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2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2024 minor corrections.

Note : Most of this is a true reflection from our father, however some of the so called early facts he was handed down were untrue, so his early days is not as accurate as his later life. David J Webb jnr,

### **THE COMPLETE AND UNEXPURGATED LIFE OF DAVID JOHN WEBB**

My entry into this world took place in Springfield nursing home on the 19th February 1913, from the nursing home I was taken to Gate Cottage in Maltmans Hill, Smarden in the County of Kent. My next awareness is of living in Richmond at St Kilda, a 3-storey house on the corner of Warrington and Hermitage Road, I think this move was because my father had been sent to France with his regiment, (The Buffs). My memories of those early years are rather clouded. After my sisters birth, we moved to 5, Warrington Road into the basement of that house, into one room. Warrington Road was a cul-de-sac, with a total of 7 houses on one side of the road and a long single storey building opposite, which during the war had been a school for Belgian refugees; later on it was to become a warehouse for Wrights furniture and storage business.

The last memory I have of my father is a photo that my mother had and when she died my sister had most of my mother's personal things. It is one of my great sorrows that I do not remember my father, this is where I envy my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, for better or worse they can say "they can remember me and my beloved Peggy. After my father got to France he was promoted from Lieutenant to Captain, he died in a French hospital in 1919 and was buried in France with four of my mother's brothers who came over from Canada with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, my mother didn't get a widows pension because the War Office said that he died of influenza (which was prevalent at that time) and was called the "Black Flu". They weren't interested at that time that my father had lain in hospital for several months with wounds that had probably lowered his resistance to infection. Nevertheless my mother didn't get a pension and that made things difficult for her as service pay in those days wasn't very good as most men who got a commission had families who sent them remittances in addition to their pay, but my parents were disinherited by both of their families because one was a Catholic and the other was a Protestant. My mother had been brought up in a privileged family as had my father. This meant that my mother found herself in circumstances for which she was least prepared. The War Office said that this Black Flu was taking civilians as well as servicemen and people were dying in their tens of thousands.

This tragedy of life continued in the last war, my cousin Patsy (Patrick) (his father Patrick was one of the brothers who died, ) the others were Tom, Will and Charles, the fifth one, Gerald returned to Canada, back to the R. C. M. P (Mounties) but had recurring bouts of neurasthenia through being gassed in the war and the authorities decided a more moderate climate was needed and settled him a coal order office in Eastleigh, Southampton. My cousin Patsy used to write to me every month, he was a Catholic teacher teaching Romanian settlers children in Banff Springs, he gave that up to attend theological college in Toronto, the last letter I got from him told me that he had been ordained and has been accepted as a Catholic padre to the Canadian forces, it wasn't until about 1979 from the war graves commission that I

discovered that he was on his way to England with the Canadian Forces and were torpedoed with total loss of life, the second tragedy was suffered by my sister, she was engaged to a R. A. F navigator, Billy Wright, who died in Japanese hands in Java. My mother moved up to Richmond to be near her sister who lived in St Margarets. When we were in Warrington Road we had a single room, I slept on the sofa on one side of the room and my sister slept on the other side of the room with my mother. We had to rely on a paraffin oil stove for cooking and a valor stove for heating, our lighting was provided by an oil lamp. I remember in Winter lying on my sofa and looking at the ceiling fascinated by the pattern which the stove threw up on the ceiling like a circle of leaves pointed at both ends. My mother played the piano at the Empire cinema, she played it, for in those days the films were silent ones so she changed the music depending on the particular scene at any given moment, at this time my mother got the News of the World newspaper, as much for the publication of the manuscript of the latest song of the day, which she used to take to the cinema half an hour before the films started, and played the manuscript for her own amusement. My sister being only a baby, was wrapped in a shawl and laid on the front seats so that my mother could keep an eye on her. We both went to the Catholic School in Parkshot, in Richmond, one approached it via Richmond Green over the railway bridge and took the first turning on the left, that led to the gates of Old Deer Park, there we were taught by Nuns from the Marist Convent at the bottom of Queens Road. After the last performance my mother would hurry up to the Pagoda Night Club and look after the ladies cloakroom until it had turned midnight, cinema piano playing didn't pay very much in those days, it was after Joan started school that my mother took on an additional job. She went up to Kings Road to a house called Kingsbury, a guest house. She left for this job before Joan and I were awake so she left some porridge on the valor stove keeping it hot for Joan and me. Our mother would work at Kingsbury guest house until noon and then hurry home and get tidied up for the cinema. It was my job to wash us both and get us to school, mother used to leave some money for our dinner which was fish and chips, in the summer we would eat on Richmond green and in the Winter we would eat in the school. At the end of the day I would take us both home and give us our tea. In the Winter we would have to be indoors before dark but in the summer, we could stay up until, but no later than, 7 o'clock.

When I was 7 years of age a family named Goad who lived at No. 4 (next door), were very friendly with our mother, one day Mrs. Goad said to our mother "Patricia, you and the children must come away with us to our bungalow on Canvey Island, " mother demurred and said she couldn't afford it. Mrs Goad said "Rubbish, Pat, you look washed out and look as though you and the children could do with a holiday, and it won't cost you a penny, so you and the children are coming with us and I'm not taking no for an answer". When the holiday time arrived Joan and I were as excited as anything. One day we went into an adjoining field and saw 2 or 3 other children riding on a couple of donkeys, we asked them which was the quietest of the 2 donkeys and they pointed out the brown one, they also said that the donkeys didn't belong to them and were in fact strays, a short time later we were called for dinner. We had just finished dinner when I saw out through the window the same donkeys out in the lane and chewing at the grass verge, I rushed out into the lane it didn't bother me that there was a deep ditch on one side of it and jumped on the back of the alleged quiet one, he was chewing grass on the verge of the ditch, I didn't want to be late for the make believe rodeo or round-up so I cheerfully pulled his ears and dug my heels into his flanks. The next few moments were a blank but according to eye witnesses I got flung up in the air (the donkey in true rodeo tradition bucked) did a couple of somersaults and disappeared into the ditch, the thing I do remember is

getting up onto the grass verge and screaming my head off with my left lower arm swinging about as if it was on a universal joint i. e. : a ball and socket joint.

Mr. Goad and a Mr. Fogg from a neighbouring bungalow (he was a sick bay orderly on a warship in the navy during the war) the latter gentleman made up a sling for my arm and both men accompanied me to the local doctor on the Island, when we arrived after crossing several fields we were informed by the doctors house keeper that he was out on the mainland attending a measles case but she expected him back very shortly, we were welcome to wait inside if we wanted to, however they declined the offer and elected to wait outside, after 5 minutes she came outside and gave me a glass of milk and a slice of seed cake. I can still see the cottage now, it was a pretty cottage with a frame work like a bower outside the front door with a honey suckle creeper climbing over it and an oak seat either side. A few moments later the Doctor arrived from the mainland, he took me upstairs looked at the elbow, I must say that he was very gentle, he put some little pills in a box, stuck a label on it, wrote something on the label and gave it to Mr. Goad after he found out who was responsible for me and said here are some pills you must dissolve them in warm water and put the lads elbow in the solution to take the swelling down and come back on Monday, this was difficult as we were coming home on the Sunday.

We had been home for 2 or 3 weeks when the milkman said to my mother "that arm of your boys looks very bad to me and I think you should go to the hospital". All this time my arm was giving me great pain and my mother took me to St Johns hospital in Richmond and this is where my appreciation of the Spanish inquisition and all it implied took place in my mind. This is where a thoughtless doctor can lose a child's trust, this is where my memories stand me in good stead again and I was to appreciate what young people would feel during the war when I was on the ambulances. It is funny but if you suffer pain when you are young, your memory can recapture the event as if it was yesterday, I can see the doctor now and if I was asked by the police to do an identity picture I could do so, he was tall, had sandy hair, high forehead, had a Scottish accent and seemingly had a permanent amber cigarette holder in his mouth, more often than not with a cigarette in it. He took one look at my elbow and said "The boy has dislocated his elbow which has been badly reduced, we shall have to re-dislocate it and then reduce the dislocation by resetting it again". My mother told him that my arm hadn't been touched by anyone but it made no difference, if he had asked my mother she would have told exactly what had happened and that the only treatment my arm had received was to be bathed in treated water to reduce the swelling, but I don't think that the doctor would have believed her, at this distance in time he struck me as to be unhelpful when his patients or relatives of the patient made a point of his prognosis of the recovery of the patient. They took me into the hospital the same week, after I came out of the anaesthetic my awareness as to what had happened hit me like the kick of a horse, my arm was encased in plaster-of-Paris, in those days when they put a limb in plaster it consisted of plenty of cotton wool and over this they put miles of plastered bandage, unlike today when they put a 'back' plaster on a limb. After a couple of months they took the plaster off for this I had to attend the outpatients department. I can see old John the hospital porter with his shears and I can still see the back of the blade where it went between my arm and the plaster digging into my arm. When they took the plaster off, the forearm was at right angles to the upper arm and was locked in that position, so every day I went down to the hospital where they attempted to straighten it by the very scientific method of putting my elbow on the table. Placing a bucket in my hand and putting or slopping water in the bucket out of enamel jug, this technical part of the operation was undertaken on by the doctor with great expertise,

the nurse was probably very expert at giving her patient a blanket bath or giving the correct dose of a dangerous drug where an overdose of one milligram would be fatal but slopping water from a jug would test her expertise to the limit. It wasn't as though they were measuring out the amount of water and writing down the exact amount it took to move my arm an inch, they could do this by the simple expedient of taking a tape measure from the shoulder to the wrist noting the figure and estimating the amount of water it took to straighten an arm like mine and how many turns of a Spanish windlass it would take to get my forearm up towards my shoulder because that's exactly what they did when they got my arm to move a couple of inches downwards, despite me fainting a few times during the water splashing mayhem, from pain. The Spanish windlass consisted of a chamois leather wristlet, a chamois leather necklet and the two linked together by a length of bandage, a flat bone being inserted through the bandage loop and giving it a few twists each day to pull my forearm back again, again I fainted quite often. As the doctor was a Scot by his thick accent and probably a supporter of the Scottish Kirk and I was an R/C, I could be forgiven for thinking that this was the Spanish Inquisition in reverse.

It was at this time that a neighbour told my mother she ought to take me up to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. We went up there and the bone specialist went spare when he saw my arm and the state of it and he wanted the name of the doctor or surgeon who treated me, when my mother told him he wrote down the details and the names and told my mother that he would be making a report to the right authorities.

How do I remember all this I can hear you asking I am not relying on my memory for the later details, my mother wrote a diary that I kept. The surgeon that we saw was a Mr Elmsleigh.

The Orthopaedic surgeon had some X-ray's taken and informed my mother they showed much concern and that they would have to arrange for an urgent admission into the hospital and that they would be in touch with her as soon as a bed became available. After we returned home, she was very agitated and worried, two or three days later we received a letter from the hospital saying that there was a bed ready and informed my mother what she should take for me in the way of pyjamas, soap, face flannels and towels. My mother took me up to the hospital the next day. On arriving at the hospital, they made a few things very clear to us (you won't find this in the diary, but I remember it very well) things like eggs, 'relatives would have to provide', and they would have to be left on a table outside the ward with the recipient's name on them. So the children with parents who were affluent would have eggs for breakfast and others like me would have to have whatever the hospital could dig up which in the majority of cases was porridge oats, the other thing I remember was a large chipped enamel mug filled with Epsom salts, it was foul, the other thing I remember, but not with nostalgia was "coming round" after my operation, the memory of those days is with me still, the orderlies had put me back in bed when I returned from the operating theatre, if my head was under the sheets as I "came round" I was very conscious of exhaling the anaesthetic and breathing it in again and that memory was re-awoken during the war when I was in the A.R.P.

That smell in hospitals brings back memories of those early days plus those privileged few who had the luxury of eggs for breakfast, the thought used to cross my mind 'wouldn't it be nice if the nurse put a double dose inadvertently of Epsom salts in their mug's, perish the thought.

The next 2 or 3 years was a period of trips to the hospital, initially as an outpatient, then as an in-patient for a further operation with such scattered remarks like "We will have to amputate the arm, the boy will

never be able to use his arm, he will be able to use the shoulder". Another op., he will be able to use the shoulder and the hand but not the elbow, apparently the problem was, the elbow had suffered a fractured dislocation, the Olecranon was splintered and diseased and taken root, like throwing a spanner in the cogs of a wheel. (The Olecranon is the knob on the point of the elbow).

The National Orthopaedic Hospital sent me to St. Bartholomew's for radium treatment, this consisted of putting me in a darkened room with a pale blue light, getting a strip of oxide plaster, laying on the adhesive side a row of what appeared to be a number of gramophone needles and laying the strip, needle side against the scar which stood out like a long purple garden worm, to reduce the deep colour of the scar and to flatten it and speed up the healing, This didn't please me much as I was proud of my scar. Its a good thing everybody didn't think like me, otherwise the beauticians and the plastic surgeons would be waiting in a queue for the arrival of the soup kitchens. During the odd times I was home from the hospital I did not go to school, there was no point, and that was when I started writing poetry. I remember on one occasion when I was in Richmond Park I was walking under a tree when I heard a sharp crack, but instead of running I stopped and looked up just as a rotten branch, a large one, came falling down and caught me on the side of the face causing a small fracture to my upper jaw and when we attended the Orthopaedic Hospital on our next due date Mr Elmsleigh said after studying a couple of X-ray's that the bone had splintered but added that the upper jaw was in itself a splint and that the splintered bone would heal itself, but to this day I have a very noticeable dent in my cheek when I smile.

On a later occasion my arm was to land me in a further mishap the evidence of which I still carry to this day. It occurred after I had joined the 14th Richmond boy scouts, and I went to camp at Herne Bay with them. The local inshore fishermen during holiday times convert their boats to carry trippers on excursions or trips round the lighthouse. I think this is due to the activities of holiday-makers sailing boats, of swimming, and motor boats frightening the fish away, I bring this matter to explain what happened to me on one of these trips in a fishing boat, this boat was a round bottomed one and had temporary seats in the rear half on the starboard, port side and the stern, the deck was covered with duck boards. On this particular day we went on board for a trip out to the lighthouse and back. We sat on the seats provided the sea was rather choppy and the boat rocked slightly and when it caught a small wave sideways on, the scouts opposite us fell forward as their side of the boat rose up, we all laughed but it was the turn of the other side to laugh when we all fell forward too, the only thing was that because of the awkward angle at which I had to hold my arm, my thumb went through the duck boards it swelled up and the cub mistress put a cold compress and bandage on it (her name was Dorothy Barrett and she was engaged to Bill Bettles the assistant scout master). Unfortunately, when we came home I removed the bandage on it and saw the base joint of my thumb was distorted, and today that distortion is manifested. Shortly after this we went on a church parade in the vineyard where our drill hall was situated, this church was next door to the R. C. church. After this church parade I rejoined my friend Dicky Heal who lived in St. Margarets about a quarter of a mile from the old Richmond bridge, we walked along the river towards Marble hill gardens, pass the old 'Pelabom' works which was a wartime ammunition factory but is now the Ice rink. It was still summer, and we were in short sleeves, (our uniform included jerseys instead of the usual shirts, but we wore long sleeves in the Winter), as we passed some people sitting on the seats by the side of the gardens one woman said "look at that poor boys arm", I left Dicky Heal standing there looking stupefied, I don't know what people must have thought seeing a boy scout running over the bridge and through Ormond road

crying his eyes out, I got indoors and flung myself on the sofa-come-bed my mother asked me what I was sobbing for and when I told her she said "some people can be very cruel". My beloved Peggy used to say "Why don't you roll up your sleeve on your bad arm and let the sun get to it, you look odd walking about with one sleeve up and the other one down, but I wouldn't and for a very different reason to the one I had before, I didn't want people to feel sorry for her for being married to a cripple, that is why I always walked with my left hand in my pocket.

Because I was always trying to catch up and never did, my exercise book for e. g. was full of W. L, W--VLW in red letters, these letters stood for Warning, Last Warning, Very Last Warning etc., etc. in red letters, this was because of my bad writing--- well more of a scrawl. Most of us were war orphans, Italian children, Belgian refugees and the bulk of us were Irish.

My mother had wanted me to be a proper gentleman and taught me all the social graces such as when she met a friend in the street I would have to stand with my cap in my hand and only speak when I was spoken to and only put my cap back on as we walked away. When, in later life if I was out at a dinner to stand at the side of a lady when helping her to sit down and not at the back of her where she could be embarrassed by knowing that if she wore a dress with a low neckline, I could see more than she intended. In the event of my accompanying a lady upstairs I should not disadvantage her by walking behind her she is not likely to fall but more likely to do so coming down the stairs and in those cases I should always go first. It seems at this distance hilarious when one remembers our early days, we lived in one room and my sister shared my mother's bed and I slept on the other side of the same room sleeping on a sofa and my mother going out charring, looking after a ladies cloakroom and playing the piano in a cinema for silent films but you should remember my mother was brought up as a socialite and had private tuition for the piano, violin, zither, harp and sketching and drawing and that shows my mother's strength of character and in this respect I can only admire her for this, my children remember her for a fun loving cheerful person. Speaking of my bringing-up brings me to when I started school, I got ribbed for having a 'posh' accent. Whilst I am on the subject of school I must relate two episodes which caused a temporary hiccup, the first was when a boy named Bert Griffiths fired a couple of blank cartridges from a starting pistol, when we got back from the playground, Sister Norbert, who took our class asked who fired those 'caps', Bert Griffiths wouldn't own up at first but when sister said we could all stay in after school, (I think it was the clenched fist shaken in his direction) made Bert reluctantly own up, sister asked him for the caps and he willingly handed over a few and when she demanded the rest he sheepish handed her some more. It was winter time and in front of the fireplace stood a blackboard and easel and as Sister went behind the blackboard we thought 'she isn't is she'--she was--and did, there was a muffled explosion, the blackboard got blown over and red-hot coals came flying across the class room, with all the row and commotion plus the explosion all the other teachers came running in only to find Sister Norbert completely unruffled, (she was at the side of the fire when she threw the blank cartridges on it and so was out of the line of the flying coals) for the rest of my days I shall always remember the impertability of Sister Norbert. The other occasion Sister Monica, tubby with an owl like smile and steel rimmed glasses (she was the teacher who took science amongst other subjects) and one day was taking the class in science in what seemed an innocuous matter at the time, she poured two chemicals into a lab, jar with a tight fitting cork bung out of which protruded two glass tubes one extending about half an inch the other tube had a right angled bend on it, Sister held a light to the tube that was angled, but nothing happened, after two or three abortive attempts she gave the jar a good

shake, lit another match and again the school was treated to another atomic explosion, broken glass flew all around the class room but fortunately nobody was hurt but whenever I hear a bang I instinctively look up expecting to see Sisters glasses hanging from the ceiling because on that occasion that's where they were embedded in the plaster minus the lenses and the ear pieces hanging down.

After I left school I got a job in a builder's office as an office boy, the firm was Foulshams Ltd., my mother bought me a wing collar to wear with my white shirt and a black bow and Mr. Foulsham bought me a bowler hat, I felt a proper 'Burlington-Bertie-from Bow' until I passed the school at the top of Eton Street along Paradise road. It was Winter time and in those days you could rely on snow through most of the Winter time, certainly during December and January and most of February and as I walked pompously past those boys waiting for school to start I was rapidly deflated when a well-aimed snowball would knock my bowler hat flying into the gutter so after a couple of episodes like that I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and proceeded to carry my bowler hat in a paper bag until I got clear of the school. When I first arrived at the office, I was introduced to the office manager a nice enough man who wore a pince-nez glasses with a slight blue tint to them, the other person I was taken to was Mr. Foulshams daughter, she had just like me just left school, she had a private school education where she had learnt typing amongst other things. Mr Stevens showed me how to take copies of typed letters into a thick book of thin tissue paper leaves. The procedure was to place the typed letter behind the next blank sheet in the book and behind that an oiled card (by that I mean a water proof card) on top of the page that you wish to take the copy you place a damp cloth, on top of that you placed another oiled card, closed the book put it into the press and clamped it down, leave it for about 5 minutes open the book and gently remove the letter and the damp cloth and left the book open so that the copy would dry.

