Ege – a girl very much like Spud [Margaret “Spud” Murphy was Jim’s first girlfriend] – who is engaged to Mrs. Miller’s son “H.M”, away with the Marines, tried to teach me a few Jitterbug steps without much success.

The following day, we all went swimming in the pool at Wykagyl Country Club. This club, besides a swimming pool, has a golf course, bowling alleys, cocktail lounges, dining rooms and a seemingly endless number of bars.

No person can join the Club unless a notice of his application stating his name, business or profession and “any other such information as the Admission Committee may have obtained”, is communicated to every member of the club. All these members are requested to communicate to the Admission Committee anything favourable or unfavourable known about the person!

If you are a guest of one of the members for a game of golf over the weekend, he will have to pay 5 dollars (30/-) for you to use the course (green fee!) each day.

The annual dues (membership fee) of members is 200 dollars and there is an entrance fee of from 200 to 500 dollars. All around you must have hard cash to be anywhere in the swim with New York’s Society.

Still this Country Club had nothing – for magnificence – on the one we went to in the evening – the Westchester Country Club, said to be the best in New York State.

This club which from the outside is something like a luxurious hotel, has attached to it a wonderful golf course where the main championship matches are played, grass tennis courts – also the centre of country tennis championships – outdoors and indoor dance floors and dining rooms, lounges, etc – also bars of course! – in great profusion.

There are elevators, a library, and more than 300 twin-bed guest rooms (3,700 dollars a year – room with balcony).

We drank quite a lot – most of the party danced a bit and I danced almost the whole time – so much that I was forced to give up Rye old fashioned and go on to beer to quench my thirst!

Later we drove home and on the way called in at a little bar for a nightcap. I said I'd like a milk, and despite everyone's horror, got it and found it more thirst quenching than anything else I'd had!

I shall never forget a little buffet dinner we had at Mrs. Gromely's home that night. There were long candles on the table – we all sat around on chairs and cushions often helping ourselves to huge helpings from the table which was fairly loaded down with all kinds of food. A Negro butler and maid looked after us.

It was a very cosy and homely party – everything done very nicely. Everyone was happy – a few glasses of Scotch and Rye and Sherry had seen to this – Corinne O'Hare, Peg Ege, Mary Gromely (only aged 13 but looking about 16), Molly and Les and Winch and Shrimp and I plus a couple of other girls whose names I can't recall, with Mrs. Gromely hovering around seeing we didn't pinch the silver, etc. Matter of fact she was very nice to us.

On Sunday, we all went bowling and Mr. Miller, who is something of a champion in the alleys, trundled down those huge bowls with devastating effect. The balls were much larger than ones we'd used before in Montreal and a good deal of effort was needed to even bowl them. There were finger holes in the balls to help you get a grip, and the balls themselves had a diameter of about 9". Nevertheless, the girls - Mrs. Miller, Molly, Peg and Pat – teamed up against Shrimp, Winch and Les and I, and beat us very easily.

In the evening, we had a great buffet dinner at the Wykagyl Club. Before that, we had a few drinks in the cocktail lounge and I concentrated on Sherry. This was because the previous night Pat Miller who was going off to a slumber party (where everyone stays up all night) had managed to get very merry on one Sherry (she's only 16).

However, after I'd lined up a few Sherry glasses, I gave up trying and concentrated on eating shrimps and lots of other things.

We had a comparatively peaceful evening and of course a few drinks – mostly Scotch or Rye Wine, as I'd given up Sherry as hopeless.

Later we said goodbye to all the girls. They were a bright crowd all round – one or two needed jumping on a bit – but in the main, despite the great superficiality of wealth surrounding them, they were very nice and were very nice to us.

I'll never forget how on Saturday night - while in a slightly elevated frame of mind – I carried Peg Ege out of the Westchester Country Club kissing her en route; then proceeded to apologise and call myself a "rotter" because she was engaged to H.M overseas! What a bl _ _ _ y fool!

I won't forget Corinne O'Hare, who seemed to have the idea that it was up to the girl to lead a guy off the beaten track (and into the bushes!) rather than wait for the lad to do the luring. There is no doubt that if a chap was a bit backward in America or Canada, he would not lose by it because the girls are not the least bit shy!

On Monday morning, we took some photos and said goodbye to Mrs. Miller and Pat, and Miss Leonardi and Grandma. The family also had bad news that H.M was in the Solomon's with the Marines.

3.2 The Aussie Hitchhiker: Philadelphia – Washington - New York

We caught the train to New York and, as soon as we arrived there, I set about arranging for a quick trip to Philadelphia and Washington.

Shrimp decided to let me go alone as we'd been running about quite a bit and he thought it wasn't worth the effort for the briefness of the trip.

Les had to leave to go back to his station prior to going back to England, and Winch who had only just come from Aussie, had to get back to his ship for England.

I found out the return fare to Washington was 5 dollars odd – and decided I could not afford it on top of the other traveling expenses so I decided to hitchhike – see more of the country too, and there is always the element of doubt in hitch hiking which adds interest.

So I took a 5c subway trip to the Holland Tunnel where I had been assured I'd have little difficulty getting a start to Philadelphia.

September 21st 1942, Monday. Written at the YMCA (bed 75c) Philadelphia. Philadelphia is a fairly bright city, which pales into insignificance beside New York.

The buildings are bigger than in most cities. There is a population of about 2 million, and the city is about as big as Sydney, and somewhat similar.

It has a few subways in which run a type of tram which come to the surface in various parts of the city. The subway here is really a way of carrying the tram system underground at the central part of the city to avoid congestion there. In the subways, there are also short fast trains which travel out to the outer districts of the city.

At present, I am eating an apple brought in New York before I got my first lift from a cotton goods manufacturer, in a beautiful Lincoln Zephyr car, this afternoon.

He took me about 11 miles of my 90-odd miles trip to Philadelphia – across the Pulaski Skyway (named after Polish General) a tremendous affair and one of the biggest bridge constructions in New York – somewhat like the Jacques Cartier Bridge in Montreal, only bigger.

I travelled through Jersey City and Pennsylvania while with the cotton good manufacturer.

He told me his business was almost entirely devoted to war supplies now.

We passed the Brewster Plane Manufacturing Works where they were turning out twin inline engine bombers (3 blade props); then at the approach to another bridge, I bade him farewell, and with an American naturalized (Italian descent) soldier picked up a lift with some folk from Jersey City. They did not pronounce it JOISEY, and said it was only New York folk who said this for fun. Perhaps it might be called that in Brooklyn, they suggested.

These good folk took me another 20 miles and embarrassed me by wanting me to take 3 dollars as a gift to "buy myself a feed" on the way. Don't know if I looked half starved! I refused and they said they would get pleasure if I would take it – dropped it on the ground at my feet and drove off. Did I feel awful. I began to wonder if I should have hitchhiked after all; tho' it was terribly nice of them, and, in the present rather difficult circumstances, quite welcome.

After they had gone, I met 2 soldiers from a nearby camp and together we were given a lift by a New York couple. The soldiers were from Philadelphia and seemed to think it was one of those places where you got nothing for nothing. We drove along beautiful highways all the way. The highways in the country are numbered like the New York city streets.

As we neared Philadelphia, we saw folk gathering in the tomato crops – the Yankees, like the Canadians, pronounce it TOEMAYTOE – then we went along the beautiful Roosevelt Drive, which is much on the lines of St. Kilda Road Melbourne, only longer with trees overhanging for miles and small new apartment houses at the sides. I saw row after row of apartment houses just a street or two away from the Drive – two storey attached houses, all of exactly the same design. Very new now, but probably later to become slums.

Further into the city, I saw many small apartment houses, which were erected some years ago, now semi-slum dwellings and tenanted largely by Negroes.

One of the Yankee soldiers directed me to the YMCA and also gave me a copy of the evening newspaper obtained from a news seller whom he apparently was cobbers [Australian slang for 'friends'] with before the War.

As I checked in at the 'Y', an American recruiting sailor introduced himself to me. He was Jim Durham of 313 Fulton Street, Millville, New Jersey, and he insisted on taking me to tea.

I was subjected to curious glances all over Philadelphia. They apparently have not had Aussies here before.

I wandered around until 1 a.m., talked to everyone who could tell me anything about the place, looked in at the subways and collected a token (7½ cents) and called in at the office of the Evening Bulletin, which sells 650,000 copies daily. There are nearly 100 reporters and the feature section is all staff work. As in New York, the city is covered by dividing it into districts with district police reporters getting the news. The news editors told me they had been cutting out local news in favour of cables, but were trying to get back some local news now.

I turned in late and awoke early to have breakfast with Jim Durham. I was in a great hurry to get off to Washington but he was very keen to show me around the place and introduce me to hordes of his friends. Apparently an Aussie was something of a curiosity.

He took me to Independence Hall, where a great many of the great events in the U.S history took place – including the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

I saw among other things the Liberty Bell (now cracked) which was cast in England and rang on July 8, 1776 to call the citizens together to hear the first public proclamation of the Declaration of Independence (a facsimile of which is at the Independence Hall and the original of which is at Washington). The Liberty Bell also tolled on many other famous occasions, including the first hostilities of the revolution in 1775; the surrender of Lord Cornwall at Yorktown in 1781; the proclamation of peace in 1783, and the death of Washington in 1799.

“That is where Washington sat” said Jim Durham pointing out the historic leather chair of the President. “George Washington; the father of our nation” he added, and there was a wealth of pride in his voice.

I think to have visited this spot without an American would have been to completely lose the significance of the historic place.

The building is very plain and unpretentious; very unimpressive. But to have an American eagerly showing you with pride these symbols of his American birthright cannot fail to impress you when you have heard outside America that tradition and patriotism and all that go with them, are not the sort of things very highly respected in the States.

As undoubtedly all folk do who visit this place, I stood on the exact spot (marked with a metal plate) where Abraham Lincoln raised the flag of independence.

I later visited WANAMAKER’S famous stone. This is a department store with a difference. It has the largest and finest toned organ in the world. To look this organ over properly you have to take an elevator! There are six manuals of ten divisions, with 451 stops, 964 controls and 30,000 pipes. 200 horsepower is required to operate it.

The organ plays recitals for customers at various parts of the day.

The whole store is designed in a most original fashion – a great deal of floor space is wasted because there is a grand court in the centre which runs from the ground to the roof. At one side of the court tower the pipes of the organ. In the centre is a giant bronze eagle. The pillars and sides of the court are marble and high up hangs a flag – the stars and stripes - 90ft by 50 ft, believed to be the largest in the world. The stars are 3ft from tip to tip. The flag weighs 440 lbs.

John Wanamaker apparently has the idea of giving his customers their money’s worth.

The beautiful store is the scene of many free recitals at night and at Christmas time, there is carol singing in the grand court and the organist plays carols at various hours during the shopping.

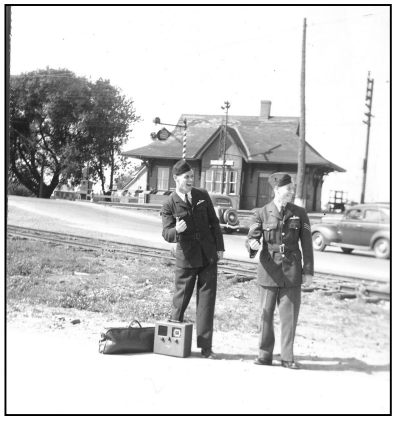
I notice that the folk here invariably tell you the distance in time rather than miles – this is typical of the place where everything is speed and time – and time is money.

Jim Durham's habit of describing distances that way made me realise what I hadn't noticed before. Jim and a friend of his also told me that over here girls very frequently take out service men, or both 'parties' pay – FINE!

As I write this next bit, I am gliding along in the direction of Washington in a beautiful Studebaker car owned by a coal dealer, Hendrie Dziekonski of Baltimore (Maryland). He is a Pole, and has two brothers in Poland. His car has fog lights, fresh air and thermo heat, a de-froster, cigarette lighter, and many other gadgets.

We are passing through the State of Delaware – beautiful country, rich in trees and grass, as is all the land I have seen along this route.

This is my fifth ride today. The first four rides took me only 20 miles but this will take me 80 more, leaving me only about 48 miles from Washington.



I'm learning quite a bit about this hitchhiking business (pictured is Jim – on left - hitchhiking with a fellow serviceman). It is getting out of the town that is hard. You run into so many motorists who are only going a little way.

There are two ways of hitchhiking. The methods of 'never refusing a lift' and 'choosing your lift'. I prefer accepting them all even if I don't get there so quickly, because this way you meet so many more people and that's the chief object.

It's really funny. Sometimes a motorist will lean out of a car and offer a lift saying 'where are you going?' and when you say "Washington" (about 120 miles away) he'll blink a bit and grin and say 'hop in, but I'm only going a couple of blocks" – and in the short ride I'll ask him everything I can about things in general in The States because I can't know enough about this wonderful country.

We have passed through the town of Wilmington, where big powder works are situated.

There are more detached brick houses here than I have seen all along the route. Besides these, there are too some of cheaper construction, but still quite neat.

As I write, we are passing a huge airfield under construction. There are scores of tractors smoothing the ground for runways and trucks carrying material for hangars, etc.

The best piece of roadside advertising I have yet see just caught my eye. The fuselage and wings of an old aeroplane mounted nose down on the roof of a café – just as though it had crashed there; attracted one's eyes to the place immediately.

One of the men who gave me a ride today, told me Philadelphia folk are very English and don't easily become enthusiastic over anything. "They are not the sensational or panicky type" he said. This is also reflected in their newspapers; the chief of which (The Bulletin) is very quiet and reserved in displaying news; a sharp contrast to New York papers.

There is quite a large number of cars on the road, though I'm told this highway usually is packed with traffic in peace time. The shortness of some of my lifts too shows that a majority are using their cars for short runs only (the minimum ration here is 4 gallons per week and a lot of motorists I meet get this; they're all quite astounded to hear that in Aussie I get 2 gallons per month!)

We are just passing through Elkton, a famous spot in the United States. The laws here permit you to come in at any time of the day or night and get married at a moment's notice – hence the town consists almost entirely of marriage license offices.

I am told that often folk have driven right out from New York to get one of those 'marry in haste repent at leisure' weddings. Dangerous spot!

There is a U.S. army soldier (also hitchhiking) in the car with us now.

As though in a hurry to get out of Elkton, we are now hitting up 85 MPH, but nonetheless we have been passed and are being left behind by one of those super luxury American cars you see here.

We have passed lots of fields where dark brown corn stalks are stacked drying in the sun. It is late in the season, and the corn cobs – a table delicacy here – have been picked. These stalks are kept as feed for the calves.

It is 2pm and we are at the Susquehanna Toll Bridge. It cost our driver 40c to cross. The bridge is one of those towering majestic girder constructions, the Americans are so famous for, and looking over the side you can get a beautiful view to where the river runs towards the State of Pennsylvania.

Here, too, as we go further, is Havre de Grace – famous horse racing centre.

With a one-way traffic lane on each side of the grass strip for scores of miles on end, and beautiful surface, these roads are made for racing. The grass in between the two road strips is kept all clipped although it, itself, is a road's width. It is cut every month or so by a motor driven cutter.

At Baltimore, I bade my Polish friend goodbye. He was a very nice chap tho' a bit hard to understand.

Baltimore is a bigger city than Washington. Here is the Glenn Martin Aircraft factory, and as I went through the city I heard the name Chesapeake Bay, where the local shipping comes in and realised this is what the Chesapeake dive bomber is named after. The Maryland and Baltimore bombers too, of course, are named after the State and town respectively.

A grizzled old truck driver gave me a lift here and drove me around the cobble stoned side streets of the city and I was very glad when at last we got out of that big city and on to the road for the last 48 miles to Washington.

My opinion of the state of American roads has gone down since I climbed into this jolting truck, which seems to find every crack in the road.

This old truck driver, whose name is J.D. Carr, produce dealer, has given me a pretty good idea of how the fruit and vegetable seasons run in the States, by telling me his normal haulage program for the year:

- At Christmas he is hauling to Washington from Florida – oranges, cabbages, beans, until April.
- In April he hauls cantaloupes, oranges, cabbages, beans from Georgia and South Carolina.
- In May he hauls Georgia peaches and also cabbages, cantaloupes, beans from South Carolina.
- In June and July he shifts operations to North Carolina hauling beans, peaches, cantaloupes, potatoes.
- August he hauls from Virginia and Maryland, and his loads are much the same.
- And, in September and October he moves still further north to New York State and New Jersey.

When I met him today, he was hauling a huge load of potatoes from close to New York.

His hauling program shows how the season gradually is later as we go north. The result roughly is that he hauls from the South in summer and from the north in winter.

He had much to say about the War: “The Americans went into this to win” he declared. “Everything we’ve got we’d lose. How do you think we’d live under a Jap government? We are not going to live under it.”

When we reached Washington, which on the outskirts reminded me of Australian cities with lots of land devoted to big buildings, we climbed out of that rattling old truck and into Mr. Carr’s private car – a real beauty. It turned out he owned the haulage business and was having to drive his own trucks because of lack of men.

I have met several men on the road who are carrying on their business in this way. It was about 5 o’clock as we glided into the heart of Washington, which is quite unlike a city. There seems to be more land devoted to gardens and lawns than to buildings. And those buildings I can see are wonderful, dignified but not the least bit sombre pieces of architecture.

Mr. Carr dropped me at the side of the famous 60 acre plaza. I must say that my appreciation of the place was somewhat dimmed by the fact that I was tired and feeling dirty and those folk whom I stopped to inquire my way to the YMCA, as I crossed the broad lawns separated by concrete paths, did not know where it was, and indicated I was going to find extreme difficulty in getting a bed for the night as Washington in war time is very over crowded.

Written before going to bed at the YMCA (12 midnight)…….

Washington is a garden city with a comparatively small business section and many lovely parks. It has a brisk but dignified air about it.

There is little attempt at blackout at night, though there are lots of guards at government buildings.

At the White House, I was peering in the gate seeing as much as I could and a young army officer came tearing out to warn me off. I looked all ignorant and then he informed me people were not even allowed to walk on the White House side of the street.

Hotels here are very expensive and apparently I was very lucky to get half a room at the YMCA for 1 dollar 25 cents.

It is interesting to notice the difference in costs of YMCA rooms as I go along. In New York I paid 65c for a single room; at Philadelphia I paid 75c for half a room; at Washington half a room costs 125 cents.

I was told by a man I met on the tram when I arrived that I would probably not get a room in town because of the war-time overcrowding. Sometimes he said, service men are stranded all night. He told me to ring him up if I was stuck and he would give me a bed for the night.

I've been wandering around poking my nose in here and there – seeing all the unofficial sights.

Here, as well as traffic police, they have pedestrian constables. These men see that pedestrians do not cross against the lights, etc., as they do in New York. They can issue "tickets" to pedestrians just as to motorists, for offences.

Pedestrian Constable T. Fletcher, whom I had a yarn to, told me there has been considerable tightening up on pedestrians in Washington recently because 70 accidents investigated had shown only 2 resulted from the motorists' fault.

The traffic constables are used by the public like walking information bureaus. While I was with him the constable was asked the way to a certain restaurant just opened, the way to the nearest barber and to a theatre, and as I left him he was answering another's query.

These pedestrian constables are also on duty in Philadelphia and they do make you more careful.

Here, as in Philadelphia, they have signs – "WALK" – "WAIT – "DON'T WALK".

After talking to the Constable, I became much more careful in watching for the "Don't Walk" sign to light, instead of just ambling across as I saw fit, like you do in New York.

If a 'ticket' is issued, the person can pay the fine at his nearest police station within three days or can go to court. Usually the fine is 2 dollars (12/6), and usually people pay up without going to see the Magistrate.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the Frenchman who designed the layout of Washington (about 1791) laid it out so that now there are four precincts or sections – NW, NE, SW, SE. The Divisions are named North or South according to whether they are north or south of the Capitol Building. North-South streets are numbered in their various sections 1,2,3,4 in their relationship to the Capitol Building. Those streets running East and West are titled A, B, C, D streets, etc.

Where this extensive list of letters and numbers runs out, the next streets are named after States in alphabetical order. After going to W the streets start off in the names of Presidents. Then when you get to W, you start in on flowers – giving you three alphabets; a unique system of street naming which is a little complicated to the visitors but definitely better than no system at all.

I visited the offices of the Morning Post – the Washington paper with the biggest circulation – 150,000. It has grown recently and in its rather confined and ancient premises is like a lusty child, too big for his nursery.

I watched the staff artists at work 'masking' line blocks of drawings. In masking, the artists place a sheet in black where they want metal left on the block.

The process room photographers use film and not glass for taking their negatives. This saves a few minutes in preparing a sensitive surface on the glass.

In the teleprints room, a barrage of machines for International News Agency, Associated Press, etc., faced me. The Post uses the service messages received all the time as a check on their own correspondents' stories.

Later, I strolled around in the small 'bright lights' section of Washington which seemed no more and no less than most other cities I've been in. Just before turning in at the YMCA, about midnight, I met a man named Robert E. Cavendish of the Munitions Research Corporation, New York. He showed me some plans he had for an ideal town planning scheme. He gave me an introduction to Griswald Thompson of 580 5th Avenue N.Y.

Wednesday morning I awoke with a great shock at 9-30 cursing like one thing, because I did intend to get up at six, and have a quick run around the main official sights, and leave at noon to try and make New York by late night.

So I packed my bag, paid my bill and decided to let breakfast go by the board. By 10am I was catching a trolley car to the Union Station from which I decided to begin my quick tour. I was lucky in meeting Mr. Bill Dana, retired architect, and former lecturer in architecture.

He was free for the morning and, once I told him how little time I had, he quickly got down to the job of showing me all he could of the Capital.

We went first to the Union Station and grey haired old Bill Dana who had a friendly helpful way about him (also a wife from whom he was happily separated), showed me where to leave my bag.

We walked through the main passenger concourse of the station – the largest room in the world under one roof. I was interested in the lights on the backs of seats where passengers sat reading. On the front of the station are inscribed stone panels high above six tall columns with statues on top of them representing fire, electricity, agriculture, mechanics, freedom and imagination.

Across from the station is the Big Plaza which was created at a cost of $10 million.

We called in at the National Congressional Library where 4½ million books are housed. I noticed that the main entrance hall had a floor decorated with the signs of the zodiac (which reminds me of the huge bronze figure of Atlas holding aloft the zodiac outside the Rockefeller Centre, New York).

At this library we saw the originals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the Untied States of America. They are preserved in airtight glass fronted cases.

When I wanted to go out on the verandah to have a look at the city, I found the entrance blocked by a chair. I began to move it and an attendant called out and stopped me. No one was allowed out on the verandah, he explained. It seemed silly to me and I wanted to go out, so I asked him why not and after some difficulty got him to explain that this rule was because of the pigeons which had apparently caused complaints by dropping things on folk on the verandah. I said I'd risk the pigeons and went out.

We went to the National Gallery where the building itself is something of a classic art exhibit. I made a special visit to a portrait I had been told about – a painting of Madame Recamier (pictured at right) by Baron Francois Gerard. I think it is on loan to the gallery. I don't think I'll ever quite forget that living picture which did everything but move. The woman painted full length, had a fine creamy skin which the artist had been able to reproduce, bringing his painting the nearest thing to real life I have ever seen.

The rotunda of the gallery is quite unique and impressive, with huge black marble pillars weighing several tons. The famous Mellon Collection is housed here, and the gallery was built with Andrew Mellon's funds. It cost him $15 million.

The giant white marble pillars gave one a most impressive feeling entering the Supreme Court building. This impressed me more than any other building in Washington. I looked in the room where all the big legal struggles (suitably briefed) have come to final decision, and also saw the rather unique marble staircase which is quite self-supporting, having no pillars beneath.

Everything in Washington (except the people who all strike one as a little tired) is impressive though usually beautiful too. Constitution Avenue, running East and

West, is broad and dignified; there are gardens, big trees, pools and lawns in the city, the suburbs (except for the Negro quarter) are built much the same as the better class Australian suburbs with avenues of trees and lots of detached private houses (besides the apartments which seem to be inevitable in American cities).

The White House is not the palatial place I expected. It is quite a plain looking building - at least from a distance – and not very lavish or large – though Bill Dana told me it is so cleverly designed (by an Irishman James Hoban) that it is actually much larger than it appears.

Although it does not look much, he says architecturally it is a gem (and he should know, being an architect).

Incidentally, the White House was not always white; formerly called the Executive Mansion, it was destroyed by fire in 1814. The structure was then grey in colour, but after being rebuilt, the walls were painted white to hide the marks of fire. It is, with the Capitol Building, one of the oldest buildings in Washington.

Folk in Washington had little time to talk of the war. They are all too busy on war work.

The bus drivers in the city call every street on the route.

After I'd taken a bus to the edge of Washington, I asked the bus driver to drop me at the best place to get a lift to Philadelphia. I called in at a little wayside cafe, deciding to have something to eat (my first for the day) before commencing that tremendous 'hitch' to New York. While I was there I wrote a couple of postcards - one to Kaye, whom I'd neglected to write to at all, and the other to Janette Wiltshire (which I have never posted!). Soon after lunch, I got a short lift with a young man who normally earns 3300 dollars a year as a draughtsman building oil heaters for apartments, etc. He now has to drive his own trucks, collect his own money, etc, because of the extreme shortage of labor.

He told me some more of how expensive it is to live in Washington in war time. Minimum wage for government workers there he said was 1440 dollars a year, and he added that it took every bit of this to live.

"It costs at least 7 dollars a week for a room" he said" and 15 dollars a week for eats."

In normal, times, he said, his truck drivers earned 6 dollars a day - 42 dollars a week. In Washington, he said, you could get an apartment with two rooms a bath and kitchen for 34 dollars a month, whereas in Pennsylvania (he had his home at Berwick) you could get a whole house for 25 dollars a month.

Of Russian nationality, he was very proud of his home town, Berwick, which he told me was turning out many light tanks for the U.S. Army.

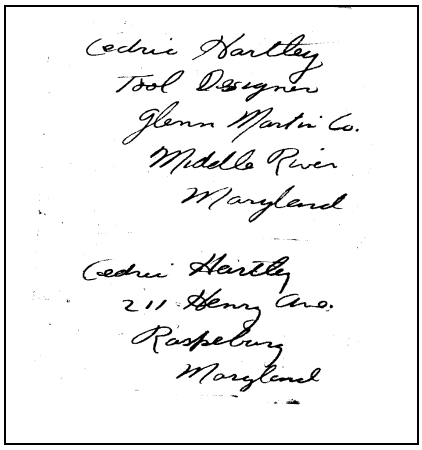
His name was N. Tirpak and he explained to me the operation of the safety traffic lights on the main highway. These turn to red, and so force you to stop if you approach them at more than 45 mph. They also automatically turn to red if there is a

car wishing to cross from a side street. These lights do much to prevent speeding through towns, etc., forcing motorists to slow up or be stopped by the automatic light.

Next to give me a lift - for just a few more of the many miles to New York - was Cedric Hartley, tool designer, of the famous Glenn Martin Aircraft Company, Middle River, Maryland.

He told me how the go-ahead Martin had barnstormed his way around the country with a couple of pals raising money that way to build his pioneer planes. Now president of the big American company which was turning out thousands of bombers for the Allies, he was using the same go-ahead spirit and had brushed aside difficulties to increase his factory from a staff of 2,000 to 40,000 in five years. A far cry now to the days when he was giving exhibitions to advertise the ships he designed.

I had only left him a few minutes after asking him for his signature (see below) when I was hailed by Mr. H.C. Whiteford, head of a non-profit making co-operative canning concern.



His concern will pack six million cans this year - of corn, pears, tomatoes and lima beans.

"The farmers send their product to us" he told me "and we can it for them. We borrow money at 1½ per cent from the bank and we have four factories which are leased from the owners at five per cent of the gross selling value. Then after canning the products, we distribute them for the farmers".

While driving with this interesting man, he sighted a car with a New York number plate on it and immediately hailed the driver, then drove in front and stopped him. He thought this car was going to New York and would give me a ride all the way, but the two lads on board had just purchased the car from some one in New York State, hence the number plate, and they were only going to Havre de Grace, the great racing centre a few miles ahead.

They offered to take me that far, but after we'd travelled ten miles a tyre blew out and the young Yankee driver steered well into the swerve and pulled up safely.

Like many motorists on the roads today in America he had no spare, so he was stranded. It is of course impossible to get a tyre from a garage these days and along

the side of many of the main American highways you see abandoned cars which have blown out a tyre and so become unusable.

The young owner and his pal insisted that I go on because I could do nothing to help them and I wanted to reach New York by night. So I wandered along the road again towards New York and, of course, the next car along picked me-up.

Incidentally, I forgot to mention a story Cedric Hartley told me about Martin showing his go-ahead character. Martin wanted his plant increased to double its size in ninety days and none of the local contractors would take on the job which they declared was impossible. He said it would be done if he had to go all over the States to get someone to do it, and he found a contractor in Detroit; and with their engineers plus his own engineers and his ingenuity, the plant was finished in ninety days. It has since been enlarged further.

All the American folk on the road were full of information for me about their country and the local notabilities and particular places of interest. Americans I have discovered know much more about their country than folk of other lands, and they have such a great pride in their home that they are always very keen to show it to any visitors.

As I travelled through Elkton, right across the State border of Delaware, I was given some more facts about this interesting place I'd passed on my way down. Apparently, lots of folk drive from New York to get married in a hurry. You just walk straight in to one of the marriage license offices and a Justice of the Peace will marry you without more ado.

This next part I scribbled in shorthand on my pad when I was 104 miles from the Newcastle ferry, at 5-30 pm.

At about 4-45 Mrs. B. R. Werner (4015 Georgia Av., N.W.Washington) and her son Phil - both formerly of Brooklyn (it cost them 100 dollars to move their belongings to Washington they told me) - gave me a ride from just outside Aberdeen.

When I walked in to a shop to purchase some pictures of the place at Aberdeen I was treated like some rare animal by the local folk. One asked me what did the Australia on my shoulder stand for, and wanted to know if that meant I had relatives there.

There is a big ordnance training center at Aberdeen, but I did not have time to stay and have a look at it because I was in a hurry to get to New York, still a long way away.

When Mrs. Werner and her son pulled up and I said I was going to New York, they said they were too -- oh boy, did I jump for joy! I must have looked a bit hungry, because Mrs. Werner offered me some sandwiches which were very welcome.

They told me they had been saving up their gas ration tickets for some time to make the trip to New York and back possible. They were going to pick up some relatives in New York and take them back. Mrs. Werner explained to me her son Phil was merely accompanying her and was taking the opportunity to inquire about a University course in New York.

When we reached the Newcastle Ferry and were moving briskly across Chesapeake Bay, Mrs. Werner left us for a moment and Phil explained to me that actually he was on his way to New York to be examined for the Secret Service. He had some special qualifications in his training along this line. He made me promise not to split to his mother, and on the next stage of our car trip to New York we managed to turn the conversation casually around to the secret service and stressed how 'safe' it was compared to the rest of the army jobs -- all of which I am afraid went right over Mrs. Werner's head because she hadn't the slightest interest in the secret service. Phil has had difficulty with his mother and as he is in a reserved occupation she, like most mothers, is not keen to see him rush off unnecessarily. But, like most sons of American mothers, Phil has decided to take it into his own hands.

I arrived back in New York at 9-15 pm and, as we headed back into those bright lights and unbelievably tall buildings, I felt it was like coming home. I left Mrs.Werner - a very kindly soul - and Phil, a lad with brains, at the entrance to the Holland Tunnel, the point from which I had left New York on Monday afternoon. As I left New York about 4 p.m. on Monday and returned at 9 o'clock Wednesday night, I made the return trip in 53 hours – which beat my own schedule.

In that short time, I had hitch-hiked 500-odd miles - which says much for the generosity of the American motorist towards service men - and had quite a good look over Philadelphia and Washington, besides meeting dozens of interesting Americans and seeing quite a lot of the country, on this route which is said to be one of the most interesting drives in the States.

However, I found I still had appetite for seeing things, and as I walked down 34th Street, carrying my bag, and looked up at the misty outlines of the Empire State building pointing upwards into the night sky, I decided to have a look at the city from the top at night.

So just on 11pm, I was inside one of those elevators which rise at 1000 ft a minute to the 102nd floor. The next bit I wrote in shorthand while up there.

I am writing this by moonlight on the top of the Empire State Building looking down on dimmed-out New York. The dim-out has served its purpose in that it has eliminated much of the glare from the city, but there are still a myriad of twinkling lights.