Foulshams had two building projects on at the time I worked for them, they were two housing estates, one in Richmond, this was called the Manor road project and if my memory serves me right was called Manor Farm road and was the first turning on the left just past Manor road, this project was under a foreman, an Irishman, the men called him Paddy but his name was Mr. Doyle. The second site was at Kingston in Fife road, I forget the name of the foreman but I think it was Saunders. We had a lorry driver who used to come into our yard (which was behind the office, but the entrance was beside the office) he came into the yard every day to collect supplies, his name I remember very well, it was Harry Shimmell, he lived at Silvertown. (I remember that because it seemed to me that it was a funny name for a town. ) At every opportunity I would go out into the yard to help Harry to load up.

Mr Foulsham worked at times on projects with a firm of architects called Couch and Coupland and who had offices on Richmond Green. Mr Foulsham was a convert to the Roman Catholic faith from the Jewish one and was a kindly sort of man and very considerate, one day I was copying a letter into the book (I don't know whether carbon papers had been invented in those days or not but one thing was sure, with this method copies couldn't be lost) this letter I was copying was addressed to my mother and asking her to come along to the office to discuss my future as it seemed to him that the four walls of the office were like hell to me and he thought that I would be happier in a job where I could be more active.

After I left the office I went to the juvenile employment office for a job, they sent me to Broomfield House school at Kew, this was in Broomfield Road along Kew road opposite Lichfield Gate which stood halfway between Lion Gate and Kew Green and was service gate to Kew Gardens Botanical gardens. At the interview I met the two principals, by a strange coincidence their names were synonymous, the senior one

was Miss Jessica Crosse and the second one was a Miss Jessica Wilde but there the similarity ended Miss Crosse was as blonde as Miss Wilde was brunette and their natural cosmetic was again as varied. Another oddity about their names both were Jessica and both surnames end with the letter 'e' I was never aware of Miss Crosse having a boyfriend but Miss Wilde had one, he was a scientist (Botanical) working at Kew Botanical Gardens. When he called for her to go to the theatre, opera or ballet he always had a collapsible or folding top hat and an evening cape that had a red silk lining, smart evening dress suit, black patent shoes and a silver knobbed walking cane and brought Miss Wilde a box of assorted silk tipped cigarettes, The silk tips being of varying colours.

At the interview I was told that my job was to take any letters that needed posting for the teachers or the pupils, feeding the goldfish, tidy up the classrooms and make myself generally useful and help Hannah the cook and Bridget the maid whenever they wanted help, for this I was to be paid the princely 'sum' of 7 shillings and sixpence per week, my day off would be Thursdays from 2:30 p. m., but I had to be in by nine thirty p. m. and one Sunday off a month, that was fiction, the fact was very different. It consisted of rising at 06:00 am. light the kitchen fire for Hannah, go round to the three dormitories, pick up the footwear outside the doors, they consisted of tennis and assorted shoes and riding boots, the shoes were of so many different colours, I was amazed at the varied colours of Meltonian cream, after cleaning them I had to replace them back outside the dormitories. After that I had to take myself down to the ground floor and take down the shutters from inside of the windows in the dining hall. (I should have said that the first thing I did on rising in the morning was to don my green baize apron). After taking down the shutters in the dining room I would start my brass cleaning trip, this involved cleaning the heavy brass furniture on the big double front doors, then the large brass plates on the stone pillars either side of the gate at the front of the school then inside to the dormitories and polish the brass knobs, and the floors with a mixture of bees wax and Ronuk floor polish (which I had prepared previously by the simple expedient of melting the bees-wax in a saucepan with the Ronuk and stirring same). After polishing the floors I had to hurry downstairs and clear the breakfast things away. (I should have said that before I went upstairs to polish the class room floors I served breakfast). After I had cleared the breakfast things and washed up I sat down with Hannah and Bridget had my own breakfast. Afterwards I had to go round and pumice stone the front steps by the front gate and then the steps from the tradesman's gate, from there I had to go to the wide steps leading up to the front doors and the large stone platform leading to the single step at the front door.

When I had finished these steps, I had to go to the rear of the school to the fire escape, the bottom flight of steps were stones ones that needed pumice stoning. When I finished these and swept out the dining room floor and laid out the dinner things, I went into the kitchen and helped Hannah by Zebo blacking the kitchen range and cleaning the fender and Zebo blacking same, this fender was topped by brass filigree which I cleaned with Bluebell polish. The bell went and that meant that Bridget and me were to serve elevenses, Bridget would serve the teachers and I the pupils. After all this I would clear away the cups and saucers and wash up the same while Bridget went back and sorted out the bed linen and making the beds. While Bridget was doing the pupils beds I would polish the dinner trolley and lay out the dinner things, by the time all this was done it was time to serve with Bridget's help, before we cleared away the dinner things we went and sat down to have our own dinner. After dinner I washed the dinner things, this didn't just mean the plates, etc., but also the dishes and saucepans. After I had finished these duties, I took myself up to my room, washed myself and changed into my uniform, this was in the school colours which

are red and grey, the jacket was like a hotel bell hops just covering the top of the trousers. It had silver pointed buttons, the trousers were grey with a broad red stripe down the legs. My afternoon duties were multifarious ranging from laying the tables in the dining room to posting letters or running messages for the staff.

On reflection I must have cost the school a fortune in breakage's, I remember on one occasion it seemed a waste of time to me to run backwards and forwards from the dining room with dirty crockery so I had the bright idea of putting all the crockery in the galvanised bath with the two carrying handles, placing it on the trolley in the dining room and wheeling it out to the scullery. My intention was to lift the bath with the dirty crockery in it, unfortunately I failed by the margin of an inch to heave the bath into the sink, CRASH, the next moment the scullery floor was covered with broken crockery, Miss Crosse came flying down the stairs, took one look at the scullery floor and went out like a light. Hannah fussed around like a broody hen and looking very pale said "Jarn Miss Crarse 'ave fainted", at that moment Miss Wilde came down and took over. Later on when Miss Crosse had recovered she called me into her study and said "John, you will have to take a weeks' notice". Miss Wilde must have had a soft spot for me because as I left them I heard Miss Wilde say "You can't mean that Jessie, he is so willing and very industrious, after all it was an accident". When the end of the week came I knocked on the study door to collect my cards but instead of giving me my cards Miss Crosse said "Of the crockery that was broken Hannah has managed to save this cup that was not broken, so on Monday you must go up to Harrods and take this cup and order a complete set, you will come up to my study and collect your fare, (they bought everything from Harrods). When Monday came I left after lunch, as I walked to the bus stop I thought, if I walk over Kew bridge and catch the bus the other side I can save a couple of coppers but as I passed Kew Green swinging my hand with the cup in it my hand hit a post and the cup went flying into the road and a passing bus crushed it, (in those days buses had solid tyres) but I thought I could remember the pattern, when I got to Harrods I went to the china department, I picked out what looked like the same blue pattern and gave them the letter with the schools heading on with the request that they send the set as per sample. Unfortunately, what I had broken was a coffee cup, Willow pattern but what I had picked out was a tea set, blue but not Willow pattern. A couple of weeks later Miss Crosse came down to Hannah and said "Those fools at Harrods had a sample, but they still sent the wrong service, we shall return it and say we ordered a Willow pattern 'coffee set".

When Harrods delivered, I used to go out to the van and help them to unload their deliveries to the school, on this particular day they brought 4 x 7lb stone jars of marmalade and jam, 2 of each, a sack of flour, two sacks of potatoes, drums of butter, drums of cooking fat, a sack of sugar and assorted parcels. When I went out there they loaded me up, but big-headed John said "Put some more on, I can manage", reluctantly they put another stone jar of jam, back I stepped from the van loaded up, tripped over the kerb, the parcels were alright but the jars of jam, ----- 'UGH, at first I had visions of Miss Crosse throwing another dramatic collapse in the best traditions of a dedicated thespian, but Harrods van men saved me from that scenario by saying that they would say that they dropped these things or that they slid across the floor of the van as they negotiated a corner. Hannah was good enough to cover up for me, while the delivery men from Harrods were having a cup of tea in the kitchen, they told her what had happened and said they were taking the blame. Hannah told Miss Crosse what had happened, and Miss Crosse was overheard to tell Miss Wilde "Do you know Jessica, those fools from Harrods have spilt all or most of our provisions all over

Broomfield road, fortunately I understand from Hannah that we are not short of jam so we are alright for a few days".

At this point I should explain that Broomfield house school was a day school or preparatory school for about nine little children whose parents work in embassies abroad, the rest of the pupils were young ladies attending what could be described as their finishing school preparing them for their debut into society.

I remember another episode when a pupil had some Dutch mice, she had permission to keep them as pets, when the summer holidays came round her father asked me if I would keep an eye on them and gave me ten shillings (which was a small fortune to me in those days) I used to clean out their cage every day, putting them in a box while I cleaned out their cage and then returned them to their cage, fed them and made sure they had fresh water. One day I took them downstairs and put their cage outside the kitchen window on a table in the garden to get some fresh air, I sat down to read an Edgar Wallace story when Hannah started up and shouted, "Jarn, what 'ave that cat got on the lawn?", I looked out and was shocked to see the cage lying on its side. I rushed out to the rear garden, but I was too late, Hannahs tabby had just decided that Xmas had come five months early, thank you very much, the first thing in my mind was how could I explain the kitchen cats early Xmas.

Miss Crosse had a nasty habit of going round and rubbing her hand or fingers along, for example, the picture rail and if there was any dust, would call "John I thought you had cleaned in here?", so when I was told to clean out the stock cupboard at the top of the stairs (this cupboard stood on the cross landing against the wall between two class rooms on the second floor and contained exercise books, stone bottles of red and blue ink, chinks, etc., etc. ), I took the steps up there and cleared the cupboard out neatly putting the things on the floor, placed them all back in order and took the steps downstairs. On returning upstairs I realised that I had forgotten to dust off the top of the cupboard, this precipitated the nasty thought that Miss Crosse would probably check the top of the cupboard for dust, I did not intend to go all the way downstairs for the steps so I opened the door of the cupboard and used the shelves as steps, it was on the second shelf that I felt the cupboard move away from the wall, in a panic I jumped clear with the result that the cupboard fell forward and slightly askew so that the contents fell out and cascaded down the stairs with catastrophic results, areas of red and blue ink mixed with crushed chalk and exercise books camouflaged likewise in vivid hues. The next day I was out on the lawn with seventy-five feet of carpet, scrubbing brush, bowl of water liberally endowed with Hudson soap powder, Scrubbs cloudy ammonia and a large bar of yellow kitchen soap, scrubbing the length of that carpet (all seventy five feet) it was then that I realised that most of my mishaps were self-inflicted but not the following one. It was my day off and I had got back fairly early, it was about 08:30 p. m. and I was lying in bed reading one of my favourite authors, Edgar Wallace, there was a knock at my door and a girl's voice said, "Are you awake John, only there is a mouse in our dormitory". I was too naive to realise they were having me on, they knew it was my day off and that I would be in bed early and then they had waited until they thought I would be in my pyjamas and in bed and I fell for it hook line and sinker. When I got into their Dormitory which was occupied by about 8 beds the rest of the girls were standing on their beds screaming their heads off and giving me conflicting instructions as to the whereabouts of the alleged mouse I had just dived under one bed where some girls were pointing when the door opened and one of the teachers (Miss Palmer) stood there and said "Girls what on earth is all the ----(at that moment I emerged from under the bed looking very guilty but the blushes were due to my embarrassment) At the sight of my dishevelled

appearance she said or rather stammered "John, whatever are you doing in the girls bedroom at this time of the night?", the girls to their credit jumped to my defence and chorused, its our fault Miss Palmer we thought we would have a game with John and called him in to deal with a mouse that we pretended that we had got under our beds, the duty teacher looked at me and said "Is this correct?", discomfited and red with embarrassment I nodded sheepishly, she dismissed me to my room and as I left I heard her say to the girls that was a silly prank, do you want John to get the sack, is that what you want? and there was a chorus of "Oh dear, No Miss".

On another occasion Miss Crosse had invited a couple of influential parents to dinner out in the garden one evening. It was during the first week of the summer holidays, I should explain here that the rear lawn was a sunken one, very large and with a flight of steps at both ends. The end furthest from the house contained a large flat area reached by one of the flight of steps, this area contained a semi circle of trees hiding the pavilion, the open end facing the sunken lawn. It was in this area that Miss Crosse intended to entertain the guests. On the day in question the parents duly arrived and I was conducting them out to Miss Crosse who welcomed them and said "John you may serve dinner". One couple had a small terrier with them that was very lively. As I crossed the lawn and started to mount the steps up to the upper area of grass where the table was prepared I was carrying the first course of Tomato soup, the little terrier, who had broken free from his tethering ran across to me and effectively tripped me up by his loose leash entangling my feet with the result that I tripped up and deposited some of the soup over the gentlemen's suit. "Miss Crosse said John you are very clumsy" but the gentleman came to my rescue by saying "It wasn't the lads fault, I should have made sure the dog was more secure.

On another occasion Miss Crosse organised an important dinner for a few influential parents, one or two were very wealthy, the dinner was to take place in her dining room, a very large room on the first floor. Miss Crosse said to Hannah "What a pity we don't have a proper butlers suit like Mr. Robby's" Hannah replied "I think that when Mr. Robby left, he left his dinner suit up in the attic or box room, John could go up to the attic and look in the basket and see if there is a dinner suit and if so bring it down here. " Miss Crosse said "What an excellent idea, but do you think it will fit John?, Mr Robby was a big man". Hannah considered this for a moment and said "We could have a look it and probably make a few adjustments to it, John go and bring down the suit from the basket in the box room there's a good lad. "

When I got up to the box room and took the suit out of the basket it had a musty smell mixed with the smell of camphor, I took it down to the kitchen Hannah gave it a good shaking in the scullery and brought it back into the kitchen. Miss Crosse told me to take it into the scullery and try it on, returning to the kitchen so they could see if there was anything they could do with it. I thought, that's fair enough, when they see me in it looking like a heap of clothes on the move. . . . . I should be so lucky. . . . . when I came back into the kitchen it was obvious to my simple mind that they were both determined to make the suit fit me, no matter what!

When I look back on it now I'm really amazed that they could let me go round looking like a scarecrow, an overdressed one to boot. Hannah was getting old and anything in dark clothes or black ones looked acceptable, I think it reminded her of the poor peasants in Eire, the wealthy folk gave their old clothes to the church, who in turn handed them on to the poor and needy, who being impoverished, didn't have the stature of their benefactors and so didn't fill the clothes out like their donors. Miss Crosse was so blind to

my ridiculous appearance that she said to Hannah "I think you can make John look fairly presentable can't you"?

You are not going to believe this, at times like this I too have difficulty believing that two people could be so beguiled as though by Leprechauns, to start with the trousers were too long and too big around the waist. . . Miss Crosse supervised Hannah in making the necessary alterations, if ever there was a case of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear this was it, the alterations were done by the judicious use of safety pins. Tucking the cuffs up into the sleeves and then tacking the same with needle and thread, as far as the waist of the jacket was concerned they got over this by the judicious use of two large tucks in the back securing again with needle and thread and in case this gave away reinforced it with two large safety pins. . . The trousers were a different kettle of fish, they pulled my trousers up by the braces so tightly that I was in danger of becoming a male soprano. Hannah got a large pair of scissors and cut about two inches off the trouser legs. They secured the large waist, by the timely use of tucks in the waist band at the back and a belt pulled very tightly, the tucks in the back were secured by pins. The waistcoat was no problem at all, not to these pixilated couple anyhow, all that was needed was to slit it up the back, cut out the surplus and sew the remaining pieces together. The next problem was the shirt and collar, the shirt looked like a tent on me, two Bedouins would have considered it very spacious living accommodation but tucked into the trouser and with a jacket on it didn't look too bad, however the collar was another proposition, the fact that it was size 17 and I was 14 1/2 didn't dismay these two assassins, Hannah suggested that they could be overcome by removing 2 inches and sewing the two ends together. (The collar was a wing type and almost cut my ears off). I don't know what I looked like from my back but if the front was anything to go by all my instincts told me that the rear must look ghastly. This was made very clear when Miss Crosse said that under no circumstances was I to serve the dinner but to leave the room BACKWARDS, she would serve the dinner, Hannah would put the food on the small service lift, my job was to remove the food from the lift, place it on the trolley, push it into the dining room and BACK out. Miss Crosse would serve the guests herself. This last instruction gave me some idea how ridiculous the back must have looked.

When the evening came I did everything right for the first two courses but when I pushed in the trolley with the dessert I completely forgot and turned to come out of the room face first, an outburst of laughter rang in my ears and I realised that it was the sight of my rear that had prompted the hysterical outbursts of laughter. When dinner was finished Bridget was asked to take in the coffee. After the guests had gone Miss Crosse came flying down stairs to the kitchen, she was absolutely livid and told me that I had made her a laughing stock in front of her guests. I stood there feeling very sheepish and shifting from one foot to the other, Miss Crosse finished her tirade by giving me a weeks notice. By the end of the week it had been forgotten but I suspect that Miss Wilde had a hand in it because Bridget said she heard them arguing about it and Miss Wilde had asked what was wrong with me wearing my uniform it would be the logical thing and would be an ideal opportunity to show off the school colours to perfection, anyhow I heard no more about the sack Miss Crosse went so far as to apologise to me for putting me in such an embarrassing position.

Miss Crosse ordered from Harrods a Summer House and got a local firm of builders to erect it. The whole thing revolved on a concrete base set in the front garden, into this concrete base was a large wooden cross piece let into the cement when it was wet, in the centre of this was a metal tube, this was to receive a spigot which was in the centre of the floor of the summer house, under this floor on the corners were four castors. This completed the principal of making the summer house rotatory. Onto this assembled base was

erected the Summer House, the idea of the rotary effect was to enable one to turn the house to face the sun by a simple push with the hand.

It was a Whitsun holiday week-end and it was Hannah and Bridget's Sunday off, Miss Crosse came down to the kitchen in the morning and said as Hannah explained to you about my mother, I nodded my head and Miss Crosse continued "Miss Wilde and I are going to get Mrs. Crosse down into the summer house in a moment and you are going to give her lunch and then serve her tea at tea time, Hannah has prepared everything for you both. I replied that Hannah had explained everything to me, with that Miss Crosse gave me a nice smile and left the kitchen. At mid-day I took Mrs Crosse her lunch, she remarked to me that the sun had gone in. I didn't think that merited any reply but remembered my mother had always impressed on me the need of good manners, I replied "Yes Mrs Crosse" and went back indoors to get my own lunch and got on with reading my novel by Edgar Wallace. I had just got to the part where the villain was to be caught when there was a commotion in the passage outside the kitchen, and the next thing I knew was Miss Crosse bursting in like an avenging angel and screaming at me, that they had found Mrs Crosse. . . . her poor mother. . . . in the summer house looking like a drowned rat, and did I know that it was 7:45 and her poor mother had had no tea, and that the summer house was ankle deep in water. Apparently after I had taken her lunch out to her it had bucketed down and a gale force wind had blown the rain into the summer house, Miss Crosse continued in a menacing voice "I am going upstairs to give my mother a hot bath and then I shall come down to deal with you, you wretched boy". . . . I don't know what happened next but I never heard any more about it I think that old Mrs Crosse must have said something.

At the rear of the back garden was a large gymnasium, there was access to us but anybody hiring the gymnasium had to go through the door in the side street. (Broomfield House stood on the corner of Broomfield road and a side street). . . It was my job once a week to go to the gymnasium and light the radiators in the winter early in the evenings for a religious group and then go over and switch them off when they had finished, when it got near to them finishing I would watch for the light to go out and then go over to there and switch the fires off.

A Couple of times I forgot to go over and light the radiators, the tenants would complain to Miss Crosse who in turn would berate me but now and again I would forget to go and switch them off when they had finished and that would really upset the apple cart and Miss Crosse said that if that happened again she would stop the extra amount on her gas bill out my wages. One night my mother came to the school with a new pair of pyjamas for me about 9 p. m. and said "I suppose John is in bed", but Hannah told her I would be in shortly when I had finished scrubbing the gymnasium. When I returned from my scrubbing job my mother said "Right son, you are coming home with me Wilberforce got the government to abolish slavery years ago". I prevailed upon my mother to let me give a weeks notice, my mother realised that it would be putting too much on Hannah and Bridget so she said "Alright son it is Saturday now and on Monday you must give a weeks notice". I was rather reluctant to leave if only because of the meals, I remember Hannah saying "where does he put it all he must have hollow legs, that is the third rice pudding he has had".

After I left Broomfield I got a job at Keays the Grocers as a van boy, their shop was the first shop in Petersham road, almost opposite what was the Tea-Cup Inn on the corner of Ormond road. My job was van boy to George Wells, the driver, whose family owned a dairy business in Sheen road Richmond. George had a Rudge Whitworth motorbike known as a Rudge "Ulster" because it won the Ulster Grand Prix. I remember George boasting that he could get down to Brighton have a quick dip in the sea and be back in

less than an hour, you must remember there was no speed limit in those days and very little traffic. Van boys in those days used to stand on the back of their vans so that when the van stopped, the van boy could leap down quickly, grab the relevant order and deliver with the minimum waste of time, there was a rope hanging down from the roof of the van, so that the van boy could haul himself back in the van, stamp his foot to tell the driver that he could drive off to the next customer. There was a fruiter and greengrocer in Friars Stile road Richmond called Mulberry's whose son Matt used to hang on the rope like me, one day the van had just left the shop and was turning into Onslow road at some speed as he went round the corner Matt who was hanging on the rope got flung out and went into some railings of the corner house, fortunately he was not killed but was pretty badly smashed up, Matt and I were friendly with another Irish boy who was destined to become one of Britain's fighter aces, the redoubtable Paddy Finucane. When we knew him he was like us a happy go lucky sort of boy, he got shot down and killed during the Battle of Britain and had won the DFC and in recognition of his services to this Country a block of flats was built in the Lower Mortlake road, a cul-de-sac which had been flattened by a 1, 000 pound bomb, these flats were re-named Finucane Court. Shortly after this I left Keays when we moved to Twickenham, to 3, Station road. My next job was a die casters mate in a foundry. The house we moved into was behind the Albany pub, which was separated by The Twickenham laundry, a single storey building.

We had only been in this address for a few months when the laundry next door caught fire, it was about 1 a. m. when the fire started, and been going for about 1/2 hour, when a fireman standing on the receiving office of the laundry spotted me by the light of the flames still asleep in bed, he smashed the window and shook me into wakefulness it was about a couple of minutes before I gathered what all the commotion was about. I went down to the front door in my pyjamas and as I stood at the top of the steps there was a "Cor, Look" from the crowd outside, which included my mother and sister. When my mother and sister were aroused by the landlord they thought it was me who had roused them and were looking for me in the crowd.

During my employment at the Foundry we moved to Heath road to a flat over Rumseys shop, a remover's and upholsterers, his son and I became great friends and Morris became our best man at our wedding in 1937. whilst working at the Foundry as a die casters mate I got badly burnt on the right foot by molten metal, I was laid up for about three months, I had only been back a few weeks when the side of a furnace gave way and I got burnt on the other foot and got laid up for a further 2 1/2 months after that I came to the conclusion that foundry work wasn't for me. While I was there I never caught a cold or if I did I never knew it, because when I went back to work I sweated it out of me, a vest only used to last 6 weeks, the sweat used to rot it, just the same with the plastic buttons on our trousers they used to crack and fly across the floor from the heat, in no time at all we would be wearing string to keep our trousers up. In the middle of the foundry floor they used to place a large vulcanised container that was filled with barley and lemonade powder, in this metal container was a large ladle so that when we went to get a drink we had to be sure to stir it up because the barley used to sink to the bottom and it was essential to have the barley in it to give the stomach a protective lining. We also wore asbestos gauntlets.

Mr. Rumsey was so busy re-upholstering and selling things to people like DIY, e. g. Scrim, Hessian, springs, webbing, hinges, catches, knobs, deck chair canvas, twine, roller blinds, hinges, etc., etc. When anyone wanted to move out into the country or seaside Mr. Rumsey would get them to agree to do the move at the weekend, it would be very much cheaper because all the family would be available to help with the

moving. Maurice would ask me if I wanted a job helping them, I would jump at the chance because it meant a day out with my friend, We would get into the back of the pantechnican, the mother and father would be in the front with Mr. Rumsey and if there were any children they would get in the back with us. At this point I had already left the foundry, and started with a builders called Ives in Heath gardens with my friend Les Farndon, Les was an old friend from Richmond and he got me the job. We once pushed a barrow all the way to Ealing with a bag of cement, four bags of sand, tools, ladders, paint, brushes, two shovels and some bits and pieces we where tired out when we got there. Another time we had a job over at Merton at a dingy row of houses, in those days it was nothing for a landlord to own a street of houses and put an estate agent in charge of them, this agent would be responsible to collecting rent and for keeping them maintained, sometimes the council would clamp down on the owner and put the property in a good state of repair, there where about ten of these houses and the front and back had to be put in good order, front gates, front concrete paths to be re-laid the exterior of the house and outside toilets to re-paint. One day Les and I where doing an outside toilet and garden shed and the elderly lady from the house came outside to us and asked if we would like a cup of tea and we said yes please, a few minutes later Mr. Ives came round, I felt sorry for him, he had fallen of a ladder some years ago and had finished up with a deformed back like Quasimodo the Hunchback of Notre Dame. He came up to Les and I and said "Come along-come along you two don't turn the bloody shit house into a palace" he turned round to see the old lady standing behind him with a tray of tea and a couple of home made cakes and she said sharply "You are not having any". another job we had was at Ealing, we had to push a barrow with 3 bags of sand, a bag of cement, 100 bricks, shovels, pick-axes, tins of paint, a general assortment of tools and a couple of ladders, it isn't until you push a barrow with all those things on it that you realise that the apparent flatness of a road is all too often an uphill gradient. The slump was just beginning to bite and some of us where laid off, this was at a time when the unemployed in this country reached several million, it was so serious that we only had to sign on at the labour exchange by the theatre at Richmond Green once a week, previously when out of work a daily sign on was necessary even though you only got paid once a week. The day of the week that you signed on meant that you only went on that particular day each week to collect your dole money.

Les Farndon and another friend Tommy Farrington and I would go into Lyons cafe in George street Richmond, have a cup of tea and baked beans on toast and get the draughts off the window ledge and have a couple of games. For a diversion we go into Richmond magistrates court and spend the morning listening to the cases. One day Tommy said to me "My brother is one of the grounds men at Twickenham Rugby ground and there is an ex army Major who has got the franchise to rent out cushions and blankets on rugby days, the next week at the labour exchange Tommy said my brother has had a word with the major and we are to go along on Wednesday morning, as there is a university match in the afternoon and he will explain what we have to do. On the Wednesday we went down to the rugby ground and saw the major and very briefly he explained to us what we had to do. We had to stand by one of the entrances where we would receive a pile of car rugs and leather cushions and we had to let them out on hire, if I remember correctly we had to charge 1/6d for a blanket and 6 pence for a cushion, these prices in those days was when a pound note was worth 240 pennies. We were going to get paid on commission but at the end of the day we had taken nearly twice as much as the value of the cushions and rugs that we had rented out, one of the reasons was due to people getting caught up in the tide of people surging forward

before we had given them their change others said "keep the change". We did two or three weeks like this and then I said to Tommy that there were plenty of jobs in the papers but they were for van and lorry drivers, if only we could drive. This was the year the driving test was introduced, Tommy said we could not drive and we could not afford a lesson but I said I had given it some thought and that we should go to the library and read some books on driving, this we did, we sat in the library all morning and we went round to my house, my mother was at work and my sister Joan was still at school, I nailed a piece of plywood to a block of wood about 4 inches deep, 4 inches wide and 6 inches long, try and imagine the board on the floor and the block of wood is up towards the left hand corner in the block of wood was a wide hole, wider than the broom handle that was going into the hole, the length of the piece of broom handle was about 18 inches, the block of wood had pencilled in the four corners, top left the figure one, in the bottom left the figure two etc. to emulate the positions of a conventional gearbox. On the other side of the plywood, two more squares of wood, side by side represented clutch and foot brake and to the right of those two bits of wood I nailed a half tennis ball representing the throttle and then we would sit and practice gear changes and emergency stops. One of us would sit in the chair, the front legs of which were on the rear of the plywood to stop it moving about and the other one would call out change up, change down, stop and reverse and so on. After a couple of weeks of this we were ready to go out on the road, we sent off for our provisional licences, (After several rugby matches we had accumulated a few pounds), I knew a garage down in South street owned by a man called Joe Meadows, a kind hearted chap, black sheep of a wealthy family, he was a flamboyant character who always wore sandals and yellow socks a yellow cravat and spotless white racing overalls. Armed with our newly arrived provisional licences, a set of L plates and a copy of the highway code which we knew backwards, all hidden from the view of Joe Meadows, so that he would get the impression that we were fully fledged drivers, we arrived at his garage. Beforehand we had flicked a coin, with the hapless loser given the responsibility of driving any car conned from Joe, out of the garage, as the loser this task fell to me! We asked Joe what the chances were of hiring a car for a couple of hours and he said no trouble at all, 7/6d.

We waltzed into the cobbled yard got into the car and under the watchful eye of Joe I drove gingerly out of the yard in first gear towards the gates that had a gap about 12 feet wide these seemed to get narrower as I got towards them like when you are playing cricket and facing a fast demon bowler, the wicket gets bigger, the bat smaller and the pitch shorter, I drove out into South street with Joe holding the traffic up and waving me out I came out of the garage turned right not daring to try and change gear until we had got round the corner out of sight, we stopped and breathed a sigh of relief. We then went along to the Chertsey by pass which at that time stopped short by the rugby ground round about, we went up and down the road taking it in turns. When we took the car back, Joe said did you get on with it alright, that gear change is a bit tricky and I replied rather airily I did not notice it. We took the car out fairly frequently after that over the next month the last trip we did we went up and down the Chertsey road a couple of times and I said to Tommy "What about a run to Chiswick", he agreed, we tossed up a coin, the loser taking the car up to Chiswick and the loser driving back, as usual I called wrongly but by the time we got there I had got into the rhythm and carried on to Hammersmith, I remember with affection West London Hospital because it was here I did my first three point turn in the turning at the side of the hospital, then Tommy took over. You must remember there was very little traffic about in those days, any driver today would think he was in seventh heaven if they could have driven in those conditions. We decided to send

off for our driving tests straight away. From then we concentrated on the highway code asking one another questions on it. A couple of weeks later we had our test fixed for the following week, mine was on the Thursday and Tommy's was on the following day at Claremont Hall in Surbiton. When we arrived Tommy wisely disappeared in case he had the same examiner as I had, then, as today, only a qualified driver could accompany a learner. When my examiner came out he said where is your driver, I replied that he had gone for a cup of tea, the examiner went through the usual preamble of questions and then told me to start the engine we took off, I remember with some affection Brighton road because he told me he would give me an emergency stop but I was not to worry about signals as when he gave me the emergency stop he would make sure nobody was at the back of us, when he gave me the order to stop I slammed on the foot brake and the hand brake and came to a shuddering halt. When we got back he said is this your car and I replied we had hired it he said to inform the owner that the engine was a bit too far advanced. I got over the questions on the highway code alright, I could have told him the page numbers as well but on my driving I was a bit uncertain and he seemed a very miserable man with slightly tinted glasses which accentuated the school master appearance, but as he got out the car and I hurried round to open the door for him he said "Aren't you going to take your L plates off" to which I replied have I passed then? All he replied was I must congratulate your driver when I see him if you come inside I will sign your papers and stamp them. The following day I took or rather accompanied Tommy for his test. To cut a long story short he also passed with flying colours. On the Saturday I looked through the job pages of the local paper and saw, 'Driver wanted Kwik Return Cleaners' not feeling too hopeful I went along for the interview I was to start on the Monday and he said he was glad that I had just taken the test as he thought the previous driver would have failed. I started on the Monday as requested, the van was a small Ford Eight painted pale blue with silver letters. My new employer was a Mr. Roberts son of the Symington soup people from Market Harborough, it transpired that neither he or his sister wanted to go into the family business, he wanted his own dry cleaning business and his sister wanted to go into the hotel trade so they brought her a hotel in Bournemouth. In those days the dry cleaning trade was not very busy, in the summer laundry had the summer trade and cotton dresses, whites in particular tended in those days to come up yellowish particularly cricket flannels you must think with some belief that working class people didn't play cricket but nearly every town and village had its cricket team, so did the factories, there was no such thing as television in those days people had to make their own amusement, most people played football or cricket either as amateurs or for a living, seventeen years ago Jim Standon was the West Ham goalkeeper in the Winter and played cricket for Hampshire in the summer.

My time at Kwik Return cleaners was pretty hectic in the winter in the summer it wasn't too bad, Kwik Return did a valeting service in which customers gave me shirts with frayed cuffs and collars and I had to take these shirts to 'Shirt Menders' at the foot of Kingston bridge at Hampton Wick. When we go any shirts for valeting I would go along to Shirt Menders, it was on such a trip that I had my first and only accident, I had only been with the firm a couple of months, it had been raining and I was on my way back from Shirt Menders and was almost half way along Strawberry Vale and caught up with a lorry belonging to Bentalls, in those days you were allowed solid tyres on the back but you had to have pneumatics on the front of lorries, Strawberry Vale used to have a pronounced camber on both sides of the road because the area was subject to flooding when the Thames was in spate and the steep camber facilitated the drainage of excess water, so the Bentalls lorry was being driven along the centre of the road to overcome the tendency of the

lorries solid tyres to slide towards the gutter, I went to overtake him but at that moment an old man on a cycle coming towards me kept taking his eyes off the road to check the numbers of the house, I was half way past the lorry when the cyclist swerved out towards the centre of the road again, I was almost past the lorry so I swung my wheel over and braked at the same time, I did not hit the lorry but my van spun round like a top slamming into a Morris Cowley saloon car parked in the kerb, I finished up facing Kingston, the Morris car was in a ladies garden on the lawn and sitting on her fence which it had taken with it. My van finished up with all wheels buckled and the back axle distorted, I smashed my nose on the front windscreen, the steering wheel had gone almost through the screen, the steering column was bent and I was sitting on the pavement up against the fence next door, my vivid memories of that day is of a man standing with the lady of the house looking at the devastation with utter disbelief, he had a telescopic hose in his hand and it transpired that he was a vacuum cleaner salesman giving a sales demonstration, at that moment a man came up to me and said don't worry, are you alright, I was trying to get my scattered thoughts together and just nodded he said he was Mr. Pangbourne from 'Pangbourne's garage just off York street and he would see to the removal of my van in fact he had already called for the platform lorry to come along and collect my van, there where hangers and price lists all along the Vale, anyhow I started off back to the shop, needless to say I was very worried, I knew nothing about insurance's and I was worried that I would have to pay for the damage to both vehicles. When I was two shops away from my own shop I could see Mr. Roberts standing in his doorway waving across to Mr. Campion, the manager of the Luxor cinema, later to become the Odeon, just at that moment his vision was cut off by the sight of a platform lorry with his battered van on top, he staggered to the edge of the pavement and watched the lorry with his beloved van disappear around the corner, my heart dropped right down to the bottom of my stomach, in fact I nearly set off hot foot for home but at that moment he turned and saw me and looking relieved said are you alright John, and when I said I was alright but it hurt me in the stomach to cough he merely said you must get your doctor to check you over tonight, in the meantime you must get back on the road as soon as you can, so you must take my car, its at the back of the shop, come inside and I will give you the key and get you on the road before you lose your nerve. The effect that his remarks had on me where difficult to describe, sufficient to say I would go through fire and water for him. His car was a Triumph sports car or rather a semi sports car, it was a sports tourer what they used to call an occasional 3 seater, i. e. that is it had a 'dicky seat' behind the front seats and the car had a collapsible hood. Mr. Roberts went on to say I had better go off to Pangbourne's and get my receipt book and any work left on the van. It was a surprise to me how quickly I adapted to the Triumph almost as if I had driven it all my life. When I arrived at Pangbourne's garage I was surprised to see some mechanics working on it already they looked up recognised the uniform and asked about the poor devil who was in this when I told them it was me who was in it and that I had come to collect some bits and pieces they did not believe me and at that moment Mr. Pangbourne came out of his office and said hello young man how are you, did you realise today is Friday the 13th it must be your lucky day and walked off. The two mechanics said you have really given us a difficult job our governor has been onto Mr. Roberts and told him about the state of these tyres, they are as bald as a baby's backside and we have to get them off and put some runner's on these wheels and you can see the shape of them, and we've got to get them off before the insurance come down. Later I found out that the damage to the Morris car was 1/2 its new price I also found out that it was going around Twickenham that there had been a fatal accident in Strawberry Vale.

One of my customers in the Vale was Norman Morris the racing motorist, he lived three doors past Vale Motors, he was very friendly with Fred Mead who owned the garage. He had a nervous habit of shrugging his shoulders intermittently and at the same time slapping his right hand against his right thigh and raising his eyebrows, all these nervous actions were done in time. Fred Mead owned a large red Terraplane car, a large open tourer 2 seater, one day they were pushing this car out into the road just as I was flying around the corner, the exit and entrance cross over's through the garage forecourt were quite steep with the result that as they pushed the car out into the road, it ran out to the crown of the road before they could stop it or grab the hand brake, at that moment I came flying round the corner and I can still see their shocked faces, there were cars coming towards me so I did no more than swung onto the cross over behind the Terraplane round the back of the pumps, in front of me was a large glass show-case which they used to take in at a night time but as I passed the last pump I swung right and left and carried on. When I got back to the shop the girls said Mr. Morris from the Vale wants to see you, he sounded ever so cross, saying when that bloody driver gets back tell him I want to see him, to which I replied I don't remember Mr. Morris saying he wanted a call, but I will go and see him now. When I knocked on the door his wife answered and said it's that death wish driver Norman. Mr. Morris came to the door and said, what was your bloody game this morning you came round the bend like a bat out of hell, Fred Mead nearly had a heart attack we all thought you were going through his glass show-case but you did a quick right and left diggle and carried on if so nothing had happened, why didn't you stop? I replied I saw no reason to stop as I didn't hit anything there where cars coming towards me so I could not go round the front, he grinned as I said this and asked how would I like to drive a racing car I replied that this is what I would like to do but could I let him know tomorrow, he replied that driving a racing car was not just a matter of getting behind a wheel and belting round a circuit it would mean hard work and dedication, Riley's had a nursery team and I would have to start in the factory and see a car built from the beginning to the end and that I would spend some of my time going round the nursery track and the rest of the time learning to build a car and he said I would have to go through all the stages of car building so that when I finally passed out, I would be able to give a precise analysis of what was wrong with the car when I took it out on test. When I saw Peggy that evening and when I told her the good news spilt the wind from my sails and said "If you take up motor racing I will never speak to you again, we used to live near Brooklands race track, Daddy used to fly Aircraft from Vickers who had a factory there, Parry Thomas was a friend of our fathers and we saw racing cars go over the top at Brooklands and if you take up motor racing I shall not be your friend any more". I think it was then that I realised I could not live without my beloved Peggy and so the next day I told Mr. Morris I couldn't take up his kind offer and told him why, he said it's a pity, your a natural, but be guided by your girl friend it was a car crash that gave me these nervous spasm's, the only time they are quiet is when I am behind the wheel its like a drug.