The Chrysler Building - second largest in the world - stands out like a gaunt ghostly frame in the silver moonlight and, as I look down 5th Avenue, cars are moving with dimmed headlamps - a long straight line of lights, red and white.

There is a notice at the 86th floor of the Empire State saying in the event of an air raid occupants of the building are to remain on their own floors and are under no circumstances to use the elevators…. Poor folk - I wouldn't like to be up there in a raid. There was an air raid alarm in New York last week-end, while we were at New Rochelle. False alarm though. Some folk say these buildings would stand up to bombs, but I'd rather be on the ground. 1000 ft is a long way to fall.

Later in the post office concourse, I saw a Mailomat for the first time. This is a coin operated letter box. You drop coins in a slot, dial your postage value, and then insert

your letters one after the other until you have used up all the money you inserted. No stamps are required. I posted myself a card.

Incidentally, I addressed it to Base Post Office, Ottawa - where all our letters go and it took seven days to reach Trenton from New York. This makes it look as though they hold up our mail unnecessarily at Ottawa.

I wrote this next bit on Thursday at 10-45 p.m. while travelling in the train from New York to Montreal.

This afternoon -- it was lunch time before I got up - I went over the National Broadcasting Commission studios and had a look at programs under way in some of the 33 studios there.

A small party of us went around together. The young chap who took us round thought himself a bit of a humorist and had one joke about a guy who met a girl in a revolving door and has been going around with her ever since.

He told me that a good television receiver like those used at N.B.C could be bought for 390 dollars. You could buy cheap ones - television and ordinary radio equipment combined - for 90 dollars.

I stood in front of the battery of lights used for the television machine and found it tremendously hot and I could not see a thing for the glare. This must be a tremendous difficulty in television. One girl with our party, who was televised on to the screen, should take this up as she appeared more attractive and actually better than in real life.

The largest studio at NBC - which holds 1200 people - we were told by our guide, was the largest in the world; but someone I was with from Chicago told me there was a larger one there. These Yankees!

Incidentally, the Americans don't like being called Yankees any more than the English like the American name of ‘Limey’ (mostly used by sailors). In the Civil War, of course, the Northerners were Yankees and the Southerners were Rebels, and even nowadays there is still a good deal of feeling between the Northerners and Southerners. For example, Miss Leonardi, at New Rochelle, when I asked her about it, said in a lowered voice "I'll tell you about it later. I’m from the South; the servants are from the North” – which rather made me blink; didn’t know it was as bad as that!

At NBC studios, I saw the clever top hat microphone contrivance used by George Hicks in his street broadcasts. The apparatus is concealed in the top hat and in a leather belt he wears, and he carries a light microphone in his hand.

Later, with an hour to spare before catching the train to Montreal at 8-50 from Grand Central (which is on 42nd Street), I thought I would have a last walk along 5th Avenue.

I felt quite sorry about leaving New York. I can understand now why Kaye says "it is a wonderful place." Somehow, it has got quite a grip on me - the size of everything; the speed and hustle and bustle; the bright lights; the taxicabs which are so skilfully driven that though they travel at great speed and threaten your life continually don't

appear often to cause crashes; the bus drivers who tell you what to do rather than ask; the subways which are uncomfortably hot in sticky weather (famous here) but get you places very cheaply and rapidly; 5th Avenue where the buses charge you 10c while every other transport service - bus or otherwise - in the city charges only 5c; the night clubs and theatres where you see the best shows in the world; the endless procession of sights which the New Yorkers are proud belong to their city, and about which they know more details than the residents of other cities know about their famous spots.

The Americans are a people who talk much about their country, but I believe that they have something to talk about.

I like all these things about New York, but most of all I have appreciated the wonderful friendliness of the New Yorkers towards the Aussie visitors. The phrase I have heard most here is “that lad's a long way from home” – and I have received so many acts of kindness from Americans since I have been in the States that it is quite impossible to describe my reaction except that I take this as a sign that Americans are waking up to the importance of the war. One gets the impression that the Americans are thinking now of some of their own lads far away from home and their way of expressing the hope that their lads will be well treated in Australia is to treat us as well as they can.

Some Americans have told me that New Yorkers are always more friendly towards visitors than to their own folk, but my thoughts as I walked down busy 5th Avenue were a trifle sad that I was going to leave New York, and I really think one day I will return.

Coming back to Montreal from New York was like coming from a wonder world back to a very plain and ordinary everyday world; something like returning to earth!

Our couple of days in Montreal was notable for little else but that I had a little scrap with Kaye.

3.3 Posting – Central Flying School, Trenton, Ontario (Sept, 1942)

3.4 Learning to be a Flying Instructor

September 27th 1942. The next part was written while travelling in the train to Trenton, No 1 Flying Instructors School, Ontario - the place where (so we have been told) you discover that previously you knew nothing at all about flying.

We are on a route near the one I travelled to Ottawa a couple of months ago, but what a difference in the country now. Right across the rain-swept fields the grass is beginning to die. Watercourses are filling. In a few weeks they will be iced over. Trees are turning, and the green of the bush is splashed with beautiful soft tones of red and brown.

When we sighted Trenton airport about 3 p.m., we saw Harvards, Cessnas, and Fairchild Cornells circling the field. Everything seemed to be running so smoothly

despite the obvious difference in speed of the aircraft around the drome, that Shrimp remarked dubiously "it looks far too efficient for liking."

Shrimp and I - because we asked for a double room - were quartered in the main officer's building where is situated the dining room, reading room, writing room, lounge, snack bar, bar, billiards room, squash court and table tennis room, barbers shop, etc. In a camp of this size (this one covers several acres) this is a very big advantage, cutting out long walks from other blocks to officer's quarters for meals, etc.

It's very cold here now and I caught a chill and have been fighting it off ever since through sitting in a draught in our room writing to June on our first night here.

We had a wonderful surprise when we arrived here. We had not had any mail for about a month, and Shrimp and I both received about a dozen letters. We did not even bother to unpack, but just sat straight down on our beds and read and read swapping items of news. I got a lovely photo of June, and one of Jan and Shirley and Spud. The following day, I received a lovely pair of woollen stockings from June. To think she knitted them all by herself – "or did she?" I wonder.

The camp here, at least so far as the officer's quarters are concerned, is quite an amazing affair. This is a permanent air force camp and the peace-time officers apparently did themselves pretty well.

All the buildings are white brick and concrete constructions - reminds me of Washington. There are broad lawns and as well as a Mess, which is as comfortable as any Canadian Club (the dining room is furnished in leather and lounges are beautifully furnished), there are facilities for tennis, badminton, squash racquets, swimming, table tennis, softball, football, billiards - in fact almost any game in the world you could think of.

Discipline is fairly tight on the station. There is a great deal of saluting for us. We have to return salutes of all airmen, salute squadron leaders and above (there are dozens on this station), besides saluting the Ensign every time we pass it. One's arm gets quite tired.

And of course, any time we visit Belleville or Trenton, the local towns, they are full of airmen who all conscientiously toss salutes whenever they see an officer and make it pretty impossible to move about the shops. It may be good for discipline, but personally I wish these Canadian airmen were more like the Aussie soldiers who regard it as downright crawling to salute an officer!

Meals so far, are really wonderful for an Air Force station. We have a most comfortable bedroom, with heating, a wash basin, two reading lamps and two other lights, lots of cupboards and drawers and chairs, even a carpet on the floor and batmen to tidy up, attend to our laundry etc.

To Shrimp and I, who have been in the infantry, it is like paradise.

However, pilot officers are just nothing at all in this place where wing commanders, squadron leaders, etc., abound, and we march about in a squad just like any other

rookies during the day - only the officer in charge says "stand at ease – Gentlemen!" Wonder how the boys in the infantry'd react if you said that to them.

That pair of socks of June's is very comfortable, and of course the fact that they were knitted by June makes them twice as good - didn't even think she could knit. What a wonderful girl - she can do EVERYTHING! Matter of fact, if by any chance she does wait for me, and I have a feeling she will, I'll be a very lucky guy.

The C0 (Air Commodore F. S. McGill) gave us a little pep talk soon after we arrived, apparently with the idea of making some of us a little more enthusiastic about becoming instructors. As we were all keen on becoming fighter or bomber pilots, it is a little hard to work up any enthusiasm. I shorthanded the CO's speech and here are some of the things he said:

> *"You should feel very honored. Those picked to be instructors out of this tremendous air training plan are the best men we have got. It is an honor and a privilege. Instructors are being sent overseas, so it is not going to deprive you of the opportunity of doing what you joined up for - that is getting a crack at the enemy.*
>
> *Those who have come back will tell you that the men who have instructed live longer and do a better job overseas.*
>
> *As instructors you will turn out a great number of pupil's and they will fly as you teach them and through your example will become pilots along the lines of your teaching. Any one of those pupils may go overseas and do a better job than you could do.*
>
> *It is not everybody can become an instructor; it requires special qualities. It takes a very even temperament, somebody who is very patient, and to learn to fly well above average at the same as instructing, is not granted to everybody, so if you wash out on this course don't be disappointed.*
>
> *We need instructors and we need them badly. You must have the ability to get along with people, and you must do your darndest."*

Besides this, a fusillade of pep talks was fired at us in our first few days at the instructor's school. We were fairly inundated with lectures on "why we should be glad we are instructors", plus talks telling us about every conceivable sort of flying accident, in which almost always the stories finished with the instructor a bloody mess.

In this way they apparently hope to encourage us in our job and ensure that we become good and safe instructors. Typical phrases I noted during these "safety" talks were:

> *"Some come straggling back with a parachute over their shoulders and some don't.*
>
> *"You are screaming off down the runway at 90 mph and the brakes lock -- where are you?" (don't ask me, though I think it would be hotter than Canada is at present).*

"When your engine quits at night-time then there's not much you can do about it but fly straight ahead and keep your fingers crossed."

"If you are alive in six months, you will be able to land O.K. from the back seat."

"They fly you to the brink of hell here at night-time".

"Wait till winter comes...I walked seven slow march parties in two months in the course of last winter."

All of which did nothing to cheer us up, but on the other hand did not unduly depress us because we've become quite accustomed to these cheerful lecturers who endeavour to make us more careful, so that not too many of us will be killed and not too many planes will be wrecked each month.

These same lecturers told us the usual cost of the various accidents (minor ones) on the drome. A ground loop (I've been within a whisker of two) costs 1,178 dollars usually to repair; a wheels-up landing, 653 dollars; a Harvard airscrew costs 1,199 dollars; Wings - 26,000 dollars.

One of the lecturers told us of a couple of students who were flying together and one called over the intercommunication set "you have control". The student in the other seat called back: "What did you say". The first lad thought he said "O.K." and they both took their hands off the controls and went straight into the ground.

On the desk, in the classroom certain artists and poets have inscribed their various works; I remember two inscriptions:

"What did you do in the war daddy,
How did you help us win.
Circuits and bumps and turns laddie
And how to get out of a spin."

There was another line which read:

"Kiss me again - I'm still conscious."

There was one day in ground school when Jack Tarry, a Canadian was missing on roll call. "He's in bed" called out his pal, Ben Johnson; and then he went on to explain that Tarry had no clothes to wear as his only uniform did not come back from the cleaners that morning.

In ground school, too, we were told about the very wide difference in temperament of pupils we would have to contend with. Cocky pupils, we were told, usually turn out to be good fliers, though you have to keep treading on them. There are, too, pupils who will have to be coached along and with careful handling they will do just as good a job as the chap who blusters his way through.

We had another very interesting lecture on diction by a flying officer who in civilian life had lectured to public speakers on the same subject. Diction is taught to us because quite a good percentage of potential instructors who wash out of the course, fail because they cannot make their voice understood over speaking tubes, and above the noise of the aeroplane engine.

The lecturer - dark and a vibrant personality who was no mean actor as well as being a capable orator - pointed out to us first of all that speech was our chief medium of instruction. He said he had spent a number of hours flying around in aircraft doing nothing else but listening to various voices over Gosport speaking tubes and electrical intercommunication sets.

One of the great factors contributing to poor reception, he said, was speed. Normal speed of speech was much too fast for a speaking tube. Also, he added, by consciously reducing speed you automatically rounded off your words.

"If you are impatient or lacking in confidence it will show in your voice. You say "do this - do that" sharply and the pupil deducts immediately you are impatient. In the same way you can reveal nervousness, or irritability. If you are like that you might as well quit as an instructor right now because you'll never be capable of teaching a pupil.

"If you have many vibrations in your voice it is high pitch, if you have few vibrations it is low pitch - like the beautiful voice which comes over the radio in the morning and does not disturb you over your paper. However, the radio announcer does not have the extraneous noise of an aeroplane engine to overcome. An open throat gives you a low pitch; all the radio men know how to open their throats; but this is not so good over a Gosport - this type of voice often causes an instructor trainee to fail. It is the high pitch voice which comes over best. Walter Winchell, with his high voice, would come beautifully over a Gosport, if he slowed it up about 90 per cent.

"Inflection - which means changing the pitch -- is also important. How many of you refuse to put inflection into your voice? Monotonous pitch quickly shows your pupil you are disinterested and he loses concentration".

"It is too, a natural habit to allow the volume of your voice to fall off when you have finished a sentence. But due to the construction of this language of ours, our important message is all too often left until the last part of the sentence. Hence, unless you learn to correct this, the pupil frequently misses the point of what you say.

Then there is that great secret known only to public speakers.

"How often have you seen a vehement speaker double over his rostrum at the end of his sentence beating the side of his clenched hand on the top and wringing out his last words, and you've said, "my, my, doesn't that man FEEL his subject". The real reason of course, is the silly ass just doesn't know enough to draw another breath and he doubles over the rostrum because his diaphragm is doubled over like a crumpled piece of paper".

Other common faults are failure to open the teeth - it produces a sibilant sound. Other folk open their teeth, but forget to open their lips. Others speak in the back of their throat - like Charlie McCarthy.

"The unfortunate part about faults in speech is that as with those B.O. ads, nobody will tell you about them for fear of causing you embarrassment."

He stressed the importance of choice of words to give the fullest and clearest meaning you have in mind to a sentence. He showed, with these examples, how choice of different words can form an entirely different idea in the mind of the hearer although in effect the sentence means the same:

1. Immigrants tend to settle together.
2. Foreigners tend to herd together.
3 Newcomers tend to cling together.

In the first sentence the reaction of the average person is one of little concern. They would say it may be true or may be untrue; it doesn't matter much anyway.

In the second sentence the word foreigners immediately sets up a feeling of dislike, and the word herd makes one think of cattle and immediately gives one a feeling of repulsion.

In the third sentence, the word ‘newcomers’ immediately excite a feeling of neighborliness, friendliness, and the use of the word cling excites much the same, the helpful, sympathetic spirit.

Having seen the way a sentence can be altered entirely in meaning to give a false impression whereas analysed word for word no one could swear it was incorrect - in newspaper work, I can quite appreciate this part of the lecture.

The mixing of folk from different lands with various accents was another point brought out. The lecturer mentioned one lad from way down South (United States) who in his long slow drawling voice admitted he’d had a lot of trouble understanding his Canadian instructor… "Jaarrst saaaonded liiake a buunch of beees" said the slow talking Southerner."

September 30 1942, Wednesday. Went up for the first time for five weeks in a plane today and found I was very rusty on the controls. It was not so noticeable when I was flying duel in a check flight before going solo, because my instructor, F/0 McKechnie, a decent sort of bloke, kept taking over control himself. I did some fairly good aerobatics and a beautiful landing for him, and pulled out of a couple of spins a trifle shakily; but when I went up solo I found I could hardly control the plane. For half of the period, I grimly wrestled with the controls trying to keep the air speed correct and the vertical speed indicator at zero. Gradually I got back a bit of touch but, when I tried to do a forced landing approach, I was so busy worrying about keeping the air speed to prevent a stall close to the ground that I missed the field by miles. However, I tested myself out describing how to do a slow roll to an imaginary pupil while actually doing it and seemed able to talk and fly both at once, which they tell us is very important.

A Sunday morning a day or two later:

These late autumn mornings here are wonderful. There's a spring in your step; the air is so crisp and clear it goes to your head. As I look out of the window of our bedroom, through which sunshine is streaming - sunshine which is bright but has little warmth, like the sunshine on top of a mountain – I can see over the mirror-like surface of the lake.

I can hear a sound I've not heard much since we left Australia - numbers of birds singing. I think many of them are on the nearby island which is reflected on the smooth lake. I looked down on some islands like this one while flying the other day and they looked like bananas in the water.

From the air, you could pick out the many colours of the autumn touched trees - red, brown, yellow, and many soft shades of these. This country around here is wild and beautiful from the air.

In the last few days of sunshine, the grass, which had been nipped by the first cold and was already beginning to turn brown, has sent shoots of green through and the country looks much the same as in summer.

In a few days or weeks, the real cold will come and these shoots will soon disappear before the first coating of snow arrives.

This scene of perfect peace, with all the elements in harmony, is somewhat disturbed by the roar of our planes, which are carrying on flying training out on the drome just over the road.

I visited the R.C.A.F. boathouse this morning and was told about the giant Sue St.Marie Canal linking Lake Superior and Lake Huron - never heard of it before.

Nearly a month later:

As I write I am looking out of the window again at black skies. The sun is out and shining on the edge of the clouds but there is a cold wind blowing along the edge of the lake and it is chilly enough to freeze your ------; well, cold anyway.

This morning, as we went to the hangars, we found several puddles with a crisp layer of ice encrusting them and the Canadians laughed when we said it looked like snow and said this was only "just cold summer weather"; wait till it got really cold.

However, when I took off solo, I had a nice surprise on looking south of the aerodrome to see white fields where a day or two before had been green and brown paddocks and autumn tinged trees with shades of brown and yellow and red.

I flew over and could soon see there must have been a light fall of snow in this area by the lakeside, or else a very heavy hoar-frost.

Cottage roofs were whitened and some paddocks were like white table cloths. Others had patches of white and you could see it was only a light coating of Winter Whitewash because grass peeped through in several places.

Timber country looked black with trees nearly denuded of leaves, the last few rapidly giving up the ghost before the bite of winter. Through the black trees, you could see a light coating of white on the ground and the scene reminded me of the scenes following the Australian bush fires, with black leafless trees and white ash coating the earth. I flew fairly low over the country and then headed towards the menacing black clouds to the south. We are warned not to fly in these clouds because of the severe currents of air which are sometimes strong enough to pull the wings off, but I was curious to find out if there was any snow present in them and flew into the fringe. The air was violently bumpy and I struck heavy mist and sleet, and the air temperature gauge showed -10 degrees centigrade. I headed out and as I climbed up into the clear air in the north I discovered the storm was moving away, from the fact that the area of sunshine was steadily increasing on the ground up north.

It was a remarkable sight - the storm, black and menacing to the south with Nimbostratus extending from the ground up to quite a considerable height, and then from over the top of it, sunshine streaming down on the land up north and gradually creeping southward, leaving the northern land brown and green as it had been for some weeks past and the ground under the black skies still coated with white.

At 8000 feet, I encountered carburetor icing and as my mixture gauge was u/s [unserviceable], I immediately moved the mixture control lean and nearly cut the motor. Full carburetor heat settled the icing.

As I landed, it appeared to be clearing up, but, when I went up with Pilot Officer Bill Taylor (about 6 ft. 3in) in the front seat, we climbed right up to 11,000 ft, encountering sleet on the way up. I saw bad weather up north and suggested we fly towards it in case it closed over the aerodrome while we were away. However, we climbed up and meanwhile it did come in and we got back to the drome just in time as snow flurries closed down and the ceiling came down to a couple of hundred feet.

We had to make a very low circuit and as we taxied in the first snow of the year was just falling down lightly over the drome – a nice sight, quite Christmassy, though too bad for the lads still having to get down through it.

September 29 1942, Friday. This morning, I did my final test flight with a squadron leader before being categorized as an instructor (usually this is known as 'cat' test).

I flew better than usual and gave my 'patter' clearly, but I was only given an average category as an instructor, which of course is really no more than I could expect, as I need to fly far better than I usually do to be even an average instructor.

However, my instructor (Flight Commander, Flight Lieutenant Mc Lernon), a jolly good chap all round, was quite apologetic when he saw me afterwards because he told me I lost most of my marks due to the fact that I gave the patter for straight and level flight just as he'd told me to give it, whereas the testing officer had had an argument with him over it, and said that this patter was not correct. Anyway, who cares?

Mc Lernon incidentally is posted overseas to an operations squadron (lucky blighter) and leaves very soon. As soon as my 'cat' test was finished he gave me leave to go to Toronto with Shrimp.

3.5 Toronto – On Leave

Knowle has relatives there with whom he's going to stay and he seems to think possibly they may ask me. Anyway, Rex Walls, one of the New Zealanders, says there's a 21st birthday party on Saturday night, and as I want to see Toronto it's worth the trip of about 100 miles.

I am writing this on a Sunday morning in the Royal York Hotel, Toronto - the biggest hotel in the British Empire.

Col Mayes is upstairs recovering from last night. Shrimp who has relatives here (also a blonde cousin) has not been seen much by us this week-end.

Toronto is a big city, fairly bright, not much different from any other city, but all round a pretty good place, with quite a few moderately big buildings, including the Bank of Commerce which is largest building in the British Empire, and is half as big at the Empire State in New York. Streets are clean and broad, not very well laid out, and the folk are friendly.

I visited the local newspaper office yesterday - the Toronto Daily Star - with largest circulation here. There I met a Mr. Nicoll, who was acting news Editor and also a reporter who had been in action with the British Air Force and had been shot down a couple of times and sent home.

I also visited some second hand shops during the afternoon to buy a wardrobe trunk for Shrimp and I. First, I priced them new at Simpsons, and the prices ranged from 70 to 200 dollars.

Incidentally, in Simpsons, which is a fine store here, besides lifts they have up and down escalators all the way to the 7th (top) floor.

After visiting EVERY second-hand store in the city and beating the dealers down before leaving and saying I MIGHT come back, I eventually found a wardrobe trunk like I wanted at 25 dollars. I was only willing to pay 20 dollars, but after a lot of criticising the faults of the trunk he reduced his price to 15, so I bought it. If he'd only known he could have got 20 out of me.

The dealers tell me they are visited by a lot of wealthier folk these days for such things as trunks, which have a heavy tax on them new and also are not being manufactured.

Last night, we had a supper dance at the Royal York Hotel. It was the 21st birthday of a girl named Ruth McKenzie. Their idea of a supper dance is rather humorous as we did not have any supper. I don't know if it is their custom over here, but we were invited to the birthday party but we paid the entrance tickets which though quite a satisfactory arrangement, struck me as a little odd!

As Ruth and Babs and Helen could all dance fairly well, the evening was pretty enjoyable. It was Halloween and as we went into the hotel, little lads outside asked us for coppers which were forthcoming on this special occasion.

Toronto Girls – Babs, Jim and Ruth

The room where the dance was held was decorated for Halloween, and at the end of the dance everyone settled down to pinch the decorations, much to the annoyance of the management. Our girls escaped with all sorts of things, while a house detective was engaged in hunting for and recovering missing decorations from folk at the various tables.

Later we had a drinking party in the (single) room which Colin [Mayes] and I shared - scotch, sherry, beer, gin, coca cola,..Ted, Colin, Rex Walls, Mrs. Hutchinson of the Anzac Club, Babs, Ruth, Betty, Helen, Sue, Myself. The surplus of girls due to Shrimp's absence with the blonde.

Consequently, there was some consternation when Col and Rex were lured away semi-drunk about 2 a.m. to some other party in the building. I saw three of the girls to their car and the two we were taking home by taxi snoozed on the bed while I hunted up the boys and eventually they came back having mixed things a little unwisely and we got them all home 0.K.

Meanwhile, a young Air Force lad had wandered into our room having nowhere to sleep and awfully sick.

When I went to sleep, Col was still pretty ill and the lad was on the bathroom floor in a horrid state. I covered him with a blanket and left him for the night.

The scene in a big hotel in a city like Toronto on Saturday night these days is rather amazing and also rather disgusting unless of course you happen to be tight yourself.

The Royal York keeps one floor for Air Force, one for Army, etc. So that there won't be too many fights. There is very little peace until three in the morning.

In most of the rooms there are drinking parties going on. In some, its just service chaps - in others, girls and chaps.

As the evening wears on, everyone gets more or less under the weather. Girls wander around a little blearily kissing everyone in general who's willing to kiss them; other girls, who are not at all under the weather and know their job, tap on the door of rooms where they know there is a lonely man and then run to the nearest corner. When he puts his head out of the door, they come along the passage and get into conversation with him - maybe ask for a cigarette or a match. If the chap is a little bleary or any other way unwary the girl will get herself asked in. Then she'll make herself affectionate and if the poor goof is a bit under the weather he won't have a chance.

She'll encourage him to go on drinking until such time as he's so bemused she'll release herself from his embrace and leave him lying on the bed while she goes through his pockets. If they don't yield sufficient haul she may find some other way of extracting money from him such as frightening him into giving her some by accusing him of attacking her, etc.

These women - and some slightly lower types - fairly haunt the hotels around the big cities these days. Air Force padres in some cases are being sent to stay at the hotels to try to clean up the business, and in some instances they've met with a good deal of success.

The padre at Trenton, Flight Lieutenant Hadley, who has become well known out there because he always turns up at night flying and stands out in the cold all night with the lads on the end of the runway keeping everyone cheerful with lots of jokes, had this job for a year in one hotel - and he told me he had his hands full. I can quite believe him.

On Sunday afternoon, Col Mayes and I wandered around the city. Col was feeling pretty groggy, but the fresh air was the best thing for him, though he didn't feel like it. We went up the highest building in the Empire; and had a look at the city. The guide said sometimes it was possible on a very clear day to see the spray of Niagara Falls 40 miles away from the top and we saw what we thought was spray on the horizon over Lake Ontario. We heard a lot of fire crackers going off - and he explained there was a celebration on in the Chinese quarter - so we hurried down.

In the Chinese quarter of the city, the Chinese Athletic Association was giving an annual display of old 'art of combat' dances to a crowd of some 500 Chinese and a few Canadians.

The dances were peculiar -- energetic, but of a very simple and elementary type, and the dancers brandished various old fashioned weapons of war as they pranced around in their Chinese costumes - weapons that looked more like agricultural implements.

There was a procession too with a dragon that was not at all fearsome and into the mouth of which small Chinese boys poked their heads as it danced along. All very amusing and interesting.

We poked our noses into everywhere in the Chinese quarter - went into a little Chinese art exhibition where some of the paintings were quite fascinating. All the work was of birds and flowers, and was of a decorative type.

We also looked through a crack at a service which was being held in a vacant shop. A black woman was wailing in a most peculiar manner leading the congregation at singing and a white man with glasses (about 40 years old) appeared to be in charge... quite peculiar - pos [slang for 'possibly'] a Father Divine meeting.

3.6 The First 'Practice' Student & Officer Duties

November 2nd 1942, Monday. As I write, outside it is blowing a big gale off the lake. This morning I took up my first pupil - one of the boys learning to be an instructor in the course behind us.

It was raining quite hard when we went out, and as I was a bit weary having not returned to camp till 3 am this morning from leave. I made an extra special check of the cockpit and instruments, because I know how easy it is to make a mistake and forget something vital when you are tired. In the airmen's life there is often only one mistake, so it's worth a few minutes extra time and care.

With the pupil (Seargent Pilot Charlie Orpin) in the back seat flying blind, and me sitting on the controls in the front making sure he did not put a wing in, we took off and after we had climbed past 3000 ft, I let him raise the blind flying hood because we had entered cloud and it was necessary to fly by instruments anyway, as that was all you could see. I set him on a compass course of 210 degrees and flew for seven minutes climbing to about 7000 ft.

The clouds were getting a bit thinner, but we were heading out over Lake Ontario though it was invisible to us, and as I did not want to get lost I turned round and got him to fly back a reciprocal heading for seven minutes and let down through the clouds in spirals.

As we came down, we passed through sleet and then snow, and when we came out of the clouds discovered we were over Belleville, having drifted about 10 miles in the wind. I was quite relieved because I don't know the country around here very well and I was a bit worried we might be lost. The visibility was shocking, with heavy rain making the windscreen just a smear as, of course, there are no windscreen wipers. We flew around for a while and then came into the circuit at 600 ft. and circled the drome at that altitude before landing. It was like blind mans buff and I was all ready to run into someone coming in the other direction and also unable to see at any moment. However, we came in without any accident although there was a heavy cross wind on the runway and while I was dipping the wing steeply to prevent crab-landing, I touched the wheels and bounced and splashed a bit.

As I was Assistant Orderly Officer, I had to inspect the messes immediately after landing, and of course I asked the chaps had they any complaints, just as I have

been asked myself many times. Most of the Canadians had none, but several of the Aussie boys said the food was lousy! I had my meal in the WD's section and must admit, that after eating the officer's meals, the food they had was eatable, but it was hardly edible.

Although potatoes were on the menu, there were none being served and the cook went to great trouble to explain there had been a breakdown in the steam system. He assured me this was the first time it had happened (it makes me recall how often the same unit used to break down in our airmen's kitchen before I was an officer and I was inclined to doubt his word though I did not write a report). I was sitting down having my meal with the airmen and a few minutes later along came the cook with saucepans of specially cooked potatoes for the men at my table. I'll bet none of the lads or girls who came later got any.

A Boston landed here today. We all clambered all over it and Shrimp took a photograph at great risk, because there are very strict regulations about cameras on this drome.

Sometimes we feel very fed up and want to get home, but more often we are all laughing and joking and enjoying the fine company of the lads we are with. It is really a blessing to be amongst such a great bunch as this lot of pilots. They are all pretty well educated in one way or another and they're keen and alert - have to be to keep themselves alive.

There are many countries represented - England, Australia, America, Canada, New Zealand, Newfoundland, even an occasional one or two from Norway, Ceylon, France etc, - and to know them all is an education.

Though, of course, as in any other section of humanity, there are those who are selfish, and some who are conceited about their flying. But these chaps have been so long mixing with all the chaps in the Air force that they have come to realise they don't get very far if they adopt this sort of attitude amongst their fellows.

Although everyone is serious on the job (flying) because you have to be to stay alive, off the job all worries are thrown aside and its a very carefree existence.

November 12th 1942[16]. When we awoke this morning, the world outside was a sea of white. There was soft snow 3" thick covering the brown ground. It was as though an artist had brushed across the country during the night daubing white with abandon and without system, but nevertheless artistically, on the bushes and buildings and ground.

The trees, bare of leaves, at once have taken on a new beauty - their nakedness seeming to fit in with the wintry scene.

Roofs have changed from dull grey and black slate and tiles to brilliant white. Cars are topped with a roof of crusty snow.

[16] Editor's Note: Clearly this date is not in sequence. I have left the transcript in the order as it appears in Jim's diaries. Jim could not recall why this occurred.

The scene of our first real fall of snow is like the pictures we have seen on Christmas cards.

On the aerodrome, the planes are taking off with a spray of snow shooting out behind in the slipstream. The snow plough has cleared the runways of their light layer of snow. Planes on the tarmac have a light coating of snow and I'll warrant they'll be hard to start.

It is a little later now and the sun is coming out to paint, the scene with brilliance. Flurries of snow are swirling down in the wind from the rooftops, leaving red and grey patches. The aerodrome has turned from green and brown to white, with black strips of runways across it.

Shrimp and I decided we couldn't have snow without a snowman, so we set to with a spade and broom and managed to get our hands very cold.

We put an Aussie hat on him, and a pipe in his mouth. He really was what the Canadian girls would call "Cute". I can almost hear them say "Uh-huh", which is their way of saying "'yes".

3.7 Visiting Ottawa & Toronto

November 4th 1942, Wednesday, 2.25pm. I'm on my way to Ottawa for a week's leave. We got this leave because we got through our course quickly and so had a week or so to spare.

The train has just left Brockville where I ducked out quickly to get a box of chocolates for Kaye, at whose house I'm staying.

The country through the window is sunlit. Our met [meteorology] man says there is a high advancing north from New York and we will have four days at least of clear sunshine.

It's beautiful late autumn weather - clear and crisp. The countryside is brown like a summer scene in Aussie, only there the grass has been burnt brown by the sun, and here it has been nipped by the autumn cold.

All the deciduous trees now have lost their leaves and only the evergreens lend a splash of colour to the brown earth, which has expended its beauties for this year and is awaiting a winter coat of permanent snow to hide its barren ugliness.

Here and there in the brown and black trees, is a dash of red from some hard dying leaves or a bush of bright berries.

Winter is coming - but slowly.