In the light of what happened in the following years up to my beloved Peggy's death I am glad I did not take up motor racing much as I wanted to at the time I was not to know at that time what the future held and what a wonderful marriage I would have and what a wonderful family we would have. When my darling died the day after her birthday in Ashford Hospital two thirds of my life went too, we were lucky with our off spring as well and because they all had the best and the very caring qualities of their mother, but that tragic day was still to come.

One episode that I recall, occurred just before I met my beloved Peggy was the occasion of King George and Queen Mary's wedding anniversary in the early 30's. The Country was in festive spirit for several days leading up to the jubilee. The whole of London was going mad with festivities the day and night before. Maurice and I went up to take part in the jollification's the evening before. When we got up there people were jumping on bonnets and roofs of cars as motorists navigated their way through the streets of London, Oxford street itself was wild with everybody dancing in the road and in shop doorways. Maurice and I jumped over the high tail board of a Westminster Council lorry with very high sides, we both landed in a heap on a load of garbage, when the lorry pulled up and before we could get out, the waste contents of hotel and restaurant kitchens were emptied over us, tomato skins, bacon rind, egg shells, remains of soup, everything comprising of 'leavings' from kitchen sinks, smothered us from head to foot. Only when the lorry stopped at traffic lights were we able to get out. As we went passed a crowd of revellers they held their noses and made obvious references to our personal hygiene, which needless to say, we found very embarrassing. The next day at noon being very tired we wandered into Hyde Park, all London was there resting, or so it seemed to us. It was a very hot day and we were very tired, so we sat down near a group of people, it would not have been possible to find an exclusive spot, but that was until we go there. Within a few moments of our arriving it was not long before people moved away from us and not surprising, we must have stunk to high heaven. Having been with the smell all night and morning, either we had not noticed or become immune to it. When we woke up about 4.00pm we decided to make for home but when we got to Kensington we went into the nearest gents convenience to make ourselves as presentable as possible, I remember pulling a handkerchief out of my pocket and a couple of potato peelings fell out with it. Then we caught a bus home, on the bus we went straight upstairs but the passengers on our vicinity moved further up the bus, sniffing and giving us odd looks. I have never felt so embarrassed in my life. Well I do remember saying to Maurice "If people said we were not fit to live with pigs, they would be only too right".

My sister Joan one day asked if I would like to go to Richmond theatre with her, I should have been suspicious because it was unusual for my sister to invite me out with her, particularly when she offered to pay. When we got there, she said "oh there are my three friends", it was then that I remembered that Joan had mentioned before about three sisters that she had met at the theatre we all sat together and afterwards we walked to Beaconsfield road St. Margarets where the three girls lived Moya and I walked on ahead of the other three, we saw them to there house and then walked home. Joan said what did I think of them, I do not remember my reply I think it was non-committal.

The following week Joan invited me again to go to the Richmond theatre I was even more suspicious , I recall someone once saying, sisters are inveterate match makers where brothers are concerned so naturally I asked Joan if those girls were going to be there, to which she replied she did not think so, sure enough they were there, they worked things so that Peggy and I were on one side of the aisle and the others on the opposite side, I think this was because on the previous occasion when we had walked home, Moya had walked on in front and bored the girl talking about my dog chum, it was because I was painfully shy where girls were concerned and I felt safe talking about my dog, it was the only subject where girls were concerned on which I could talk coherently. After the show had finished Peggy and I walked on in front, I forget how it went from there but I must have asked if I could see her again and she must have said yes because there was no way I would have had the cheek to call on her otherwise. Two months previously

I had left Kwik Return cleaners and got a job with Burtol Cleaners. It was another four or five months before I had the courage to kiss Peggy and that was entirely due to the letters we used to exchange every night, we had been doing this since the first time we had been going out together, we used to exchange these letters when we parted every evening. I used to rush home every evening to read her letter. In the Winter Peggy had to be in by 6pm and earlier if it was very cold or damp so we sat downstairs in her kitchen and sat in front of the kitchen range up to now we had both been so painfully shy that we had not even kissed. By now they had moved to a very tall Georgian house in Popes Grove. One Sunday I went to call for Peggy (I should tell you that for several years my darling Peggy had suffered from Asthma) when I knocked on her front door one of Peggy's sisters answered the front door and said that Peggy was up in her room, I bounded up the stairs the door to her room was open and I could see her buttoning up her blouse and it was very obvious that she was only wearing a bra under her blouse this worried me so much that I took off my jacket shirt and vest it was the short sleeved type, (my mother would not let me wear the sleeveless type, saying that the lungs weakest points was under the armpits) and I made my beloved Peggy put my vest on, she removed her blouse and put my vest on and I suppose that it was a measure of the trust we had in one another that neither of us was embarrassed but it was to be another couple of months before we would kiss one another. We exchanged letters in the usual way but on this particular evening when she gave me her letter she squeezed my hand and said if you do not want to come around tomorrow evening I will understand and with that she ran up to her front door entered and did not even turn and wave and she used to do. When I got home my with my mind full of worry about her peculiar behaviour when I left her, my mind was filled with doubt as to what her letter contained, bearing in mind her odd manner when we parted and not waving as she shut the front door. It was with much trepidation that I opened her letter, I remember thinking that it had been too good to be true to last any longer, I remember my hand shaking but when I read it I could not believe my luck, she had put at the bottom a p.s. saying now we have been friends for so long I do not think a goodnight kiss would hurt either of us, that is if you wish. The following night as her front door was closing we said "goodnight" we both repeated this several times, the door was gradually closing and at the last moment I plucked up courage and gave her a quick peck on the cheek, missed my footing on her front steps, tripped over their dustbin and turned the wrong way to go home. The end of her road was under repair on the corner and I stayed with the night watchman for about an 1 1/2 hours in those it was essential to have a night watchman on any road or pavement excavations to comply with insurance requirements as the red hurricane lamps could be put out by vandals or blown out by very high gale force winds. stayed with him until about half past twelve, he gave me a swig of his cocoa. We still went on writing letters but by now they had become love letters though the ones we had previously exchanged had been very affectionate. From then on after I left Peggy I would stay with the night watchman for a couple of hours and on the third night he said "when you left me last night I thought to myself, I know that walk, what was your dad in the last war" and when I said he was an officer in the Buffs the Royal West Kents, he said "It was a funny thing but I can remember most people by their walks and when I got home this morning I looked at the picture in my hall, it is a long picture, directly in the middle was your dad Captain Webb". 'E didn't come 'home with us becorse, 'e was in a froggy 'ospital wounded. When I told him that dad had died not from his wounds but from the virulent flu epidemic that had swept across Europe and killed thousands. Because this kind of flu was so virulent they called it the plague. The night watchman said I will bring that photo tomorrow and let you see your dad he was a

proper gent he was and we were all sorry to see him go. The next night I was looking forward to seeing the photo of dad but when I got to Popes Grove the hole had been filled in, the previous night was the last time I saw him.

Peggy had to see the doctor fairly often and I used to try and arrange my calls so that I could pick her up, take her to the doctors wait for her and run her back to her home. Her Doctor was on the corner St. Stephens Gardens, it was in East Twickenham. Her mother used to visit a friend in that area and would come along to the surgery about 5 or 10 minutes later on this particular she gave me a funny look and walked off, Peggy got into the other side of the van a little disturbed and my heart missed a beat and I asked if the doctor had given her some bad news and she replied she had told the doctor she was pregnant, I was so shocked I said that cannot be true we haven't made love she said I know but I thought the doctor would tell my mother and then we could get permission from my father to get married, you know what daddy is like he does not think you are good enough for me and that I should look for someone better who has a decent job and can afford to give me a nice home, he doesn't think love counts for much. On the way back to her home she said I am not going back to 7, Popes Grove, I want to stay with you for ever. I pointed out it would be better to wait until the end of the week until I got paid, but she was very adamant and in all truthfulness I was not very persuasive in asking her to wait until the end of the week and in fact was glad when she told me that when her mother told her father what she, (Peggy) had told the doctor about being pregnant he would take immediate steps to send her to an aunt up in Blackpool. When we arrived at her home she dashed indoors about five minutes later she emerged carrying a suitcase, she must have told those of her sisters who were indoors at the time because they came to the door waving wildly and blowing kisses. Peggy stayed in my van all the morning while I did my rounds, we had lunch in a workman's cafe, I returned to the shop after my lunch and loaded up my van with some 'clean' work for our shop at Molesey, we had a receiving shop at West Molesey where the manageress Phyllis Davis had a flat over the top of the shop where she lived with her husband Sid, we did their cleaning for them at the shop in Twickenham. Sidney worked at Shepperton Film Studios as a technician. As I was transferring the clean work into her shop she said to me "Who is that girl in your van John"? and I told her the whole story to which she replied "So that's the girl you lost your heart to, you were going round moon eyed and forgetting things, don't leave her out in the van bring her in here". When I took Peggy into the shop Phyl said to my beloved "So you're the cause of his absent mindedness and his head in the clouds---I've heard all about you ---he never talks about anything else these days but you". So I left my beloved with Phyl Davis at her suggestion and called back for her in the evening. My mother thought we were both mad and told me so, saying you cannot keep that poor girl away from her family like that. I didn't tell her the reason about what my Peggy had told her doctor and about our fear that her father would send her up to her aunt's in Blackpool, in fact I think my mother would consider such an event would be satisfactory all round. When I went to return to Molesey that evening Sydney her husband was there and he said "We have had a three way talk and have decided is that the best thing for you two is for Peggy to work at the New Inn, the pub owned by Pyhllis's parents as Peggy is only 16 years of age she must be self supporting, when I pointed out that Peggy was an Asthmatic and that the public houses atmosphere was smoky etc. was not good for her health, he countered that with a suggestion that they had already considered that and that my Peggy would be self supporting by taking the dogs for walks, washing up in the kitchen and helping to make the beds, they added that they had had a word with Phyll's parents and they were happy to smooth the path of

true love so that's how e left it. The next day the girls in Twickenham shop said, your young lady's father has been round here kicking up a frightful fuss, so I went straight round to the Police station and told them the whole story, the station sergeant advised me to go to Brentfords magistrates court, see the probation officer tell him the whole story and he would apply to the justices for a courts permission for you to get married, but you must first get a form from the town hall and ask her father to sign it, this form was a special form giving consent to marriage, if he refused to sign it that would give us the leverage to go to court, I thanked him and said I would do as he advised. When I went round to the Town Hall to get the consent form the woman clerk suggested that I take two or three forms as often they got badly folded or torn. The following evening I collected Peggy from the New Inn and took her home to give her father the chance to sign the consent form, when we knocked on her front door it was opened by her father who slammed the door in my face but was opened immediately by my darling, her face white with temper, she said to her father if you treat my John like that again you will never see me again and with that she swung her handbag at him. It was at that moment I saw a timid mouse turn into a tigress and this passion was to continue all our married life if my children or me had any bother with anyone.

When I got the consent form out of my pocket he said truculently "What is this" to which I pointed out it was a consent form for us to get married and that if he didn't sign it we would apply to the courts for a magistrates permission to get married. He was a flag waving imperialist at that time and had a responsible job at the ministry and the thought of his name appearing in the paper made him shudder and to delay making a decision at that moment said he did not have a pen (ball points were not invented then), Peggy's sister Moya said I have a pen daddy and with that produced a fountain pen and got a black look from her father for her trouble. He was in such a foul temper that he snatched the pen and dug it with such a vicious movement that he crossed the nib and set a huge blot of ink across the page and then said there I have spoilt it at which I drew a second form out of my pocket and made sure he saw the third one. After her father had signed this one I folded it very carefully determined to defend it with my life.

It was at this moment that I should explain that like my father I was christened David John, but so that there would be no confusion when we were call they decided to call me by my second Christian name which is John, they obviously expected my father to return from the war in fact they had not even been expecting a war in 1913 which was the year I was born. When I joined the A.R.P. and the same with the T.A. when people saw my name published as D. J. Webb they asked me what the 'D' stood for I naturally answered 'D' for David and that is why outside the family I am called Dave or David having divested myself of that invaluable piece of information I will continue with my memoirs.

After all this Peggy and I went back to Molesey collect her things and thank everybody and in particular Phyllis and hr husband Syd. Then I took my Peggy back to her home. The next day I asked for an hour off so that I could go over to Ealing registry office and put up the banns. On the 21st of August in the year 1937 we got married, Maurice Rumsey was our best man. I had got the wedding ring a couple of weeks beforehand, torn off the corner of an envelope, I put the ring in it and wound miles of white cotton round it to keep it secure. The day of the wedding arrived and at the registry office I gave the ring to Maurice still tightly secured when the registrar asked for the ring, Maurice gave it to me still tied up, in trying to release the ring I dropped it and watched helplessly as it rolled under some filing cabinets, the registrar went out and got the janitor and a window cleaner to move the filing cabinet and rescue the ring and we were finally wed. It was a strange thing but my Peggy had always suffered from severe asthma but the week before we

married her asthma left her and she did not have another attack until our son David was born in 1950. We had moved to 33, London road, Twickenham over Elsie Connell's hat shop which was opposite the main post office. For the last six or seven weeks they had not taken any rent off us as the premises were scheduled to be demolished with the three remaining shops for road widening.

When we got married my darling had the usual woman's indisposition so we were unable to consummate the marriage. Why does he tell us that you may well ask....well I will tell you why, a friend of ours was a policeman and on the way from the station to do point duty at the junction, that was before traffic lights were installed, (there were toilets occupying the centre of the crossing) he came flying up the stairs and up to our bedroom, we were still in and bed and as he came up into our room to wish us all the best, our bed leg went through the floorboards, the wood work was rotten, at that precise moment, to which Tommy took one look and went downstairs laughing his head off and as I write this I can still hear him laughing. My Peggy got a job at Birtles Cleaners as a receptionist before we got married and the girls in the shop brought a tea set and fire screen. About this time I got a job driving for Williamsons the grocers in York St. the van driver they had was leaving and suggested I went in on the Monday that he gave in his notice and applied for the job which I did and was told to start on the next Monday so I went back to Birtles and gave in my notice. At Birtles I was getting £2 a week for a job that had the hours of 09am till 5am and the van was kept in a garage in Radnor road that was very handy. When I went to Williamsons, it was a bigger van, a semi forward control Morris commercial 10cwt capacity and was kept in a garage in Eaton street Richmond where the Richmond's vans were kept, Richmond was the area office for the three other shops which were at Twickenham, Teddington and Surbiton. The difference between the two jobs were the hours were 09am till 5pm except Wednesdays when the hours were 09am till 1pm. At Williamsons they were 08:30am to 7pm, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Fridays were a late night until 8pm and Saturdays later still 9pm. Wednesdays were a half day. I had to cycle to Richmond to collect the van and in the evenings when I had finished take the van back to Richmond, all this I did for an extra two shillings and sixpence a week. It may not seem a lot by today's standards but in those days in the old currency it represented a difference of 12 1/2 percent of ones wages, not to be sneezed at in those days.

In July 1938 my Darling and I went to spend a week with Beryl and Ronnie Dart, (Peggy's sister and her husband), in Harvest road just off of Egham hill, they had a flat that they rented off Mr. Bromley, who had his yard and stables at the same address, Ron lent us a pony and two wheel trap and he suggested that we tour around Egham, he gave us some instructions about controlling Chum for that was the name of the pony, these instructions consisted of walk on and 'whoa' for stopping and gently pulling on either the left or right rein when ever we wanted to change direction. At the end of Harvest road we wanted to turn left so I pulled on the left rein but the pony had other idea's and turned right and then took the first turning on the left, this continued for about 1/4 mile and he then turned into a private driveway and stood at the front steps and flatly refused to 'walk on', after several fruitless efforts I got out of the trap and went to get hold of his bridle to try and coax him out of the driveway when a lady came down the steps and gave Chum a lump of sugar, when I started to apologise and explained how the pony had a mind of its own she smiled and said that's alright, we usually hire the pony a couple of times a week and go shopping into Windsor and when we start off or rather before we start off I have to give him a lump of sugar before he will move, if you jump aboard now he will go without anymore trouble.

On November 27th 1938 our daughter Ann was born we had an arrangement my beloved was to name the boys born to us and I was to name the girls so I named this first born Ann and Patricia after my mother. Shortly after Ann's birth the war clouds hung over Europe, so like most men of my age I enlisted in the A.R.P. prior to us being called to the colours. On the Thursday that Germany marched into Poland I got a postcard through the post, I cannot help smiling at it now but it was an ordinary card for all the world to see but was marked secret and urgent and requested that I presented myself to Orleans school to a Mr. Lynch, I had my tea first and then went round to Orleans school, it was a hive of activity, Mr. Lynch gave me the keys to one of the cars in the school playground gave me the addresses of people who had volunteered to lend their cars in the case of an emergency, I had to take six other chaps with me and drop them off one by one at the addresses I had been given. It was about 10:30pm if I remember rightly, the last call we made the people were in bed and through their car keys out of the window the car was in the road outside their house, it was about this time that when we moved to 38, Radnor road but his particular time we were still at London road and when I got back to the school to see if they needed me for any further duties I saw my darling sitting on the steps outside the school and told the officials that she was not going home without me, they seemed nonplused, (I can see them now scratching their heads, they could not find anything in the rules and regulations regarding Air Raids to cover any contingency like this). One of the nurses persuaded Peggy to let me take her home and return to the depot or school, but at the last moment she shook her head vehemently but she said there was no way I could stay out all night and go to work the next day and drive a van, they agreed and so arm in arm we marched off into the sunset or moonlight. The next evening they asked me if I would like to go full time ----- wait for it----- 3 pounds 8 shillings a week, I swallowed hard and said they would have to let me give a weeks notice at work to which that agreed. On going into work the next morning I told the manager I wanted to work a weeks notice as the A.R.P wanted me to work full time, the manager Mr. Steele said or did not exactly say, he literally exploded with the words, "What a bloody load of nonsense we didn't have anything like this in the last war". I do not know if it was poetic justice or not but the first bomb to fall on Mortlake fell in his road. This brings me to the strange synonymity of names, but as Broomfield house School where the heads were Miss Jessica Crosse and Miss Jessica Wilde so it was at Williamsons. The area manager and shop manager at Richmond were respectively Mr. Silk and Mr. Wood and at Twickenham we had Mr. Steele at Teddington we had Mr. Cotton and at Surbiton Mr. Glass.