We've had some nippy days, some rainy ones, some really icy ones with a bit of snow, but its always cleared and just as at present the sun has come back to pour down brightly, though coldly from cloudless heavens.

It is a day of still waters and beautiful reflections of farmhouses, bridges etc in rivers, and ponds which are numerous.

It is quite a remarkable sight - to an Australian - to see dead brown fields with pools of water showing through the grass.

I met an army lad on 14 days embarkation leave. He told me about his final field manoeuvres, sleeping out in the rain, etc. - rather like I remember doing 15 months ago in the Australian army. He got off the train at Ottawa West.

November 10th 1942, Tuesday. Well I have had a wonderful holiday - thanks to Kaye Derby and her good Ma. Kaye's home is a real home.

Poor old Kaye was very worried before she took me home in the car after meeting me at Ottawa Union station. Her Ma is a member of the Pentecostal Church and, besides saying grace before meals, she reads a psalm and has a short prayer after meals once or twice a day. It is really very nice, though Kaye thought I'd not like it.

We spent many happy nights in front of a roaring fire, danced at the grill at the Chateau Laurier, and went through that famous Canadian Hotel; looked over the city from the top of the 300 ft. peace tower of Parliament Building, and listened to the huge bells chiming, went for drives in the car and walks through Ottawa's beautiful suburbs which are a little bare these days with no leaves on the multitude of trees; went shopping (prices are not bad as Canada goes), and one day when we had parked the car in Sparks Street we returned from shopping and could not get the car unlocked.

We tried every key we had and after ten minutes – when we were reduced to the stage of trying to force the windows down with our hands, we discovered it was the wrong car – ours was parked a little way away. Heaven help us if the owners had caught us!

We went to church on Sunday, borrowed some clubs from Dorothy over the road and played golf (after a fashion).

The reason I enjoyed the holiday so well - apart from having Kaye's bright company - was because it was so like home - it was getting back to doing the things I have missed since leaving Aussie. They can have their night clubs. Give me a night or so in front of the fire.

It is now the following Friday night….

Reading the last few pages makes it sound as though we don't do much work in the Air Force and now once more we are on leave.

Today we were posted from Trenton, and as we don't have to report to our new station, Kingston R.A.F. no 31 Service Flying Training School until Monday, Shrimp and I have nipped away quickly to visit his relatives in Toronto. Did we have a rush to get away and catch the train, and we only made it with about half a minute to spare.

Tonight, for the first time, we saw a city in snow - exhilarating and unique in our Aussie eyes.

Drab buildings made picturesque with crusty snow glinting reflections of the street lights from every ornamental facing; roads and sidewalks made one by a level layer of white - a few early sweepers already on the job cleaning up in front of their business premises; taxis almost unprocurable in the snowstorm which was not anticipated by the populace, and queues waiting for buses on every wind and snow-swept corner.

Lots of girls were without hats and to our unaccustomed eyes they became twice as beautiful with feathery snow in their hair. Some of the girls were even without stockings. The male population appeared to be better prepared - most men had hats and raincoats.

It took us two hours to travel five miles from Union Station to Mrs. Barbour's home in North Toronto by tram and bus.

The trams here have sand chutes which put sand down on the lines so that the wheels will grip for starting. Cars are not so fortunate; they continually held us up. On the hills the cars have great difficulty in getting going again once they stop. Unfortunately, there was a long line of cars on the road and whenever one car stopped all the others behind would have to pull up and then they'd all be slipping and skidding around on the road trying to get going. We saw several skid into the curb before getting a grip. Moving with this slow column of cars we progressed very slowly.

Lighted houses appeared very cosy as we trudged the last lap to Mrs. Barbour's house with snow on the rooftops and swirling around us.

Mrs. Barbour incidentally is Shrimp's third cousin. She has two daughters, Helen 18 who is quite pretty and Beverley, 16, who will probably be even prettier, and Bobbie about 12. They are a nice family and very good to us. Mr. Barbour - who is something like a former chief of mine, Arthur Baker – is advertising manager for a magazine.

Saturday morning has dawned bright, crisp and clear with lots of snow on the ground and Bobbie Barbour and Shrimp are at present getting the toboggan out of storage. Bobbie looks a typical little snow lad with his trousers tucked into his socks, rosy cheeks and bundles of energy.

Shrimp and I did not turn in until 3 a.m. We went out into the snow about 1 o'clock to meet Beverley with a pair of rubber boots. She had gone to a dance before the snow began to fall.

While we waited on the street corner for her to arrive on the bus, we constructed a slide in the road and Shrimp, who has done a bit of skating, quite amazed me by being able to slide much further than I could. I tried my hardest and succeeded in coming a heavy cropper without beating him, but later I discovered he was wearing rubber heels, which apparently are a big help in sliding.

We had a snow fight and finished up covered in snow. I wonder when we will get so used to seeing snow that it won't immediately inspire in our minds thoughts of snowmen and snow fights, etc.

Saturday night…

This afternoon, I've had my first toboggan ride – and that first ride is one of the things I'm glad I didn't miss.

We went out with Helen and her sister Beverley - both quite young but very good sports - and, their brother Bobbie and his little pal, Gil. The two young lads rode most of the way to the local hill and we pulled.

En route three local lads aged about ten pelted us with snowballs, to which we replied more or less enthusiastically.

At the top of the hill we found quite a cluster of over-coated youngsters - the little girls wearing hoods, easily the most attractive headwear I've seen on kiddies, and the little boys helmets of cloth.

There were toboggans and sleighs. The sleighs were mostly solo but the toboggans often had four or five aboard. The procedure was simple: climb aboard one behind the other, all except the man at the back having their legs forward, and the last man, steering with his toes. Then a quick push off and - SWISH!

We had our first ride with Bobbie and Gil. I was in front, Shrimp second and Bobbie and Gil in control. We gathered surprising speed and near the bottom hit a big bump which shot us off the ground causing us to do some balancing acts to maintain our seats.

In one ride the girls tipped up and in another I turned over and did a full roll with the toboggan on top of me. It was great fun. However the girls were pretty cold, so we left Bobbie and Gil to it and ran home hand in hand like a lot of kids – cold and damp and happy.

At home we discarded our wet clothes, changed our socks and shoes, and put them over the heaters to dry, lit the fire and then sat down on the floor in front of it drinking hot cocoa.

At night, we danced at Casaloma Castle, built by a mining millionaire who had to hand it over eventually to the local government when he could not pay his income taxes. The wall alone is said to have cost two million dollars.

The castle is beautiful, and now all it is used for is dances three times a week held by a charitable organisation and sight-seeing tours for which a charge is made - a great waste of a beautiful place which could be used for better things.

3.8 Posting - Kingston SFTS (November, 1942)

3.9 Instructing First Students – Some Highs & Lows

November 17th 1942. It's Tuesday now, November 17, and I'm typing this in the billiards room of the Officer's Mess at Kingston SFTS. We've only been on the station for a few hours but now we're told we'll be leaving in a few more because the instructors we were sent to replace don't need replacing!

One way and another it's pretty tough (though we don't care much) because yesterday when we arrived at Kingston station and telephoned for transport to take us with our trunks to the camp (about seven miles out), we were told there was no accommodation at the camp and we would have to live out. The Adjutant said don't come to the station until you've fixed up a place to stay.

So when the Air Force truck arrived, Shrimp and Joe Wilson and Mike Workman (two Englishmen) and I toured the city trying to find a hotel to stay. As the living out allowance is 1.70 (including travelling expenses to and from the camp) we had a definite limit on what we could pay per day; however, it would be enough in a normal town, but this one unfortunately is not normal.

The hotels we visited were all dirty little places charging exorbitant prices. The only reasonable looking one in the town wanted to charge us seven dollars (42/-) a day with bath, and could give us no reduction if we agreed to take rooms for a long period. It was obvious the local hotel folk were capitalising out of the lack of Air Force accommodation. As there is a University in the town with lots of students wanting accommodation, plus an Army camp, the shortage is acute.

Eventually in desperation, the four of us took ONE room for ONE night in a dirty little hotel – little more than a den of wh _ _ es; however, we immediately set out to look for somewhere else because we just couldn't live in a hole like that for long.

We visited several more places and found a room with a double bed with Mike Workman and Joe Wilson; then we met the camp padre - Squadron Leader Donald A. Foster - and when he heard of our plight he told us his son was away at school at Port Hope and he would put us up for the night in a double bed at the house where he boarded with his wife. He went to no end of trouble to arrange transport to the camp for us in the morning.

Later, at the suggestion of the Adjutant, we telephoned a Mrs. Belcher of the local war services organisation and she told us to get in touch with Mrs. McDonald, of College Street, who had a room with a double bed which would be vacant the next day.

Shrimp and I had shared a double bed over the week-end at the Barbour's and we'd spent very restless nights kicking each other and poking each other with our elbows, fighting over the blankets, etc., and we were looking for TWO beds; but Mrs. Belcher said Mrs. McDonald was not very keen on the idea of boarders - had only just tried it - and if she liked us there was no telling what she might do for us.

So we went along to see her, both trying to look like the ideal type of boarder all meek and mild, certain we would like everything in the house (including Mrs. McDonald's daughter, Blanche, whom we were both disappointed to see was only about 12), quite certain that whatever price Mrs. McDonald fixed would be suitable, she not being the sort of woman who would cheat us, etc!

Result of all this intensive impressing work is that she has invited us to use the dining room and the rest of the house just like home. She really is very nice, and is getting someone to call for our laundry and generally looking after us. She is letting us have the room for 7½ dollars a week – which is really quite reasonable for Canada and considering how comfy she is making us.

November 18th, 1942 I have to take up my first four pupils for the first time tomorrow. I have seen their previous instructor - Warrant Officer Padfield - who, thank goodness, has got them through the solo stage, and he tells me one is exceptionally good and may be able to show me some points (I've no doubt!), another is over confident the third one is below average, and the fourth one is scared stiff and "freezes" on the controls in landings, making it difficult to get the thing safely on the ground. All round I can see some fun ahead.

These four I have for a couple of months, taking them through the rest of the first half of their service training; then, if too many pupils haven't been killed and too many planes haven't been smashed up, I'll get another four. In ten years, I estimate there'll be 240 pilots who owe their inability to fly to me.

November 19th 1942. Took up two of the four pupils today. Cattanach (the one who's said to be over confident) and Davis (the one who is supposed to be exceptional).

They both seemed to me to be pretty good, though actually I did most of the flying today.

When I climbed into the plane, I felt quite uneasy, and checked over things very carefully, because I had a horrible feeling I'd do something wrong and look a silly fool. It's not such a good feeling at first, being an instructor expected to do everything just so.

In one of the first landings I did with Davis I bounced a bit, and corrected with the motor and as soon as the wheels hit the ground I picked up the mouthpiece and bawled: "That's the way to correct a bad landing!" which saved my face somewhat.

Later in the day, I wasn't quite sure where we were when we were some distance from the drome and as I didn't want to let him know I was lost I told him to set a course for home and left him to it….We got there O.K.

November 24th 1942. It is now Tuesday November 24, and flying is washed out because the ceiling is almost down to the ground.

I flew for 35 minutes with Crisp - the pupil who was said to be below average and who is shaping better now - and travelled around the country low down, almost blind the visibility was so bad. I didn't feel like handing over to him so low down, so I returned to the aerodrome cursing the Chief Flying Instructor for not washing out flying for the morning. Just as I returned to the drome and commenced a circuit, having instructed Crisp in the front seat to keep his eyes sharply pealed for planes (which in visibility like this come on you suddenly) out of the mist and rain, the orange recall signal was fired and flying was washed out.

I've been flying a great deal of dual with my four students. The instructor who has just left didn't seem to have taken too much trouble with them and they are all weak in airmanship, though Davis is a steady and careful pilot and also an accurate one and probably will finish up an instructor (poor blighter). Cattanach is pretty sound all round and does not seem to be easily upset.

He misjudged a landing yesterday, stalled the aircraft ten feet up, the right wing dropped violently, and he was all set for a ground loop and pile up when I kicked on opposite rudder to lift the wing and opened up the motor.

There was no pressure on the controls and I knew he had relaxed and was leaving it to me - thank heavens he's not like Crisp and does not 'freeze' on the controls and make it harder for you.

This time we hit the ground with a bang on one wheel, slewed off the runway, and as I piled on the coal the motor fairly dragged her straight and I was able to settle her down on three points.

Cattanach said: "I've never seen it do that before sir."

Still I'm glad he's quite calm, because a chap like that is much easier to teach.

I have had to spend a lot of my flying time with Crisp making him relax. He's inclined to tighten up on the controls when he comes in to land.

On Sunday, when I flew with him, he had only one solo landing to his credit. It was just on lunch time when I went up with him and I intended to give him a couple of circuits of the aerodrome and send him off solo while I went off to get some lunch (he'd had his earlier).

I didn't want him to think I noticed he was a bit tense so before we went up I said: "I haven't done circuits with you yet Crisp, but I want to emphasize something I tell all my pupils - just as you come in to land make sure you are relaxed, if necessary deliberately shake yourself up as you approach to land to ensure that you're not tense on the controls."

I've been stressing this with him right through, and it seems to be having effect. In this period however, he had a tendency also to overshoot the runway with the result that he wouldn't be able to get on to the ground till near the end of the runway and we'd shoot off the end at a great bat and on to the grass and I'd have to take over and jam on the brakes and turn her around so that we didn't go through the fence.

So, I did circuit after circuit with him trying to get his landings right before sending him solo; one or two of them were quite safe, but others were definitely unsafe.

At 1-30pm. I'd made myself too late to get any lunch at the Mess and though his landings still were pretty touch and go, I'd showed him how to correct bad ones and felt he was moderately safe, and I had to let him go solo some time, so I sent him off on his own.

I told him his landings were quite safe so as not to upset his confidence, and crossed my fingers and went in to find something to eat.

However, the Chief Flying Instructor was on the phone when I got into the hangar and wanted to take me up for a test flight (all new instructors at a station must have a check flight with the C.F.I.), so up I went again and this time, instead of explaining how to fly to a nervous pupil, I was telling it to Wing Commander Loxton who knew more about it than I did.

He was able to find many faults too because I was not in the mood for a test and my flying was pretty sloppy. However, I discovered I could do slightly better slow rolls than he could; he had a tendency to keep his control column back when he was upside down and in my guise as his instructor, I was able to pick holes in his methods - which I did with great gusto - and of course being my 'pupil' he could have no come-back. He was pretty decent afterwards and said he was quite satisfied, though actually I put up a pretty poor show apart from the aerobatics.

Just as we were coming in to land the C.F.I spotted an Anson circling over Kingston town (prohibited area). He roared "I have control" and raced off to take the number of the plane which was flagrantly breaking regulations. I felt sorry for the chap because everybody breaks little regulations like this sometimes and its bad luck to get caught, as the penalties are usually pretty severe.

Wing Commander Loxton took his number and then a few minutes later just as we were coming in to land, a student taxied out on to the runway right in front of us; had there been a student in our plane, it's 10/1 we'd have landed right on top of him the careless beggar. Once again the C.F.I. roared 'I have control' and tore down past the other plane taking its number. He'll give the student a roaring up - which he thoroughly deserves for being so careless - or worse.

We made another circuit of the drome and then right in front of us a student came in to land having forgotten to lower his undercarriage. Though it's serious, I couldn't help grinning because the C.F.I. was certainly getting a bag of victims this afternoon.

However, the student didn't make a wheels-up landing because as he got down near the ground he must have throttled right back and his warning horn blown. We saw him hastily lower his wheels just in time.

Fretwell, my fourth student, appears to be a good, sound hard working type of pupil. He's still pretty rough on the controls in places and yesterday nearly threw me through the coupe top in recovering from a spin, but he's no shirker.

I like all four of the lads and I'm going to spare no effort to teach them everything I can.

When we came down there was a little interview between the CO and the C.F.I. in the C.F.I's office and it was discovered the pilot of the aircraft over Kingston was a flight lieutenant. The CO said "flight lieutenant or not I'll deal with him." He also said: "They're all in it, I'll deal with the passengers too; they should have stopped him" which of course is unfair, because the pupils on board would never dare to criticize anything an instructor did. I've been up many times with reckless instructors doing much worse things than merely flying over a prohibited area, and I've enjoyed a bit of crazy flying knowing that all the broken regulation were his responsibility and not mine; and in those days, being a pupil, I never dreamed of questioning anything a flying instructor did.

I'm learning to skate. On the first night Shrimp took me along it was not quite so bad because I had Shrimp and a girl and a sailor taking turns to shepherd me around the ice at the local indoor rink; but the second night I went along, they sent me off solo and I became a positive menace on the rink.

I'd get out into the middle of the ice away from the supports at the side and then my left leg would depart for South Kingston and my right leg for North Kingston and I'd do a double reverse and fling before settling down in the tobogganing attitude on the ice, and of course folk whizzing along from all directions would fall over me. Other times I'd manage to clasp one of these fast travelling skaters, as I felt my skates departing for parts unknown and bring him or her down on me. Then I'd be scrambling around on my knees trying to get up and help them up at the same time. They'd usually have a pretty bright gleam in their eyes, but I'd say "Oh I'm so sorry I'm just learning to skate" and they'd reply "Oh, it's quite all right" gritting their teeth. In this way through the evening I got to know quite a lot of girls amongst others – but I really feel I could not be blamed for not doing much good as it WAS under rather unfavourable conditions.

However, one, who was what K. K. Welsh would have described as "definitely of the moderate variety", attached herself to us, and gave me a bit of a hand for a while; a lad who saw me with her came up to me later and said she’s been trying to get her hooks into everyone around here!" However, as it turned out, she soon got fed up with shunting me around and concentrated on Shrimp.

Another girl (also moderate) named Beth, came out of the crowd of the skaters and took my arm and suffered for it by being dragged along on her ear a couple of times

before skating finished for the night, and I staggered off to massage my ankles and change my clothes, which were getting stiff with ice.

Travelling to the camp one night on the bus I met a girl called Pat Beeman, daughter of a retired army officer. A few days later, I received a letter from a Mrs. Hanson, of Maitland Apartments, King St., inviting me to bring along the other five Australians to afternoon tea on the following Sunday.

We all went along and when we arrived Pat Beeman was among those present, so she must have organized it.

Anyway, there were tons of girls present and immediately we sailed in Shrimp and I got acquainted with a couple of girls who in the dim light didn't appear to be too bad. We talked to them for quite a time and, before we'd finished, arranged to go skating with them.

One was amongst the moderate class - Jane her name, with nice hair and a grin and not much else. She seemed pretty keen on old Shrimp. The other one, a girl who everyone called Barby (her real name is Barbara) who might enter the moderate class after we've skated a bit of her mid-riff off.

Bob Heath performed the old fox trick and stayed away from the girls, while he had a good look around. He deliberately kept himself from getting tangled up with anyone until he'd look the whole party over, with the result, of course, that he swiped the best looking girl present. However, even she was not so very magnificent - on the whole not a very impressive slice of Kingston's girlhood.

Colin Mayes and Jack (Sport) Palmer just looked around and talked and did nothing about it - for which I cannot blame them. Alec Evans, who would have been sure not to have left without someone, was not well and in bed.

3.10 Raising & Lowering the Nation's Flags

December 1st 1942. It's the following Tuesday now - Dec 1st - and snowing outside. The snow looks like staying with us this time. At the end of last week, we had two or three days flying washed out because of it and we flew on our day off, which was fine, to try to catch up in flying times.

When we catch a station transport at our house about 7-30 each morning to come to breakfast in camp, we travel about five miles along icy roads. The countryside looks quite spectral in the half light; the trees like monsters of the night caught up sharp during their prowling and frozen in their tracks.

This morning, I had to come in a bit early to take part in the raising the flag ceremony. On Canadian stations we used to take part in this once a week and it took about an hour to carry out, with the whole station on parade and quite a lot of flying time wasted.

When I arrived about 7-45 a.m., there was not a soul on the parade ground. A few minutes later a Sergeant appeared and said he didn't know what had happened to

the parade but he'd been looking around for the flag which was to be raised on the mast. We were wondering what had happened when a bugler arrived. I asked him “where was the parade?” and he said it had been cancelled. When I asked “why” he grinned and replied: "'Oh, it's too dark sir."

I was a bit surprised, though I knew that on English stations a great deal of the ceremony, and what we call bulls _ _ t, was cut out by devious means, but I said "What about raising the flag?"

The bugler explained that nearly always he and a service policeman were the only ones to attend the flag raising ceremony, as the parade was invariably cancelled on one pretext or another! The policeman and he would put the flag up at 8 a.m.

So I went and had breakfast instead - the English having risen in my estimation.

One of the pupils in Shrimp's flight was killed this week. He was firing on a drogue target being towed over the lake by a Lysander. The pilot of the Lysander said the pupil flew alongside him for a moment and pieces appeared to be falling off his machine. A moment later he saw the pupil floating down in a parachute; the plane had disappeared in the waters of Lake Ontario.

Farmers went out in boats to try to get him and we sent an amphibian “Walrus" to search but all that was found was the pupil’s parachute. Nothing has been found since and the machine has not been located.

The water now of course is freezing, but as the pupil had a “Mae West" life jacket on, it is surprising he did not keep up for a while once he was free of his 'chute.

The Walrus, flown by one of our very high ranking officers, proceeded to do a ground loop on the runway on returning, leaving only one runway in use for the rest of the afternoon.

For the last three days, it has been blowing a blizzard – snow and wind and a very low temperature have combined to give us a real taste of Canadian winter.

There’s ice on the ground and drifts of snow blowing everywhere. Many of the cars are using chains. Walking along it’s a real problem keeping your feet and I’ve had some heavy croppers.

Harvards lined up at 31 SFTS Norman Rogers Airfield, Kingston, Ontario. Central control tower at right. Snow and ice on the ground

Yesterday, Dec 3rd, the snowing stopped but flying was held up after the first period because of the heavy wind. Shrimp reduced his plane's airspeed to 65 mph and found he was standing still in relation to the ground flying against the wind.

They say locally that this blizzard is exceptional for this time of year and we are unlikely to suffer many this winter.

December 4th 1942. It's December 4th today and once again flying is washed out because of the extremely high wind which gave us lots of fun in landing this morning. In the intervals while they are deciding whether flying should continue, we instructors have fights, soccer matches and even musical chairs in the seclusion of the instructor's room. Whenever there's a long break I get my typewriter going. I've got three articles on America ready to go to the Herald, and I write letters and carry on this diary.

This morning, I taught a couple of the boys some aerobatics - including slow rolls. It is rather funny. You go up with one pupil and show him how to do them and then let him try and often he'll get on his back and leave the ship hanging there, and the motor will cut and all the dirt fall off the bottom of the cockpit on to you, and eventually you'll take over control and put her back the right way up. Then he'll try again and gradually improve, though there'll be many lurches and wild swings on the way round the rolls.

If your stomach is like mine, after about 45 minutes of this you'll begin to feel a bit gooey and you'll say kindly to the pupil: "Do you feel quite O.K." hoping he'll say "No, I feel sick" and you'll be able to take him back to the aerodrome; and, of course he'll cheerfully yell back "I feel fit as fiddle!" And on and on it'll go. I can take any amount of aerobatics smoothly executed, but when they're the lurchy variety in which you have to keep on taking over control to prevent the plane finishing in a spiral dive, I favor short periods.

However, gradually the pupil under your guidance will smooth them out, and you'll decide he's good enough and safe enough to send off solo to practice them.

So you'll return thankfully to mother earth where awaits you another pupil who also has to be taken through the same instruction, and will also lurch and swing you all over the sky and leave you to get him out of all sorts of awkward positions he gets himself into.

However, all round, Cattanach and Davis, the two I took up this morning, are shaping O.K. and towards the finish of his period Davis was getting his rolls around quite smoothly.

Davis went for his progress check flight with the Flight Commander (F/L Shearsmith) earlier and was given a pretty good report. I'm pleased because I was quite expecting the flight commander would discover something which (in my inexperience) I'd failed to teach him properly.

It's late afternoon now and the snow's coming down again. When weather stops flying here they call it a "clamp"; they have another expression I've not heard before.

They will tell you the flight commander has the “gen” which means that he has the information you want (comes from the word 'agenda' I think and apparently is used throughout the R.A.F).

Today, I had a wonderful surprise. I've not had any letters from June for weeks and weeks and I must admit I've been getting pretty anxious because I really seem to have well and truly set my heart on her. But at lunchtime, I found two letters in my rack from her, and two beautiful photographs. She really looks most adorable! I feel very, very relieved and quite a new man.

I forgot to mention earlier that while I was in Ottawa I was introduced to the Chief of the Canadian Air Staff (Air Marshal L.S. Breadner) by Col Stacey, a friend of the Derby's.

Breadner told me before he could join the Naval Air Service in the last war he had to spend 300 dollars learning to fly at the Wright school - flying machines which were largely held together with wire. Camels, one of the ships he flew, in a turn to the left threatened to go into a spin because of the propeller torque. There were no instruments on these machines, and often when you flew in cloud you emerged upside down.

He remarked on the fact that, although the Aussies and Canadians in the army fought like wildcats in the last war, the air services mixed quite amicably. This he said was due to a certain brotherhood of the air which existed between flying men no matter what nationality. Even German fliers had this something in common with Allied fliers and this was why the opposing air forces invariably treated airmen prisoners with respect.

While I was in Ottawa, I also looked over the chief newspaper, the Citizen, the editor of which told me proudly had a circulation of 42,000 daily - 12,000 more than the chief opposition. The newspaper is a very profitable concern. Often there are twice as many columns of ads as news, and there is no photographic or process engraving section. Stereos are purchased from New York syndicates and flown over from the States to illustrate news stories. A newspaper which is definitely a paying proposition.

Life these days revolves around a series of charts on the wall of the instructor’s room. They show pupils flying times, and the number of spins, forced landing practices, instrument take offs, etc which have been done by each pupil. It’s the instructors responsibility to see that the regulation number of each is carried out, and what with bad weather, and lots of days when the "dual only" flag is flying from the control tower (when pupils are permitted only to go up with instructors because of adverse weather), it becomes quite a job to balance things up.

For the first week or two, I was here I was very keen to keep their hours up, and although the boys grinned a bit and said "keen type;" and "he’ll get over it", it has put my pupils well up on the charts and relieved me of a lot of worries.

At present, the trouble is a shortage of solo hours, due to the fact that it has been ‘dual only’ for several days. Pupils should have approximately 20 hours solo when they reach 20 hours dual. At present, mine each have about 19 dual and 10 solo. Today the weather is not very good, but it is just holding good enough for solo and

besides my own machine (number 35), I have managed to bag a spare machine and so am getting twice as much solo flying time for my pupils while the weather stays fine.

The ceiling has come a bit low now, and as I write F/0 Sellix is standing on a box anxiously looking out of the window looking for No 37, his machine, in which one of his pupils is up solo.The machine is overdue back. I can see one of my pupil's just taxying in along the asphalt tarmac. Funny the feeling of satisfaction you get when you see one of your pupils return from a solo flight safe and sound without busting anything.

Some more interesting Air Force expressions we've picked up:

> *When a flier is getting tired or a bit fed up with his job, he's said to be "**browned off",** and those in authority take a **"dim"** view of anyone like this (in other words regard it with disfavor). Anything which is sure is said to be **"buttoned up**". You will hear a pilot say his plane has **"a ropey brace of urge boxes"** which means the engines are not so hot. They say you're going **"dicing"** when you go flying (apparently the idea is "dicing with death"). A plane which crashes is said to have **"pranged"** apparently from the idea of the sound of a crash.*

3.11 Knowle's Hate Session

Every morning, almost without fail, Shrimp has a little hate session. He almost always wakes up in a really bad mood and picks on anything at all to say something nasty about. He's normally a very easy chap to get along with, but at these times he's quite impossible to get along with.

I've discovered that when Helen wakes him up down at Toronto she finds him quite affable, so I presume it's just that he knows me so well he doesn't bother to hide these moods from me. Guess his wife will suffer them - after they've been married a while.

However, he thaws out pretty rapidly and after breakfast everything's O.K. It's really quite a remarkable characteristic of Shrimp's and I believe it's something in his physical make-up which upsets him and causes him to be so terribly irritable just after he wakes up.

I can't talk because I'm often irritable and difficult to get along with, but this early morning blues of Shrimp's is something more than just this.

Yesterday (Sunday December 13), I had my first day off for about a month and Shrimp and I spent a pleasant day at home. We didn't get up till nearly mid-day and Mrs. MacDonald insisted we stay home for Breakfast.

We went walking with her daughter, Blanche (aged 12) and an equally young pal of hers, and nearly froze in the cold. It was so icy our faces became quite painful and I could not talk properly. We had ear pads and scarves and gloves and things but the cold seemed to go right through.

During the walk we found a crowd of lads playing ice hockey on a natural skating rink down in a quarry.

It was a picturesque scene and Shrimp took some photographs with Mrs. MacDonald's camera his own having been stolen a week or two ago. Poor old Shrimp had a period of bad luck, having his camera stolen, also a new pair of fur lined gloves and being bilked by a taxi driver, of some five dollars.

The lads in the quarry had built a fire in a piece of wide drain piping, and we were glad to warm our frozen fingers over it.

I took a few photographs of the ice hockey which was fast and furious; the young lads keeping their feet in a manner quite astonishing to a poor skater like me.

3.12 Night Flying At Gananoque

December 14 1942. Today, December 14, we have arrived at Gananoque aerodrome - the relief field for Kingston. Here we remain for about 10 days and do our night flying.

Most of the instructors flew over – it is about 25 miles from Kingston. I flew and brought Cattanach, one of my pupils. The majority of the pupils and ground staff, etc came over by road transport.

We were hoping to get the night flying over with quickly so that we could leave this outlandish spot - which is 12 miles from the nearest small town - without delay; but right now it is 7 p.m. and flying is washed out for the night because of heavy snow and semi-blizzard conditions. A cold front is expected by the Met [Meteorology] office about 5 o'clock in the morning, so we can't expect it to let up for a while.

I am told that last night the temperature went down to 2 degrees below zero - which is 34 degrees below freezing point! BBrrrr.

Here, amongst Englishmen, there are no Canadians to worry about offending, and so we all wander around cursing and muttering "what a bloody country!"

December 15 1942, Tuesday – 10.45 a.m. At 10.15, I had just landed with a pupil and turned off the runway.

After turning off the runway the pupil is supposed to stop and raise the flaps. Just once in a while, however, a pupil has been known to move the wrong lever at this point and raise the wheels by mistake with the result that the plane flops down on its "belly" smashing the propeller (costing more than 1000 dollars).

So whenever I land with a pupil, I make a point of bracing my hand against the dual control undercarriage lever in case he tries to move it.

I've often thought this a bit of a waste of effort, but this, morning we turned off the runway and pulled up and I felt the undercarriage lever move back against my hand. I was just able to shove it forward before it was sufficiently back for the wheels to unlock and fold up. Fretwell, the pupil, appeared to have got quite a shock at his narrow escape from making the bloomer, and his taxying became pretty ragged so I took over and parked the a/c in the snow.

Incidentally, where the Canadians (like the Americans) call an aircraft a ship, the English call it a kite more often than not, like the Aussies. We seem to have many more of their habits and customs than the Canadians, who follow along American lines.

Last night,and the night before, I was Aerodrome Control Pilot – controlling the flow of plane traffic around the drome during night flying.

On the first night, I was stationed in a little control wagon at the end of the runway and with the temperature below zero had a very cold time indeed. Last night, I went on duty at midnight and carried on till 5-15am. Fortunately, the Flight Commander (Flight Lieutenant Shearsmith) had fixed it up last night so that the Control Officer could operate from the Watch Tower, which is some distance from the runway but high up and overlooking the whole drome.

From here - with one of my pupils, Davis, as signaller and another, Crisp, as lookout - I controlled the flow of traffic with the aid of red, green and white Aldis lamps and a Verey pistol.

Although it is a long job, and you have to keep alert all the time to prevent crashes through collisions, etc. it's fairly interesting and the fact that you have to be on the job all the time helps to pass the time.

From the tower you see the whole activities of the drome. You see a plane on the downwind leg signalling his code letter with his lights and, if everything is 0.K to land, you tell the signaller to flash him his letter in green. The aircraft after landing will taxi around to the take off point and again signal his letter and you must make sure no one is coming in to land on the runway before sending him back his green. If anyone piles up, you must get the fire truck, ambulance to him as soon as pos [Aussie slang for ‘possible’], and also make sure no one comes in to land on top of him (you hold the planes in the air with red Verey lights). If the crash takes a long while to move off the runway, it may be necessary to move the flares so that planes can land before they run out of petrol.