Starting full time at Orleans school was the start of a new kind of life for me and one in which I was to gain a lot of confidence which I would need a lot of in the coming years, you see when I left school I spent so little time there as I mentioned earlier when I went up a class I went up not on ability but on age so I was always trying to catch up though not very successfully I must admit, it was while I was at Orleans that I noticed a wealth of talent including Lou Muscant a brilliant violinist and brother of Peter Muscant who was lead violinist of Louis Levy's orchestra, Wally Purdey the saxophone in Maurice Winnicks orchestra, we had an operatic soprano known as Meg, Pop Riley who had two claims to fame he was not only the father of the famous Harmonica player Tommy Riley but was also a demonstrator for Honer accordions, Harry Rathmel the celebrated organist, Captain Morgan the well known tennis player and writer on the same subject and the line up include Grandiose Gubbins the famous Royal Academy who in addition to his A.R.P. work acted as camouflage adviser to the war ministry, my cousin, Ian Bostridge, who was only seventeen and a clever cartoonist and was to make his name in the R.A.F. as a navigator flying from a satellite Airfield

in the country and to which the approaches were guarded because the planes that took off from here dropped supplies into occupied Europe and landed sometimes to drop and pick up resistance leaders and they came under the Auspices of Maurice Buckmaster the moving light Special Operations Executive, S.O.E, of the MI6, more of Ian's adventures later on. Another Artist Noel Sayers R.A., designed the front cover of the depot magazine, we called it the Orleans Post. we got permission from the depot Adjutant so we contacted R. Wright also a member of Orleans depot who had a printing business,,the next thing was to go round the depot to get members to contribute articles and news items which they had promised when we first dreamed up the magazine, but unfortunately almost all of them wanted to see what the first 'copy' looked like and that was when I had to juggle my brains to create lots of 'copy' to look as though we had a lot of contributors. In the first edition attached to the back of these memoirs I have initialled the items I have contributed, alas Wrights the printers were unable to produce the 'blocks' to print Ian's cartoons, unfortunately before we could get going on another issue the powers to be decided that Orleans Depot was over staffed, we had over 200 personnel on each 24 hour shift, they sacked over 50% and transferred the rest to other depots, because I lived near the railway station they asked me if I was prepared to go to Isleworth at Redlees Park where they had an Ambulance and stretcher party stationed housed in the bowling green dressing room. So I accepted the transfer to Isleworth when I got to Redlees Depot I was given a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost 40-50 1918 model for an ambulance. They had a system of organising a first aid bee, in other words they divided the members into two teams and the two teams competed against one another with the depot clerk asking the questions and if the member of a team could not answer, the other team got a bonus point if they knew the answer, when it got to my turn I can remember if it was only yesterday my question and answer, it was with every confidence that I wall able to tell them the answer to the question,"How many ribs did the human body have", but of course I knew the answer to that one I have a certificate from St. John's to prove it I was only a short step from being a doctor so with the utmost confidence I said we all had 24 ribs, Bert Leach the depot clerk and question master said with some surprise, 24, by now I was confused and altered the answer I gave to twenty four pairs it was only then that I realised that I had learnt my first aid parrot fashion, at Orleans we had the twelve statutory lessons two in the morning and two in the afternoon for three days and then on the third day we had the exam, when I answered the questions at my examination I could have told the examiner the number of the pages as well as the right answer, it worried me so much when i realised I knew very little about first aid that I decided to rectify straight away on the premise that if I could not give the people of Isleworth skilled emergency treatment I couldn't complain if any member of my family got bad or unskilled treatment. The result of all this was to aim for the top proficiency and to this end I brought Tungstall's advanced ambulance first aid book and read it from beginning to end and then returned to the beginning again and did this several times. I gave my beloved Peggy the book and asked her to keep throwing questions at me, I also Ballieres medical dictionary and ordered the nursing Mirror from our newsagent and then I went to the British Red Cross and asked them if I could sit in on one of their lectures they said this was unusual as they didn't normally take people other than members of the Red Cross Association but as I was on the Ambulances they would make an exception. They let me take the course and examination then decided to let me take their medallion standard exam, and passed me in that category. After this I went over the road to West Middlesex hospital and saw Mr.Galloway,the hospital superintendent and asked him if I could sit with the nurses and join in at their

lectures, to which he replied that he could not answer that one until he saw the sister tutor and see if she was willing to take on a pupil who was not a member of the nursing staff, and would phone the depot and let me know if she would accept me, The next day on arriving at the depot, Steve Lerner the depot super., said there was a message from the West., Mid., hospital saying that it was alright for me to join the nurses in their lectures and to sit the examination afterwards. When they took the exam., afterwards, some of it was written and the rest of was practical, in the written, they made sure that whether you were first, second or third year student you would not sit adjacent to another student of the same year this was to prevent the risk of students helping one another out. I can remember the practical as though it was yesterday. The first thing I had to do was to go through the motions of giving a patient a renal or blanket bath without actually using water, our patients were other nurses. Another nurse had a label denoting bad burns to the chest and back and I had to give her dressings secured by spica and reverse spica bandages, the next exercise consisted changing the draw sheet and the other sheets of a patient without her getting out of bed, after this I had to go over to the sister tutor herself, she was sitting at a desk in the opposite corner of the room, it was a fairly large room but as I walked over to her it seemed miles long, her first remark was "nervous lad" to which I admitted to being nervous, she replied "I am not going to bite your head off", she asked several questions like "what was the incubation period of German measles, Chicken pox etc., and continued with questions applying to medicine instructions on the label on a bottle which would be in Latin such as "Hac-Noct"--"Teumendum" --"" -Bis-Die " which freely translated mean "at night " "three times a day" and "twice daily " and then I had to pour out medicine from a bottle on to a spoon, I had to hold the bottle with the label uppermost so that the medicine did not run down the label and conceal the instructions or the nature of the contents, remove the cork with the little finger curled round it and keep it like that while I poured out the correct dose, replace the cork and give the patient the medicine. They gave me pass marks for the nursing course much the relief of my darling Peggy and Anne who kept asking her mother "mummy do not let daddy bandage me up tonight, or change the sheets of the bed with me in it, as I fell out of bed a couple of times".

On my off duty days I had been delivering to ladies hairdressers for a Mr. Sulkin, the father of one of my colleagues who was at the depot with me, and who had been called up for the army asked me if I would carry on, I agreed to do so. I had to go to Heathfield South, Rd., Mr. Sulkin had been bombed out of his premises in London and was carrying his business from his home in Twickenham. This set me up to learn all about the hairdressing trade which was going to stand me in good stead after the war. Sidney Pollard, who had a chemists shop and sub-post office at the corner of Chudleigh rd., about 3 turnings away from Mr. Sulkin's home, used to make up permanent waving formulae, reconditioning cream etc., for Mr. Sulkin and for his tenant upstairs who had the front room on the first floor over his shop, there were 2 floors above his shop, both of which he owned, this tenant had a ladies hair dressing salon. Mr. Sulkin used to be allowed a small petrol ration for his small car, which I used to do his deliveries. He used the garage at the side of his house as a warehouse in which he kept things like carboys of peroxide which came in the strength of a 100 volumes and I had to break it down into lesser strengths of 20--30--40--and 60 volumes, decanted in to pint half gallons and 1 gallon bottles, the same had to be done with -880 ammonia, ie, decanted into smaller amounts, the most popular sizes were Winchester Quarts. Sidney Pollard made the perm. lotion in gallon bottles, which I transferred into pint or half gallon bottles according to what was wanted by the customers, it was not just bottled lotions that were wanted, Mr. Sulkin also stocked hair

pins, grips, curlers, salon combs (large, small and medium waving combs and barbers Etona combs, also scissors, cutting, thinning and tapering types) -----When I returned to the depot the next day Mr. Watson told me that the authorities had decided that the ambulances should be at a separate depot that would be for ambulances only and that I should lead the ambulances down to Bulstrode Lodge which was in Bulstrode road of Lampton rd. A stretcher party car followed us down then took 2 of our drivers back to fetch our ARP ambulances down to Bulstrode Lodge, this depot was sand bagged to a height of about 8 feet at the front to protect it from blast from a bomb landing on the hard surface of the road, behind the mansion was a large garden and to the side of the house and reaching from the front to the back was a gravel and cinder surface for our ARP ambulances, and behind the house was a large shed and behind the shed was a lawn and fruit tree, immediately beside the depot was a narrow accommodation road which led through to the Bath rd., and on the left hand side were several lock up garages, 2 of which had been knocked into a large single garage which housed both white or civil ambulances, these were approached from a door in the wall flanking the depot garden, in this garage was a power point low down on the wall and attached to this power point was an insulated lead with an attachment on the end, this attachment plugged into a socket on the ambulance underneath so that when we got a call-out the ambulance engine was warm as was the interior of the body. One of our earlier calls was to Sidmouth gardens which was on the right along the London rd., almost opposite the fire station and Borough Rd. College, between there and bridge road was the trolley bus depot midway between Sidmouth gardens and Bridge road which were about 600 yds apart, and under the pavement out side the trolley bus depot was an unexploded bomb which lay about three feet under ground, the bomb disposal men tried to get a rope on it to stop it sliding into a dried up under ground stream, when they left it was lying on a sandy ledge and they were coming back the next day to set up a tripod and rope and pulley. My ambulance was third out and when we approached the area it was barred both ends by a series of trestles and poles with boards with the legend KEEP CLEAR UXB, I said to Bert my attendant if we go down bridge rd and Worton rd., turn into Woodlawn rd. along into St. Johns rd, turn left into London rd. and continue back along to Sidmouth Gardens we shall lose valuable time, especially as it was a cloudy night, which made it harder in view of the black-out and the restriction on head lights, so I suggested to Bert that I wanted to charge past the trolley bus depot through the barriers but that he did not have to come if he didn't want to, but dear old Bert said "Whacko mate, we cannot live for ever, " so we charged through, sending trestles, poles and boards both ends flying and arrived to find that we were the first of the emergency services to get there. The first thing we saw was a scene I can see now, it was a father on top of what was their Anderson shelter, they were in their shelter, a bomb had landed on the house, the blast had entered the shelter and forced both halves of the shelter apart blasting the occupants out through the gap formed by the parting of the side walls which were of corrugated iron covered with earth, the father and son were blown clear but as the mother was blown through the earth crashed down again and brought sides of the shelter together and decapitating the woman in half, the father was crying and cuddling what was left of his wife, and the boy who was only 6 years of age, cuddling his fathers head and saying don't worry daddy, I'll look after you" that is a scene I shall never forget, when I looked at Bert he had tears in his eyes, Bert was like a 6ft 2" Billy Bunter with his owl like eyes, he wore glasses and during the last war had served in the Royal Naval Air Service which was the fore runner of the Fleet Air Arm, he wasn't very good at first aid though better than anybody else in the depot but he had a marvellous bedside manner and rapidly put patients at their ease, chatting to them like

a Dutch uncle. The thing that struck me during the war was the way that even young children seemed to mature during adversity and become stoical. Another thing I noticed was how nature protected you from any trauma or shock, no matter how much the casualty was smashed up, nature protected you in various ways such as drawing your attention to the fact that they wore odd socks or food stains on their clothing and you found yourself focusing on these points, for example a young lady was having a bath when their house was smashed and she lay on the debris alive but naked and I was only conscious of vaccination scars on her upper arm. The next day when I arrived at the depot Mr. Heseltine the depot superintendent said "Johnny, I've had a police inspector round here early this morning and wanted to know who was driving the Rolls Royce ambulance last night that crashed through the barriers in London rd where the UXB was, and went on to say that if the bomb had exploded a large part of Hounslow would have gone with it, when I told him that it was you and why you did it, he seemed to lose interest and walked away. When a police inspector comes to make a complaint and then walks out without a murmur, that's fame, or is it infamy. A parachute mine landed at the junction of London rd, Wellington Rd, South and Wellington Rd, North flattening several buildings in the area and shops, Mr. Watson was there organising evacuation when it went off bursting his ear drums, he was taken to West Middlesex hospital where he died from brain haemorrhage, I was not on duty that night but was sorry to hear of the death of a brave, strong willed man like him who stood by his principles. One Sunday lunch time we got a call to Hounslow Heath, it was a cold miserable day in November where some members of the Fulham Gas Works Home Guard detachment were having grenade throwing practise under the watchful eye of a Middlesex Regiment sergeant, it was not unusual to find large concerns having their own Home Guard companies. When we left the depot we were told a man had been injured but when we got there we were faced with quite a tricky problem indeed, they had taken the casualty down into the dugout that had been reinforced with heavy timbers that had been holding up a roof of corrugated iron and covered with about three feet of earth, these timbers had been reinforced by cross timbers which made access and egress very difficult, I asked the usual questions as to what had happened to the poor Home Guard captain who was lying there in agony, When I saw what we were up against told Bert to go and phone Hounslow hospital and ask them to be prepare for a casualty needing morphia, oxygen and a blood transfusion, this was after I had asked the usual questions as to what had happened, it appeared that they were receiving grenade throwing under the guidance of the Mddx. reg. sergeant, a man had thrown a grenade but it had struck a stake of wood sticking up out of the ground about 4 feet in front of the bombing trench and bounced back into the trench, the sgt, went to lean down to throw the grenade but before he could get down the home Guard officer bent down with the same intention with the result that the sgt, who was a large heavy man over balanced, fell on top of the officer as the grenade went off under his body doing extensive damage, whilst being given these details I had been examining the casualty and the injuries were as I had feared and that he was in a worse state than I had at first feared, and that first impression was bad enough that is why I had sent Bert to phone the hospital with the requests that I had given him plus his blood group which strangely enough was the same as mine. After Bert had gone I continued my inspection and found that he had penetrations of the left lung, the abdomen had perforations as well as penetrations, his left femoral artery was torn but there was no serious blood loss due to the extreme shock reducing the blood pressure, he also had penetrations and perforations of the chest, his scrotum had swollen to the size of a tennis ball, the flesh on his arms and legs hung in loops. I patched him up as well as I could, putting a firm bandage

over his torn femoral artery in his left leg, I gave him a glucose tablet to suck because at this point combating shock was supreme. Bert had arrived back from phoning the hospital. Fortunately we had come with a civil ambulance as the siren had not gone off, this had the added advantage of a well equipped medical case, hot water bottle and pneumatic mattress and adequate blankets. prior to this I had got Bert to give me a hand to put a blanket on the floor of the shelter and lifted the officer onto it before he went to the phone, this had the advantage of keeping him off the cold ground but would assist us in lifting him and conveying him to the stretcher which we had left outside owing to the impossibility of getting it into the dug-out. we now pinned the edges of the blanket together with large 'blanket safety pins' and with the help of a couple of Home Guards we got him outside and on the stretcher and into the ambulance, I felt very sorry for the Home Guard who was their first-aider, complete with the St. Johns badge sewn on his tunic and I wondered how I would have coped if this had been my first casualty, and I knew in my heart that I would have felt just as inadequate as he did, probably more than he did. He was worried stiff about the captain lying on his injured lung side and I explained to him that it was better to lie any casualty on their injured lung side because if we leant him on his good side the blood would flood into the good lung and that would make matters worse. This was the only occasion that I got Bert to drive the ambulance while I remained to keep an eye on the casualty, Bert was a good attendant when the casualty had no complications. When we got to Hounslow hospital they were waiting with an oxygen bottle and mask, morphia or morphine which they injected him with. As they had several nurses laid up with influenza (there was an epidemic at the time) they asked me if I would go along and help them to clean up his cuts and scratches and at the same time remove the obvious bits of shrapnel while they attended to the oxygen and blood supply, checking his other injuries including stitching up his more serious cuts, while they did this another doctor sewed up the loops of flesh that hung down from his arms and legs, while they were doing this I completed cleansing his minor cuts and abrasions with peroxide 5 volume strength. When they had finished what they were doing they asked Bert and I if we would be kind enough to take the casualty to the ward where they had prepared a 'shock' bed for him. When we got to the ward the nurse was preparing some onion bags for his limbs, this was important for his recovery. When we got back to the depot Mr. Heseltine said that the hospital had been on the phone asking him to thank us and added that we had surpassed ourselves. A few days later Dr. Hirsch said your casualty has had a good night, They had sent for Mr. Green Armitage (a multi injury specialist) and he had been here all the evening, and at 2-0 am he decided that the casualty was strong enough to undergo further surgery, which took nearly 3 hours, he expressed surprise at the mans chances of recovery. A few days later when we took in an epileptic fit, Dr. Hirsch (I should say MR. Hirsch as he was the 'house surgeon' said to me have you seen this weeks copy of the Lancet, I replied that wasn't my usual sort of magazine, he did no more than to take me along to his office and showed me his copy of the 'lancet'. the page he wanted to draw my attention to was marked with a paper clip, and it said, quote, 'The home guard officer that the ambulance men picked up, and despite their valiant efforts would be sure to die either from septicæmia or pneumonia due to the great shock his injuries would occasion him. This caused me some distress and said "Is this true sir" to which he replied "What they do not know is what a very professional and dedicated ambulance crew we have in you two. They ultimately sent him to Harefield for breathing exercises but found that he could not aspirate, so they returned him to Hounslow hospital where they found a piece of shrapnel in his heart muscle, which they successfully removed, and 6 months later he was back at work. Shortly after this 3 Hounslow doctors,

Doctors Dark, Curran and Meadowcroft (the latter being a fracture specialist) approached Dr. Anderson, the local medical officer of health and said they were so impressed with my treatment of casualties both in shock, diagnosis and general approach that they would like to send me to medical school, they went on to say that they were very impressed with my natural aptitude for being a doctor or surgeon. Unfortunately their offer only covered my medical school fees and my books etc. Dr. Anderson told them that it might be difficult for me as he understood that I had 3 children and that as far as he knew I had no other income and that it might be difficult for me to take advantage of their kind offer, When he told me this I asked him if he would be kind enough to thank them for me, he smiled and said " I have, and would like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of all the casualties you have treated, and I understand you have only lost one out of all the casualties you have treated, and he was on a motor bike and went under a lorry on the Colne brook bye pass, and died in your arms 3 minutes after you got there. I understand that the late Mr Watson, when he was in charge of Martindale road schools depot gave the ambulance men 3 minutes to get to any part of the borough boundary, said boundary stretching from Cranford Bridge to the iron bridge at Brentford and from Norwood Green to Ivy bridge at Twickenham, and I see from the casualty ' call-out' sheets that you have done just that, I'm not criticising you but I must say that I hope you will continue to take care, That is all and thank you again. Some episodes stand out in my mind like the little girl who was sent out to the milkman with an empty bottle, she fell on it and badly gashed her palm, her mother hearing her scream took her along to the local GP who lived a few doors away. When we got there the little girl was sitting on his desk, having treated her grazes I asked Bert to bring the small padded splint, bandage and triangular sling and acriflavine, all this time the doctor was dancing round like a dervish shouting " get her to hospital " I warned him that I was going to report him to the medical authorities for his unprofessional behaviour in front of the patient and her mother. In those days hospitals were under staffed, and because of the raids, very busy and there was a slight chance that they would be unable to attend the little girl at once, in that case, if we left the little bit of gauze that the doctor had put on her hand, and did not splint it and the little girl was left for any length of time her little hand would finish up like a claw for the rest of her life, if there was any damage to her nerves or tendons the risk of permanent could be reduced by firmly strapping it to a padded splint, and it was important that the splint was long enough to stretch above the wrist by 2 or 3 inches. When we got to Hounslow hospital I reported this Dr. Matthew's to the hospital doctor, he suggested that I make my complaint to Dr. Anderson the local medical officer of health which I did on the way back to the depot, Bert accompanied me up to his office at he Bath rd., health centre where we made our complaint. 'Tommy' Atkins a volunteer on the ambulances at our depot was a clerk at the health centre and used to come out with us of an evening, told us that Dr. Anderson had phoned the hospital and spoken to the doctor there who had seen the little girl, told him that he had a complaint from the ambulance crew, they replied that it was just as well that we had strapped the hand to a splint for had they been busy, deformity could have taken place, and anyhow it was very unprofessional to shout in front of a patient, and Dr. Anderson had made an official complaint on our behalf, Tommy also told us that Dr. Matthew's had got his degree during the 1914 war when there was a serious shortage of doctors and that they were pushing them through without regard to the fact that they would carry on after the war when they got demobbed, and they would set up as a G. P., there was no examination to see if they were fit for entering civilian practise. Another incident that stands out in my mind is a call that we got from Hounslow Polytechnic. When we arrived we saw a very large lad lying on