It was a beautiful scene last night: the snow-covered drome bathed in brilliant moonlight; planes taxying across, flinging up sheets of snow dust; the revolving beacon throwing a beam of light across the drome every 10 seconds; a constant stream of planes circling the drome exchanging signals with us in green, white and red lights.

December 19 1942, Saturday. The aircraft situation today is rather humorous. It’s so cold that as soon as an aircraft is pushed out of the heated hangar it must be started or it freezes up and will not fire. The oil in the oleo (undercarriage) legs also is freezing up with the result that all day long planes have been coming in

unserviceable and now there are about forty pupils and eight instructors and only about three planes to fly.

The temperature has been down to 25 below zero - 57 below freezing point.

3.13 Christmas With The Padres

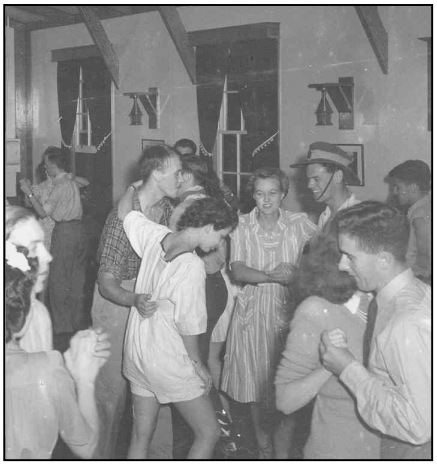
December 26th 1942. It is now Boxing Day – or rather Boxing night and I'm typing this in the room in the Officer's Quarters occupied by Col Mayes and Jack (Sport) Palmer. They are away on Christmas leave in Montreal.

In some ways it's been a quiet old Christmas - in others, not so quiet!

Christmas Eve, there was a Ladies Night - cocktails and dinner and dance, etc in the Officers Mess.

The Officer's Mess at Kingston SFTS

Jim & Norma watching conga from doorway



Shrimp, Jane, Norma & Jim

I went with Elizabeth (Libby) Broom, who is the daughter of Lieutenant Col Broom, of the Canadian Dental Corps. She lives in Barrie St. Kingston and is the best looking of the girls I've seen around these parts. She seems to be a nice kid – a bit like Joan[17]] and a little bit like Valerie Watson in her ways.

She was easily the best looking girl at the function which made the evening all the happier as I didn't feel the least inclined to wonder off and was much more attentive than usual. The whole trouble was I had to keep on the job all the time, as there were so many guys trying to horn in on me!

The funny part about this enjoyable evening is HER MOTHER CAME TOO! After I'd invited Libby, the Adjutant (Flight Lieutenant Morris) asked Mrs. Broom (who is really a beautiful lady), and he drove us the six miles to the camp.

[17] Jim's older sister; referred to also as 'Jo'.

When I arrived home, it was 4 a.m. and I did not wake till 11 o'clock on Christmas Morning.

Just as at home, I woke up and pounced immediately on my presents - two WHOPPING parcels from home which I'd managed to resist opening till Christmas Day. There was also another huge parcel from Kaye but this was at camp so I could not get it.

Then I opened them up and, I must say, it was a wonderful feeling to get those presents from everyone at home. Everything was so carefully packed, and they'd taken such a lot of trouble, and there were little messages from them all - and some very funny ones from Jo.

I DID WISH SHRIMP HAD BEEN THERE.

That was the only thing - there wasn't a soul in the house as everyone was away except me. Still I gave old Kaye a ring in Ottawa, and then I rang Shrimp in Toronto, and I had a piece of Jo's beautiful Christmas cake and ate some figs and rang up Libby.

Went to Libby's House for the afternoon.

It was a real Christmas with snow and ice on the ground, boys skating in their back gardens and people doing their Christmas shopping from sleighs - which are more reliable than motor cars these days. At Libby's house they have a lighted Christmas tree which I helped them erect. It looks beautiful in the window and stands right up to the ceiling.

I was invited to have Christmas tea at Libby's but the camp Padre (Sqd. Ldr. Donald Foster), a man who never lets any waif or stray around the camp at a time like this stay that way for long, had asked me earlier, and I went to his house and had the most beautiful Christmas dinner - turkey soup, turkey and Christmas pudding - and after we played games, many of which were really well thought out and were originated by one of our Meteorological Officers, Harry Avery (also one of the waifs and strays looked after by the Padre). Later still, I called back at Libby's house and I went to bed about 3-15 a.m.

Today, I have been formation flying - or rather teaching the boys how to. One way and another, I'm afraid towards the end of the day I was getting a bit haphazard and hard to please, and my eyes were nearly closing with tiredness and the tremendous glare of the sun over the snow.

That last bit was written Saturday...

In the evening I went home and the house was freezing cold because the family are all away and, although they've arranged for someone to look after the heating and keep it stoked up, whoever does the job skimps it pretty thoroughly.

So, I hunted around the house for a hot water bottle and couldn't find one for a long while until I went down into the cellar and discovered an old whisky bottle which I decided to press into service.

Having filled this, I then discovered a REAL hot water bag with the result that I spent such a comfortable night, I slept until 8.30 the following morning - the alarm failing to wake me at 7 a.m. - and missed my transport into camp.

I had to wait a couple of hours before transport could be arranged and I rang Libby and heard the great news that her Dad had arrived home on Boxing Day. He had been away in England for more than a year. I'm so glad because Mrs. Broom had been fairly longing to get him back.

After darning about a dozen pairs of socks and doing some ironing and general chores, I went to camp and about the time I arrived, flying was washed out for the day so I went off and spent the rest of the day at Libby's place.

Everything looks very Christmassy. As I walk home from Libby's place at night, I have to practically skate all the way because there's an inch or more of ice on the ground, and in lots of windows there are lighted Christmas trees and other coloured decorations in the windows.

I have purchased some rubber overshoes and they're quite a blessing in the sort of weather we are having today.

December 30th, 1942. Walking along the footpaths, which at the moment are covered with about an inch of solid ice and thus have the qualities of a skating rink (only not so smooth), is quite an art.

You see lots of small boys on skates skating along the paths and roadways. I'm gradually learning the Canadian way of walking on this sort of ground. You sort of shuffle along so that your feet are sliding all the time and then they don't slip away unexpectedly from under you. Tonight, however, it is a little easier to get along because it is snowing and so the ice is roughened up a bit and gives you a better grip.

Along the road from here to the camp there are quite a lot of cars which have slipped off the road into the ditch. This morning there were a couple of buses caught this way.

Shrimp is not too well with a chill at the moment. In a little while, I'm going to take him up a hot lemon drink. Can't make out whether his chill is due to the cold or to his visit to Toronto from which he's just returned!

Am very pleased because Davis, one of my pupils, came top of the course with 80 per cent flying marks - quite rare marks. The nearest to him was 77 per cent. I'm very glad although actually in his elementary training before I got him, he flew well above average, so it’s not really due to me! I don't know what marks I got when I did my own wings flying tests but I’m quite sure they were no-where near 80 - lucky if I got 70; very!

None of the other three were scrubbed, and Crisp, the one who was pretty tense and shaky in his flying at first, has been trying very hard and been given a pretty good average report.

I'm going down to Ottawa for a few days New Year leave, and then I'll get another four pupils – whom, I've no doubt, will be green as green, and all eager to kill themselves.

If they are as decent and try as hard as my first four, I'll be well satisfied. You learn a lot about pupils when you are teaching them:

- Cattanach is quite a strong type of lad though inclined to be haphazard and rely too much on natural ability – which leads one to think he's over-confident.

- Crisp is inclined to be erratic and does not easily consider things in his mind in an orderly fashion, with a result that doing a number of things at once such as you must in flying an aeroplane - is quite difficult for him. So in the initial stages of his flying I was inclined to think he couldn't fly, but once the actual operation of the plane had become a matter of a drill to him, I found he could handle the aircraft better than the average. His previous flying reports have been very bad and I thought perhaps he was disheartened and wasn't trying, so I told him I had been rated below average at instrument flying early in my training and finished above average, and hence his earlier reports didn't cut any ice with me and this really seems to have been his trouble because since then he's buckled down to it and improved no end. He can be rather a grimly purposeful type of chap when he likes.

- Davis has great ability of imitation and hence learns a thing once you've shown it to him. He is a keen & steady type of chap with nice light hands for flying.

- Fretwell looks a real ham-handed sailor, but is pretty thorough and a good trier. He gets very disgusted with himself when he does something wrong - which is a good sign of keenness.

3.14 An Eventful New Years in Ottawa

January 1st 1943. Today is New Years Day, and I am in Ottawa for leave.

I took a taxi to Kingston Station to catch the Ottawa train at 1-20 p.m. and on the way another car headed quite fast out of a corner and hit us on the side near the back, throwing us round in a complete circle. We skidded backwards down the road and came to a stop without any injuries. Had the road not been covered with ice and snow we'd have turned over for sure because the other car fairly crashed into us.

But this was only the start of an adventurous trip to Ottawa which did not end (the train journey usually only takes about 3 hours) until 11 hours later.

We arrived at Brockville where you change for Ottawa to find that there had been a very heavy snow storm the previous night. Lines were down and a horse had been electrocuted - so all power was cut off as a precaution in the district.

Trees were a wonderful sight with their bare branches and twigs covered with a transparent thickness of ice which sparkled like diamonds in the brilliant sunlight. It was as though all the trees had been hung with tinsel.

They told us at Brockville that the Ottawa train had been held up by snow and would be at least two hours coming in. All lines were down, but I sent a wire to Kaye - who I was afraid, would be waiting at the Union Station at Ottawa for hours - when the post office people told me it could be sent via Toronto.

The two hours stretched on and on. I met some folk from Kingston – a lady named Moore and two others whose names I've forgotten, and a girl named Dorothy Fournier and another whose name I've forgotten. The last two were members of a party of entertainers who go round to the camps and from their looks if nothing else I should say they'd be popular.

They sang lots of songs in the waiting room, and lots of very "select" people looked over their noses at first, but later when hours dragged on and it looked like we might be there to see the New Year in these folk joined in. About 9-45 p.m. the Ottawa train at last arrived and we got to Ottawa. about 12-15 a.m. The 6 ½ hours in that waiting room fairly dragged but they were made a bit shorter by those two cheerful spirits of girls. I think I might look Dorothy up. She asked me to.

Today I've been out skiing - or attempting to - with Kaye.

From the time Kaye said "put your foot in there", to when I took those dreadful long clumsy annoying bits of wood off my feet, I continually was doing the most peculiar antics.

I started off down the hill outside her house and tried to follow her example as she pushed herself off easily and slipped along the snow quite nicely. Then WH00SH! And down I went into the softest spot I could see. And, in the forty or fifty yards down that first hill, I hit the deck no less than four times.

However, it's not really so hard when you begin to get the hang of it, and after a couple of trial runs down a shallow nursery hill nearby - with about three stops each time to pick myself up out of the snow - I found I could get along most of the time without falling over.

We moved on to a slightly harder hill and I performed some most weird and complicated maneuvers, usually finishing up all tangled with my skis, which are clumsy things in the hands (or rather on the feet) of the inexpert. However, Kaye and her pal, Alice, did not negotiate this hill too often without falling, so I didn't care much.

I find, as in ice skating, my feet have a strong tendency to get ahead of me with a result that I assume the tobogganing attitude.

I'm writing this on Monday in the Ford Hotel, Montreal. When I arrived here, I went to a nice quiet place recommended to me by Miss Dumais (a previous landlady of ours) and I intended to catch up on a bit of sleep and have a good old snooze this morning; but unfortunately, the landlady didn't mention that a road mender would be operating all the morning right outside my window.

This afternoon, I moved out to the Ford Hotel and having had my pockets emptied of all their small change by the hordes of flunkies and whatnots who fought over my

stack of bags, I was shown to a foul room. I went downstairs and changed it for a more expensive one, raked up some more coins end set the page boy staff loose on my bags again, and was promptly shown up to this room which is almost equally foul. I'll keep it because I've already paid enough to almost buy the room.

January 10th 1943. It's January 10th now and I've just seen my new pupils. Before I go on I must say my first impression of these is that they're distinctly 'ropey',

On Wednesday January 6th, I awoke in my room at Mademoiselle Brisset's apartments, 1455 Rue Drummond (apt 618), in Montreal and as I was about to leave at 7-30 am, to catch the 8-15 train to Ottawa I discovered a black suitcase of Shrimp's (borrowed) had disappeared and with it my Canadian air force flying suit and a pair of trousers, dressing gown and air force flying gloves. As I only brought the case in with me at midnight, someone with a key to the outer door of the apartment must have come into my room in the night and swiped it while I slept there. It's going to cost me a small fortune to replace if the police can't track it.

While I was in Montreal, Kaye and I went up Mount Royal and watched youngster's ski-ing in between the trees on the mountain slopes. We didn't take our skis and, though I'd like to have had a go, I think it was just as well because it was icy cold up the mountain and ski-ing would not have been much fun.

3.15 Circuits & Bumps, Solos and Other Mis-Adventures

January 18th, 1943. Today there's been a full clamp - snow and a high wind. It started just as they were warming up the aircraft for flying this morning and the blizzard is still going.

I've spent most of the time on my book. Shrimp and the rest of the boys went to town to the pictures this afternoon and I used an empty bedroom in the officer's quarters for a period on the typewriter. However, I didn't seem to be in form and finished writing a letter to June.

Two, at least, of my pupils are definitely ropey, and the last few days consequently have been a trifle hectic.

I've been teaching them circuits and bumps (taking off, flying around the field, and landing), and have those bumps been heavy!

My first impressions were not entirely right as when I first saw Cassells, one of the four, I immediately thought he would not be much good, but he's turned out to be the best of the bunch so far. Bristow also appears to be getting a grip of the ship. Bushby I am still uncertain of, though he can put them down fairly safely MOST times; Dallaway is either very careless or else just can't help forgetting things. You teach him something, and then a few minutes later he will do it wrong again. He can land quite safely but has a tendency to leave the motor on and run through the far fence of the drome.

On Friday, I came in to land with a pupil (Bristow) in control. There was a plane carrying Jack 'Sport' Palmer, one of the Aussies, and a pupil, standing beside the runway waiting to take off.

I could not see it from the back seat, and the pupil in the usual manner of dumb pupils, headed down straight for it without attempting to correct his heading and swing back on to the runway.

To make it worse, there was a strong wind and a heavy wind gradient (i.e. the wind dropped off sharply close to the ground) and also, as he got down within about fifty feet, the pupil closed off the throttle.

The result was we sank down sharply right on top of this other plane.

Just in time I saw it beneath us and rammed open the throttle. The engine coughed and my heart fairly stood still; then it caught, and gave us just sufficient power to hop across the top of Sport's machine. I took over control, swerved back on to the runway and landed the plane.

‘Sport’, who does not exaggerate, told me afterwards that our tail missed his propeller by four feet, so all round we were mighty lucky.

On last Wednesday night, Shrimp and I joined in a sleigh ride with a lot of kids. I've never been on one of these before, but they're very popular among school children over here and I wouldn't have missed it for worlds.

The sleigh ride was organised by Blanche MacDonald, Mrs. Mac's daughter aged 12.

Most of the children were about the same age; I think the eldest was 14. But I don't think Shrimp and I were too old for them judging by our conduct that night.

Shrimp wore a pair of pyjamas, a shirt, two sweaters, bedsides his battle dress and overcoat. We're getting wise to this Canadian climate. I wore all my usual clothes plus a fur lined jacket, flying suit and two pairs of gloves and flying boots.

The procedure on a sleigh ride is simple. Everyone puts in 25 cents to pay the driver for hiring the sleigh.

The sleigh drawn by a horse is merely driven by the owner along the streets for a couple of hours at slightly more than walking pace. It is just a flat timber platform, like the back of a lorry, on long wooden sleigh runners.

There were 20 in our party and the kiddies made their fun as they went along - having snow fights, pushing each other off the sleigh, ringing door bells, hooting horns of any cars standing at the roadside, singing and generally doing just as they pleased.

There was only one casualty - little Sheila who had her hand frozen - though not badly.

We all came home about 9-45 and Mrs. Mac had some hot cocoa ready.

January 19th 1943 – Tuesday. It is now Tuesday January 19, and once again flying is washed out by the weather. The roller is out rolling the drome, but I think they're a bit hopeful because the ceiling is very low and it doesn't seem very likely to clear.

Two of my four pupils have already got their six hours dual up (they are not supposed to go solo till they have six hours at least) but they are not ready to solo yet.

As one of the other instructors said: "They start off pretty bl _ _ _ y awful, and get steadily worse till they've got six hours up. Then you send them off solo and go into the instructor's room, shut yourself in and think hard about something else". "If they come down O.K. you blink a bit to see them taxi in, all in one piece then pat them on the shoulder and say: 'There you are, I told you you could do it".

Reminds me of the health lecture delivered to a group of airmen. The lecturer started off: "Well boys I'm going to tell you what not to do. The MO's [Medical Officer] coming along after me to tell you what to do after you've done it."

January 21st 1943 - 4-50 pm: As I looked out of the window about ten seconds ago, I saw No 35, my aircraft, come in to land with Cassels flying it on his solo test. He appeared to make a false approach to the ground, then correct, and make a reasonably good landing, so I hope he'll be passed O.K. and go off solo.

He's the best (so far) of my four pupils but he's the last to go off solo because I put in more time on the others.

Bristow went off first - yesterday morning. I sent him up to be solo tested with Pilot Officer Dick Barton, even though his flying could at best be described as safe. However, he appeared to me to be trying too hard and was getting over-anxious about it all, so I thought it best to let him go.

In the afternoon, I flew with Bushby after solo testing Dick Barton's pupil and sending him off.

Bushby flies pretty well, but I'm afraid he's not sufficiently careful. After turning off the runway he made that star bloomer of pulling back the undercarriage lever (raising the wheels) instead of the flap lever after landing. Fortunately, I had my hand braced ready and was able to push it forward, before the wheels came up and it cost the Air Force 1000 dollars for a new propeller.

I sent him up with F/0 Sellix for a solo test and Sel told me that during the test Bushby came in to land and, instead of putting his flaps down, pulled his wheels up! I'll have to get on to him.

Sellix had a pupil, Barr, who had sufficient hours to go solo, but whom he was doubtful about. He told me Barr was a poor flier and he was doubtful if he was worth sending off solo at all. He asked me to solo test him, but not to send him off solo if I wasn't sure he could make it.

I went round with Barr, who I found a very keen type of chap who flew quite well but could not land for nuts. It became obvious after I'd been round about four times that he could not make good landings, so I concentrated on teaching him to put it down REASONABLY well and how to correct bad landings. If he hadn't been so keen I'd have given him up because he was pretty dangerous, but towards the end he seemed to get the idea of how to correct a bad landing with motor, and so I taxied in to the hangar and climbed out of the back seat and let him take it up himself.

Then I fairly sat inside and shivered.

However, he came back 0.K., and when I saw him taxying in, all in one piece, I must admit I got more kick out of it than I did the day I went solo in a Harvard myself.

This morning, I took Dallaway up and he went off solo just before lunch. I think he's the worst of my bunch. He is very slow to react and though I think he will develop into a moderate flier he has to be pushed all the way.

Cassels is just making his third circuit of the drome with Flight Lieutenant Harvey and, from the look of the landings I've seen so far, he should be sent off solo pretty soon.

January 25th 1943. Cassels went solo O.K, and appears to be the best of my pupils from his flying so far.

I have not heard from June for about a month and I can't help becoming a bit anxious. The situation with Libby Broom and Jane Turner [Libby's cousin] at present is funny.

I've not been going down to see Libby very much recently. This is partly because I've been working on my book, partly because I can't help thinking of June, and partly because Libby's inclined to be conceited, and gets rather a jump ahead of herself.

On Saturday night, Shrimp went down to the Brooms, and, after tea, Jane announced that she had a date and was going out! She'd been freezing Shrimp off a bit in the last few weeks. So Shrimp took Libby out.

On Monday morning he told me he'd had a "wonderful" night, which made me prick up my ears.

On Monday night, we both went down to see the Brooms and I arrived a bit after Shrimp. When I got there, Libby was out with someone, Shrimp was playing cribbage with Dr. Broom, and Jane was sitting around doing nothing!

So I kept Jane amused for the rest of the night, and when Libby came home Shrimp kept her amused. The situation thus has become rather Gilbertian[18].

Especially so, as Jane is rather like Spud, whom I was keen on when I was younger, and as Shrimp knows this and realises a swap doesn't worry me at all, he doesn't appear too keen about it all.

[18] An expression meaning "wildly comical and improbable" as in a Gilbert & Sullivan opera

It's really very funny.

My chief concern at the moment is to hear from June. I wonder sometimes if I should not ask her to become engaged; though I still can't help thinking it was wisest not to. Still it might make her happy if I did and also I won't get so worried when I don't hear from her for a while; so I think I might take the plunge soon.

26th January 1943 - Tuesday. As I write - at 2-40 p.m. Sgt. Pilot Ted Turner, one of the instructors, is looking out of the window watching the planes come in with a very worried look on his face. One of his pupils - who has done very little solo - is out on a solo trip now and is 40 minutes overdue back. Ted says he's a very 'ropey' type and liable to do anything.

As I typed that, Ted saw a plane come in to land, and from the fact that the chap did a fearful approach and attempt at landing, ending in a bounce so high he had to take off again, Ted deducted it was his pupil!

I'll have to get cracking myself as Bristow is waiting to go up with me.

It's night now. That pupil got back O.K. I was only thinking just now that one of the things I like most about old Shrimper (that's what Kaye calls him) is that when he has a fight with you he forgets all about it in a very short time. It's a very likeable trait of his and one that's going to help a lot in his married life.

February 6th 1943. It's Saturday and our day off, but we're flying just the same - though goodness knows why, because we're well up to the line in flying hours.

Last Saturday, I went to Dick Barton's wedding to a girl named (blast me I've forgotten it!); managed to kiss the bride five times and met a girl named Nancy Weller, who is quite nice looking, though not particularly brilliant, and just a little bit like June in her ways (i.e. she has a sweet smile and is very easy to get along with).

One day during the week, Davis and Crisp and Cattanach and Fretwell, my first four pupils, came over to our hangar with brown paper parcels tucked under their arms. It turned out these, parcels were their cameras and they wanted to take some photos of me, with 35 [Jim's Harvard], the aircraft I taught them in.

So we pushed greasy old 35 out of the hangar and took photos of all of us in the Cockpits and on the side of the plane [see photo below].

It was great to see them all again, and I felt pleased to think they'd bothered to come around; I'll be glad to get the photos too.

Another day during the week, Arthur Walford, who was a pilot officer in ATS, was killed with a pupil when their aircraft collided with another in formation flying. The other plane managed to get down safely. Poor old Arthur probably tried to pull his plane out and land it, but while he was still struggling with it, it must have gone into the deck.

I heard it was a plane in Shrimp's course and I was scared stiff it was old Shrimp; I rang the control tower and, when they said it was a pilot officer, I got even more worried because there are only a few P/0's beside Shrimp in that course.

However, he was O.K, and last night we went to the pictures in the car which he purchased during the week for 100 dollars. He took a girl named Helen Sutherland, whom he met last week (quite nice looking, and pretty good company) and I took Nancy.

Today, he's going down to take Jane and Libby for a drive; I was going too, but it looks like I'll be flying all day.

Well, it's a little bit later now and I didn't fly all day after all. A clamp (bad weather) has descended over the drome. I'm at home now (at Mrs. Mac's) and typing on the dining room table. Snow is falling steadily outside.

Incidentally yesterday, while teaching a pupil instrument flying, I managed to get lost. There was a 55 mile per hour wind and I flew above the clouds for quite a long time. When I came down I didn't know where I was (actually I was miles into the United States). So I got the pupil, Bristow, to hold a steady course while I tried to pin-point our position. However, as it happened this was hopeless, because we had flown right off the map.

I reduced the boost and revs to save as much fuel as possible; then I altered course 90 degrees with the idea of making a square search. After we'd flown about half an hour, I estimated from the direction of the wind drift that we'd travelled south west of the aerodrome (this later proved to be absolutely correct). So I changed course slightly to the west and after we'd flown a little longer Bristow said: "I believe I know

where we are sir; isn't that field down there; the one we usually practice forced landings in?"

And sure enough, it was.

February 8th 1943 – Monday.[19] Yesterday Shrimp and I went to church - Jane and Libby were supposed to be singing in the choir but unfortunately stayed at home, so we fell in!

This morning a couple of pupils had a collision while dog fighting and one crashed in flames and was killed and the other managed to get down, but attempted to make a forced landing with his wheels down and pranged badly, going over on his back. However, he got out all right.

In that crash, the instructor, Flight Lieutenant Patterson, did a pretty good job. When the planes collided, the pupil's cockpit top was jammed and he could not bale out. Patterson could have baled out and left the plane to crash (it was practically out of control) but he stuck to the plane and managed to make a forced landing, and so saved the pupil's life - a good show.

February 15th 1943 – Monday. I have taken two days of my annual leave and so had yesterday and today off. Tomorrow, I will go off to Gananoque relief field to start night flying for a fortnight.

For the first time since we've been in the R.A.A.F, Shrimp and I met in the air last week. We saw each other twice as we were about to take off and proceeded to do some close formation flying together. Each time when we broke off, I pounced on his tail and tried to get him into a dogfight, but Shrimp had to get his pupil back to the drome and buzzed off after a very brief skirmish.

This couple of days leave has been rather bright and I'm afraid I've not done much work. On Friday night, I went out with Nancy Weller, whose chief attraction is that she's a little bit like June! On Saturday night, Shrimp and I took Jane and Libby to a dance at the Officer's Mess [see photo below].

The line-up on these two girls - who are pretty good sorts all round - is interesting though just a trifle obscure at the moment.

I have not paid much attention to Libby recently and appear to have slipped about four places down her popularity ladder; however, all the four rungs above appear to be vacant ones so all's well! Shrimp has been piling for Jane like one thing and she's taken him back. I think she was only dwelling on me to make him jealous. Strategy!

[19] At this time, the Allies were starting to win the War in Europe having landed in North West Africa and in particular the German surrender at Stalingrad on January 31 (the first defeat of the German forces) and the re-capturing the Soviet cities of Kursk, Rostov & Kharkov.

A Dance at the Officer's Mess in Kingston – Jim is 7th from left in the back row, and Shrimp is 7th from right also in the back row with future wife Jane in front of him.

Alec Evans, one of the other Aussies, had a swell girl with him and I had one eye on her and the other on Libby all the evening. Towards the end of the night, Libby didn't want to dance: Shrimp says because she was tired; I think it was because she was a bit snooty and wanted to try to rile me.

Anyway, Alec was blowing off about some mythical occasion when he'd swiped a girl friend from me in New Zealand, and Libby was in a funny mood, so I decided to pile for Alec's girl friend for a bit of fun. The result was not so funny as I began doing quite well with her (Norma was her name) and just before we were going she gave me her telephone number.

However, Alec interrupted at this moment with the result that I only got three figures of her telephone number - 513... So yesterday I rang 5131, 5132, 5133 etc. and got no result when I asked for a. girl named Norma at each of these (don't know her other name); then I tried ringing 5113, 5123, 5133, 5143, 5153, 5163, etc. and when I got to that last number and asked to speak to Norma they said she was out at present, so I think I've found the right one!

Had to descend to this because I knew Alec would not tell me her other name. Shrimp thinks I'm a low type; wouldn't be surprised.

Visited the MacLachlan's in King Street yesterday. Mr. Mac Lachlan is related to Mrs. Broom and we met Mrs. MacLachlan at church last week, when we were invited to come to tea on the following Sunday afternoon. They're a nice family and want us to drop in any time we like. Shrimp couldn't go unfortunately, because he was orderly officer at the camp.

The temperature here last night was 32 degrees below zero. Some say it was 40 below.

February 21st 1943 – Sunday. There's been a bit of a thaw on and things are a trifle slushy. All A.T.S. flying was washed out today at the main drome and so Shrimp has the day off. We're flying at Gananoque relief field and the surface is not too bad though the ice which covers it entirely, gave a couple of nasty cracks when I first landed this morning.

Yesterday afternoon, I had my first experience of ice boating, and it was good fun, though a cold sport. The ice boats are much the same as ordinary yachts only instead of a boat there are ice runners at each side and a tail skid, and do they zip along!

We travelled at about 30 mph, but I am told that in a high wind these ice yachts will go at about 100 mph

The thaw, which began yesterday, was causing the ice covering Lake Ontario to become a little soft and just before I went off in the ice yacht with a chap named John (who incidentally I spoke to in the street when I was watching the ice boating, and who offered to take me out) the owner of the boat Hugh and another chap crashed through the ice, boat and all, and bruised and cut themselves a bit, besides getting soaked in icy water. They were lucky to be able to rescue the yacht.

So I had some misgivings when I went out, especially when we began haring along with a "wing up" (i.e. one skid off the ice as the yacht heeled over in the wind). John told me this was quite usual and they didn't OFTEN turn over. I didn't quite fancy being shot off to skid along on my ear at 30mph, though he tells me this is not uncommon.

I met some of the chaps at the yacht club and was invited to go along any time I like for some ice boating.

Yesterday week, just before going to that dance with Libby and Jane, Shrimp and I decided to cook our own tea. Mrs. Mac was out and we almost thought of asking the two girls to come up and let us cook for them. As it turned out, it's a good job we didn't!

We bought some spaghetti, some eggs, some mushrooms, and we had them all nicely cooking with the gramophone playing in the next room.

I rang Libby for some information about cooking mushrooms and everything went fine until the time when Shrimp said the spaghetti was nearly ready and so I started to poach the eggs and moved the mushrooms over to one side. Shrimp put on some toast and I started some cocoa on the gas.

Then everything began to boil at once!

Shrimp decided my mushrooms needed heating up and turned the gas up under them so that they nearly went through the roof. While I was coping with this and

cursing Shrimp, my poached eggs boiled over and then over went the cocoa. Then there was a panic as Shrimp couldn't find any tomato sauce to put in the spaghetti.

Shrimp sat down heroically and ate a good sized plate of blackened and tough mushrooms (which incidentally, we'd forgotten to peel) and well stewed eggs and toast, while I cleaned an assortment of spaghetti, egg water and cocoa off the stove. I didn't eat much but the following day I felt ill and ate even less.

Last Tuesday, I was flown over to Gananoque aerodrome for night flying and on the way I took some photographs with a camera lent to me by Mr. MacLachlan's son.

Bill Bainbridge, one of the other instructors in our flight, was flying the plane that picked me up and I took a photograph from the back seat as we took off, another photograph of Kingston airport, and then when we arrived at Ganganoque we decided we'd like a photograph shooting up the control tower.

There are all sorts of fearful penalties for pranks like this, so we put our wheels half way down and pretended they were stuck (you are supposed to fly down low over the control tower waving your wings when your wheels are stuck).

With one wheel down and one up, we dived down past the tower and I leaned over the side and snapped it as we tore past.

Meanwhile, the fire truck and ambulance tore out on to the field ready for the crash!

I left Bill to make all the explanations, and he must have spun a good yarn because we haven't been put in gaol [jail].

It's about 8-15 p.m. Sunday and I've just returned from a nice little trip to Kingston. At supper (just after I'd laid the flare path for night flying) the Flight Commander asked Dick Barton (one of the instructors) to fly over to Kingston and fetch Cal (PO Callard).

There was no flare path ready at Kingston and I wanted to try landing in the semi-darkness without the aid of a flare path (also Shrimp and Libby and Jane had been down to visit Gananoque and I wanted to shoot them up on the road back to Kingston). So I hurried my tea and then offered to go.

I was just taking off when the flight Commander decided it was too risky to land over there without flares and fired off white recall lights to me from the control tower.

I turned a blind eye and took off, flew along the road waving my wings to Shrimp and Co and then went in for a landing.

It was fairly dark, and the aerodrome was badly cut up with melting ice; I had landing lights but I didn't want to use them because I wanted to try it in the dark. I used reflection from the horizon on the ice some distance away as a guide to where the ground was.

I found it was not very difficult and everything was going O.K. until just as I was settling down on the ground. I had a horrible feeling I'd forgotten to put my wheels down. However, it was too late to pull up and check the wheels so I landed, though

this sudden awful thought caused me to move the controls lightly and make the landing a little rough.

Cal came running from the control tower in an awful sweat; wanted to know why I'd not used my landing lights and, when I told him, said: "You blighter!" with considerable feeling. He told me he'd been sitting up in the control tower in a dry sweat watching me come in, with a Verey pistol in his hand ready to fire a red flare.