the floor on his back, when we asked the P, T, instructor what had happened, he started off by saying that he was very relieved when we arrived, he had not touched the lad since he fell, he explained what had happened, apparently the lad had come over the vaulting horse to do a rolling forward somersault but had landed just as we found him, I said quietly to Bert that I wanted a safety pin out of our first-aid bag, then I got down by the side of the lad I asked him if he had any pain any where, he smiled and said no, while I was asking him this I was sticking the safety pin, firstly in his arm and then in his leg but keeping my actions out of sight, Bert at this moment was preparing the stretcher with sand filled socks and placing them on the stretcher where they would give maximum support, i. e. the small of the back, behind the ankles, under the neck, and one either side of his head to prevent it rolling about (Bert had worked long enough with me to know that we were dealing with a suspected broken neck) hence his preparation of the stretcher. While he was doing this I took a group of 5 lads up to the other end of the gym, got one to lie down to represent the casualty, the other 4 lads I got to kneel down on one side of the lad who was acting as the casualty, one opposite the hips, one at the feet, one at the shoulders and one to support the small of the back, (when I said I got them to kneel I should have said, kneel on one knee) I told them that when I gave the order to lift, they would have to lift very gently together while I held the head steady, we did this several times and must say that the lads were very good, at bringing the casualty on to their other knee while Bert pushed the stretcher under the pretend casualty, and the lads lowered him on to the stretcher, keeping him very straight, when I was satisfied that they were O, K, we all went back to where the real casualty was, and made a very successful transfer on to the stretcher, (I should explain here that I had diagnosed a partial severance of the spinal cord and the last thing we should do was to hurry, there was no point in rushing him to hospital) any undue sudden movement could complete the severance and that would have killed him, this casualty worried me as much as the Home Guard officer at Hounslow Heath, we had to rely on 4 young lads, who if they did their job well would make all the difference to whether we took a casualty or a corpse to the hospital, as I said earlier, there was no rush in getting him to hospital, there was nothing they could do for him tonight, they would put him to bed to rest, and let the doctor look at him in the morning, the operative was rest and warmth, and we had warmed the stretcher before hand, or rather Bert had by applying our hot water bottles on the stretcher under the blankets until we ready to put our casualty on it, at which point the bottles would be moved and put either side of his back in the area of the kidneys. When we had got the stretcher onto the ambulance I drove very gently, keeping to the crown of the road, avoiding the unevenness of the kerb side of the road, rather than taking the turning on the right that would take us into West Middlesex, and necessitated a sharp left hand and right hand turn, so I continued to Bush Corner and continued on a gradual curve to the hospital, I had to take care on turning into the hospital entrance and slow right down to a slow walking pace, we were about 20 minutes doing a journey which normally would have taken 2 minutes. When we arrived at the hospital the doctor examined him in as much as he took the lads temperature and checked the pulse, he did this in the ambulance, I suggested to the doctor, who was obviously young, and worried, that it would be better if we carried the stretcher straight to the ward rather than transfer him to a trolley and with the assistance of a couple of orderlies transfer him straight on the bed, which we did satisfactorily, we found out later that he had a comminuted fracture of the 7th, cervical vertebra, and a fracture of the 6th. vertebra. Three days later we went on a maternity case, and when we returned, Mr. Heseltine gave us a couple of packets of cigarettes, which in those days were as rare as gold dust, most tobacconists kept them under the counter for their regular

customers. When we asked him to whom we were indebted for this, he replied that the father of the boy who had the broken neck, on asking the father how the boy was, the father said that the boy had died that morning, some one pushing a trolley through the ward had accidentally caught the lads bed sufficiently hard enough to complete the severance of his spinal cord, they told the father at the hospital they could not understand how we managed to get his son to the hospital alive, given the tests the ambulance men did at the gymnasium it was obvious that the spinal cord had been partially severed and the boy would have been bed ridden for the rest of his life, but, the father went on, his son was or had been such a keen athlete that he would have been in purgatory if he had to depend on other people and that he and his wife looked upon his death as a happy relief. Apparently had told him that he had us to thank for giving he and his wife a couple of days with their son before he died, and the cigarettes were their way of saying thank you. -----all very sad. Bert and I were very quiet for a few days. Our 4th. daughter was born 24 hours after the flying bomb fell on the Grotto hotel. After the bomb fell on the Grotto hotel I was painting the front of the house, suddenly there was a crash, seconds later I could not see the bottom of the road for a cloud of gritty dust, it settled on my wet paint which was green, the dust stuck to it giving the effect of the wood work being coated with billiard table baize. Within 10 minutes we had a knock on our door and when I opened it, Mr. Mcnight from the bottom of our road was standing there with blood pouring from a badly cut wrist and looking shocked, he was a professional violinist and was worried about his injury in as much as it would harm his violin playing, I took him in, sat him under our stairs and stemmed the bleeding, he had cut both arteries in his wrist, while I was attending to him there was another knock and my darling answered it only to find three other neighbours stand there smothered with debris and assorted cuts from flying glass. ( most of the houses in the immediate area had lost their windows, ) one of them was badly shocked, smothered in mortar dust and bad cuts so I led her through to our bedroom, lifted her onto our bed, ( which had been readied for Peggy's confinement ) My darling brought in a bowl of warm water with dettol in it I was checking her for other injuries, I spent a couple of hours cleaning these folk up while my darling who was expecting any minute to go into labour was giving them cups of tea under our stairs, and our bed was in a mess, we were not sleeping in it while the raids were ever prevalent but would be using it for the confinement. When Julia was due nurse Macnamara, the middle aged and popular Irish midwife said to me "Jarn, oi would loik you to be prasent when the cheeld is barn. " She thought the experience would stand me in good stead if we got called out and had to deliver a baby. I was glad I was present at my beloved's delivery of our daughter, I took a deep interest in the birth and all that nurse Mac., did, and heeded every thing she said. A few months later I was to remember nurse Mac's advice with gratitude. When my darling started her labour pains on that evening I was there and the first thing nurse Mac told me was that a mother needed stitches it was bad midwifery, and that was why she would not send for the doctor until after the baby was delivered, that is of course if there were no problems. this enabled the doctor to claim his attendance fees from the N. H. S., When I asked her the reason for this she said "The doctor is always in a hurry and tells the patient to 'bear down' with the result the baby is forced out of the vagina before it stretches sufficiently to permit the safe delivery of the baby, When I asked her how she would stop this, she replied, "When the head first appears she gently maintains a gentle pressure with her hand to restrain a 'too-rapid' delivery, she would repeat this several times letting the head make a very gradual emergence. The next thing learnt from nurse Mac. was to ensure that I had on my ambulance a maternity kit which would consist of maternity towels, dettol, ligatures, the latter consisted of two doubled

lengths of strong cotton knotted at both ends in 2 test tubes filled with alcohol ether with a ligature in each and tightly corked up and the corks secured with adhesive tape, Talcum powder and a rubber sheet, ( The rubber sheet and alcohol I scrounged from Hounslow hospital, we were tickled pink when I told them why I wanted these items, they also gave me a large bottle of Dettol and the talcum powder. ( I should have added that when the bomb fell on the Grotto we lost all our curtains and I never found them, when a bomb falls it creates 'concussion' and 'suction' waves so as you walked down Bonser road you would find the first three houses with their windows blown inwards and the next three houses with their windows sucked outwards. The council men came round the next day to replace the window frames and glass. The method was that the repairers were in three teams, the first team unscrewed the windows (casement types as were the windows in our rd. ) the second team removed the broken glass, the third team put in the new glass and putty, and the first team having got back to the beginning of the road, screwed the windows back. The bomb actually fell in the Grotto car park and partially destroyed the hotel itself, at the time a director from Alfa Laval, a firm on the Great West rd. in Hounslow, was getting out of his car in the car park with his secretary and that was the last anyone saw of them, even their car was unrecognisable, the first couple of houses in Holmes road were flattened and 2 or 3 people were killed. The next morning on my way back from the shops ( I should explain here that I had taken a couple of days of compassionate leave for Peggy's confinement ) and as I passed the remains of the Grotto hotel I saw a Royal Air Force officer with medal ribbons including the D. F. C. and pilots wings walking over the rubble crying his eyes out, it appeared that the house that was completely flattened was his and the dead occupants were his wife, sister and his baby. very sad. and it struck me how lucky I was to have my beloved wife and 3 children alive and well and expecting our 4th. child who was born on Sunday 4th July ( 24 hours after the Grotto was bombed) In November the same year as Julia was born we got an ambulance call out to vicarage farm rd to take a maternity case to the Norwood Nursing home at Norwood Green the other side of Heston. When we came out of the depot we couldn't see our hand in front of us owing to a pea soup fog, in those days before London was declared a smoke free zone, in other words no one was aloud to light a fire with coal, they had to use a smokeless fuel like Anthracite but this was before those restrictions and when we got a bad fog in those days it was really bad, when you sat in your vehicle you could not see the front of your bonnet so Bert walked in front with his torch towards to me. - When we finally got to Vicarage Farm rd., over half an hour had elapsed to do a journey that would normally have taken 5 minutes. When we finally arrived the mother was in an advanced stage of labour, this worried me as it dawned me that I might have to deliver the baby, because there was no way that we could get her to the Frogmore nursing home so I asked Bert if he would walk up to the nursing home and bring the nurse back with him, I calculated that it would be at least 50 minutes before he got back, we could have phoned but it did not seem fair to ask the nurse to walk all the way here unescorted, you have to remember that there was total black out at night, so that and the fog would make it a hazardous journey, but in any event I wanted the professional support of the nurse if I was half way through delivering the baby. Bert went off and I went into the kitchen, put some hot water in a bowl, put some dettol and intended to scrub my hands, at that moment the patients mother came into the kitchen and before I could stop her she had poured my water down the sink and said "that water was cloudy, so I have refilled the bowl with clean water. ( I should mention here that as well as the pregnant mother, in the same house at the same time were her 2 sisters and her mother, all 4 had their husbands in the forces, and I could not understand how

jittery they all were. all the girls were staying with their mother until the war finished, ) It is a strange fact but I never saw them the whole time I was there except the mother and she only popped in twice, the first time was to come and take the baby into the other room and the second time was to bring in a cup of tea, I should mention here that the pregnant mother was on the ground floor in the rear room whilst the others were in the front room. The patient started 'bearing down' and I remember what nurse Mac, said about not letting the baby being delivered too quickly so to restrain the delivery I had to maintain a light pressure on the head as soon as it appeared and release the pressure between the contractions, finally the delivery was complete, I checked that the nose and mouth were free from mucous or any other obstruction and was breathing alright, I then lay the baby between the mothers legs having first made sure that it cried, and waited for the discharge of the 'after-birth or placenta' when that happened I had to wait for it to stop pulsating before I applied the sutures that I had prepared month before hand, I applied the first ligature close to the babies umbilicus as possible tied the umbilical cord close to the ligature then cut the 'cord' after cutting the 'cord' I had to make sure that the ligature near the babies umbilicus was not leaking, if it was that was where the 2nd, ligature would come in handy, it was a safety precaution having 2 ligatures, the baby was partially covered in a little white fat on its skin, like lard and I remembered Nurse saying that the amount of this on the surface of the skin indicated how early the birth was i. e., how premature. I already had found a zinc bath, narrow and about 4 feet long, and sitting on a short 3 legged stool and with a rubber apron and with sweat pouring off me poured warm water into the bath testing it with my elbow for temperature as I had seen Peggy do, I had 2 saucepans beside me, one with hot water and the other with cold water. Having got the water just right I picked the baby up, went and sat on the stool scared of dropping the baby which was as slippery as an eel, after drying the baby and putting talcum on it, there came the question, after having placed a half penny on its umbilicus, did I sew the ;binder; on or tie it, after a few minutes thought I decided to sew it on, then I dressed it and before you could say 'Jack Robinson' the door opened, the mother breezed in, took the baby and disappeared into the front room. I placed a rubber sheet under the mother, washed her, dried her applied the talcum and a maternity towel, put a clean vest and night dress on her removed my rubber sheet, knocked on the wall and asked the mother for a cup of tea, while she was getting this I put a couple of books under each leg at the foot of the bed to inhibit a too rapid flow of blood from the vagina. At that moment the mother brought in a cup of tea and a biscuit and said to me " I have sugared it dear as I am sure you would like a sweet cup of tea " but I said its not for me, its for your daughter " Shortly after this Bert arrived with the nurse, though it was November the sweat was pouring off me due in no small part to the strain I had been under, this was the first time I had a birth to attend, except Julia's, and then I was only a spectator without the responsibility, I'm sure I'd accumulated more grey hairs that evening than in the last 2 years. The nurse did not look too pleased having to walk all that way in freezing fog, but had I known that the birth would have been so successful I would not have troubled asking Bert to have fetched her, she took the patients pulse and blood pressure, checked the baby ( who was in its mothers arms by now ) then she turned to Bert and me and said "I cannot think why you bothered to bring me out on a night like this " but when I told her that it was my first baby that I had brought into the world, she was rather mollified and said " For your first delivery you have done very well and the mother and baby are in excellent condition, On the way down your colleague told me that you were very resourceful, and now I can confirm that, what ambulance depot are you from, when I get back tonight I will get matron to commend your service " she then turned to the mother and said " I

will come back in the morning to check that you are alright and weigh the baby, and now perhaps I can stay here for the time being and wait for the fog to lift " but when we got outside the fog had partially cleared so we offered the nurse a lift back to the nursing home, on the way back to the nursing home she asked me what nursing maternity courses I had taken, I smiled and told her that the only experience I had was being present at my fourth daughters birth and nurse Mac., said that as I was on the ambulances we might have an emergency birth to deal with, and that it would be to every ones benefit if I was in attendance when Julia was born, and that was the first and last time that I had been present at a birth. When we got to the nursing home, she alighted from the ambulance and said well you can give yourself a pat on the back. it was shortly after this that I approached the military hospital at Hounslow barracks and saw colonel Stanley who was the officer in charge and asked him about the chances of taking the lectures and exam., in military sanitation and hygiene, he asked me why I wanted to do this course to which I replied that I wanted to join the RAMC, He agreed to let me join the class and take the exam. when I finished the course colonel Stanley said that he would contact the local Medical officer of health about me joining the RAMC. When I returned a week later to see if he had heard from the local medical of health, he replied that had and had heard that I was doing an excellent job on the local civil and ARP ambulances, and I would not enjoy life in the RAMC as I would not go over seas with my disability and would finish up in a base hospital in this country emptying bed pans and burning dirty surgical dressings, and would miss the freedom of working on my own initiative, This was a great disappointment to me and felt that colonel Stanley had been pressurised into putting me off the RAMC. Shortly after this we had an abortion to attend to, the foetus was about 5 months and when we got to Hounslow hospital I asked what would they do with the foetus, they looked surprised at the question and told me that they would throw it in the incinerator, so I asked them if I could take it back to the depot, Dr. Kay just smiled and said what do you intend to do with it, and when I told him that I would dissect it and acquaint myself with the different organs and their position, the book gave illustrations only a rough idea, Dr. Kay just smiled and told me to take it but not to say that he told me to. when I got back to the depot with it, I shot up to the bath room wash basin with an Ever-ready razor blade, I picked this particular type of razor blade as it was a single edged blade, not a double edge blade which would have been difficult to use without me cutting myself. When I had left the hospital I had scrounged a small jar with a screw cap lid that had a cardboard wad in it, and some Ethyl Alcohol as a preserving fluid and some suture gut. Armed with these items I proceeded to vivisect the foetus, the head was soft and without a strong attachment to the body, the only thing that attaches the head to the body is the neck muscles and the top end of the cervical vertebra, so I just flushed the head down the toilet, the parts that I managed to salvage were the spine, pelvis, lungs, heart and liver. and the ribs Having acquainted my self of the position of the other organs in the body, I flushed these down the toilet too. I attached one end of the suture gut to the top end of the spine and the other end to the fairly close to the card board wad inside the lid, then having filled the jar with the Ethyl=Alcohol I lowered the spine etc., into the jar and screwed on the lid, I'll never forget the look on my darlings face, she just said "Ugh, where are going to put it ?" and I replied that it was going to stop the front room mantle piece where I could study it when I was home, to which she replied, " how morbid darling" We were getting close to the end of the war when George Box the depot clerk said in a panic stricken voice, "Air ambulance crash on some houses in Heston" and gave us the address, we took the white civil ambulance as the siren hadn't gone, the time was about 2-0 pm, we went roaring up Lampton road, across the red traffic lights at the

junction of the Great West road and up the Heston Rd, on the border of Heston and Norwood Green we found the incident, the fire brigade were there, this air craft had crashed in two gardens, causing a crater with the displaced earth thrown up making the aircraft sit in a large hole, with the firemen standing on top of the artificial hill pouring water on the aircraft and a large lake of burning petrol in the vicinity of the aircraft, I asked a fireman if anybody had been got out to which he replied "Don't be bloody silly, we can't get near it" I remember muttering to Bert, "poor sods, getting all the way here, only to crash when they get back to their homeland. " I told Bert to get a blanket out of the ambulance and asked one of the firemen to soak the blanket with water from his hose which he did, with the soaking wet blanket i rushed down the earth slope to the aircraft, I was too worked up to realise that aircraft was too small for an air ambulance, I got to the aircraft put the wet blanket on the side of the aircraft managing to avoid the lake of burning petrol, the heat burnt straight through the wet blanket as soon as it touched the metal work, at that moment I heard a voice shout out "Who is that bloody fool down there, for goodness sake, run the water round him, they did so and only made matters worse, some of the water jetted into the lake of burning petrol and broke it up into hundreds of flaming puddles some of which splashed up onto my uniform burning holes in it, in attempting to spring back into the bushes behind me I compounded the problem because a chain link fence behind the bushes thought it was a tennis racquet and bounced me back towards the plane again so I waited down there and as soon as the plane had cooled down I was able to see that it was a fighter plane, and it was being tried out by RAF and Fleet Air Arm pilots, this pilot had tried it out to test its diving propensities, failed to come out of the dive and had crashed, the pilots and plane had come from Heston air field where some free polish airmen were based. The firemen used their axes to chop into the aircraft to release the pilot, when they had made sufficient clearance they stood aside to let Bert and me to get him out but we could not straighten him out as the force of the impact had driven his upper legs through his pelvis and were sticking out through the rear by 2 or 3 inches, and the lower legs were driven through his knee caps so we carried him out in the sitting position, the firemen helped us to carry the poor devil to the top of hole, where we laid him on the stretcher and loaded him on the ambulance, while we were doing this, there was a clamour at the round the doors of the ambulance and when we looked up there were a crowd of pilots of both RAF & Fleet Air Arm, one of them if they could see the pilot, but I saw no point in taking the chance of one of them fainting, and I did not think it would do anything for their morale if one of them was his special friend so I said no one could see him, but before there was a clamouring on the back doors of the ambulance, and a high falutin said " Ai demand to see him" when I refused, he tried to pull rank on me, he could not have done anything, ambulance crews have full control of patient and vehicle, we can even demand assistance from the police, ( the only person we are subordinate to is a doctor. ) and I made that quite clear to them and said that we did not want to take the dead airman to the mortuary and one of them to hospital as a shock victim, at this point a quieter voice said " I would not have your job for a proverbial fortune old chap and we quite understand but can I ask you what sort of buttons is he wearing, are they Fleet Air Arm or RAF, Bert just whispered to me, I'll look, I was in the RNAS during the last shin-dig, we both looked at the buttons, and Bert said to them, "Fleet Air Arm" and as soon as he told them, there was a marked difference in the two groups, the RAF went off quite cheerfully but the F.A.A. chaps were very downcast, and I said to Bert "See the difference, you can imagine the atmosphere if we had let them see the corpse. " When we got to the mortuary which was a little shed in the cemetery behind the church in Hounslow High street, and which abutted