Actually, landing in the dark is much easier than it appears.

We flew back to Gananoque and landed on the flare path, and immediately we went into the hangar, were told flying was washed out for the night because of the thawing ice on the drome, so I'm going to write some of my book.

February 4th 1943. I'm back at Kingston drome. Flying once more is washed out by snow, so I'll get this up to date.

Have just had a very nice letter from Dad, telling me all about things at home. He draws a very clear picture of everything that's going on. Had to laugh at one bit "thanks very much for the Ephemeris. It was no use." Still he's got the one he wanted, so all's well.

It will be great to see them all again. I have had a couple of rather close shaves in the last couple of days. Day before yesterday I came in to demonstrate a landing without flaps to the pupil. In this landing you come in very fast and unfortunately the runway I used was just about to be changed as I came in and was actually down wind. I still had about fifty mph half way along it and looked fairly sure to go over on my nose in the snow at the end because the brakes would not give me a grip on the ice. I dropped my flaps at 40 mph and they acted as air brakes and stopped me just before I shot off the end.

Yesterday, I was teaching a pupil to lead a formation of three planes in No.35.

Another formation headed straight for us. I could not see the other formation from the back seat and I had just told the pupil to signal a turn to the left.

The pupil signalled 'break away' without saying anything to me about the other formation and I proceeded to roar at him to turn to the left.

The two instructors in formation with us did not see the pupil's 'break away' signal which was not very clear, and they also didn't see the other formation.

I saw it at the last moment and did a steep climbing turn to avoid it and the other two peeled off in time.

Cassells, who has flown pretty well through the course, did a very poor test with the Group Commander. Dallaway, on the other hand, who has not been quite so good, did a good test. He appears to have lots of confidence.

Bushby is still in the toils. I'm trying to save him being scrubbed. He's not very sound - is inclined to be impulsive in his flying, and pretty erratic too. He has been up for a

final test and did not pass, so will be re-tested. He's not bad at formation flying and I'm going to do my best to keep him on the list because I think he has enterprise and might make a good fighter pilot.

Bristow has been passed - but only just. He's a trier, but has not much natural ability.

With Cassells, I think it was ‘test’-itis, but with Bushby and Bristow I think it's just that their flying ability is a bit below the line.

Haven't seen Libby or Nancy for about a fortnight. Have been out a couple of times with Norma. However, she's a little bit like June and has a most rebellious chin!

Shrimp's car, as is usual with any old car, is costing bits of money here and there. So far we've spent 4 dollars on fixing the tyres, about 5 dollars on the self starter, 6 or 7 dollars on new covers, 2.75 on a little repair when it boiled when Shrimp was driving it, 1.35 on something that had to be done due to a knock which developed when Shrimp was out in it the night before last. The total so far (about three weeks) without petrol is 20 dollars of which I've contributed 13 dollars. It reminds me of my old car which cost more than £30 in a few months driving. Still this is not a bad old bus.

My old bus, No. 35 Harvard, is outside the window as I write. Two mechanics are perspiring over it trying to get it started to taxi it into the hangar. It's always very hard to start on a cold day and I've had lots of trying times. It's just coughing and spluttering a bit now, but I think they'd find it an easier job to just push it into the hangar.

April 3rd 1943. Much water has flowed under the bridge since my last entry, and such a lot of things have happened that I've failed to record. Yesterday, Alec Evans did the first serious damage to an aircraft by any of the six Aussie instructors here. It was not his fault and he did a very good job to get his pupil and himself out safely.

The airscrew pitch control went wrong just when he needed the engine to recover from a bad bounce landing by his pupil. He was down at Gananoque aerodrome and the result was he drifted along the drome about ten feet off the ground at about 75 mph unable to climb away although he had full boost on. He passed the end of the drome and headed for some telegraph wires but quickly closed off the throttle and made a semi-crash landing in field, damaging both wings.

I'm in B Flight with three other Aussies, Alec Evans, Jack Palmer and Bob Heath, now, and go to Gananoque for night flying tomorrow.

The Instructors
Back Row – Bob Heath, Unknown, Jim Vickers-Willis, Unknown, Frank Piercey
Front Row – Alec Evans, Unknown, Flight Commander Pip Aldridge, Unknown, Jack 'Sport' Palmer

Now April 13th and beginning to warm up, though still nippy. I did go to Gan but not to night fly because we had bad weather the first night and I did some much overdue work on my book, and the second day I was told to fly to Kingston to see the Chief Flying Instructor, and it turned out he wanted someone to act as his Adjutant for a while, and I was it. I'm writing this now at my desk as Adjutant in the control tower and looking out on to the rather windy drome.

No. 85, the black-nosed Advanced Training Squadron aircraft has just taken off on No 1 runway. This plane is marked with a black nose and it 'stooges' around in the local flying area with squadron or flight commanders on board and any time it sees an A.T.A solo machine flying along, tries to get on its tail without the pupil seeing it. If the pupil fails to spot no. 85, and take prompt evasive action, he gets fatigue duties cleaning aircraft, etc. The idea is to teach pupils to look around and develop the "rubber neck" as they would in the combat zone.

Incidentally, I find my neck is growing stronger and stronger and making my collars too small. I've noticed this with most of the instructors - due to the fact that they are constantly turning their heads around in all directions searching the sky to prevent collisions in the crowded flying area.

A week ago today, April 6th, I went for my re-category instructors test. When we graduated, we all were given 'C' categories; this test was for a B instructor's assessment. No increase in pay or rank - just a matter of prestige and permits you to send pupils off solo at night and one or two other minor details. Shrimp went for his "B" too and we both passed.

Examining officers from C.F.S. (Central Flying School, Trenton) come around to carry out these tests at all the stations periodically.

In my test, I flew with Flight Lieutenant Mc Lurg for 50 minutes and did 10 minutes I/F [instrument flying].

I started off with an instrument take off and though I managed to keep straight under the blind flying hood, I felt the wheels hit the ground pretty hard twice, so it was probably a bit dangerous.

He told me to turn on to course while I was still climbing, but one of the other boys had told me he often asked for this, so I had my compass already set with the gyro and hadn't much difficulty. Then, after a few turns on to courses using primary instruments, he told me he was putting it into a spin and would let me hold it there and recover on instruments.

He'd had it so far as I was concerned as there were chinks in the sides of the blind flying hood and I could catch glimpses of the horizon whirling round and so had no difficulty pulling her out blind. He said 'nice work' and released the hood. I grinned.

I then demonstrated some spins off steep turns and we both did some aerobatics. He said he detected a trifle of side-slip in one or two of my rolls, and he thought my demonstration of spins off steep turns could be better illustrated with a bit of patter about a lad shooting up his girl friend steep turning above her house and looking back over his shoulder unconsciously hauling back on the stick and so lifting the nose and flicking into a spin.

He then asked me to demonstrate stalling and how an aircraft flicks out of a high speed stall. The plane was sluggish and I couldn't get it to flick properly so I let him have a go and it wouldn't flick for him either!

Then he decided we'd had enough and asked me to take him home and show him a flapless landing from the back seat.

Never, in any test, have I done a good landing, and as I came in I was determined that this time I'd do one. After all, an instructor should be able to turn on any sort of landing he wants.

There was a very high wind and a whale of drift on the runway.

I brought it in with slightly too much speed but levelled off very carefully and flew along with one wing down correcting the heavy drift. She floated and floated in the high wind and at last settled down perfectly on to three points, and I was just about to pat myself on the back for my first really good landing in a test when the examining officer in the front seat rammed open the throttle, took control, and took off again.

It appeared that in concentrating on getting that landing mathematically perfect I had floated a considerable distance down the runway and he considered there was a good prospect I'd shoot off the end and go over on my nose in the mud after landing. I, of course, could not see from the back seat, but I think I would probably have

made it O.K. The examining officer then flew around the circuit and made a pretty 'ropey' landing and said "gosh, I never knew a Harvard to float like that!"

For all this, my report said "a sound instructor" and I got a B Category. Shrimp's report said "a capable instructor" and he got a B category! Suspiciously similar.

One or two of the instructors got some pretty caustic remarks in their log books.

Just then, no 32, one of C Flight's aircraft, flew past the control tower rocking its wings, a signal that it could not get its wheels down. However, they appeared to be in the down position though they may not be locked. I advised the driver of the fire tender to be ready in case of a prang and he's sitting outside the window in his driving seat waiting for the plane to come in to land. One of the undercarriage legs is likely to collapse when it lands.

Hasn't come in yet so probably the instructor has taken it up high to do some rough aerobatics and try and shake the wheels into the locked down position before coming in.

Have been to see some great films recently – best of all ‘Casablanca’, ‘In Which We Serve’ and ‘Random Harvest’.

Last night Walter, Norma Compton's cousin, invited Norma [Norma Compton with Jim – pictured below] and Norma Holland, and I to Vimy military camp where Mart Kenny gave a special broadcast performance in the drill hall to a huge crowd of army lads. It was a great show and Judy Richards sang quite well and illustrated the music with constant movements of her hands and body in a way that would have looked foolish only it was very well done. They did "Said the Private to the Corporal" and "The Fuhrer' s face" very well, and introduced an idea in which three soldiers and a WAAC were invited on to the stage and allowed to conduct the band. Very interesting as the band followed exactly the movements of the conductors even when they were out of time. A couple was very good - one was a bandmaster!

Later we WALKED home five miles! Mr. and Mrs. Compton took us in the car.

Have had quite a lot of fun as Adjutant learning quite a lot of interesting things with, of course, full access to all the squadron's personal records of everyone.

I'm writing this at my desk in the C.F.I.'S room, control tower. It's mid-afternoon. Raining - quite unusual here. We have had hardly any rain all winter except freezing rain which forms ice immediately it hits the ground and makes it almost impossible for cars to travel along the slippery roads, and also makes it almost impossible to walk, and creates a perfect imitation of frosted glass on all windows, and puts a layer of glaze ice on the wings of a plane destroying the forces of lift and making it necessary do get down soon or just come down from the force of gravity.

However, at the moment we are having some real old honest-to-goodness rain, which lies around comfortably in puddles and doesn't turn to ice. Looking out of the window it reminds me of Aussie.

All the country is dead at present of course. There are no leaves on the deciduous trees; grass is very brown after emerging from under the ice and snow. Even the evergreens are looking a bit pinched and browned off after the cold they've been having.

Incidentally, the rain is just turning to snow - a very familiar old enemy - so I spoke too soon. There's a big parade planned for tomorrow and if this weather keeps up it may be cancelled - so it's an ill wind... Date is April 11th.

To think that a year ago today we were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean on our way to Panama. Wonder where we' ll be this time next year - Aussie I hope.

April 15th 1943. This morning we thought we were in for some of that really beautiful Canadian weather, but I have just witnessed a flock of planes which were lured out by the early morning's promising sunshine, scurrying back to the drome through snow so thick you could not see across the field. A series of little storms this is. One minute heavy snow and visibility almost nil - then clear for a minute or two - then another heavy snowstorm. Few of the boys seemed to realise this and did not wait for the clear patches before coming in to land. Some of them were so low they were scraping over the hangars, and I suspect they were seizing their opportunity to shoot up the place.

The Met [meteorology] people let us down a bit for once, though Harry Avery - a clever Met chap – said 'there's nothing on the map to show it, but it looks like a front to me, the way the wind's backing." George Lees, is another good 'Met' man. He and Harry are leaving soon; don't expect their replacements will be as good. Funny, they're both school teachers in civil life.

3.16 Graft, New Pupils & A Tea Party

April 21st 1943. I heard some funny things in the CFI's office. It is now April 21st and I've joined A Flight as an instructor again.

One day, there were two squadron leaders and the wing commander and the group C Captain (Le poer Trench) in the office. The Group Captain went out and the other three began running down Group Captains mentioning how they wangle out of paying income tax by flying around a bit between stations and so getting the rebate which is intended for men flying on active service (if you fly 100 hours in a year you pay no income tax).

The wing commander laughingly told how many of these Group Captain's flew slow planes deliberately so that they would take more hours between stations on their flights. Even so, some of them found they could not get 100 hours in, so they had had the regulation changed so that if you flew part of the 100 hours you could be relieved that percentage of your income tax (i.e. 50 hours would let you off 50 percent of income tax) - what a blasted old bit of graft!

Yesterday, Flight Lieutenant Smith and I took D Flight pupils for a three mile run. Flying was washed out. I've not had much exercise recently and it nearly killed me although as we were leading the squad I had to keep running all the way. I learnt how good it is not to smoke from the way some of our huskiest looking sailors, who smoked, caved in completely out of breath after about a mile or so.

Shrimp hurt his fingers in the window of our room on Monday and went to see the Doc who tried to drill the nails, with the result that Shrimp passed out.

He was pretty sick when we were home in the evening, so without telling him I rang Jane and asked her to come up and see him and then borrowed his car to go round and get her, telling him I was going to see Norma.

He got quite a surprise, and I think it bucked him up. Jane is a nice girl.

I'm trying to do a bit of match-making at present with Libby and a very good looking chap from the Bahamas. Don't know how successful it'll be, but Shrimp thinks he’s a bit old for her.

I've pretty well fixed it for him to take Libby to a dance at the Officer’s Mess, though they haven’t met each other yet, so I'd better not be too hopeful.

Now have four new pupils - and they all appear to be very good. Wall, Watkins, Williams and Webb.

Have got them through the worst part of teaching them to fly - giving them general handling of the aircraft (trims, etc) plus first circuits and bumps in the first two days, and they seem to be shaping O.K. Wall, who started off very well is having trouble with swings and nearly caused me to have my first crash on Sunday. I only just pulled straight before going over in the mud. Have to be on your toes with these pupils in the early stages.

Have had a TEN page letter from Jan. There can't be a thing around Brighton that I don't know about. Her blood should be bottled and served in small quantities as a tonic for maintaining morale among lonely troops far from home. I think one of the things I look forward to most is having a game of tennis with Jan and Pam and Chas, just like we used to when we were kids.

April 29th 1943. Had four days leave over Easter.

Forgot to mention that the Sunday before that, Shrimp and I were invited to one of those Canadian 'tea' parties at the home of the Dalton' s (as Norma puts it - definitely the Upper Crust of Kingston). They own a big hardware firm here, among other things I believe.

It was really a most peculiar party. When we got there, afternoon tea was being served. Shrimp and I had just climbed out of our planes and arrived there about 5-45 p.m. We were pretty hungry, but in the usual manner of these parties we were polite and hardly ate a thing (I think I had one biscuit!).

Then someone suggested dancing and so they rolled back the carpets. I began to perk up because this was better than the usual run of such parties, where everyone just stands or sits around and bores one another wholesale with endless and pointless conversation. Anyway, the first couple of records had been played and several were dancing when some chap sat down at the piano and, without being asked, began doing his best to drown out the gramophone. He was breaking about even with it when someone suggested we should all be polite to him and turn off the gramophone. So it was duly turned off, and the carpet was rolled down – all this before I even had time to have one dance. So we sat around and talked and then (thank goodness) Colin Mayes, one of the other Aussies, who is really good at the piano, came in and began playing and we spent from then till 9 pm. singing and listening to him playing - he didn't stop all that time.

It's rather interesting that Colin and Shrimp and I were the only Aussies asked - though we didn't know the Dalton's from Adam. The other three Aussies were ignored. I don't know why Jack Palmer was passed over by “the Upper Ten”, but Alec Evens and Bob Heath have been wandering around with one or two rather doubtful girls and generally having a lively time in the neighborhood, and so apparently they have been banned. Sure they won't worry!

It was also very funny afterwards. When we got outside into Shrimp's car with Jane and a girl named Barbara, I said I wanted to go into town to get something to eat because by this time I was famished! Can't get this idea of a party from 5 pm to 9 pm with practically nothing to eat.

Anyway, we went down to the Superior Cafe in the town, and while we were sitting there about eight chaps who had been at the party came in to get something to eat. Then, in little dribs and drabs, practically everyone who had been there came, and there were broad grins when we realised we all felt just the same.

3.17 Easter on Lake Ontario

To get back to Easter (Good Friday April 23rd this year). I had four days leave and was invited to spend it with Comptons. Went down on Thursday night and didn't come home till Monday night.

It was great fun and I slept on a studio couch in the dining room with a screen around me. As Mrs. Compton said -"with about as much privacy as a goldfish".

Norma has most peculiar little swellings which come up on her skin (like the result of stinging nettles) when she gets either hot or cold. They itch terribly and she gets them all over her, poor blighter. I tried putting vinegar on some of them and it seemed to help a little, though she couldn't sleep much the first night. She also suffers from almost continuous headaches – though she sometimes has spells when they go away for a few days. I believe they're psychological headaches but anyway they're pretty painful.

We went out to their cottage, which is on the shore of Lake Ontario, near Bath. It's a tiny little shack but has accommodation for seven to sleep, and we went rowing just after dark one evening, while Mr. and Mrs. Compton built a bonfire.

It was beautiful out on the lake that Saturday night - cool and so calm that even I could not find any difficulty rowing, though Norma, in the stern, was pretty critical and seemed to think she could do a better job. We had to cut the trip a bit short because the boat leaked.

We had a fish supper that night - Mr. Compton had been out all the previous night doing a bit of illegal out-of-season fishing and bought home some beauties! He got a lot of chipping about breaking the law for his pains.

Mr. and Mrs. Compton, who sing in the choir, drove home to church (St. Luke's) on Sunday morning, while Norma and I stayed behind at the cottage. They came back and brought part of the lunch, while Norma and I had prepared the other half. It was raining but we were very cosy and in the evening we all went home and to church.

On Monday night, we all went to the pictures in the car. Norma and I have developed the habit of going to the pictures with Mr. and Mrs. Compton. We often go about 5 o'clock on Saturday evening - getting there before the queues start and coming home to have supper (i.e. dinner) at about 9 o'clock. I enjoy it, and I think the others do too.

3.18 B Flight Pupils - A Couple of Dopes & Some Military Justice

May 3rd 1943. Just one year ago today we were having our first look at Montreal after arriving at Halifax and travelling across Quebec by train.

I have moved to B Flight and have four new pupils. In a way it was unfortunate because I had just got my pupils in 'A Flight' through the hard stage - i.e. first couple of weeks circuits and bumps while they learn to fly - and had got three of them off solo when I moved. However, it was lucky in a way because one of the pupils, a chap named Wall, looked to me as though he was heading for a wash out, despite that I was doing the very best I could with him.

On the Thursday, just before Easter week-end, he gave me the worst day I have had since I've been flying and I know something more than my ability saved us from crashing at least three times that day.

In the morning, he made a fearful mess of a landing and it is little short of a miracle that we got straight when I took over. We finished up ploughing for 50 yards through mud which showered up over the machine and I could hardly believe our good fortune as I taxied her very gently back to the hangar to have the plane examined.

I scribbled this next bit in shorthand just after that last episode, while I was trying to puzzle out what to do with this dangerous pupil:

"It's not a very enviable feeling having to go up with this chap again knowing he will probably cause me to have my first prang. I will have to be very much on my toes.

Of course I could wash him out, but I don't like to do that - it's almost like a failure on my part; and also I should not be scared of a prang - though actually the thing I am most-scared about is that when you have a prang here, they always blame it on to the instructor; they say he should have been able to save it (to which I heartily say – Bulls_ _ _!)

When I took him up in the afternoon, we flew around for a while without anything very terrible happening, then they changed the runways and we had to land in a bit of a crosswind and we were quickly in trouble.

In two successive circuits, Wall dropped the wing into the mud violently on landing and I must have got a bit shaken because once I applied the wrong corrective (i.e. opposite aileron instead of opposite rudder) with the result that we hared along in the mud and slush at the side of the runway, and took off at about 60 degrees to the landing path.

I took Wall in after that. I really felt I couldn't cope and it was quite a beautiful feeling to look forward to four days leave right ahead.

I went up with Watkins, who is a good pupil, after that and got him off solo. When I'd sent him off, I stood with Peter Wiseman (who gave him the solo test) and I watched him do a beautiful first solo landing which cheered me up no end because I was feeling a bit down in the dumps over my failure with Wall.

On the Tuesday, I came back very much refreshed and found I was able to cope with Wall quite easily, though I still couldn't get him good enough for solo.

I gave him 1.50 dual and had him tearing along the runways (taxying) and then bringing to a stop fairly quickly to practice him in correcting swings on the ground, and he improved quite a lot. However, now I've been moved to another flight and he has a new instructor, so I don't know how he's got on, though I believe he's not gone solo yet and may be washed out.

In B Flight I have four pupils - Mumford (said to be overconfident), MacPherson (a trier), Machin (still mis-pronounce his name) and Morgan (a big chap, like my elementary instructor, Flight Seargent Coutt in Australia).

They all seem to be fairly good types and, with fairly good weather, I've got off to quite a good start. I'm going to try and make this my model course of pupils - teach

them everything according to the textbooks, plus giving them the little bit of experience I've already gained.

I have come to realise that it's experience that counts in instructing, and I feel I can do with very much more before I'll be much good at all.

It is May 3rd Monday and we have just had a 48. There is a catch to that, though, as it means we will not even get one day off next week.

However, we had a good time. I stayed at Norma's home and had a very happy week-end (Norma pictured below with Jim).

They're a nice family. Norma is very much like June with really fine blue eyes. Her mother is a very good scout and quite young and her Dad is an alderman and a building contractor. He reminds me very much of Bob Ridgeway and appears to have a finger in many pies around the district, works hard, and does quite well out of it. I rather like his style.

Norma is stenographer at the City Engineers office, and she seems to know everyone in the district - including all the police force – and, because she always has a smile for everyone, is very popular. She also seems to know everything official, about everyone that goes on in the district.

Though I am not suggesting that there are not plenty of sophisticated Australian girls, the average Canadian girl is much, much more sophisticated than the Aussie girl.

Canadian women too have much more entertainment than Aussie girls. They go out much more - even the married ones. I think they are on the average a bit more cunning than Aussie girls - i.e. they have a bit more savvy in certain respects.

It is difficult to give examples of this, but they are very good at adopting a pose. For instance, if they think you are the type who likes the "good mother loves children" type of girl, they will usually put across a pretty good act designed to make you believe they are this type.

The best way to find them out is to not bite; then they will get what they can from you - run you around to all the most expensive places of entertainment they can, and if you are a dope it will probably cost you quite a bit of money before you wake up to the fact that the dear little thing that says "I've always wanted to go there" never went because she could never before find anyone silly enough with their cash to take her there.

Shrimp and I have both been dopes on one or more occasions, so we know.

These remarks do not apply to Norma, who is a really swell girl and reminds me very much of June.

May 26th 1943. Heavy fog over the drome. Plane circling overhead apparently lost. Control tower have been firing off Verey signals without effect and light beacon is revolving, but apparently he can't see us. Little groups of chaps out on the drome watching. We're not flying.

June 4th 1943. Much water has flowed under the bridge without much effect on us. The invasion of Europe is (apparently) coming off any minute.[20]

We have had one or two narrow escapes at the drome. Most notable, Colin Mayes, one of the Aussies, had a bad prang at Gananoque and was very lucky. Teaching a pupil a precautionary landing he hit the ground short of the runway and went over on his nose and on to his back in the mud. Colin was buried with the pupil underneath.

Colin kept calling out "are you all right" to the pupil who, when he became conscious, began yelling "get me out of here, get me out of here!" Colin was busy trying to turn off the switches while upside down.

Fortunately, they did not catch on fire or they'd have had it because it was some time before they were extricated. Neither was very badly hurt, though the plane was pretty well wrecked. There was no doctor available at the drome and they had to be taken by road 18 miles to Kingston for medical attention. This is a disgrace, because there is no telling when someone will not die for lack of medical assistance one day out there.

3.19 A Little Trouble Out At Gan.

Flying Officer Lishman who was officer in charge of night flying out there one night, got himself a bit drunk early in the evening and took a plane up, with a pupil in the back seat and shot up the drome in a very dangerous manner. Apparently, it was a sheer fluke that the two came down alive.

Lish was court martialled and Flying Officer Biggers Camp Commandant, and a lawyer, was asked to act in his defence. Biggers did a pretty good job with the result

[20] The Invasion of Europe occurred 12 months after this comment by Jim on the 6th June 1944 known as D-Day, when Operation Overlord landed Allied forces at Normandy, France.

that Lish got off to the mortification of the Commanding Officer, Group Captain Le Poer Trench, and the C.F. I. Wing Commander Loxton who wanted to see him nailed for it.

During the trial, Loxton actually threatened Biggers that, in the event of a certain decision (Lish getting off), he (Loxton) was going to see that Biggers was posted.

I had had the job of typing some of the questions for Lish's defence and Biggers hauled me in again to type a letter protesting to the CO about this threat. It appears that the threat was made in the presence of another Wing Commander and also later at a dance, in front of some civilians. Biggers asked that the matter be referred on to the Air Officer Commanding.

The day after Biggers sent his letter, the CO rang him up to tell him he was posted!

All round it looked like a filthy bit of work and a few days later came a greasy letter from the CO trying to put Biggers off referring the matter to the A.O.C. However, Biggers is a lawyer and he got me to type another letter insisting on his rights, and so one way and another it looks as though there's trouble ahead for the C.0. and the CFI. Most people at the camp seem to dislike these two, so I don't expect very many people will be sorry.

De Roeche, one of the young English instructors, had a nasty prang a couple of days ago. Squadron Leader Weston, O.C. of No 1 Group, took off behind him too close, and overtook his plane crashing into the rear. Weston's airscrew chewed right into de Roach's cockpit mangling up the metalwork and actually clipped him before Weston cut his switches and stopped it. "Rocky" had a miraculous escape and suffered only a couple of scratches though his plane was pretty well a write off. In other accidents like this, usually the instructor in the back seat has been chopped to bits by the airscrew. Shrimp says "Rocky" was so shaky he could not light a cigarette afterwards. Rocky apparently escaped because he leaned forward in his seat.

I went to Toronto with Norma Compton and her family last week. Ordered a civilian suit at Simpson's among other things.

It's 160 odd miles each way and we started at 5 a.m. and arrived there about 10-30. We had breakfast at Oshawa, where the old street car tracks are now used by the railways and you see train carriages travelling down the main street. Apparently, the bright idea allows the railways to deliver goods (in their own trucks) right to the business houses in the main street by merely shunting the railway trucks on to the tram lines.

Saw too, Marie Dressler's birthplace at Coburg. Spent a long time looking for a dress for Norma and eventually we didn't buy one. It was very hot and we realised how much better it is in Kingston. Mr. Compton took us to lunch at Scholes Hotel, and later we travelled through the 'better' suburbs in the north of the city where the famous Casaloma Castle is. The car broke down just outside Casaloma when I stopped to take a photo and we all went to Aunt Sid's (Mrs. Comp's sister I think) while it was fixed. I was taking pictures all over the place; even hopped out into the street in the middle of the city to photograph a crowd of people pushing each other off the steps of a tram.

We brought back with us Norma's married sister, Marjorie (Mrs. Simmonds) and her little son, Jimmie. Marjorie's like Norma - a bit thinner, rather less moody, and more practical than Norma but without that little bit of softness and good-heartedness that makes Norma such a great girl.

June 6th 1943. To get off the subject of girls. - It's June 6th, Tuesday. One way and another I have been very lucky in the last couple of days..

Yesterday, I sent one of my pupils (Grant) for a solo test with Tom Ironside, one of' my best pals. The pupil made a poor approach, coming in low with too little airspeed, hit the ground with his wheels and drifting sideways. The plane swung, the left wing went up and the right wing down. Tom took over control rather too late (he waited to see if the pupil would correct it, and waited too long) and slammed on opposite rudder, stick forward and lots of throttle. He saved it turning right over, but the wing tip hit the runway and she went down heavily smashing both wings, the undercarriage, ailerons, flaps, airscrew and part of the fuselage. The pupil's arm was cut when it smashed through the plastic window of the cockpit. Tom hurt his arm a bit.

They were using my aircraft (No 17) which I have only just had back since one of my pupils smashed it up in a forced landing a couple of months ago. I've been getting it put into shape over the last week, and had it just about right when it was cleaned up again. There's not too much left to repair.

I was sitting beside the runway solo testing another pupil when they crashed and I must say it was one of the most spectacular prangs I have seen.

This morning after landing my pupil, Gazzard, tried to raise the undercarriage when we were standing on the ground. Had he done so it would have smashed the airscrew (1000 dollars odd) and also probably damaged the engine and U/C. I had my hand on the lever and managed to stop him.

This afternoon, Bob Heath had his first prang when he was giving some 'gen' to a pupil approaching the take off point and while he was talking the pupil taxied into No 14, smashing the right mainplane very badly with the airscrew. Bob's pal, Alec Evans, says bits of the wing were thrown fifty feet into the air by the airscrew.

Only a few minutes after Bob's plane had taxied in, I had a very narrow escape from being run into by Joe Houghton, an Aussie in the R.A.F. Houghton did not see me and ran straight at me. I swung round fast and managed to get away with only a foot or so to spare. As Jack Palmer said "You're the only one of the Aussies, Jim, who hasn't had a prang now, so you'd better look out!" Colin Mayes has had about three prangs. Jack had one about a week ago when he ran his wingtip into the airscrew of another plane (we managed to get him out of an endorsement by a bit of wangling - I saw the ground staff and squared the duty pilot). Shrimp has busted a wingtip when he was dual (not to his credit, as he was not captain of the aircraft) and also busted another wingtip and bent the oleo leg of a plane when a pupil dropped a wing while night flying recently.

Alec Evans had a crash recently, though he could not in anyway be blamed, as the airscrew unit failed and he made a fine job of an emergency landing.

Bob Heath had his first prang yesterday. So far, I have not even scratched the paint on an aircraft - so I had better start touching wood.

Tomorrow, I have to try to get off solo the pupil Grant, who crashed yesterday. I don't fancy the job because he is very slow in his reactions and it will be very difficult to decide whether he's suitable for solo or washout.

I'm going to bed early tonight anyway!

July 8th 1943. Flew 3¼ hours with Grant trying to get him fit for solo yesterday. After working really hard with him and nearly pranging once myself in the process, I considered him quite safe and sent him up for a solo check with Pip Aldridge, the Flight Commander. However, Pip was a bit browned off and the wind was awkward on the runway with the result that Grant was knocked back again and Pip wants him washed out.

3.20 A Good Kiwi Down – Frank Piercy

July 9th 1943. Frank Piercy was killed today. He's from New Zealand and a good friend.

It was rather rotten down at Gananoque aerodrome this morning. We knew one of our crowd had crashed and probably been killed, but no one knew who. Bob Heath and I checked up that Jack Palmer was safe in the flight room and Alec Evans landed just then. One by one our pals came back to the drome, and as they came in we knew it was not they who had been killed.

I gave my pupil a bit more dual and then Pip took him up again on a solo check. Tom Ironside and I stood watching while he came around on his circuits and Tom told me Frank has a wife and a little daughter he's never seen in New Zealand.

"I wouldn't get married before going away for anything" said Tom, and these sentiments, which lots of us have expressed at various times, took added effect at this moment.

July 12th 1943 – Monday. Today we went to Frank's funeral. He had full military honours but it was not a very happy affair.

As we sat quietly in the front pews of beautiful St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Kingston, awaiting the arrival of the Air Force clergyman, I could not help wondering whether Frank were there with us in spirit, and then I had another thought that it were more likely he'd be over in New Zealand with his wife and the little daughter he'd never seen before, if he were anywhere around this earth.

You could see from their expressions that many of the other officers were thinking of the times we'd had with Frank - fighting with him for aircraft when there were some short in the flight, watching him wave over the side of the cockpit as he came in to

land, giving a thumbs up or thumbs down according to whether his pupil was doing well or not.

I remember the evening he gave us all a surprise, by coming from the Sergeant's Mess to the Officer's Mess with newly sewn pilot officer's braid on his shoulders.

There was a small choir of girls. The earthly remains of Frank were draped with a Union Jack in front of the pulpit and covered with wreaths and beautiful flowers which put a sweet scent on the air in the deep-ceilinged church. In front, were about a dozen or more officers - pals of Frank - behind were as many sergeants and warrant officers and behind them fifty or more airmen.

We said a prayer for Mrs. Piercy.

As they carried him from the church the officers formed up on either side and saluted. Jack Palmer was opposite me as we saluted, and his face was hard set as Frank was carried past.

We marched along the main street in slow time, beside the hearse, the airmen moving to the side of the road and presenting arms.

Later, we drove through country lanes between fields, blue with corn flowers to Cataraqui Cemetery, which is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen.

We drove along paths shaded by friendly maples and stately poplars and elms and weeping willows. They laid him to rest in a shady spot beside other Air Force men killed on active service in Canada.

After the bugler had played the Last Post, and a salute had been fired, each of his pals in the flight stepped up and saluted, paying his last respects.

As I stepped up, I did not see the coffin; I could picture old Frankie charging into the instructors room with that carefree, almost reckless grin curling up the corners of his mouth, and his dark hair brushed back and parted near the middle, yelling: "Out of the way, you lot of kangaroos." I think the others were thinking as I was - especially the Aussies, Jack Palmer, Bob Heath and Alec Evans.

That reckless grin of Frank's was rather deceptive because he was really a most careful pilot.

Incidentally, that pupil of mine, Grant, went-off solo just about the time we heard Frank had been killed.

July 15th 1943. I am flying Frank's old plane No. 21. My aircraft, No. 17, is still in small pieces. Frank's corporal mechanic is a sad man these days. He used to nurse 21 for old Frank like a child. He was with Frank in England.

I have a new problem on my hands today. Gazzard - one of my four pupils who has quite a nice pair of hands for flying and looked like being quite good - appears to want to throw in the towel. He first of all complained he was feeling dizzy in the air and was worried he would faint (he says he fainted a few days ago on the ground). I

sent him to the M.O. who said there was nothing wrong with him and it was psychological.

This afternoon I had a talk with Gazzard and, from what I gathered, he's worried about flying, has not much confidence in himself and seems to want to toss it in.

I can't say I like this spirit, because in wartime you've got to fight these things, but it may be something to do with feeling dizzy in the air, so tomorrow I'm going to take him up and give him control and make him throw the plane around until I feel sick myself. I won't send him solo again until he's quite confident he can handle that plane in any attitude.

He'll have to take a very firm grip on himself if he's going to make good. It just depends on whether he wants to go on and in to the air fighting, which lies ahead. If he doesn't, I'm afraid there's nothing I can do. I've given him a good stiff talk, so maybe he'll pull himself together.

Since then, Gazzard has voluntarily washed himself out. I took him up and let him toss the plane around with me in the back as safety pilot, then when he came down safely I pointed out he had handled the aircraft quite safely in every sort of position, but he said he did not have enough confidence when solo. HATE to think of all the time I've wasted on him.

Sometimes one wonders whether its worth worrying about these types.

We come into the flight in the morning humming and whistling and full of the joy of living and after a morning of alternatively tearing our hair in the back cockpit and yelling resignedly "I have control", we leave it soured and bitter men.

At present, the country is beautiful. Everything comes to maturity very quickly once the snow goes away over here. I doubt if there could be any more beautiful (or livable) place in the world than this part of Canada in spring and summer.

The lakes are lovely broad expansions of clear water, chock full of Perch, Rock Bass, Pickeral, Minnows and lots of others including big Pike; the lakes are edged by thick trees – willows, maples, stately poplars, huge elms in endless numbers.

Birds, which went South in winter, are plentiful. The Red-Wing Blackbird is a common one I've never seen before. Several times while cycling around here, I have disturbed Pheasants which run across the road. I see more of the country by cycling, despite that I ride a great deal in Shrimps car and with the Compton's. You miss a terrible lot in a car.

Over here, just about everyone goes fishing – all along the road beside Lake Ontario, you see them fishing from the bridges with a variety of bait from spinners to minnows and worms. Even a lot of women are there with rods.

There is good shooting – duck, etc - normally, but now there's a shortage of ammunition.

The thing that strikes you about the country is the variation in colour. Even the trees are widely varying shades of green, and the lakes give sharp splashes of blue – hay

fields are brown and yellow, and next to them are fields blue with corn flowers, many with vetch hedges have honeysuckle, and under them and hiding in grass you find violets, wild strawberries and lots of delicate blooms. Along the edge of the roads are scores of yellow dandelions and white daisies. It is as though all the beauty of summertime, which is spent over about 7 or 8 months in Aussie, is crammed into the short four or five month season here. The country here is like wine undiluted - and like wine, it goes to your head if you are the type who goes for these things.

As I write, I am duty Intelligence Officer and in the room are pilots of No.75 course (one month to go to graduation – very senior) doing ship-rec (or ship recognition). They peer through slots in the wall, at models of ships of allied and axis fleets trying to identify them from silhouettes.

The keenness of these chaps is quite inspiring. They are pushing each other aside to look: you have one reeling off the list of ships displayed on the model 'sea' – and another saying "shut up – don't tell us – you saw these last night."

The evergreen trees, which supply the only life and colours in winter, are very inconspicuous amongst the bright variety of green shades of the deciduous trees in summer.

August 7th 1943. Swallows are already gathering in big crowds on the telephone lines. In a couple of weeks they will disappear, having fled south to Florida and other warmer spots to escape the cold. All birds here are migratory - can't blame them. They just come here for nesting time and clear out before the warm weather has gone. The big Robins appear to come here for early summer and go further north to cooler climes for late summer; we haven't seen them around recently though there were great numbers earlier. Then late in fall they fly south.

I have just had a week's leave at Norma's cottage. We went down there with her sister (Mrs. Simmonds) and Jimmy (aged 1 last Tuesday). Life was rather governed by Jimmy because, of course he wakes up at 6-30 a.m. each morning and so wakes everyone, but we had a great time. After a couple of days, we got into the habit of retiring about 9 p.m. and we did this most of the week, with the exception of a couple of nights when we stayed up to play rummy. It rained a couple of days but I didn't miss an early morning swim once.

L to R – Little Jimmy, Norma, Jim & Gram at the Compton's Lake Ontario Cottage

Lake Ontario is very warm at this part, though I'm told down near Toronto it is like ice. Last Sunday, Mr. Compton had to make a trip 75 miles up north to a timber mill and Norma and I went with him. We went past Sharbot Lake, a famous beauty spot, to Clarenden Station and then on to the mill at Ardoch. We travelled along roads so narrow through the thick timber country that when we met cars we had to back along to find a space to pass. I spoke to the miller's son and he told me last winter they were cut off from the world for three months by the snow. Life up there misses a lot of the comforts of civilisation and also some of the drawbacks. I tasted real cream at the timber man's home for the first time for a long time. One or two folk we inquired the way from appeared to be a bit off their rocker - due probably to intermarriage. On the way home we picked blueberries (huckleberries) and raspberries. The country around was either wild and rocky or covered in dense forest.

Jim napping with Little Jimmy.

Flight Lieutenant
Jim (James John) Vickers-Willis

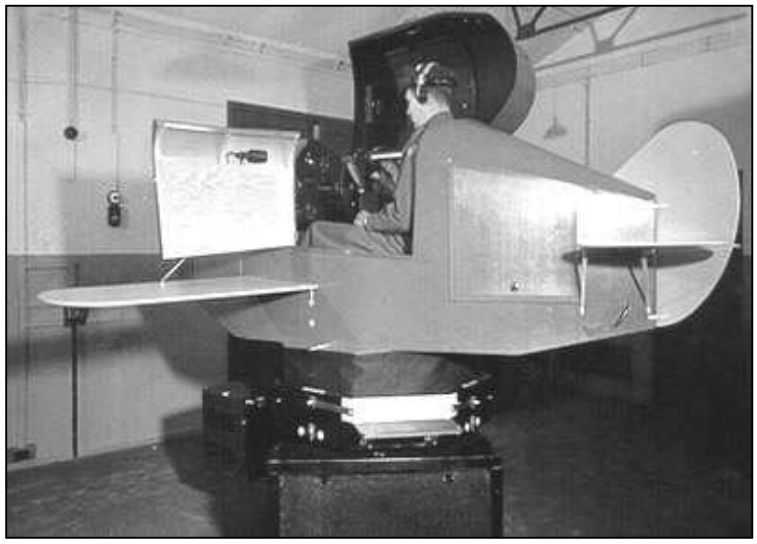
DIARY 4

August 1943 to September 1944

DIARY 4 - AUGUST 1943 to SEPTEMBER 1944

4.1 Meeting the Famous Mr. E. A. Link

August 23rd 1943. Sitting at home at Mrs Mac's (37 College St Kingston) writing this. Have just come back from leave in Toronto, Niagara Falls and Buffalo (USA) all in 48 hours.



At Gananoque a week or so ago I met Mr E A Link, inventor of the Link Trainers[21] [pictured right – sourced from web]. He arrived at Gan drome in a twin engine Grumman plane. Dark, with grey tinges, solidly built and affable, nothing in his appearance would suggest the great mechanical mind which could invent such a complicated piece of machinery as the Link. In his flying boat he goes back and forth between his factories in the States and at Gan. He lands on the St Lawrence River close to his cottage on one of the Thousand Island famous Canadian – US beauty spots.

Link, while first trying to induce the U.S. Government to take his invention, gave his brother stick instruction in the Link Trainer and sent him solo in a plane after only 42 minutes dual. He told me he had lots of early trouble getting people interested in the Link. He first thought of his invention in the late 1920's. A civilian flying instructor then, he foresaw the value of a device for teaching pupils the rudiments of flying on the ground.

With flying training in those days being paid for at the rate of 50 dollars per hour, the civilian flying teachers saw only disadvantages in Mr. Link's invention which would cut down on the profits. So Mr Link tried to interest the Army, with little early success. However, undaunted, he installed his model at the St Louis Aircraft Show and found plenty of customers ready to invest a quarter and try their hand in a plane with one foot on terra firma.

His brain child at last reaping him some financial reward, he again went to the Army Air Corps and got his brother off solo as a demonstration. "I didn't know much about flying" his brother admitted to me, "but the training I had done in the Link pulled me

[21] The Link Trainer or "pilot maker" was created in the mid-1930s out of the need for a safe way to teach new pilots how to fly by Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). It was created by former organ builder Edwin Albert Link who used his knowledge of pumps, valves and bellows to create a flight simulator that responded to the pilot's controls and gave an accurate reading on the included avionics.

through." This remarkable feat so impressed the US Army that Air Corps cadets were assigned to Mr Link for instruction.

Just about this time (1934) the US Air Mail was cancelled (politics) and the Army was ordered to fly the mail. Army fliers, however, smashed up many planes in bad weather because of a lack of instrument flying. However, the Link still did not come into its own, the US Army regarding it like a freak. The argument used then was: "We don't go to shoot down an enemy in bad weather. Combat weather does not require any I/F [instrument flying]." Fighters, nowadays, often go up to meet the enemy in weather which hides the ground from the time they leave their base to when they arrive back.

The RAF were the first to make a real step in the direction of establishing Link Trainer instruction as part of the regular Air Force Training Course. They sent big orders over to the US for Links in 1937. And since that time, Mr Link's invention has made proficient in I/F [instrument flying] (regarded now as one of the most important parts of pilot training) thousands of allied pilots – and probably, Mr Link says wryly, many Asian ones, as the Link machines had been installed in Europe before the war.

When he arrived at the drome, he had his niece with him – blonde, quite nice, a bit young. I shot up the island cottage where she was staying once. He asked me down to his Gan factory where I tested a new invention of his, the 'Reef Jumper' which has a 20hp motor and 'flies' just above the water.

Met an Aussie at the drome this week – Andrew Warther. He lives near June in Adelaide. It was great to hear all about her. He knows her well and agrees she's swell.

4.2 Visiting Toronto, Niagara & Buffalo

August 26th 1943. Last Sunday I returned from a 48 hour trip to Toronto, Niagara Falls and Buffalo – a town in the US about as big as Toronto – 600,000 odd people. I went alone – Shrimp was busy with Jane – but I met such a lot of folk I was rarely without someone. Stayed at The Royal York, Toronto, biggest hotel in the British Empire, and had a beautiful dinner there ($2!)

On Saturday, I met a chap called Ron G Kingsley from 14 SFTS, Aylmer, Ontario (# 419758) also of Box Hill, Melbourne. He had a Canadian girl with him, Lil, also W.R. Harrison (# 419754) who lived at Elsternwick. They went over with me on the steamer across Lake Ontario to Niagara Falls ($1.80 Ret). The Falls are impressive and beautiful tho' not especially exciting. Buffalo is however; the night life there is something terrific.

I visited the best nightclub there – the Chez Ami - and it was very bright. The artists at the US nightclubs are apparently hired on the 'chain store' system – and the organisations to which they belong, supply them to nightclubs – changing the program at each club once every two weeks. The artists get about 150 dollars a week so they should grumble. Buffalo has lovely broad streets and very old street cars with signs on the side: "Step inside relax and ride".

Things in the shops seemed to be cheap. I had very great difficulty finding a room to sleep tho' I tried all the best hotels and most of the worst. Met a girl named Helen McKay of Florida (Miami) on the bus to Niagara. She gave me the address of her apartment where she says she has a spare room – 2218 Fillmore Ave, Buffalo, NY.

Saw one of the quickest pieces of work in the romantic line I've ever seen on bus to Buffalo. Next to me a sailor sat. A girl sitting opposite us on the ¾ hour trip, was giving us the eye. The sailor woke up to this after a while and looked back hard. She began lying back on her headrest giving off 'come-on' looks and green lights galore. After about 20 minutes of this the chap next to her got out and the US sailor whipped smartly across to sit next to her. A couple of minutes later she suggested they move to a more secluded seat and once there she put his arm around her and cuddled up close. Even this didn't scare him off and they got off together. She was quite good looking tho' she had a glint in her eyes.

4.3 Exploring Chicago & Detroit

August 29th 1943. This bit is written on Sunday August 29 at midday lying on my bed at YMCA Hotel Chicago. Am sharing double room with Frank Hookway (H2426318 N.Z. W.A.G). who has come down from Nova Scotia before going to England. Met him on Canadian Pacific train from Toronto to Chicago. Also met Chicago man, Ed and another NZ Sgt 'Smoky'. Smoky is not with us. He is well placed having a girlfriend to look after him here.

Ed was funny on the way down. Practically everything I mentioned they had something better in Chicago. We were talking about railways and he said, "of course Chicago is the rail centre of the world." And when I was mentioning the gardens along Outer Drive next to Lake Michigan he told me "Chicago has the finest parks in the world.", etc, etc. Americans, who have never travelled outside the States, seem to say these things of their home town without any consideration for whether it is true or not.

Americans, it seems to me, make the most fabulous statements about things of which they really have very little knowledge. A military official, on duty at Air Power display we visited on Michigan Avenue, informed me while showing me an American built Army trainer that "anyone can learn to fly it in 15 minutes." He was ready to argue too when I told him a good pupil would be lucky to solo it under 8 hours. He did not know I'm a flying instructor!

We looked at a Thunderbolt, weighing 6 tons and billed to be capable of over 420mph; also saw glider used by Army. All train travel here seems to be free. USO and various canteens also give free eats and accommodation. I have come to the conclusion that a serviceman could be completely broke and still have a good time here.

At the Officer's Club of the Servicemen's Centre, one can stay to sleep in comfortable dorms, have all facilities such as showers, towels etc, have all meals, attend nightly dances, play billiards, use comfortable sitting rooms, play the juke box – all free! The juke box at the club too, is something different. While it plays, a film synchronised with the music shows the orchestra or singer on a screen.

Went to the Field Museum of Natural History this afternoon – learnt for first time that reindeer shed their antlers every year, growing a new set in the spring ready for battle in the mating season. Beaver, too, build dams across water ways and float trees down to build their homes. I never knew, either, that the hieroglyphics on the side of mummy's box tell the story of the deceased – his life, confessions and hopes for the future.

Chicago has lovely broad streets and very swift, well controlled traffic. From what I can gather Negroes up north here are much better types than the ones down south. A Negro soldier I met this afternoon seemed quite a good type.

Met a racing man today who told me he thought it very unlikely Phar Lap was poisoned intentionally. He suggested a poisoned weed.

August 31st 1943, Tuesday. Made record to June at the Anzac Club this morning. Lunch at the Officer's Club – all free! Weather very sticky. Went to Planetarium (Adler) this afternoon with Frank. Very clever show. We saw the change of seasons in the heavens and viewed the movements of the stars and planets as seen by folk in Aussie. It made me feel a touch of homesickness to see the Southern Cross, which incidentally is visible for 26° North of the Equator in certain seasons.

September 1st 1943. Had a lovely drive today with Elizabeth. She took us, in her Pontiac, north of the city along the beautiful Outer Drive – for about 30 miles. The suburbs are incredibly beautiful – and incredibly is the only word that can do them justice. Along the part we travelled, you could not see most of the houses they were so well screened by trees. There seemed to be no two houses alike. Just how much all this costs staggered us. Apparently many of the houses, which do not have extensive land, cost in the vicinity of 100,000 dollars (30,000 pounds odd!). Cars we saw on the road, too, were far more luxurious than any in Aussie.

We lunched at the Edgewater Beach Hotel (only $3.75 for four of us) and watched fan dancers practising for the evening floor show. It is now 2am. Frank and I have been to the Blackhawk nightclub – one of the best here. Elizabeth arranged it with the manager so that it did not cost us too much. The orchestra made two broadcasts – one coast to coast. I took 'Blondie' – Martha Knous (pronounced - Nouse) whom I had met at YMCA rooftop dance previous nite. She's very like Valerie [Valerie Watson is pictured below with Jim]:

Cost me only about $3.15 for the evening, chiefly due to fact that Marty only drank cokes! Must admit I like her very much – just like it was with Val. Have date with her on Friday nite but I may have to go away Friday a.m. if I am going to have a look at Detroit on the way home.

Cost of special concession ticket down here by the way was $17.50. Travelled on the crack train from Toronto – at times we seemed to be doing over 70mph and yet it was very smooth and comfortable in air-conditioned cars.

On Saturday, incidentally, we went to American League ball game – White Sox versus Cleveland. This was a double header. It was at White Sox home ground and as Cleveland is many miles away there was not much applause when Cleveland did anything good. They won. The game seems to me best from the spectator viewpoint. There is not the same skill in the batting as in cricket – chance playing a very big part, and good hits often falling into outfielders hands. Obviously, at times, this was deliberately played for by the pitcher, who has great skill and needs a very big heart.

I have an eye for good advertisement lines: Here's a couple I saw – 'prices to make your pocket book sing with joy' and on a soda fountain – the notice 'Thirst Aid Post.'[22]

Traffic moves at a great pace – especially along Michigan Avenue drivers will tell you about the 'Chicago pass' – which means you pass another car on either side, according to which is the more convenient. Everyone in Chicago seems to drive like a taxi-driver.

The view, looking north along Michigan Avenue is quite awe-inspiring. Flanked on the west side by a sheer cliff of tall buildings – the city's best hotels are along here – with a cluster of semi sky scrapers past Michigan Bridge, The Avenue has long, clean cut lines. Its beauty is of the type one sees in the graceful bridge structures which are numerous in the States. It is breathless man-made beauty.

That is typical of Chicago – which its publicity folk label 'The City Beautiful.' Along the front of Lake Michigan are beautiful parks, which provide the necessary relief from bricks and mortar. I was quite astounded to learn that a great part of these parklands, which run for miles, was reclaimed ground.

Chicago folk boast they have the finest park system in the world. They certainly are beautiful.

Stayed with Mr and Mrs F K Macdonald, 439 Howe Ave, Oak Park, Illinois.

Chicago has more than half a dozen main stations and on the Friday morning, I planned to leave (September 3), I had brekkie with Marty then took a taxi to the Union Station, to catch the train at 9.30. Unfortunately, this was not the correct Central Station. Correct one was Illinois Central. So I missed my train and eventually got one at noon.

[22] After returning from Service and when facing the need to earn extra income to pay for his children's medical operations, Jim ran a kiosk and mobile canteen business which he called "Thirst Aid Posts".

Incidentally, in moving from one station to another, I travelled on the elevator (railway) which is quite smooth and comfortable, very noisy, and not quite as fast as our Melbourne electric trains.

Eventually, the noon train landed me at Detroit about 7pm and I wandered around that city – took long bus trip along Woodward Avenue (very beautiful) among other things – till 3am when I got on train to Toronto. This was late so missed connection on Saturday morning to Kingston. I went to visit Shrimp's relatives till my train left at 4pm. They fairly shook me with news that Shrimp is going to be married. They were very worried and thought he had been nabbed by some horrid girl but I quickly disillusioned them and told them Jane is very nice.

Poor old Shrimp's quite in a daze about it. I'm scared he'll get knocked over by traffic! I'd advised him to hold off for a while but he did the deed while I was away. Apparently he was finally decided when Jane indicated she was willing to go to Aussie with him. They seem to be very keen on each other. I think they may be rather well matched. Shrimp has lots of good points.

Like most young folk he is inclined to be a bit selfish – and married he will have to get over this. Jane is too strong willed a girl to give way all the time. Nevertheless, Shrimp has a lot of good points which any girl must respect. He's rather a fine chap in a lot of ways, has good taste, a good brain, very easy manners.

I think he has found a very nice girl in Jane. They will be happy provided they are not too strong willed and selfish about things.

4.4 Sad News - Then, Shrimp Gets Caught

September 20th 1943. Shrimp's having great trouble at present finding an apartment.

We went formation flying this afternoon – did loops in formation, pretty ropey. Also had dog fight – I think Shrimp won – and did some low formation at times narrowly missing seagulls. It was great racing along low down with the wing in behind Shrimp's wing, a blur of green and red (the trees are beginning to change) and then green water of Lake Ontario passing beneath.

Hope everything's ok with Jo. Must be getting close now.

Wonder how Chas and Pat are getting along. S/pose its pretty nice to be married. Wonder if I've met the right girl yet. Think so, but I've been away too long to be sure. If not, I hope I meet her soon.

Shrimp has had very bad news. His brother Courtenay, was wounded and died in a New Guinea Hospital 19 days later.

The Americans have a most tremendous drive in their war effort. I don't think if all their cities had been bombed they could go into this war any harder. They are a people who expect a lot of praise and try their very hardest to earn it. They have, too, just the same old British Bulldog spirit.

I've met mothers who have lost sons, widows, etc – all in war work, doing all they can to help win. People are very foolish to make distinction between Americans and English. At the basis they are all the same. It's only little characteristics that are different.

The Englishman likes to be reserved in public and boisterous in private. The American is boisterous in public and more serious in private. Both English and Americans appear to me to do their best to make the most of the very tiny distinctions between them. The American is always more boisterous when there's Englishmen around, and the Englishman goes even more into his shell than usual.

September 27th 1943 – Monday. Shrimp's married – nearly a column about it in the local Whig Standard. Very nice wedding at Chalmers Church on Saturday, September 25th. Jane in white, Libby Broom bridesmaid looking very nice in champagne colour. Shrimp and ushers (Bob Heath, Alec Evans, Jack Palmer and Col Mayes) and I (best man) in uniform – Mrs Broom in black, which was nice and did her no harm but little good. Dr Broom in formal dress, appropriate and distinguished but not flattering.

Major and Mrs R M Barbour (129 Coldstream St, Toronto), Mr and Mrs Mac, the Wrights, tribes of Mac Lachlans and lots of other nice folk were there. It was quite a charming wedding and the lovely weather and Brooms distinguished looking house were a fitting background. I had a worried feeling during the ceremony that I would drop the ring.

I'll never forget waking Shrimp up and telling him it was his wedding day and hearing him say "Oh Crikey!" During the morning we went into town and while Shrimp sat in the car I went to buy confetti and buy a book with some gen on wedding procedure. The girl in the shop only had one worthwhile book on the subject – Emily Post - $6! So I just read it there and then and she said I needn't buy it!

There seemed to be a heck of a big crowd at the church; Brooms are well known, and there's lots of folk with a casual interest in the Aussies. The parson made a rambling speech at the reception – Shrimp made a nice short one and I practically proposed to Libby in mine. Maybe the parson was getting his own back 'cos we had not paid him.

Someone fixed up Shrimp's car with draped toilet paper and boxes and a dustbin lid tied on the back. He planned to go to Cornwall, then Montreal and on into the Laurentians – lovely trip at this 'Indian summer' time of year.

November 8th 1943 – Monday. Last Wednesday, I saw my first ice hockey match. Norma was given the tickets by her boss. My car was out at camp so she called for me in her Dad's car, took me into very best seats right in the middle of rink, and brought me back afterwards and went home alone! Talk about Sadie Hawkins Day. Incidentally the latter, which is celebrated by the girls taking out the men and paying all expenses – held in 500 or more colleges in Canada and States since introduction by Li'l Abner 5 years ago (in 1937) – took place on Saturday. All Norma and I had strength to do after Friday night Mess Dance was go for a walk.

The ice hockey was a magnificent game – Kingston Frontenacs Vs Boston Bruins. The Bruins are a professional team from the States and the Kingston team only a local side of Canadians in the Army. However, it was a great game and after the Bruins led 9 – 5 with only about 10 minutes to go, the Kingston side finished a tie 9 – all.

The Canadians, who were up against a superior system, were like a lot of tigers at the finish and absolutely mowed down the opposition. Made you realise what good fellows the Canadians are to have on your own side in battle. It is a game requiring a high degree of courage and that is why Canadians excel at it. They are also unequalled skaters.

By means of switching in new players all the time the game is kept at high pressure. It is undoubtedly the most spectacular game in the world.

4.5 A White Christmas With Norma & The Compton's

December Xmas time now – Mac Donald's and I have been eating a huge feast – including lovely sweets, nuts, etc out of a huge parcel June sent. We had such fun with one of the nuts. We've nicknamed it the union nut. It was a thick shelled brown one. Tom Macdonald and I both tried to crush it with the crackers, without success. We both hurt our hands before we gave up. We tried jumping on it, etc without having any effect. Eventually we got it under a cloth on a chair in the kitchen and put it on one hammer while we hit it with another. When it broke the kernel flew down the heating pipe and so we didn't get it after all.

January 6th 1944, Thursday. Weather clamped at present – we skated on the lake yesterday afternoon, but it has snowed since and covered the ice. Should be clamped for a couple more hours at least as Met people say the front moving east has not yet passed Stirling, some 50 miles west. We had freezing rain yesterday – turned the roads into an ice rink – not conducive to driving. When you skid on the ice you have to throw the clutch and steer into the skid. Sometimes it's best to let the car go round in a complete circle. Motorists over here have a lot with which to contend.

In the morning, when I get out to the car, it is often quite a job to get the doors open 'cos of the ice. Then there's probably ice and snow caked on the screen so you cannot see very well (real frosted glass). Then, although there's special oil in the gears and transmission, it may be almost impossible to move the gear lever. Also, you have to keep about 80% of alcohol in the radiator or it will freeze up and (funnily enough) boil when you have been running a while. This boiling is due to the fact that the circulation of liquid is stopped.

Freezing in the cooling system may in turn split the whole block and cost 100 dollars or more to fix. A heater becomes an essential in a car – also a defroster (plate of glass with wire element plugged to battery – to keep frost off section of windscreen) and you could not do without a windscreen wiper to keep off the snow. Fortunately, I have a good jalopy which starts easily when it is cold. Some of the newer cars are not as good.

Christmas has come and gone and it was a Christmas I shall remember for a long long time. I spent it at Norma's house. It was, of course a white Xmas (tho' there was more ice than snow). We all said we were 'dreaming of a brown Xmas' – but the snow is very Christmassy. There was a lighted Christmas tree ten feet high in the living room. It was almost knee deep in presents. We hung stockings on to the mantelpiece and 'disguised' the presents by wrapping them in all odd shapes. It was all very cosy, and lots of fun. On Christmas Eve, Mrs Comp and Norma and I drove around to Marg Doherty's and to Jean Hall's house with presents.

Jim standing outside Norma's house.

We rose early on Xmas Day. Marjorie (she and Herb Simmons, her husband and little Jimmie, aged 1 ½ were down from London Ont.) and Norma and I went to church at 8am. As the stockings were all bulging and there were oodles of presents on and around the Christmas tree, we were pretty keen to get back. Even the minister, named Herrington (and whose nickname is Herringbone) seemed to have this in mind and hurried the service (Communion) along. I go to Communion even tho' I have not been confirmed.

Then, we all just dived in to our presents. Norma acted as 'postman' and passed them around from the Xmas tree. I was so busy watching what everyone else had, I forgot to open my own. Mrs Comp had made up a series of funny rhymes for Norma and written them on the outside of envelopes each slightly smaller than the last and one inside the other. Eventually Norma got some bus tickets. Mr Comp has a very keen sense of humour. I found some scissors concealed in the top of a big box and

opened up innumerable boxes to eventually find a pair of cuff links. I had a couple of huge parcels from Norma – one was a lovely pair of fleece lined slippers (funnily enough, warmer than those I've seen over home). There was a cake cooked by Ma which was very very nice and of which Marj wants the recipe. It was beautifully packed, too, with raisins and almonds to keep it fresh.

Norma gave me an identification bracelet (as worn by Canadian forces) some cuff links, some socks she'd knitted, some Lypsil and some funny things she'd thought of. 'Fraid all round I was badly spoiled and loved it.

We went for a walk after lunch to try to get up an appetite for Christmas dinner, which we had at 5pm to allow (P/O) Larry Scowcroff to share it with us. He had to serve lunch to the Airmen at noon. It's customary for RAF Officers to do this on Xmas Day. Main feature of the walk was when Scowie and I forcibly put Norma on an old buggy and gave her a ride.

Main feature of the dinner was a 23lb turkey – the biggest I've ever seen. There was rather a surplus of turkey. Mr Comp was given another one. Then Herb and Marj brought one they had won at a party.

I stayed at the Compton's over New Year, too and on New Year's Day – which was also Norma's 21st birthday – we went skating on Lake Ontario near the cottage. The ice was perfect – almost like a mirror – much faster than the artificial ice on indoor rinks.

You could skate for miles along the shore where the ice was 2" to 3" thick. We did not go more than about 100 yards out into the lake as we were not too sure how thick it was further out. I borrowed Mr. Mac's sweater, Blanche's gloves, Norma's scarf to keep warm, but actually it was not very cold, there being little wind.

Incidentally, while I was driving to the drome the other morning a back wheel came off my car. The bolts were not tight enough. I pulled into the kerb without much difficulty or damage, and left the car. Next day the deputy warden from Kingston penitentiary, Mr Millard, outside which I had stopped, told me the convicts would fix the car for me. They took it into the 'pen' and fixed it and so now she's back on the road again.

Shrimp is well and seems happily married. Jane appears to be a nice girl. She has him fairly well under control, but it's the velvet hand – so all's well.

January 12th 1944. At 3 o'clock this afternoon I had a bit of fun. Green lights (showing undercarriage is down and locked) would not work and in accordance with regulations, I did violent aerobatics to try to shake the wheels in place, then 'shot up' the control tower twice, allowing them time to get out the ambulance, fire truck, etc. then I came in and bounced the wheels on the runway to test that they would stay locked and later landed ok. Apparently there was an electrical defect in the a/c.

4.6 New Posting Means Saying Goodbye

January 18th 1944. Sitting in my bedroom writing this – looking at pictures (20!) on my dressing table. Makes me wonder as I look. I would like to have June for a wife, but as I look at Norma's photo I realise that I'm very fond of her also. June is just the girl I've always wanted to marry, and yet it makes me wonder because I know I'm going to miss Norma, who has a great sense of humour, a really beautiful profile and very comfortable and homey ways. She says she would be quite willing to come to Aussie. I think quite honestly, we could make a pleasant married life together. She has a lot of intelligence, which I rate as important. I would also like my wife to have been over this side of the world – to have seen all the things I've seen over here, to talk our very peculiar language.

February 24th 1944. 8.30pm: Three quarters of an hour ago, I heard from Ray Nicholson that all the Aussies except Jack Palmer are posted. We're going to Montreal – to Lachine Depot – and then – where? Aussie perhaps, or England. Am delighted in a way. Sad about it in another way. Won't be so good leaving Kingston with Norma and her family and the Macs and all the good friends we've made here. Haven't told Norma yet. Don't know how I'll tell her.

Have been on the phone and told her I'd like to see her. She's coming over for me in the jalopy (I had lent it to her to take to business while I'm on leave). She should be here any minute. Here she is!

Have just come back from Norma's. She's a good soul. It's been great here having friends like the Comps and Macs who really cared about you, just like your own family. Norma and I went for a walk tonight and tried to talk things over, but neither of us could find much to say.

Just a note on Norma:

She has a lovely broad forehead with hair very near light blonde at the sides of the temples; a mellow charm which is very soft and sweet and tender when she smiles. She has little ears and a nice nose and mouth which has an obstinate pout that is very nice – little hands and beautiful blue eyes. She has a nicely rounded face – when she's smiling as beautiful as any I've seen.