onto the Police station. We had to go into police station to get the keys to the mortuary which was arrived at by walking along a tortuous path between the tomb stones to a shed which contained an angle iron frame work on top of which was a 6 feet long marble top, about 2 feet 6 inches wide, and had a draining gully all the way round, with a draining hole at the foot, the whole contraption was on a tram like track, with the marble topped iron work mounted on wheels, the shed was in 2 parts so that the mortician did his cutting in the first part of the shed, washed down the corpse, hence the gully and drain hole in the marble slab, and in the inner part of the shed was a cupboard containing bits and pieces relevant to a morticians work. The police had given us a bag in which to put his valuables and personal items. His uniform was almost completely burnt away except the thicker parts like the breast pockets, and leading edge of his tunic which still had the buttons complete, also strangely his monocle which was on a length of black braid was undamaged, even the glass was complete. We found out when we picked up the pilot that it was a new fighter plane, and the pilots had taken turns to try it out and the one whom we picked up had tried a power dive which he failed to get out of. When we got back to the depot I was still livid, and stormed into the office and blew my top at the clerk for getting the message wrong, and reminded him of the occasion when he sent us to Busch corner to an alleged bus smash, when all that happened was a cyclist, following in the bus slip stream, did not stop when the bus stopped and finished up with a bruised chin, and refused any aid when we got there after tearing like a bat out of hell, racing through Hounslow high street, I asked him the usual questions, the No of the bus, what day it was, where abouts we were at that moment, the reason for all these questions was to check for concussion, had he had any difficulty in answering these questions we would presume he had concussion and would have taken him to hospital, but as he was alright I told the bus crew they could carry on, The reason was that when a bus was involved in an accident they would have to wait for an inspector and the passengers would have to transfer to another bus, but I saw no reason for them to wait, much to their relief. While I was still tearing the clerk of a strip, the clerk went red and looked past me, when I turned round I saw Mr. Heseltine standing there and he said "Bert told me about uniform While we were up there being burnt, it looks like a sieve, give me a few moments and I will give you a chit to go over to Bath road to get another uniform. " As I left the office I heard Mr. Heseltine say to the clerk "Are you trying to get rid of my best team, you what Webby is like, tell him that it is a serious accident and he will get there even if he breaks his neck to do so, in future get the message properly, don't start guessing the worst. " Something that I should have mentioned earlier, August 1943 my sisters friend Bunny Weeks said would we like to have a holiday away from the raids, with her family in a small village called Blaisdon at the foot of the Forest of Dean, we had a lovely a weeks holiday, very restful, it seemed like another country as far as the raids were concerned. While we were up there we visited Blaisdon Hall which had been the local squires home but after he died the family sold it to the catholic church to be used as a training orphanage, They taught husbandry, market gardening, carpentry, brick laying and tailoring, this latter had Saville Row tailors wanting the lads because of their excellent training, but the catholic authorities would only let the lads go if they were sure they were well cared for. One of the things the tailoring lads did before going up to London was to make their own suit from first to last, even to the cutting of the cloth, the only thing they could not do was to take their own measurements, apart from that the garment was finished from beginning to end including button holes and lining and buttons and that was the suit they walked out of Blaisdon Hall to start their new job. The principal was Father Bamber and as we talked to him a couple of young lads came running along the

pathway in the grounds one was trying to dodge the other, and the one in front grabbed fathers long black cassock to dodge the other one but Father just grinned but when he saw us looking surprised at their impoliteness he just said " We ask the lads to look upon us as their big brother, and like all big brothers when we feel they are over doing it we do what big brothers normally do, we give them a clip round the ear, It is essential that they feel loved and protected as they would be in any well run family, it is a surprising thing, they all come back here in their holidays to visit us, in fact some of them spend their whole holiday here, also they keep in touch by letter, we are very proud of our success here, the lads in the carpentry shop make church furniture that has hardly any screws in it, but made in the old fashioned way with wedges and scotch glue. " While we were up there we went to the local pub Bunny's mother and father, it was very quaint in as much as it had sawdust on the floor and hurricane lamps hanging from the ceiling for illumination and the bar and tables were scrubbed, not veneered. Bunny's father told us that when the squire of Blaisdon Hall was alive he found that the farm hands were not very attentive on Monday after having Sunday off and going to the pub so he gave orders to the local publicans that they must not open on a Sunday, and asked Colonel Black of the next village to do the same but Colonel Black refused to that, and that started an enmity that lasted until the squire of Blaisden died. My mother looked after the children while we were away, to give us a rest, that was the reason Bunny suggested we go up to Gloucester, she was on the buses with Joan my sister, that was their war work contribution. Just before we went away it had been fairly quiet, but 4 days after we returned the V, 1, the (flying bombs) had started, Hitler lost too many planes doing bombing raids on England so tried to batter us with the flying bomb or 'doodle-bug's we called it, when they first came over the engine used to cut out and the doodle bug would lose height and crash on you, so we got pretty adept at knowing if it was going to fall in your immediate vicinity or not, but after that the Germans modified them so that the engine kept going as the weapon started its downward plunge, it was the same with the incendiary bombs, they modified them so that we would approach them carefully, by making every 10th, one explosive, and as they used to come down in large clusters it was no good one trying to count them to ascertain which was the 10th. one. After the 'doodle-bugs came the V, 2's or rockets, that was a terrible weapon, you did not know it was coming so you had no protection from it, one of these fell on Packards on the Great West road opposite Gillettes, at that time they were testing aeroplanes engines on THE UPPER FLOOR, they could not have done a worse thing, they got a direct hit from a rocket, and these things had a massive load of explosives, more than the biggest bomb that they used to drop on us. When we got there it was a piteous sight, the building was a reinforced concrete one, adjoining the paint store of the Pyrene fire extinguisher firm, which firm was situated next to their paint store, the opposite side to Packards, we could see a sea of burning paint, oil and aviation fuel and trapped under tons of concrete and steel we could see pinned under all this and screaming out in pain and fear but we couldn't go near them we would have been burnt to a cinder before we had got to within 30 feet of them, we took a large number of casualties to West Middlesex hospital, the police were there with boxer dogs which were very good at locating people who were buried, (this was after the fire brigades had put the fires out) The procedure was for the police to bring in a team of dogs and work a couple of them over a given area and after about 10 minutes, rest them and bring on another pair of dogs, 10 minutes later they would bring on a third pair, and continuously rotate them like that until they were sure there were no more bodies, the bomb fell at 9-0am and we were still working there at 7-0pm, Dr. Anderson came up, congratulated every body on a job well done and asked for volunteers to go

and help the doctors at the swimming baths, that meant helping them with bodies because the baths had been turned into a large mortuary, they had placed tubular scaffolding round both sides of the baths and the deep end, at the shallow end they had put a some steps for the two doctors to get down to the floor of the baths. On the tubular scaffolding were stretchers all round the sides and end of the bath and in two tiers. Bert bless him ? said "We will go sir " and at the same time pushed me in the middle of the back as he stepped forward. When we got to the baths the doctors were already busy, it was an eye opener to me, if they found a hand with a finger missing and then found a finger they would make every effort to ensure that finger was the right one, this was to ensure that every one buried was accounted for, Our job was to make the victims as presentable as possible. The baths superintendent had a little window in his office where he could keep his eye on the swimmers, (before the war) on the baths side of that window they had erected a screen covered with a white rubberised sheet a table wan a light over head, so that from the office side looking through the window all one could see was what seemed like a small room or cell with white walls, on this table we put a body which as far as possible tallied with the description of the relative they were wanting to identify, if they said "That is not the one" we would place another one there, that was one of our jobs, the other one, not so nice, was to make the body look as normal as possible, for instance if the had a limb, or part of their torso missing, we had to make them look as whole as possible, and if part of their face was missing, we would pad it out and bandage it to make it look whole, this was to make identification by the relatives less horrific as possible. When we returned to the depot Tom Dhonau the depot cook said "I've saved your dinner for you, we both looked at him and in unison said, "stuff your dinner, which wasn't very kind but we were fed up to the back teeth and were tired out. Another job we were called out to, was to join a convoy outside the West Middlesex hospital to go up to the East end where they were having a bad raid, the convoy consisted of a Light rescue unit, a stretcher party with their own transport, a NFS trailer pump and my ambulance bringing up the rear, we only got as far as Chiswick when my Rolls-Royce ambulance packed up, when we opened the bonnet we smell petrol, further inspection revealed that the copper feed line to the carburettor was fractured, in our first aid pack we had a length of pipette, we cut off a couple of inches and used it to connect the two broken ends of fuel pipe and started off on our journey, by now the rest of the convoy was out of sight, and we did not have a clue which way they had gone but as we knew the way to the East end of London we just pushed on, when we arrived there, we had no idea where to go, all we knew was that we had to go to a school, after what seemed ages, the raid was still running heavily, we saw a warden, who in turn called an incident officer to whom we repeated our problem, when we told him that we had to report to a school and were the rear part of a convoy his face dropped and he said "Prepare your selves for some bad news, some minutes after your convoy arrived the school had a direct hit by a large bomb, most of your colleagues bought it I'm afraid, but if you will put yourselves at our disposal I shall be very glad of any help, our services have been rather decimated this week. So Bert and I put our selves at their disposal, I knew where the local hospitals were but not the roads where they wanted any assistance so they lent us a warden to show us to the several incidents. At three o'clock in the morning they said we could go back to our depot, which we did but we were so tired that when we got to Turnham Green Bert fell fast asleep, suddenly I found myself at Busch Corner Isleworth and to this day I cannot remember the journey between there and Turnham Green. Towards the end of the war we were at Hounslow hospital and saw an old couple who's garden backed onto our depot garden, I asked the nurse what was wrong with them, and pointed out that we were

neighbours in as much as that their garden backed on to our depot, the nurse replied that they both had bad varicose ulcers on their legs, they should really have treatment more often than they were getting at the hospital but as they were so busy they were not getting treatment often as they should, I asked how often should they have their legs done, and the nurse replied that until they improved they should be done daily, I asked what the treatment consisted of, she replied that they should be irrigated with Eusol and jacquenette impregnated gauze (which smelled like caramel,) I looked at Bert and said "We can do that can't we Bert ?" he grinned and nodded, so I told we were prepared to carry on the treatment daily, she looked very relieved, got us a quantity of Eusol (Eusol is a mild antiseptic that was developed at Edinburgh University hospital and the letters stand Edinburgh University Solution Of Lime) we went out into the corridor and told the old couple what we were going to do every day, their old eyes brightened up and said "Thank you very much" so we explained to Mr. Heseltine what we would like to do, he agreed with the proviso that when an ambulance was required and the sirens had not gone, he would send one of the members to tell us that we were wanted at an emergency. When we called on the old couple the next day and took of their old dressings we were knocked over by the smell, both their legs were so deeply cratered that the bones shone through with the usual silken texture that we had got used to seeing. We kept up our treatment, letting the old couple attend hospital once a month, They made progress, and the hospital were very pleased and so were we. Shortly after this the war was over so we had to leave the old couple to the hospital. Bert and I were asked if we would like to continue on the civil ambulances, but that did not appeal to me as we would not work on our own initiative, we would be based at West Middlesex hospital and would have to take a nurse with us (that rule only lasted only a few months about having a nurse with us) but anyhow I was going into partnership with Sidney Pollard the chemist on the corner of Chudleigh road and Whitton rd near the Chertsey rd round-about near the Twickenham rugby ground.

Old Mr. Sulkin had died of cancer so there was no question of disloyalty when Sid, Pollard and I discussed going into partnership together in the wholesale hair dressing business. Mr. Sulkin's sons asked me if I would go on working for them now that the war had ended, and they had got their demobilisation, but I was not too happy about them pulling together and my darling was not happy about me staying on the ambulances as it meant night work every other week and she had had enough of that for over 5 years. My darling and I discussed my going with Sidney, I sensed her natural caution when she demurred but when I pointed out we would be working for ourselves and could control our own destiny, and Sidney assured her that there was no danger, that if things did not work out he would buy me out and then I could get a job. When I got my post war gratuity of £300- We, Sid and I worked out what the next step was to register our business and that entailed finding a name for our concern, Sidney had given this some thought and mooted the idea of taking the first 2 letters of my surname and the last 5 letters of his surname, we would have the name 'WELLARD' but I too had given it much thought and in those days there was a film company known as 'GAINSBOROUGH' pictures Ltd, and their films started off with their famous 'GAINSBOROUGH' lady, it was the portrait of Lady Howe by Thomas Gainsborough which was as famous as Constable's painting of the 'HAYWAIN'. The GAINSBOROUGH lady depicted a lady in an Edwardian type of picture hat, and long elegant waves and curls, and I pointed out to Sidney that if we called ourselves GAINSBOROUGH Ltd. we would have a name that was commensurate with the famous trademark that every body saw when they went to the pictures, it was like a free advert for us, and would be synonymous

with 'coiffeur and 'I also pointed out that on the cinema screen the Gainsborough lady's head turned in the same way that MGM's lion roared or the 'flashing beacon' that was the house mark of RADIO films., Sidney grinned and said "your artistic mind has hit the nail on the head, yes I like it, both our wives agreed it was an appropriate name, so we proceeded to ask our solicitors to register the company with registrar of companies in London. After a week or so the solicitors wrote to us and said GAINSBOROUGH films were not too happy about us using their name unless it was followed by sub title showing that it was not their company, so we added in small letters and in brackets the word Twickenham Ltd., beneath the name GAINSBOROUGH, the name of the company was in flowing copper-plate writing which was three times as large as the Twickenham Ltd, Sidney decided to leave the design of the labels to me, and the 'house colours' for this I chose pale lilac for the note paper and deep purple ink for the letter head title etc. the labels for our retail items like brilliantine, hair cream, and saloon items like pint bottles of brilliantine and jars of reconditioning cream.

The brilliantine bottles had the labels in our house colours of purple writing on pale lilac ground, said writing being edged with gold colour, the brilliantine labels depicted an easel with a canvas on it, and on the canvas, the legend Artists hair oil, a similar label was on the hair cream jars, but the wording on those was 'HEIRLOOM'. On the jars of reconditioning cream was an open locket with the words 'KEEPSAKE', the locket was heart shaped. I gave my sister details and colours of the labels and asked her to produce drawings for the printers exactly as I had suggested. Joan now had returned to her old job as a commercial artist at Reliance Name Plates Ltd., having finished her war work as a conductorette. We used the floors over Sids shop for our office and bottling, and making our hair cream, perm lotions etc., We used Sids yard for bulk storage of chemicals such as peroxide, ammonia, mineral oil, shampoo bases such as lauryl sulphate, sulphonated fatty alcohol. TLS which was triple laurel sulphate, these items we bought in 5 gallon carboys and 40 gallon drums. bales of cotton wool, lint, ( the latter was for sachets for P. W. as was the cellophane and aluminium foil, the pins, grips, razor blades, scissors and combs and any metal items that if left outside would rust. When I started to go out for orders I went out on my bike, and the earlier orders I delivered on my bike, the bike had a carrier on the back and on the front, the gallon bottles had ring handles so I tied strong cord through the handles, tied them to the bike then suitably loaded, pushed the bike to my customers, making sure that the bike was parked where the customer couldn't see it, . When a customer asked me to take the empty bottles back I would say that he was my first delivery and that I had no room on the car and that I would pick them up next week, in the finish Sid taxed his car for commercial purposes, it was a ford 8 saloon. Gradually we grew drawing only enough to live on, putting the balances of our wages back in as a loan, we had originally started by both of us putting in œ50 each, which gave us a capital of œ100, enough to satisfy the registrar of companies, this registered capital our solicitor told us was the only amount we were responsible for as a company, so that if we failed or got into debt we only could be sued for the extent of our registered capital and any money that we had accumulated in our business account. Our creditors could not sell up our homes over our heads. We had not registered for the purchase tax. (known today as VAT, value added tax. ) What made it possible for us to start up with such limited stock was that so many things were in short supply that customers understood when we said we were out of stock of any particular item, all through the war they had been 'educated' into accepting this answer or situation. We had not registered for P. Tax as we had not got a manufacturing licence, and some of our supplies that we needed for manufacturing we could not obtain

unless we could show the supplier our licence No, so I went up to the board of trade ministry in person after they had turned us down as we did not have a pre-war licence, we protested that Sid had made up for himself before the war and during the war, for his own hairdressing salon, he argued all to no avail, so I decided to go up **and beard the head** of the board of trade in his den. He was a Mr. Bowell and I realised in a few moments that I was banging my head against the wall, he said "If you go manufacturing we shall sue you, this made me very angry and I was sure people were giving him 'kick- backs' in his hand after making sure that no one else was listening that he could use as a witness, but gambling on the possibility that if he had been getting any money in his hand, in the return for granting a licence I might shout about it so I said "Go ahead and sue, it won't look very good in the press to see that the board of trade had used a steam roller to crack a small nut like us and who had given our duty to the war effort and the minister won't be too pleased to get such adverse publicity which would hurt B. O. T's image. (Sidney was a warden, part time) and I had a letter from colonel Stanley thanking me for trying to join the RAMC. as well as my reference from Mr. Heseltine., so we proceeded to trade. But one day a Mr. Munn from the local tax office called and said he understood we had been trading without applying for a P, Tax No. and without paying the tax to his office. When I explained that we had been turned down for a manufacturing licence, and we thought that we needed a manufacturing licence before we could apply for a P, Tax No. and I told him about my battle with a Mr. Bowell of the B. O. T., and the answer I gave them about defying them, it turned out that telling him the truth was the best thing that I did as we got an instant friend, there was no love lost between the B. O. T., and the inland revenue, Mr, Munn almost frothed at the mouth when I mentioned the B. O. T., he went on to say that the inland revenue in the early days in the role of customs and excise were in existence before the B. O. T., who had taken over some of the work that should have remained with the inland revenue. He went on to say that the customs were taxing bales of silk etc., in the caves of over hundreds of years before the BOT was thought of, He stopped for a cup of coffee and biscuits and said "What sort of books do you keep, I suppose you have some ?, I smiled and told him that we did have books and a firm of auditors too, at which point I brought out some 'Challenge' duplicate books and placed them before him, he looked through them, scratched his head and said "Can you come along to our office in York St, we are 2 doors from the bank, tomorrow morning at 10 am, when I will show you the kind of books you will need to keep in the future, with that he said "cheerio" and left. The following I went down to his office, he pointed to a chair by his side and gave me a copy of the sort of books we should keep and the way we should itemise every taxable item with its relevant tax, these taxable items varied from 100% on luxury items (hairdressing was considered a luxury item, or rather the things that were required in the work such as P. W. lotion, sachets, dyes, setting lotions, oils, things like combs were on a different level of tax, some items were at 60% and some at 33%, he also gave us a licence to get toilet quality spirit which we had to enter in a special book on one side, and when we used any to make up any lotion we would have to enter on the other side the amount we had used, and for what purpose, For this we needed a manufacturing book into which we entered on one page, the amount we had transferred from bulk stock, and what we had made with it, so we had 2 books. one book showed on one side the amount of spirit plus any new stock, on the opposite side went the amount we had taken out, and in the second book on one side went the amount of spirit we had transferred from the bulk storage book and on the other side of the book we showed what we had done with the spirit and what book that was in. We were given some solid chemical we had to dissolve in the spirit to make it unpalatable for distilling it into