Had wonderful news one afternoon in the mess. Four of us are posted on to Mosquitos, which are said to be the fastest aircraft in the world. Did we ever get drunk!

4.7 Visiting Boston, and New York

March 30th 1944. In fifth floor bedroom at Officer's Club, Boston. To get to this bedroom you have to climb 5 floors. There is no elevator. Boston is like that. It is very like England – boasts of being so. All the residents know about its history. In the library of this very building (which incidentally is the residence of a wealthy family turned over as a patriotic gesture) Fritz Kreisler once sat. HARVARD, of course, is

here and seems to cover acres and acres. The place where the Boston Tea Party was held, is another of the spots rich in early American history. There are many of the old colonial houses – tall, squarish buildings – still standing. Some of these houses have chimneys painted black – an indication that these houses remained loyal to the King of England instead of joining the patriots in the War of Independence.

The City here is rather like Melbourne. Nothing very striking – but clean and busy in a quiet conservative way. The people seem kind – different in many ways from other US cities. They seem very obliging and the girls generally seem better types – we have seen very few poor types of girls at all.

One nice one we got to know (via Bob Heath) was Joanne Hulburt, 44 Frost Rd, Belmont (5131). Jack Palmer and I visited her today, stayed for supper and were driven into town. Jack bought an Argus Camera 3.5 lens ($45) today – good buy.

March 31st 1944. 8.15pm: At the Anzac Club New York. We made the trip from Boston in 4 ½ hours express. This morning I took the subway to Bunker Hill – where the famous battle (the first main battle in the War of Independence) was fought. There's a tall monument on the hill now.

Boston is rich in these sort of things, as it was off the wharf at Boston that the British tea shipments were hurled into the sea and the first skirmishes took place which showed the Americans they could fight the British. Boston is a nice town – 2 ¾ million greater Boston - 1,300,000 in the metropolis. There are more pigeons than I've seen in any other town and they're very tame.

We arrived at Grand Central at 5.30pm to be met by the usual girls waiting outside the rope for boys – chewing expectantly. We went first to an invisible mending shop in Grand Central to have a couple of small burn holes in my uniform fixed. They charged $8 but made an amazing job. Then into a taxi and up to the Anzac Club (106 West 56th Street). On the way the driver told us it was more crowded on NY's streets now than in normal times. Previously, he said, people had the money to buy gas. Now they had plenty to buy bootleg gas.

Felt quite sorry for the girls at the Anzac Club. They were surrounded by Aussie's and NZ's and very harassed. You'd be talking to one, leave her for a minute and when she spoke to you again she'd ask you if you'd just arrived, as tho' she'd never seen you before. Much of the evening, Jack and I spent wandering around looking in shops, decoration of which is a fine art here. They absolutely make you want to buy. Jewellery shops and clothing shops are in abundance – also the amazing junk stores, which lure you inside just for the amusement of a look around the interesting looking collection, and usually sell you something before you get out. There's very often something you see that you want. Food shops and candy shops are so well decorated that your mouth waters even if you've just finished a big dinner.

April 4th 1944. 11.45am: I am writing this in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Park Avenue, New York.

Have a date for lunch so must go; Peg Ege was her name - nice girl. We've had a lovely leave in New York. Enterprise has been carried to a much higher plane in this city than in other places I've been. There's a number of business enterprises in existence you never see anywhere else – a shop where pay cheques will be cashed for a dime – you don't see many dime stores – their place in the heart of the city is taken by lots of little shops, junk stores etc – stores that could not exist anywhere else. There's a lot of shoe shine shops too, 10¢ time.

The Waldorf cost us only $7 between us for one night. Room was $10 for one but we got service cut. We arrived in fresh state at Park Ave and 'boys' snapped up our bags and whisked us up to our room No. 985. it was very well furnished with two big beds, dressers, desk, plenty of space, private bathroom etc, but we literally were in for a bit of a shock. Carpets are very thick and consequently generate static electricity in the body. Hence every time you touch a door handle or other 'earth' a spark jumps and you get an electric shock. Apparently its been like this for a long time. In the best hotel in NY. This rather surprised us.

We wallowed in a bit of luxury for a while, Jack writing letters (from the Waldorf) to everyone he knew while I enjoyed the 'deepest' bath I could obtain – each of us was quite determined to get his money's worth.

At night, I went out with Peg (Marg) Ege (Odel Court Apartments, New Rochelle) and had a nice evening, visiting amongst other things, the Gladstone Hotel officers dance. Jack wouldn't come. He said it was a solo job. Matter of fact I was quite glad he didn't. He's a good sport.

Peg is a nice girl too. I suspect she could be mean – but she's the type that attracts me strongly even tho' I'm a bit suspicious all is not what it seems on the surface. I'd like to have longer to get to know her better.

Tonight (Tuesday 4/4/444), we went to the Music Hall at Radio City – saw 'Cover Girl' and a great stage show including the Rockettes (see picture at right – sourced from the web) whose precision dancing leaves you quite breathless. They did 'Take It Easy' and worked like a perfectly tuned machine. There was also a very spectacular 'Eastern' turn with the symphony and organs and choir providing music. Spotlights were used very well and plentifully in the usual American way. All round a magnificent show in a great theatre. We had best seats at half price!

4.8 Posting - No. 36 OTU Greenwood, Nova Scotia, MOW

4.9 Swatting A 'Mossie'

April 7th 1944, Friday. Back at No. 36 Operational Training Unit (OTU), Greenwood Nova Scotia, now. Took us from 4pm Wednesday till 3.30 pm Friday to make trip back. Hell of a journey all round. From Boston to St John we travelled all night in

coaches and conductor kept waking us every time we did manage to drop off in our seats, demanding tickets or something else. Fortunately, the Customs, this time, left us till the morning and then didn't worry us much. Jack and I both had little things we were smuggling. Jack had camera and films and torch batts. I had Ray ban glasses, wrist strap, torch and batts. Incidentally, I had a bit of difficulty buying a torch in the States. Apart from the shortage, they don't understand you unless you say 'flashlight'.

I spent last few hours in New York buying things I'll need in England with my last few dollars. It was snowing quite hard all day – quite a sight to see the tops of the skyscrapers covered in cloud. I went to the top of the Empire State and it was in thick cloud so you could not see the ground. It was very unusual weather for this time of year in New York. When we arrived in Canada we found the weather perfect.

Had a haircut in New York – and it cost me 75¢ ! Shook me rigid. It was all I could do to get out of the place without some oil and a shampoo which would probably have cost me about $1.50. Bought a two-way torch – red at back white at front – at Rockefeller Centre, $2.50 and worth it for walking in blackout.

We had to sleep at St. John, rather a dirty looking room, last night so Jack and I decided to be clever and take a Stateroom on the ferry which was taking us across to Digby in the morning. Unfortunately, we found out too late that the ferry was unloaded half the night and re-loaded the other half – to the accompaniment of rumblings and crashes as if two or three trams were running alongside our cabin. I bribed the steward for some cotton wool but this didn't help much. However, all was well when we arrived at camp and rushed to the mail box. Jack had 15 letters and I had 11 letters, two parcels and four papers. Were we pleased!

Must write to Norma. Got four letters and two parcels from her. She seems very sweet. Mrs Mac sent me two letters – just like Ma sends, a letter from home told me Chas is up for interview for the Diplomatic Service, and has passed exams. Wonderful if he could get in.

April 11th 1944, Tuesday. Chas [Jim's brother] has had a son – least Pat has! Learnt this great news as I came into the Mess and found a telegram this evening. Bet he'll be a tennis champ. Must send a cable to congratulate them.

April 12th 1944, Wednesday - at about 10am. Today I had my first trip in a Mosquito. Found it very different after Harvards. Hand-braking a bit awkward. Swing difficult to notice. Trim after take off different and tendency for throttle to cause speed to accelerate very suddenly. Practically had to enter machine with a shoe horn. Don't know how it'll be for Shrimp who's 6'3½. I found it very difficult to locate the right dials, my eyes wandering all over the instrument panel whenever I wanted to adjust anything. In my own opinion, I really seemed to be a bit of a duff pupil!

April 13th 1944. Had second trip in 'Mossie' this afternoon. Coped a little better with brakes on the ground but have trouble with a/s and do not feel very natural in landings. Guess I'll get over this – hope so.

Incidentally, on the 11th of April, I 'crewed up' with my navigator – a chap named Peter Lake. He seems a good chap in many respects. He's a washed out pilot and I s'pose I'll have the usual difficulty with him being strongly critical of my flying – wishing he could fly the plane himself! Hope I can stand the criticism!

Feel a bit sorry for him 'cos he was washed out by Kinnear – an Aussie instructor who was a real B…… - likely to wash out any fellow whom he didn't feel in the mood to put through. Washed out pilots invariably think they know a lot about flying – but this is more a wish than a fact. I can quite appreciate how he feels, 'cos I'd feel just the same, probably worse. He is an obvious pilot type – sure of himself, even when he's not right! A good positive fellow.

He will probably make difficulties for me in the way of wanting to tell me what to do, but as I shall be captain of the a/c, I'll have to make the decisions, even if I'm not always right! It's an old saying that a good leader is one who makes a decision and is right sometimes.

He's got a good head tho', and if we can pull together should be a good man to have; has his share of guts I'd say. He's a keen, bright chap – reminds me of my brother, Charlie; probably has more brains and quicker reactions that I have.

April 15th 1944. Have just had a couple of beers. A couple of beers makes me feel on top of things. Communication is easier. I don't feel self conscious. I find I am a more likeable fellow all round than when I'm cold sober – guess everyone's the same. Drink gives you a temporary personality.

April 17th 1944, Monday. Here I am, with 1200-odd hours flying, like a cat on hot bricks because I'm due to do first solo in a Mosquito this afternoon. Hope it goes away before I start flying – usually does once you get going.

8.30pm now – still not solo – improved my landings a bit this afternoon, but not good enough. I'd better pull my socks up tomorrow morning or I'll be on the wash out list. Still I'll be in there pitching hard as I can.

April 18th 1944, Tuesday. Well I certainly was. Went solo after three more circuits and then pranged. It was on an overshoot – I had done one rather bouncy landing, one overshoot and one really good landing. My next approach was not very good – I had a little difficulty using the ailerons which are very sloppy at approach speed. Anyway, I wanted to do a good job knowing my instructor – who I had had to talk into sending me solo – was watching. So I decided to go round again.

The wheels hit the ground and I opened up the engines. Some chaps who were watching said they thought my left engine didn't pick up. I don't know; but I did swing violently. I think my left wing was down a bit and I hit on the left wheel and started a swing into wind. Anyway, I hared across the drome accelerating from about 120mph to 140 or 150. I was committed to an overshoot, so I kept opening up the boost. I was using hard opposite rudder all the time but gradually she got away from me.

Just before she crashed I thought if I closed off the motors there'd be less chance of fire, but some obstinate streak in me made me push them open harder and keep trying to pull her out, though it was quite hopeless.

The undercarriage collapsed. I experienced a horrible shuddering sideways force pulling me against the safety harness towards the right of the a/c [aircraft]. Guess this was as the wing hit the ground at about 80mph.

Both airscrews came off with the cowlings. One airscrew smashed through the front cabin. The starboard wing was smashed. Parts of the undercarriage were everywhere. I thought I'd had it. However she ground to a stop and my immediate thought was fire. There was smoke and hissing from the right wing where about 150 gallons of gas were stored.

I tore the wire off the fire extinguishers – pressed the buttons, pulled the emergency lever, knocked off the hatch and out through the top like a rabbit. Then I limped about 20 yards away, in case she blew up. I felt awful about it when I saw what a mess I'd made of the Mossie, but very grateful to be alive.

Pictures of the Mosquito after Jim's 'prang'

The fire truck came out and asked me if there was anyone else inside. I told them I'd left the petrol turned on (the cocks being in an awkward position behind the seat.)

I kept limping around (had a knock on the knee) saying “Oh cripes what a mess!” – I think I was suffering from a bit of shock ‘cos when the CO Wing Commander Heycock, came out, I went up and said “It was a bloody awful effort Sir”, and apologised no end.

Then the ambulance took me away, and I refused to sit in the back, saying I didn’t like riding in the back of ambulances. At the hospital, they fixed up my knee and one or two little cuts and took a sample of my blood for some carbon monoxide test they make. I was very down about it, but Bob Heath and Peter Lake, my navigator, cheered me up a bit. Peter was watching and said he nearly had a baby. He was all for putting the crash crew on a charge for being too slow going out.

He’s a good fellow. Says he wants to be my navigator if I’m not scrubbed. Seems very likely I will be. They practically never let a fellow go on here if he prangs one – even a small prang, and, after what I did, I have no illusions. They have been telling us all along how precious these a/c are.

April 19th 1944. Next day now – Wednesday 19/4/44 – This afternoon I went to see the C.I. Wing Commander Hamilton. He was exceedingly decent about the whole thing. Said it was due to inexperience on the type of aircraft, which I know is the least assessment of blame he can give me. He told me I was washed out and after I’d told him how keen I was to go on fighters, and that I wanted to stay on the course, he said all he could offer me was some flying in Bolingbrokes for a few weeks and then if I did all right another chance at the Mossies.

The catch was the Blenheim flying was to be DROGUE (Target) Towing. My face fell immediately. He said he could not guarantee after this that I’d be ok for Mossies but he thought I’d be better with the extra twin experience. I know he’s short of drogue towers and I’m afraid if I took the job I’d be hanging around here for sometime towing targets. So I said what about single engine fighters. He said if I went on these I might, at finish of training, be posted out to some job on the Canadian coast.

However, he rang up the Hurricane Squadron and they said all their graduates nowadays were going over to England flying Spits and Typhoons, etc. That sounded ok to me. I have rather a strong hankering for single seat fighters – always have had – don’t like the thought of anyone else on board.

So I told him that would do me. I asked if he would give me a very strong recommendation for fighter and state I was very keen to get on to ops as soon as pos. He said he would put in the strongest possible recommendation.

April 24th 1944, Monday. Have just spent weekend at HMCS Cornwallis, Naval Centre and Deep Brook N.S., where Kaye Derby is a nursing sister. When I went in to see the chief ground instructor on Friday, he told me he had met a lady friend of mine at Cornwallis and had a note for me from her. He said also she had asked him whether I was free to go over for a weekend! He said he would give me the week-end off to go!

Had quite a nice time. Went sailing in a Navy Whaler on Sunday afternoon and later went skating with Ruth at station indoor rink. On Saturday, we just wandered around until Kaye had to go on duty and I slept till it was time to pick her up. Went to a dance Saturday night with Joan, Dorothy and two Bills. Dance on at Digby, about 11 miles away.

The Wardroom (i.e. Officer's Mess) at the station was quite a palatial affair, with about three bars and four or five big sitting rooms plus a big dining room. Officers pay 20¢ for breakfast, 25¢ for lunch and dinner. Meal tickets can also be used for drinks. I quite enjoyed myself, and acquired a bit of sun and wind burn on my face.

Tomorrow, I am off to Halifax to go before a re-selection Board.

Note: In the States it means "I love you" to put stamp on letter upside down.

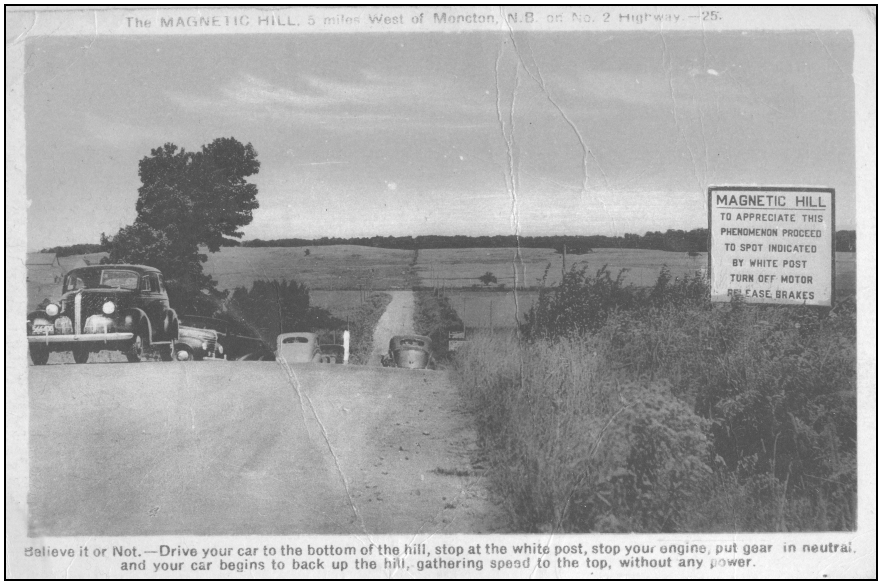
Note: When nursing sister (who has full privileges of officer) is saluted, she does not return salute but acknowledges by saying "good morning", "good afternoon" etc.

4.10 Posting - No. 31 RAF Depot, Moncton, N.B

April 29th 1944, Saturday. My address at present is No 31 RAF Depot, Moncton N.B. – Hut Y, Wing B, Room 4, Bed No. 1 upper. To see a squadron leader roosting in one of these two-decker beds is something that shouldn't be missed. There are 20 officers per room.

I went before Board at Halifax on Wednesday. They said they would recommend me for single engine fighter training as soon as pos. Down here I have run into a great bunch of Aussies: George Cochrane, Cec, Leon, Les, Bob Moffat – most of them members of the same Liberator crew. Have been training at Nassau and are as brown as berries.

Visited Magnetic Hill 5 miles outside Moncton on Thursday. At this amazing place you drive car (we went in taxi) to bottom of hill, switch off and the car runs backwards up the hill without any power. The water beside the road also runs up the hill which is not a shallow one, but quite a steep slope. Some folk say it's an optical illusion.



Postcard of Magnetic Hill from Jim's photo album

Mess here is exceptionally large. There are two or three sittings for each meal and each officer has ticket enabling him to get into one of the sittings. Things are a bit cramped in the bathroom in the morning just before parade, which someone with perception fixed at 10am. You start off shaving yourself with elbows tucked well in and two or three faces sharing your mirror; after a few minutes you find that you've been shaving the guy next to you and you usually finish up shaving yourself with his toothbrush – or something equally ridiculous. I miss all the boys.

May 10th 1944, Wednesday. Tonight I hope to meet "Ingrid" i.e. Jean Crandell, a Moncton girl whom I have seen only once but who has struck me as particularly worthwhile. Am hoping to get a chance to meet her at the Officer's Dance at the Masonic Hall. Deane McAuley, another girl, who organises the dance, has promised to ask her there as hostess.

I'm going to be in a bit of difficulty as I have met Shirley and her sister Elizabeth, also Barbara and Lin, who all live next door to Jean. They will also be going to the dance and I have no doubt will make things difficult for me in a subtle way. On one look, I believe Jean is just the sort of girl I like. However, we'll see tonight. Wonder how I'll progress? If at all.

Next day – she wasn't there – BBrrrrr. I went home with Shirley.

4.11 Posting - No. 1 'Y' Depot. Lachine

June 12th 1944[23]. Much water has flowed under the bridge since then. I am at No. 1 'Y' Depot, Lachine. I wouldn't be surprised if I've fallen in love with Jean – but she's only moderately keen on me. She is engaged to someone (Art Coles) and I think I'll have my work cut out to get her away from him. I feel rather a bastard to try anyway

[23] The Allied landings at Normandy occurred on June 6th 1944 (also known as D-Day).

‘cos he’s in a prison camp in Germany. But I feel so strongly attracted to her I can’t seem to help myself.

I managed to get to know her a week after that last entry and went out with her pretty steadily. She seemed quite affectionate but she knew I was dead keen and that blighted things a bit from the start. Spent last week-end in Moncton at cottage with her (also plenty of chaperones) in Shediac. I talked too much and about all the wrong things.

Had a ridiculously unhappy feeling leaving Moncton. I felt quite sick. I badly wanted some company. Had left Jean at Shediac (at 0935 am Sunday, June 11th ’44). Sat down to lunch opposite a chap and tried to get friends with him telling him how much I liked Canada. He then told me he was Irish and didn’t agree with me, so I had to shut up.

I bought two books and even some cigarettes to try to keep my mind occupied on that train trip, which I absolutely dreaded. I walked around quite frantically trying to get away from my thoughts. Never dreamt I could work up to this pitch. I even thought if I had a gun I would shoot myself, and then called myself a miserable coward.

I record these things, so that they may remind me that it is possible to bring a person to this stage. Maybe now I’ll play a little square with some of my girl friends – if any, in the future. On the train, I tried rather desperately to get to know someone and eventually managed to get a Squadron Leader (a former Aussie) to talk to me. He is in the RAF and married a Canadian girl who is now in England.

He gave me up after a while. All the girls on the train appeared to me, in my present mood, to be a deathly lot. They all seemed to have nice legs which I decided I hate (seeing Jean’s are not by any means perfect).

At Newcastle (three dogs, two rabbits and a fence), I hopped off the train for a drink of milk. I had no sooner picked up the glass than the porter yelled “all aboard” and the train began pulling out. So I took one gulp and leapt on the step as it went past. The train then travelled 20 yards and stopped. However, I wasn’t to be fooled again and stayed aboard getting over my hiccups, instead of going to finish my milk. Then the train did not move for 20 minutes.

Note: As I write, dozens of WD’s (female Airforce) are passing the window carrying heavy kitbags on their shoulders. They really are wonderful the way they take it. Individually they mightn’t seem so good, but as a crowd they’re tops. An Aussie and a Canadian officer are giving a couple of them a hand down to the gate.

At Cambelltown, I smiled my first real smile for days. In the last few days it had been as tho’ a shadow was over me. A 60 year old lady sitting alone made me smile. She was a bright thing. I went over and talked to her and she told me she had 11 daughters, all married, youngest only 18. Her husband died recently and she asked me whether I thought he would mind if she married again.

Had dinner with a naval type and two navy girls both Lieutenants and earning $5 a day, so they informed us. One of them had such a broad smile I thought she was going to swallow the teapot.

By the time I reached Montreal, I was extremely dirty even tho I washed my shirt (except the collar) overnight and then had to put it on damp. It was quite a familiar sight as we passed Mt. Bruno over which we used to fly when pupils. Then we went past the drome at St Hubert. Montreal looked much nicer than on previous visits.

A lady spoke to me on the bus through Westmount and asked me to dinner at her home the next night. She wasn't a wolverine. I think she just sensed that I was a bit lonely. Went to her home last night 5830 Monkland N.D.G. She is married – Mrs (Helen) Frank Lambton (Walnut 5964). She and her husband went to a show with me at the York Theatre at night.

June 14th 1944, Wednesday. This morning I went through the altitude decompression chamber at The Engineering Building, McGill University. I told the doctor in charge I wanted to pass out and so he allowed me to keep my oxygen mask off till I collapsed after 10 minutes at 25,000. I began to feel the effect of lack of oxygen very soon. Lights became darker; breathing was hard, control difficult, I became tired and hazy. After about 5 minutes I was able to multiply 123 x 321 and get correct answer but when I tried to check it I was sure I was wrong and couldn't see where. Then I tried writing the alphabet and the last I remember was putting in the Z.

The other fellows said that after this I moved my pencil above the paper and my hands shook violently. Then my body began twitching and after a minute or so of this I passed right out. I don't recall a thing after writing the Z. They gave me oxygen and, as I came to, I had a beautiful peaceful relaxed feeling over me. Wonder if dying is like this?

With the oxygen, I was instantly fully normal and scribbled the time 0950 and the words 'passed out'.

This afternoon I interviewed a Miss Foltz, fashion consultant and merchandiser for Holt Renfrew & Co. Ltd, Sherbrooke St, Montreal. I wanted some information about the type of clothes which are correct dress for travelling (in connection with a book on travel I'm trying to write). One thing she told me was that dress for travel should be always simple. Better to underdress than overdress she said.

So the flamboyant beaded turban which was such a success at the cocktail party will be replaced by a beret or small felt hat. The order is tweed or flannel costumes for women. Tweed suits and soft collars for men. Top coats will always be carried by women on long journeys.

Tonight – yielding to a bit of sentiment – I went to see the Star Maker – the last film I saw with Spud Murphy many years ago. It awakened memories. Bring Crosby sings Sun Bonnet Sue, Look out for Jimmie Valentine, If I were a Millionaire, Go Fly a Kite, In My Merry Oldsmobile, etc. Must write to Spud. I just nipped in to the York Theatre on my own and thoroughly enjoyed it. Didn't stay for the second feature.

June 16th 1944. Talked to Mr Ray Kincade – sub-editor on the Montreal Star yesterday (15/6/44). Very interesting to talk to him. Apparently there has been no

compulsory education in Quebec until this year. Some parents send their children to work at about 8 or 10. They never have any opportunity for education. This explains why there are so many rude uneducated people around Montreal. I never could fathom it before. In Montreal no-one ever stands up and offers his seat to a woman in a street car – very rarely anyway – unless she happens to be very old or very attractive. In other Canadian provinces, education is much better. Free education is available for everyone, right up to matriculation. This education – so Mr Kincade told me – is better than it is in the States – giving a more general covering of learning. In the States the children are taught about The States and little else.

That this is correct becomes obvious as soon as one talks to an American. This is the basis of one of the greatest weaknesses of the Yanks. In the States, however, far more children go to Universities. The 'Varsities find jobs (serving at table, etc) for poorer students to enable them to pay for their courses. There are more private schools in the States than in Canada. In fact, practically no-one is going to private schools at all in Canada. The only cost to parents is books.

Practically all the schools are mixed and the girls mix with the boys at sports when they are young. This is probably why Canadian boys are more off hand with their girls than Englishmen, Aussies, etc. It makes everyone less inhibited, more outspoken. Sex is not a subject for whisper among the young in Canada but is rather spoken of and discussed quite frankly. A Canadian girl often gives the impression she is much more forward than she is, to a stranger, because of this trait of Canada's youth.

The Star, Mr Kincade told me, makes great profits largely because it is operated at very low cost. You have to fight them to keep your wages up. When he went to The Star, Mr Kincade told the Managing Editor he was earning 10 dollars a week more than he actually was at his previous post. Since then he has constantly 'dickered' with other papers to force The Star to give him raises.

Individual enterprise – in the way of special articles – is pretty much at a discount in Canada because of the available flood of syndicated material from the States. Such big distributors as The Hearst Syndicate pay a very comfortable retainer (several thousand a year) to any writer of fiction or fact who wins a name for himself. His articles are distributed to hundreds of papers at very low individual cost to each.

4.12 Posting - No. 1 (RCAF) OTU Bagotville, Quebec

June 18th 1944. Now – at No. 1 Operational Training Unit (OTU), Bagotville, Quebec - Well and truly in the Tiger country. Everyone around here speaks French. I must do my best to learn it while I'm here.

According to an elderly chap I met, some of this land was the first soil under cultivation in Canada. The Roman Catholics have an extremely strong hold up here. I asked this fellow who was responsible for compulsory education not being introduced into Quebec till this last year. I knew it was the R.C. church, but I wanted to see his reaction. He looked over his shoulder and then guardedly said: "You look into history and see who has opposed educating the people throughout the ages."

And although he was obviously a fellow who had travelled and read very extensively, he would say no more.

There's an Aussie here named Warren Day. The fellows call him Roso. I couldn't figure this out at all till someone said he was named after Rose O'Day[24]. Wouldn't it!

Country here is rugged. Very rocky and mountainous and the timber country is very thick. Bad country to force land in. I have bought a wrist compass which I will wear whenever I'm flying 'cos if I have engine failure I'm baling out and walking back. You can stay alive in the bush for months – but not if you're smashed up.

June 19th 1944, Monday. Feeling very much like flying. Haven't been in an a/c since my Mossie smash two months ago. Will have first trip here in Harvards. Haven't flown one of these for about four months. Wonder if I'll be very strange. All being well, we should be up in Hurricanes by the end of the week. Gee I feel like getting into the air. The air up here is like wine. Mountains around are lovely. It doesn't seem ever to get very hot up here. Warms up in the day, but not as much as down south.

Oh I'm so glad I'm on Hurricanes. They're so clean and sweet in the air and they really fly. This is the sort of thing I've always dreamed of flying. 'Course they're not so very fast, but they'll do for the present.

June 22nd 1944. Now – had first letter from Jean today.

Yesterday, while up in a Harvard, I was foolish enough to go out of the valley exploring. Weather was not too good and for a while I thought I'd never find my way back. Bad country – mountains hidden by cloud, rocks and trees – nothing else.

June 23rd 1944. Am writing this at lunchtime June 23, 1944. Just before I'm due to go up for first solo in Hurricane. I feel just a bit on edge – guess it'll pass off when I get into the air. Just before flying now …. I just can't get into the air quick enough. Feel as keen as could be. It's the most beautiful day. The air is like wine. The Hurris sit out on the line saying "Come on out and fly me." At 1.45pm today – Friday June 23 had my first trip in a Hurricane fighter.

Had rather a rough go at the start – my radio would not work, my undercarriage would not retract and soon after the take off (in which I swung off the runway) my helmet blew off. I almost got flustered, but took hold rather firmly, climbed her to a safe height of 4000' and then set about fixing things.

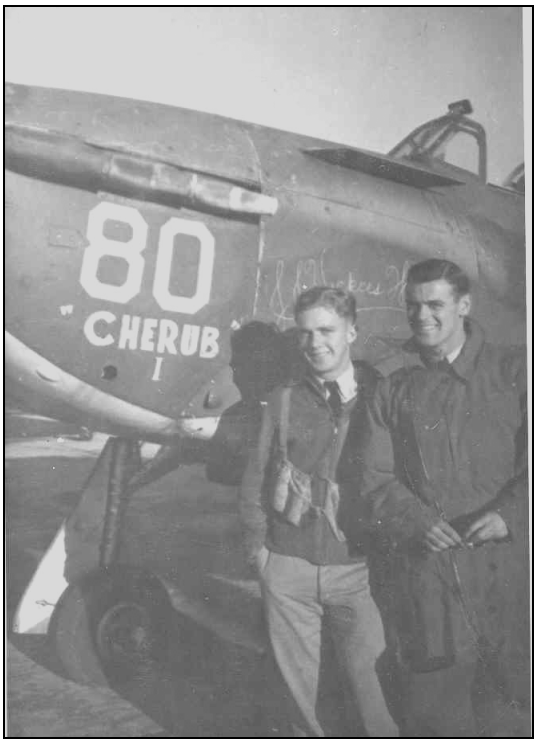
I had a period in the air when I really wondered if I would ever put the thing down successfully again – and so I grimly set about getting back a bit of confidence by doing aerobatics and generally showing the aircraft who was boss.

After a while of this I gradually began to master it a bit. Actually I think it's really an easy kite to fly, but I was just very worried that I might make a mistake and mess up my chance of going on fighters. However, I got back all right – tho' my landing was a

[24] Rose o'Day was a popular song of the day

bit high and I dropped a wing. Once I was safely on the ground breathing the usual sighs of relief I decided to go up again immediately even tho' my time was up. I felt I could do better. I didn't like to think of knocking off just feeling thankful that I'd got down safely. So I did a quick trip around the drome and this time it was a good take off and good landing.

It's evening now and one of the other lads in the course (in my flight) has just busted one of the Hurris on his first solo – bad luck.



Jim (right) in front of his Hurricane, with Nev Johnson -
"Cherub" was his pet name for Jean

June 25th 1944, Sunday. Have just been to church – good sermon – used atlas as demonstration. Went to a dance last nite with Molly Buchanan, a nice kid from Kenogami (c/o Price Bros) about 20 miles from here. Met her at dance at Price house, Kenogami on Friday. Nev Johnson and I really went over to the dance in the hope of finding a couple of girls for the Mess dance. Not much good on your own.

It is just about the longest day of the year here now. It is twilight till 10pm and by 3.30am you can see the light of the sun beginning to brighten the sky.

July 1st 1944, Saturday. No mail for me today and I've been reading Nev's mail – letter from his girl friend, Barbara, in Niagara Falls! Better than none.

July 3rd 1944, Monday. Have had very nice Saturday night and Sunday at Kenogami with Molly Buchanan. Danced at Arvida Saturday night. Went to the United Church where Molly is in the choir and went walking to Shipshaw Dam on Sunday.

I saw a group of ex-ops [ex-operations] men, all well filled with liquor, arguing in the Mess at about 12 midnight when I returned. Made me realise that a lot of young girls are going to have to be very patient after the war when they marry fellows who's nerves are damaged. These chaps will argue in a most unreasonable fashion. They are mostly inclined to be lazy and drink too much (Write article on this.)

July 4th 1944. 6.20pm: Am going to write a book on Canada. It was Jean's suggestion, tho' I did not think anything of it at the time. Have written to Ottawa asking for information.

July 5th 1944, Wednesday. Had my first dogfight in a Hurricane today – with Don Smith – an American swimming champ. The Hurri [Hurricane] was wonderful and I found I was little affected by G effect or Blackout. I think this is because of all the exercise I've been taking. I was able to out turn Don. I think in the formation flying we did, however, he showed up better than I did.

Nev[25] has just made a remark which tho made quite seriously sounded funny. "Let's read till 10.30" he said – "seeing that we're sleeping in till 7.15 in the morning." This is the first morning since we've been here that one of us has not had to get up at 6.15am.

July 7th 1944. We have been doing Section bounces the last day or two. In this, sections fly at 12,000' and a fellow whose name is Stooge flies about 9000'. The sections pounce on him whenever they feel inclined and he takes evasive action. Naturally enough the Stooge gets fed up with people nearly pranging him and after a few a/c have whistled past his ears he begins to have a go at them himself. Soon everyone is having a go at everyone else and a merry old scrimmage ensues, no one knowing who is the Stooge and who are the attacking planes. Still no one cares anyway tho' you have to keep your eyes awfully wide to keep out of collisions.

July 10th 1944. Have spent another nice time (Saturday night & Sunday) at Kenogami with Molly (Midge) [Buchanan]. Saturday night we went to a quite unique dance – open air one held on the tennis courts. Courts were covered with canvas material taken from Price Bros. Paper mill, and this was waxed. There were lots of coloured lights. Molly is quite a good dancer – is also a most unselfish girl I think.

Mrs Buchanan is very like Mrs. Goers in Adelaide – a kind, jolly soul, inclined to be a little plump. She lost her husband 7 years ago, and this has messed up the family fortunes. Curiously enough, Mrs. Goers also lost her husband 12 years ago.

Molly's sister Betty is only 15 but is astonishingly musical and can play the organ and piano by ear. She can just hear a piece and play it off in a few minutes.

Grandma is 90 and to me rather wonderful. She was talking to me yesterday about her husband and apparently still has his memory fresh in her mind. She told me she

[25] Jim met Neville Johnson when he first arrived at the drome, and he became Jim's best friend and room mate.

even remembered his footstep outside the door. He has been dead for 22 years and yet from the way she talks of him, she is obviously thinking of him still a great deal of the time. To love anyone like this seems quite wonderful.

July 18th 1944, Tuesday. On Sunday July 16th – my 26th birthday and also the birthday of Molly Buchanan, who is 22 – we went on the Canadian Pacific Boat down the Saguenay River to Tadoussac. A very beautiful trip. The River, said to be one of the deepest in the world, winds between rugged mountains at times 2000' high. These mountains are covered with thick timber.

Tadoussac is a holiday resort with an old world atmosphere. There is sharp contrast to be seen - the American and Canadian tourists providing a modern atmosphere in a background of yesteryear.

Here is the oldest church in Canada – the Little Indian Chapel rebuilt in 1750. The Angelus is rung today on the same bell with which it was sounded 280 years ago.

Houses are French style with long slanting roofs and dormer windows. Between Bagotvillle and Tadoussac is a statue of Notre Dame du Saguenay – a huge white sculptured figure made all the more impressive by being situated on Cape Trinity, one of the most prominent outcrops of rock in the sheer wall of cliff along the side of the Saguenay River.

As the C.P. Boat passes each night, a searchlight picks out the figure and a woman sings Ave Maria. It's quite impressive as are many of the very visible signs of Roman Catholicism you see in these districts. Catholics like to display their faith. Perhaps it is a good way to help to maintain it. You will see a crucifix hanging above the driver's head in a taxi – with flowers around it. On a prominent hill near a town a church will be outlined in white 'fairy' lights and you will probably think there is a fair in town until someone informs you it is in celebration of the First Day of Saint Anne.

To a local, it is possibly a good reminder of a Sacred Day. To an outsider, it makes you realise how strong a grip on the population the Roman Catholic Church has locally; it makes you realize that here you are an outsider – you were not even aware that it was the First Day of St Anne – an event apparently of no little consequence to the local folk.

4.13 Romance at the Lord Nelson with Jean

July 24th 1944, Monday. Yesterday I visited Arvida to play tennis for the RCAF. Played at Saguenay Inn, a very nice hotel built on the lines of a French Chateau with dormer windows.

August 31st 1944[26]. Have been having very interesting time: part of air training is in firing RPS i.e. rocket projectiles. They are very accurate and must be terribly

[26] The Soviets captured the city of Bucharest in Rumania on this date – just 6 days after the Allies had liberated Paris.

effective in action. I'm afraid I'm not very clever at firing on the drogue. I seem to be the best at dog fighting. My scores on the air to ground targets are not very good.

Have met another nice girl – Françoise (Frankie) Duchesne, 92 Tache St, Chicoutimi, P.Q. Met her at a tennis match against Chic. She speaks good English, tho' she is French. However, "Midge" – Molly Buchanan – is a good first in the Saguenay District. I think she is the most unselfish girl I have ever met.

She is pretty, in a cute sort of way. Strong for a girl and fond of sports, tho' she's small. Has a repartee in her speech which surprises you. Is a very strong character all round – a little bit shy, but quite determined. Everyone seems to like her.

She speaks a bit of French, plays tennis, dances well, has such a good job that she has been practically supporting the family – 3 young children, - since their Dad died some years ago. Even without knowing about her, you can see honesty and unselfishness shining right out of her eyes.

September 24th 1944. Have just finished two weeks leave spent mostly with Jean Crandall, at The Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax.

I am now at Camp Borden Military Camp – biggest I believe in Canada – lying in the sun outside T18 block. We are here attached to the A.T.T.D. (RCAF).

Jim *(centre, crouched) carrying a bomb whilst learning about Tanks at the OTU*

Spent quite a heavenly time with Jean. She had to go to Halifax on business for Marvens Biscuit Factory. She wrote and told me she would be lonely and wondered if I could get down. I managed to get hold of a Hurricane which needed ferrying to Greenwood, close to Halifax. I booked a room at The Lord Nelson, where she was staying.

I met her at Halifax Station on the Sunday night. She didn't look so very wonderful at first sight. Just a normal girl, with not especially shapely legs. When we went up to the Hotel we said 'goodnight' at the desk and I went up the stairs to my room 319

while she went up in the elevator. I was just entering my room when I discovered she was being put in 324 (almost opposite!). Was I delighted! In this happy situation we spent 9 wonderful days.

We didn't seem to do much – in fact half the fun as far as I was concerned was just in having breakfast and lunch and dinner with Jean. She was constantly asking the waitress for separate checks. She talks in such an interesting way and I like to listen. Not that I don't do an awful lot of gabbling myself.

Each day I'd get up at 7.45 am and just get down in time to have brekkie with her at 8.15am; sometimes I'd go to work with her and do a bit of shopping. I wished I was the one going to work. Sometimes she would look a little tired in the morning – and I liked her even better when her eyes were a little dark. You learn more about a person in the early morning than you do at night.

I met her for lunch once or twice and we went shopping – she was after a fun suit or dress and I was buying Xmas presents. Other days, I'd usually work on my book in the morning. With Jean in the offing, it was a regular labour of love. At night she would look over what I'd written and perhaps for the first time I realized how valuable it is to have someone whose opinion you respect, to do this. I remember now how Dad always gave his articles to Ma to read before letting the newspapers have them.

It seemed no matter what we did, every evening was a success for me. Once or twice early in the week I turned into bed very down in the dumps because I had not kissed her goodnight. This was because I had a feeling she might not be very keen.

Every time I'd go to kiss her I'd see her ring and feel as tho' a barrier was up between us. Partly got over this feeling of inferiority, but in some respects the barrier will always be there.

One night we went to the pictures and saw Bing Crosby's picture 'Going My Way.' I'll always think of Jean when I hear the tunes from that, especially a simple little one 'It's an Irish Lullaby.' It was a wonderful show and tho' I'd seen it before I enjoyed it much more this time. I managed to get us aboard the wrong streetcar on the way home, but Jeanie didn't seem to mind.

A couple of nights, too, we went to the Forum to dance amidst willing sailors and a selection of Halifax hostesses, who to my somewhat jaded eye didn't seem to have been very carefully selected.

The orchestra was not so hot – not as good anywhere near as ours at Bagotville – and you couldn't hear it too well up one end, so everyone crowded down the other. The hall was not anything elaborate for comfort, but it had a good floor and I enjoyed these simple dances with Jean far more than much more elaborate affairs I've been to.

Jean is a good little dancer; pivots in a way no other girl can; doesn't like fancy steps till she's mastered them and then once she's learned them, offers no argument and appears to like them ok! (ahem)

Then there was that service at The United Church on Sunday night. I always wanted to go to church with Jean. It seems this week I have done many of the things I've wanted to do with her. It seemed a wonderful service to me.

On Monday night we curled up together for the evening. It was the most pleasant – and most sexless – evening I have ever spent with a girl with whom I was not at all intimate. I believe this is the first time I have ever experienced complete satisfaction without any passion at all. I never quite believed, but always wished I could feel like this about someone.

We went for a couple of walks – including one on a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon. We crossed on the ferry to the Arm of the Harbour and we walked along the shore for a mile or so; we paused at a tiny church where kiddies were ringing the bell for Sunday School; at numerous places on route when I wanted to take pictures of Jean; at a little lake where we messed around for a little while in the sun and I just had to lift rocks and generally try to look as tho' I was strong.

Jean is easy company and an interesting little soul. Very often when I'm with her I feel like taking her and kissing her and it's as much a way of showing her how much I appreciate her company as anything else. She seems to be a thoughtful kid. I remember one day when she was coming back late for lunch she took the trouble to ring and tell me. Lots of little things like this tell me she's considerate.

I got along with her so well I hated to think of parting with her. I knew when I first saw her that this would be so. I have tried to show her, but only if I were her husband could I express to her the gratitude I feel already for all the wonderful things she has brought into my life. Our last night together made me realize more than ever that I do not understand women. For once in my life, however, I did the right thing. Something seemed to stop me from doing otherwise.

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Editor's Note

Jim's diaries finish here. But this is not the end – in fact, it was just the start.

The dream was about to be realised; and from this, an astounding life story was about to be launched.

In POSTCRIPT, you will find out what then unfolds in this inspiring Australian's life. You will also find out how the lives unfold of some of the people mentioned in Jim's diaries – many friends were lost in War, but many life-long friends were made too.

POSTSCRIPT

by Tony Vickers-Willis

Jim finished writing in his War diaries leaving a number of stories "in mid-air"; providing no hints to his extraordinary life story that was about to unfold. So I spent a bit of time finding out how his War service concluded and I've added this information below, including some brief information on what happened to others mentioned in his diaries, in particular - did they arrive home safely? Did they keep in touch after sharing such an extraordinary life experience together? Did they marry? Did they live happily ever after?

Jim was a capable flying instructor. However he was originally inspired by the Spitfire and Hurricane pilots ("the few")[27] who defended London against the hordes of German bombers in the Battle of Britain, and he still wanted an operational posting to a Spitfire squadron. Late in the War, Jim was driven to write a letter to the Chief Posting Officer, Squadron Leader Kilvington, strongly requesting an operational posting. Shortly thereafter, his wish was granted.

After Jim, with his friend Nev Johnson, finished up their operational training course in readiness for posting to Europe, the Von Runsted drive petered out, and his superiors decided to send them back to join in the Pacific war in Borneo. Jim was granted his wish, not only of doing front line operational service before returning home from War, but also (literally on the toss of a coin) Jim won a treasured posting to his dream squadron - flying Spitfires, on armed reconnaissance. His friend Geoff, with whom he travelled up North to join the Spitfires, was tragically killed as War ended, in a low level flying reconnaissance accident.

Jim was posted to the famous 'Grey Nurse' 457 Squadron, Labuan Island (July, 1945). He was at Biak when the first atom bomb was dropped.[28]

Flying a Spitfire off the coast of Borneo

[27] "Never in the field of human conflict was so much, owed by so many, to so few" - Winston Churchill

[28] On August 6th 1945, an Atom Bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, which by December had killed 140,000 civilians. The Japanese forces surrendered a week later. Victory in the Pacific (VP Day) is celebrated on August 15th. Victory in Europe (VE Day) is celebrated annually on 7th May.

In November 1945, Jim flew his Spitfire 4000 miles home – only 9 of the 15 Spitfires finished the air trek home without mishap (refer newspaper clipping below).

The SUN, Monday November 5, 1945:

SPITFIRE PILOTS HEAD FOR HOME

Flight-Lieut Jim Vickers-Willis of Brighton helps Flight-Lieut Bruce Little of Manly NSW to stow clothes and personal gear in the ammunition bin of his Spitfire before taking off from Labuan airstrip on the first stage of the long flight back to Queensland. The two pilots were among the first from the famous 'Grey Nurse' (457) Squadron to return to Australia when the mass exodus of R.A.A.F aircraft began in Borneo last week. Only 9 of 15 'Spits' finished the air trek without mishap.

SPITFIRE PILOTS HEAD FOR HOME

FLIGHT-LIEUT JIM VICKERS-WILLIS, of Brighton (right) helps Flight-Lieut. Bruce Little, of Manly, N.S.W., to stow clothes and personal gear in the ammunition bin of his Spitfire before taking off from Labuan airstrip on the first stage of the long flight back to Queensland. The two pilots were among the first from the famous "Grey Nurse" (457) Squadron to return to Australia when the mass exodus of R.A.A.F. aircraft began in Borneo last week. Only nine of 15 "Spits" finished the air trek without mishap. —Australian Official.

Jim had his own troubles getting home too.

At the end of his 4000 mile flight, when Jim approached Cape York aerodrome, the wheels of his Spitfire would not go down and he had to force them down with the emergency gas bottle. Once forced down this way, they could not be retracted without ground service.

When down, the wheels on the Spitfire blocked the special tropical air intake which prevented the Spits from over-heating in hot climates. Jim had to get his plane down quickly, and called the Control Tower that he was in trouble and to let him in as soon as possible. Then, he found his radio was not working. He attempted to land, but the Control Tower let an airliner take off in front of him, and fired a red flare at him to "go round again". Next time round, the same thing. The engine temperature gauge was well into the red "danger" area. On his third approach, they let him in, but when he throttled back to land, the engine would not throttle back. It was too hot - and the Spitfire kept flying low along the runway! Jim landed it by switching off. The ground crew were amazed when the Spit came fishtailing along, taxiing in bursts by having the engine switched off and on.

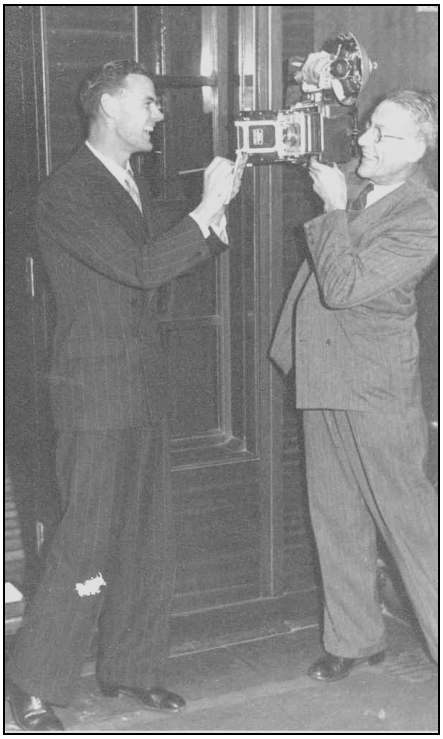
Two days later his last flight – he knew it was his last landing. With more than a thousand wartime flying hours credited in his Log Book, he used up a lot of the long runway to land the Spitfire perfectly on three points - and taxied up to the fence at Amberley Air Force Base (Queensland). He told me that, as he switched the Spitfire off, he said aloud to himself "Gee, I made it through the war!"

Jim's 'Statements of Service' show that in addition to gaining his Wings, Jim received the following five War service honours: Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939 -1945, Australian Service Medal 1939 -1945, and Returned from Active Service Badge

From the time he switched off his Spitfire engine, Jim never piloted another plane. However, his life thereafter was to be no less exhilarating - extraordinary to say the least. The full story – from becoming a famous Australian entertainer, a career which was cut short by contracting the polio virus and being put into a life support iron lung, his fight back to escape the iron lung, his achievements despite living with paralysis including returning to the public limelight as an author and thought leader in the areas of sex and relationship education and living a long life in spite of contrary medical opinion - can be read in his autobiography “The Magic of Life” and on his web site at www.vickers-willis.com.

Here is a glimpse into Jim’s amazing post-war life.

Jim’s War diaries and his visits to almost every major newspaper in each city he visited in USA and Canada during War service overseas, were clear indications of his passion to become a journalist and author. And, on return from War, Jim was offered his old job as a young journalist with The Melbourne Sun newspaper and went on to investigate many stories and write many interesting articles for the paper. At one time, Jim was the lucky journalist who knocked on people’s doors to reward them with a cheque for winning the paper’s feted Sunball Competition. He also reported on the movements at the then very busy Melbourne port.



Returning to his passion as a journalist on returning from War -
Jim on the job with top news photographer Bert Rodda.

One day he had tooth trouble and went to his Dentist, Dr Cecil Hearman in Collins Street, Melbourne. Dr Hearman, who had a romantic streak, had this young Air Force officer in his chair and insisted that his nurse, Beth, held Jim's hand during the painful bits. Jim looked up into what he described as "the most beautiful brown eyes I've ever seen" and was besotted. This admiration of Beth never changed and at the time of writing (2007) they are in their 60th Diamond year of marriage - with three children, ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

In addition to journalism, Jim started off an adventurous sideline business called "Thirst Aid Posts" – a catchy name he wrote about in his War dairies which he had noticed on an advertising billboard in Detroit during his service in Canada - which provided kiosks/mobile canteens to cater for ship arrivals and sporting events.

When two of their three children were born with physical problems requiring no less than 17 operations – this was in the days before the Australian government brought in subsidized health schemes - the costs were impossible for a young couple. So Jim made what must have been a very difficult decision - to leave his passionate but low paying work as a journalist to concentrate on the kiosk business.

But just around the corner was an even better money making proposition – square dancing. Jim became the centre of Australia's 1950's square dance boom and for a brief period was one of Australia's highest paid entertainers. Due to publicity he gained from both radio broadcasts and newspaper articles[29] (using his skills as a journalist, Jim authored many articles promoting square dancing) Jim became the most publicly well-known face of square dancing in Australia.

Unfortunately, at the height of the square dance boom and at the height of his fame, Jim contracted polio and was placed into an iron lung for life support – not dissimilar to that of America's 'Superman' Christopher Reeve. In less than 10 years, Jim had gone from the freedom of doing aerobatics in the clouds flying a Spitfire to now being imprisoned in a box - what an extraordinary life contrast that must have been.

For months, Jim struggled to break free of the iron lung. During that time, he wrote some newspaper articles, wrote some children's puppet show plays, and never gave up hope of one day escaping the lung to call square dances once again.

His courage and determination shone through as, bit by bit, Jim dragged himself physically and mentally out of the box. And he did return to square dancing. In fact his testimonial "come back" square dance held at Leggetts Ballroom was attended by more than three thousand square dancers. The proceeds from the testimonial were used to fund a recuperative holiday for Jim and Beth and their 3 young children, in the warm weather and waters of Queensland - a recuperative technique for polio patients made famous by Franklin Roosevelt, who, like Jim, was paralysed by polio before going on to become the 32nd President of the United States of America during the difficult Depression and WW2 years. Jim made a remarkable recovery from this holiday. So much so that he was actually carried up the gangway on the liner Stratheden on his way up to Queensland and on his way home he walked down the gangway. Jim could not have done this without the dedication of his wife Beth who nursed him back to health.

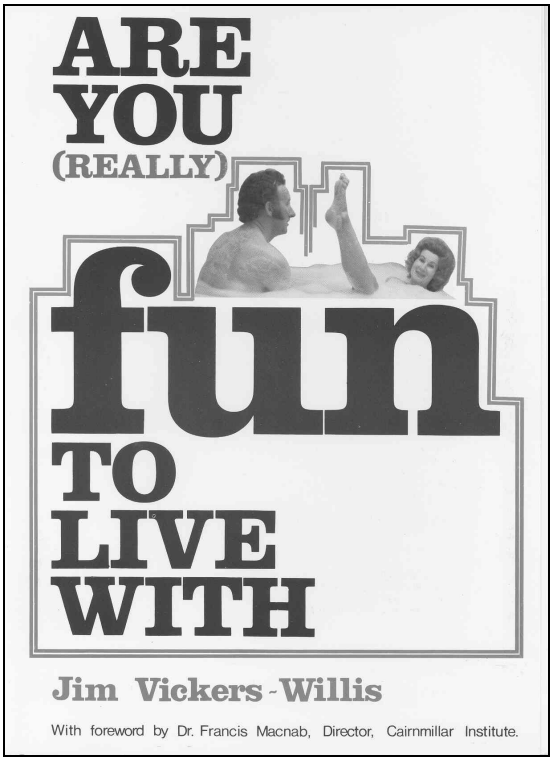
After surviving polio, Jim's real STAR qualities shone through. Now coping with severe physical paralysis, Jim 'launched' into an even more productive period of his life - returning to square dance calling, including a series on Australian television; inventing and selling baby safety barriers to place in doorways to restrain toddlers in one room; creating and operating puppet shows in Australian Department Stores and on Melbourne's Yarra River ferries; running for election to the Australian Senate in 1967 on his controversial (at that time) "Vote Us Out Of Vietnam" platform; becoming one of Australia's foremost social educators on quality of life issues and sexuality, authoring numerous relationship and life education books & articles; and,

[29]Note: television did not start in Australia until 1956 but when it did commence Jim had a weekly square dancing show called "Let's Go Square Dancing" on ABC2 television.

campaigning on controversial (for his day) quality of life issues including for improved sex education, for legal nude bathing beaches, for foreshore bike paths, for bans on tobacco advertising, for allowing stem cell research, and for people's right to choose euthanasia. Through out most of this time, Jim concurrently was operating certainly one of Australia's (if not the world's) longest surviving private sole–practitioner insurance and financial planning brokerages - for some 47 years – including passing his final exam at Deakin University to become one of Australia's first accredited financial planners at age 82.

The challenges Jim faced with polio, and later with paralysis, provided him with a profound life experience - an experience from which he gained a unique perspective on the challenges we all inevitably face in finding happiness. By the way he handled his own challenges, he demonstrated how to respond positively and constructively to seemingly insurmountable life problems - finding new, positive and healthier ways to think through our problems.

The old journalist in him led Jim to write about these findings in a number of books, including his best seller (pictured below), provocatively titled "Are You (really) Fun To Live With?"



And what became of Jim's war time friends and loves that he refers to in his diaries?

Well, his Air Force pals Knowle Shrimpton and Nev Johnson both survived the war - Shrimp with a DFC awarded during operations over Germany in a Mosquito with navigator Peter Lake, who also won the DFC. Peter Lake was to have been Jim's navigator but was transferred to Shrimp when Jim crashed.

Shrimp and Jane married happily, produced a family living in Canada and were long term friends with Beth and Jim, who visited them more than once. On one reciprocal Shrimpton visit to Australia, Peter Lake (who lives with his wife Lois close to Jim, and shares reunions) was given a surprise - suddenly finding himself having dinner with Shrimp who he thought was in Canada!

Nev Johnson became an accountant and manager of a big city hotel; had two children before his first wife died, and he then had a second happy marriage. He remained one of Beth and Jim's best friends.

Jim said he was delighted to find that Beth liked all his old mates, even his old girl friends - and they liked her. In fact, he felt that a couple of the latter finished up loving Beth more than him! Norma, her sister Marjory and Beth declared themselves "blood sisters". Beth recognised Norma as a very sweet and kind person. Norma had married after Jim left Canada, and her son Steve and his wife Nancy also became much loved friends of Beth and Jim and stayed with them on a visit to Australia.

“Proc” (aka Ralph Proctor) and his wife Helen continued to be life-long mates with Jim and Beth. After training at Essendon and then in Canada, Proc was posted to RAF operational units in Europe, where he piloted bombers and troop transport planes - including Albemarle’s, Sterling’s and Whitley’s. Proc survived through 28 flying operations in an 18 month period, which included a couple of masterly belly landings. He received the ‘Overlord Medal” when he towed Horsa Gliders (which typically carried 32 troops into the battlefield) in support of the 1944 D-Day landings. He also supported other well known allied operations including “Tonga” and “Market Garden”. After Helen died in 2001, Proc (who today is aged 90) decided to share his experiences of being an Australian in the 1900s, and wrote it all down in a wonderful autobiography titled “Aim High – Proc’s Journey” (2005: ISBN 0-646-45396-3).

As you will recall, when Jim’s War diaries came to an end, he had just fallen head over heels in love with Jean. So when he returned home to Australia, Jim and June (the sweetheart he had left behind to go to war service, and who he often refers to adoringly in his diaries) decided they would not get married because Jim was in love with someone else (i.e. Jean, who was back in Canada).

Jim was then posted to the Spitfire squadron in Borneo before returning to Australia. Jean subsequently married and had three children before her husband Arthur was killed in a helicopter crash. She now has a very happy marriage with new husband Alf, whom Beth loves, and who is the over-eighty tennis champion of Canada. There have been several reciprocal couple visits to Canada and Australia. Jim's girl friend "Midge" Buchanan in Bagotville (Quebec) has recently flown to Australia to spend a couple of happy week’s holiday with Beth and Jim.

Incidentally, June married a South Australian and has now come to live close to their son in Melbourne. Every year, Beth and Jim ring June on her birthday.

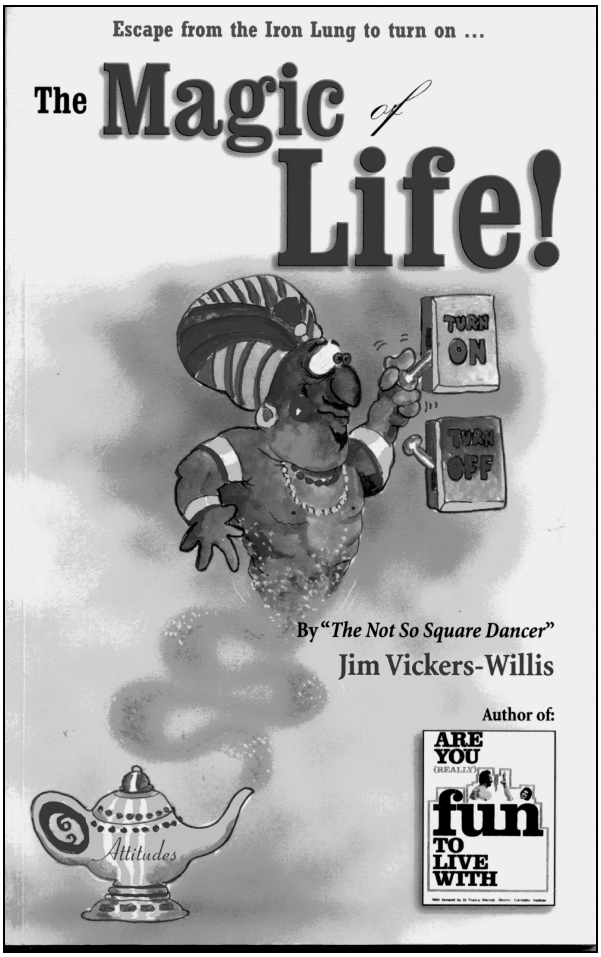
In his diaries, Jim refers a number of times to his “first” love – Margaret ‘Spud” Murphy (pictured below with Jim). Jim, Beth, Spud and her husband had quite a few happy times together – unfortunately, Spud’s husband Max recently died.

Jim at Brighton Beach with his “first” love - ‘Spud’

Of his War diaries, Jim commented:

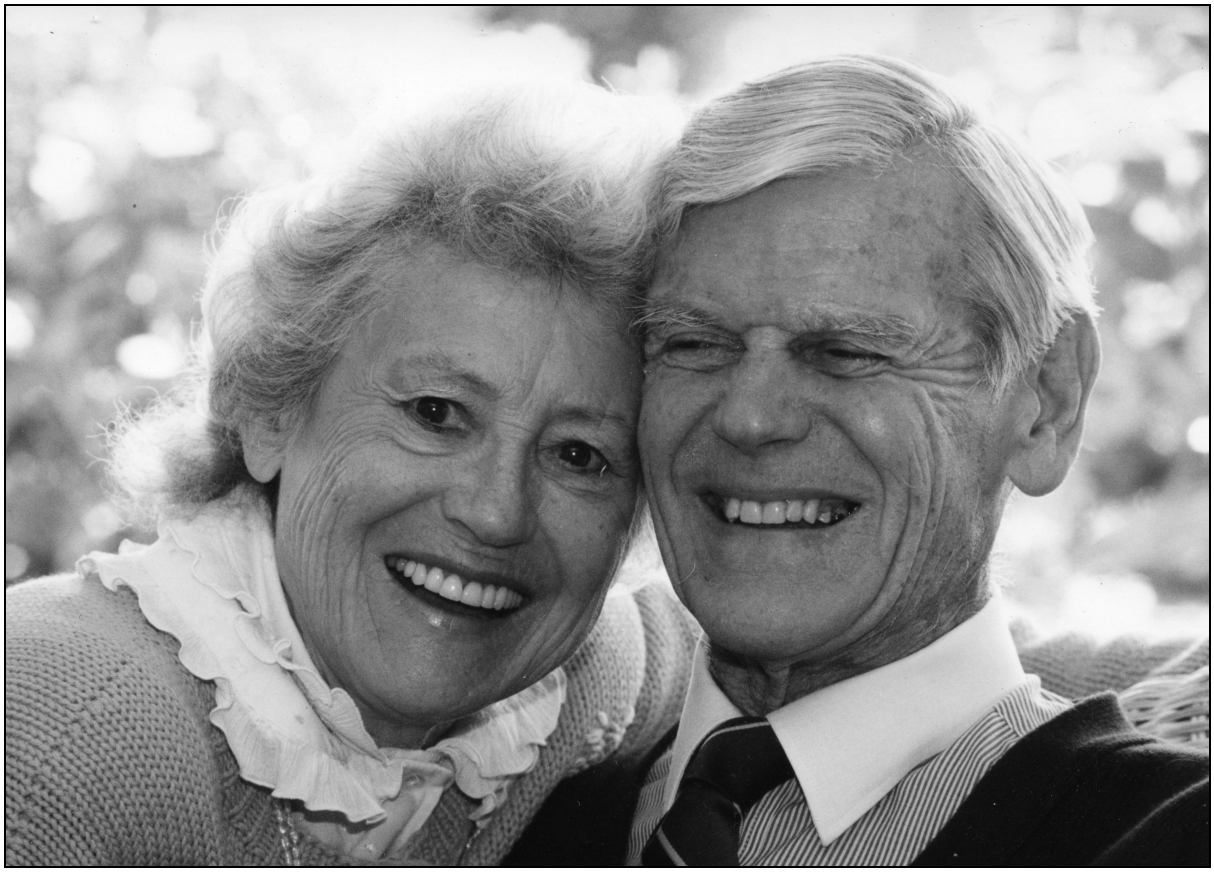
> *"I look now at me as I'm revealed in the diaries and cannot believe it's the same man. I had not read these diaries for about 50 years.*
>
> *My youngest son Tony started the ball rolling. Then Susie, Peter and Tony set to work transcribing these diaries - much of my handwriting being very hard to read - and putting them into the computer. And, here is the result. Weren't they wonderful kids (all in their fifties now!) to do that for me? They presented the transcribed diaries to me as a 2006 Christmas present. They worked and worked at it for weeks, talking on the phone and by email (as Susie lives a couple of thousand kilometres away in West Australia) trying to accurately work out each word I’d hand written and adding in some old photos.*
>
> *I've been reading and laughing and enjoying. At age 88, our children have given me back an important slice of my life.*
>
> *Perhaps you will gain out of these diaries some of the fun, interest and enjoyment which I have; I hope so".*

You can read more about Jim's remarkable life story in his autobiography "The Magic of Life" which is available on the Jim Vickers-Willis Family web site:



You are invited to visit Jim's web site at

www.vickers-willis.com.



Jim with his “true love” - Beth Vickers-Willis (c1999)

"Why do I get the impression that those two get along – because it shows I guess"

George Negus - ABC Tonight Show.
Full television interview can be seen at www.vickers-willis.com