alcoholic drink, they were very strict about that. When we first started we saw the possibility that one day we may have to charge tax, so from the word go we priced our invoices as though we had charged tax at the varying rates so that when we became liable for tax we would keep our prices the same as they had been all the way along. At this moment Mr. Munn sprang his surprise, he said that we would be taxed as from the first of March. this was the third week of January that gave us a whole five weeks that we could go on selling at minus tax as far as we were concerned, so we decided to offer our heaviest taxed items at 3 for the price of 2 our customers quickly cottoned to this good thing, (they didn't know that we had not paid P, Tax before. By now we had grown quite big and increased our stock as the things that had been in short supply previously now became available, and we were able to afford to stock these items. Just about the time we had trouble, or thought there would be trouble with the P. Tax people Sidney wanted to pull out as he would be in trouble with the Post office in as much as he would lose his licence if he was affected by any scandal, it was not so much that the Post office side was very profitable to him, but it had the advantage that when people came for their pension or stamps etc., they would look around the shop while they were waiting to be served and see something that they wanted amongst the many things he stocked. My sister's husband had already joined us as the firms secretary and sales rep, his name was Frank, we also had Bunny Weeks helping in the bottling and manufacturing side, we also had taken on a sales rep., who had been in the trade before for another wholesaler, he was **Doug**. Pluck and lived at Ealing, through him we got supplies from Jarret, Raynesford & Laughton of Birmingham, my darling Peggy's father in his ministry car was going up to Birmingham so Doug, Pluck and I scrounged a lift from him to Birmingham, when we arrived we made arrangements to meet at a given spot at 3-opm which was the time that we estimated we would all be ready to return home. Doug, introduced me to a Mr. Lord who was the managing director of Jarrett, Raynesford & Laughton. It was a very successful meeting and they accepted a very large order from us of many items in short supply, these consisted of grips, hair pins, wave clamps, scissors, curlers wave clips etc., (most of their things were marketed as 'Lady Jane' we gave them our P. tax No. and they promised to despatch our order immediately which to their credit they did in as much as we received them two days later. We had a successful rendezvous with Peggy's father and returned home highly satisfied with our days work. I had given up one of my rounds to Frank, and half of my second round to **Doug**, Pluck which he tacked on to some customers he had in Ealing. To help Frank I went on to his area and canvassed some new customers for him on several mornings, returning in the afternoon to make up the previous days orders, we had at this time taken on a van driver who I had known when I was driving for Williamsons the grocers, Lionel was driving for a rival grocers in Twickenham, a firm by the name of Coopers. a multiple grocers as were Williamsons. He was still with Coopers, or went back to them when the war finished (he was in the RAF at Manston RAF station.) About this time the car was too small and Lionel was having to do a round in two 'hits', We got the evening Paper and looked down the second vehicles for sale, and saw an advert, for a Morris van for sale, near Southend so I sent Lionel down to Southend on the train to have a look at it and if he thought it was a fair bargain to fill in the blank cheque that I had given him plus to phone our insurance company giving them details of the van plus its value and to ask them for immediate cover, and I would phone them from this end telling them that you might phone them asking them for immediate cover in compliance with my orders, early that afternoon Lionel returned with the new van, it was semi forward control with sliding doors, We immediately got J. Darling the sign writers to spray the van in lilac colour and sketched out the name etc., in the house colours, plus the

'HEIRLOOM' 'ARTIST' & 'KEEP-SAKE' names, address, phone No's etc. When that was done we had a photo taken of it with Lionel standing by it with a great big grin on his face. By now I had bought a second hand Singer 4 seater open car from Peter Bancock who had their showroom next door to my old firm Kwik-Return Kleeners. It was taxed for the year and cost me, to the best of my memory £85.00, I got it insured, it needed a bit of attention, re-paint etc., and the floor boards renewed, which my friend Kyrie, a Cypriot carpenter, he was in Burma during the war with the East Surrey regiment. (he made a 3 piece suites for the officers mess out of camouflage netting and old wooden crates) Kyrie replaced the rotten boards in the front of the front seats, it was a 9 horse power, its full title was SINGER 9, Le. Mans, (this was because just before the war (1937) it won the Le Man Grand Prix) my car was a 1938 vintage with a low sump and twin carburettor, I painted it in British Racing Green went up to Edgware road to the SOLEX people to fit new carburettors (it was a twin carb, job,) When it was ready to go on the road in all its glory, I asked Maurice Rumsey and Kyriacos Koumi if they would like to come out on the Sunday morning as far as Esher common, they said yes, and were round at my house at 10-0am, I told my darling that I would not be long and set off for Esher common, (because I could not stand the canvas hood flapping up and down on my head, I removed it.) Just before we left home it had ceased raining after raining all night, when we reached Esher common we went up to the far end of the common, and I tried to do a 3 point turn which necessitated my running on to the grass in reverse to complete the manoeuvre, but alas when I put it into forward gear the wheels dug themselves into the wet ground, Maurice and Kyrie jumped out, ran round to the back of the car and said "when we shout O. K, let the clutch in quickly, " which I did, the car lurched out of the mud, and as it did so, there was a shout from the back of the car, and when I turned round all I could see was 2 'wogs' it was Maurice and Kyrie smothered in mud, I could not help it, I fell about laughing, That Easter I decided to take my Darling and the 4 girl's camping on Cobham Common in the vicinity of Wisley lake. It was one the coldest Easters for years, the snow in the fields was about 3 feet thick, and we had not got a tent but Maurice said his father would lend us a large tarpaulin sheet which they had, it was about 14 feet square, so we set off to Cobham Common, as we went along the Fairmile, between Esher and Cobham some silver Birches had rotted at the base owing to the snow being stacked so high for so long. When we arrived at our camp site we drove my car up amongst the trees followed by Kyrie on his motor bike. The first thing we did was to unload the tarpaulin and cooking equipment and food then Kyrie and I looked round for a couple of fallen tree trunks or large boughs, we found a medium size trunk and a smaller one, the snow was about 18" deep so we had to slide the larger one down hill to the car, we then proceeded to raise the hood stays (when I removed the hood I had not got round to removing the stays) we took the tarpaulin to the near side of the car, over the hood stays, securing it by tying it to the wheels, and took the other end to Kyries motor bike which was propped up on its stand, we secured this end of the tarpaulin with the smaller trunk, at the back we secured the overhang with the heaviest trunk, then we propped up the front with a 5 foot pole or branch, the car had bucket seat backs, the seats at the front were of the biscuit type, in other words, flat pads on the floor, the back seat was of the conventional settee type, we proceeded to tip the front seat backs forward, stretch out two single mattresses for the girls and we slept in two sleeping bags under the tarpaulin, We decided that we needed water so we went down to the lane, Kyrie, the four girls and me, the girls were in their siren suits complete with pixie hoods, we found a nice house backing onto Wisley lake, it had a cobbled courtyard which led to a kitchen door, we knocked on the door and the lady of the house opened it, saying to some one out of sight, "alright Mary, I'll see to it" it

turned out to be the lady of the house, she looked at us as though we were something that had come down with the last snowfall, we must have looked odd, Kyrie, the children and me in wellington boots with a 'jerry can; asking for water, she said "What are you doing here " and we said we were camping on the common and would be glad of water in our can, she smiled at the children and asked them if they were cold, but they smiled and assured they were not and how much they were looking forward to camping, she gave us the water, pointing to a tap in the yard and as we left she called out to the children "Good-Luck, and when you come back in the morning I will have some home made cakes for you ". That night my darling did not have a lot of confidence in the efficacy of our shelter, she was huddled up in the corner of our 'tent' with a blanket round her shoulders reading a book, she looked up and said "If this contraption leaks you are going to take us all home " at that moment Kyrie nudged me and when I looked at him he drew my attention to a large bead of water hovering over my darlings head, this bothered me, convincing Peggy that it was condensation would be very difficult so I suggested that she might be better off if she moved into the further corner out of the draft, I knew it was a futile suggestion, when you get settled in a certain position in cold conditions it means leaving a spot that you have warmed up and having to warm a new spot so she demurred and at that moment the spot of water fell on to her nose tip, both Kyrie and me gave a big sigh, My darling jumped up and said " Right Mr. Webb, you can take us all home first thing in the morning, " but when we drew her attention to the sides of the tarpaulin were wet as well and that it was condensation, and lifted the front to prove that it was not raining she settled back. The following day when we went down to the house to get some more water the lady gave the children some home made cakes, smiled and asked if we had a good night, we replied that we had and the sort of shelter we had and how we had improvised she smiled and remarked how happy and well we all looked. The next day, Easter Sunday afternoon a policeman on a bike came up to us and said " Hullo what have we got here, camping on the common is forbidden by law so is picnicking, you have compounded this transgression by lighting camp fires and by parking on the common, I shall have to take your names and addresses, what beats me is where you got your water, I don't suppose you have brought it with you, I told him that we had got it from the house down in the lane, the big white house to which he said " Are you sure you got water there " at this the girls said in unison " The nice lady gave us some home made cakes yesterday " the policeman look worried and explained that we had put him in a tight spot, this particular lady was a titled lady who was on the local watch committee, and she was always ringing the station complaining about people parking on the common and picnicking, he asked when we were going home, and when we said tomorrow after dinner, he looked relieved and said he would come after we had left, and would be able to truthfully say when he came on the common there was no trespassing, but would we be sure to remove all traces of our presence, when we assured him we would, he left us with a smile. We returned home after that holiday, the girls asking if we could go camping again, so from then on I started getting camp gear together, First I bought a large ridge tent, the following I bought a couple of ex US army bivouacs at an ex army sale, and by the next year had come we had quite a supply of camping needs including several ground sheets. One day I saw an advert that camping was permitted in the New Forest, but people interested would have to write to the Forest commissioners for a permit at a cost of five shillings. We wrote off for the permit and got a permit back with a long list of conditions which were quite reasonable, we could not camp anywhere except where they told us, this was presumably to prevent a cluster of tents, in fact the nearest family to us was far over in another part of the forest. We spent a fortnight there, the children were as brown as

berries, Maurice Rumsey came and spent the second weeks with us. My darling cooked on an open camp fire for us, Peggy and I slept in the ridge tent, the children in two of the USA army bivouacs, the third bivouac was for Maurice, we also had Mr. Rumseys large tarpaulin which we stretched from our ridge tent top the bivouac nearest to our tent, this gave an area for the children to play in if the weather turn wet, but fortune smiled on us, that was the summer that had very little rain, and none at all during our fortnight, I found a pile of logs neatly stacked in the forest, so I got the largest in girth and length, ( about 6 feet long) several narrow branches about 5 feet long stuck three of them behind the fat log, one either end and the third one between them, then I repeated the row a foot to the rear, and between the poles I dropped some 6 foot thin logs or thick branches, we now had a wooden settee, one day my darling left her sandals outside the tent, and in the morning they were wringing wet from the dew, they were a present from our Irish friends, Molly and Biddy Jordan, my beloved Peggy decided to dry them by the camp fire but unfortunately they, being leather, curled up and hardened, so that finished them, but the following day we decided to go out for a picnic but firstly we had to go into Lyndhurst for a new pair of shoes for Peggy. We found a nice shoe shop, Maurice and the girls were sitting on the back seat, I went into this shop for a pair of shoes after having ascertained the size my darling wanted, I explained the situation to the shop girl and asked her if I could take the shoe out to her to see if they fitted her, I took it out to the car, Peggy tried it on, they were white, she liked them but preferred brown ones, so I took them back into the shop and asked them if they had the same size in brown, they obliged, I paid for them, went out and Maurice hissed, "Quick, drive away, " which I did, when we got down the road, I queried the trouble at having to leave Lyndhurst in such a hurry, Maurice pointed down to the primus stove and kettle covered in black soot from the camp fire, when my darling tried the white shoes on she had pushed the shoe against the kettle whilst trying it on and it had got smothered with black soot. Another day Maurice and I were going down in the forest to see the Rufus stone which marks the spot where King Rufus was shot, we were reading the legend when an old man with a battered old bike with something wrapped in a piece of sacking on the back carrier stopped and said " Looking at the Rufus stone eh ? that weren't no accident, oi know what is writ on that there stone, but that weren't no accident it was done a purpose". while he was telling us that, he was looking round furtively as though he was telling us a great secret, he pointed to a derelict farmhouse back behind us and pointing to the grass track, said in a quiet voice, " They brought poor old Rufus along this track on a litter and took him to Winchester cathedral, that warn't no accident that were done a purpose " when we pointed what the stone said, he replied in a conspiratorial manner, " We knows what the stone says but we knows different down 'ere. " When he had gone Maurice and I looked at one and other and said " When the old man was telling us the saga of poor old Rupert we could see the actual litter going past" he was so factual. That weekend we were coming home but when we got to the latter end of Ripley we saw a notice pointing to a lane on out left and saying Ockham Mill Farm, campers welcome, so I turned down the lane, went into the farm house and queried the notice the farmer assured us that the notice was correct, we found out how much a week and proceeded into the field and erected our tents. We stayed until the September, me coming up to work every day, one weekend Maurice came down, Anne and I went up to Twickenham to pick him up, Kyrie followed up on his motor bike ( he also was staying for the week-end) when we got to Maurices and were waiting for him Kyrie pulled up on his Norton motor bike he said, " Do you know that when we got to Esher a sports car pulled up beside me and asked me what speed I was doing, I told him that I was doing 70 MPH he smiled and said his speedo was not

working and he had just done the car up and wondered what speed he had managed to get out of her, but his face fell flat when Kyrie told him that he was having great difficulty in catching me up in my Singer. The journey from Ockham to Whitton rd and Gainsboroughs was half an hour and I was trying to shorten the journey time, I realised that if I took the round-about along the Hampton bye-pass a bit faster and the journey through Bushey park I could shorten the journey by about 5 or 10 minutes, so that evening when I left Gainsborough I got to Bushey Park, sped through to the pond and as I came out of the circular part and onto the straight just before the main gate I saw a keeper standing there so I slowed down to a reasonable rate, but when I got to the keeper he queried my speed and when I was only doing the permitted speed, he went berserk and shouted One minute you were the other side of the pond and before I could say "Jack-Robinson" you were coming down the straight, with that he flung his stick and cap on the ground and said 'I've been suspicious of you for some time now, I'm going to take your No. give it to my 'oppo darn the uvver end, ring me soon as you enter that end, and I shall note the time on me watch, that's 'ow we shall get you mate, " In the morning was also costing me time, on this particular morning I was coming along the Hampton Court bye-pass, I had been taking this round-about 60 MPH and decided that if I could save a couple of minutes in the morning that would give me more time with my beloved Peggy, so on this particular morning I took this hazard at 70 MPH, it was a dry morning and my tyres were inflated to their maximum, as I came out of the round-about I heard a 'thunk' underneath, I thought a stone must have got flung up and hit the mud guard, but when I got to Gainsborough and walked past the front of the car my two head lights seemed at different levels, one being much lower than the first one, this cost me some concern, so when I got up into our office I phoned old Frank Lowe, a retired engineer who lived in Chudleigh rd., only a few houses away from where my car was parked. He came along about half an hour later and cheered me up by telling me that my chassis had snapped just where the large 'U' shaped bolt clamped the leaf springs to the chassis, he said he would have to go along to Mr, Deneive behind the Rugby ground to get it welded and that before they welded it, they would have to take the engine out first, when he saw the shocked look in my face he went on to say that he would see if there was any other way it could be got over, with that he took the key. As he left my thoughts were if any one could get over the problem Frank Lowe could do so, in fact it was through him that my car performed so well, he had got it some time after I had bought it, had serviced it, he was the one who advised me to go SOLEX the carburettor people and get new carbs, when he serviced it he took down the crank shaft re-tempered it and had it case hardened and mirror finished, when I asked what he had done, he explained that what he normally did when servicing an engine he part drained the sump, replaced the cap, put about a pint of water in the engine, then ran the engine for several minutes at a fairly fast speed, then undid the draining plug and thick emulsion came out like black hair cream holding in its mass all the metallic dust and splinters of steel. At 4 o'clock that afternoon he came up to the office and said " Well Johnny I've got your car downstairs all done, come down and see for yourself. We went down together to look at what he had done, and I had to say that he had made a good job. what he had done was to get 2 pieces of 1" angle steel each about 12" inches long, and drilled a series of holes in them, altogether 32 holes, in each piece of angle iron there were 16 holes 8 on one side, and 8 on the other side, he had also drilled a similar number of holes in the upper part of the chassis and the lower part, then he inserted the pieces of angle iron inside the open part of the chassis and clamped the angle iron and the chassis with 32 nuts and bolts and he only charged me for the nuts and bolts. Shortly after we had grown so much that we needed larger premises

and moved to the 'shack' in Tennyson avenue just behind Spikins motor showroom, The shack was so named because it had been built as a bungalow by the owner, but without building permission so the local council said as it was between the first house and the rear of the shops it would have to have its use as a commercial building and not as a residential one, so we moved in here lock stock and barrel. Sidney Pollard had taught me how to make permanent waving solutions, hair cream, spirit setting lotion, how to filter certain chemicals in large quantities, and how to make hair cream in both sorts of emulsion ie, water-in-oil and oil-in-water. About this time 'point-wind' waving was becoming fashionable that is, the 'falling-heat' perm, as distinct from the old 'Spiral' or root-wind where the customer sat in the chair, had their hair wound onto curlers and then had a large machine on a stand moved over to them with a series of conical bakelite heaters attached to the machine by electric wires, these heaters were separately applied to the curlers, then the whole thing was switched on, in the case of the falling heat method, one had a small machine by their side with a series of horizontal bars that had clamps like bull-dog clips but thicker, the operator wound the hair on a small curler, applied a piece of lint soaked in perm lotion, took a heated clamp of the heater machine and applied it to the hair, when the client had sufficient clamps on her head she would sit quietly until the hairdresser considered her client had sat long enough time being decided by the type of hair and whether a loose or tight type of perm., was wanted. About this time we had been doing business with a firm in London rd. Tooting this firm was called LA REINE Ltd and its owner was a Mr, Berkovie who made hood dryers and permanent waving machines, as he offered us favourable terms both credit wise and discount we pushed his machines, in appreciation of this he offered me a formula for the ' Falling heat 'machine, instead of us buying from firms like L'OREAL, CLYNOL, EUGENE etc., We were already having our own sachets made by an out worker who lived in Whitton rd, this is where the rolls of lint came in, they were cut in squares about 3" backed by a square of parchment paper. We were now growing rapidly, and advertised for another rep. A young man made an appearance in answer to our advert, so we started him, and a fortnight we wanted another rep, along came Doug Drackett-Case who lived in Twickenham, but had worked for BURBERRYS the raincoat people in their packing department, he seemed a presentable enough chap, lived in Copthall gardens, which was almost opposite us. The draw back was that he knew nothing about our trade, so I kept him in the warehouse with me for about a week and then let him go on the road with Doug, Pluck for a couple of days then I took him on a new round abutting on to some of Peters round and including a few of Peters customers, after a couple of days I felt that I could leave him on his own. We continued to grow at such a rate that we needed larger premises, David Grey who was a rep for MAY & BAKER of Dagenham and from whom we got most of our chemicals including acetone, peroxide, acetic glacial, ammonium nitrate powder, borax, sodium sulphate and sodium nitrate powders, they offered us their toilet quality spirit but we were getting a top quality toilet spirit from the Methylating Co. Ltd. of Hammersmith. . . A lot of what we made needed perfume essences, and we got a good service from POLLACK & SCHWARTZ a Dutch firm of both water soluble essences and oil soluble essences. By this time we were becoming known in London, and as far out as Epsom, Guildford, Dorking, Camberley, Uxbridge and Wembley, we were also getting a very diverse range of new lines peculiar to the hairdressing trade. By now I was spending all my time inside making up orders, bottling, labelling and manufacturing. When I got to work before 8-0 am I wrote out Lionels delivery sheet in the order that he would deliver, help him to load up so that he was away by 8-30. The reps., would return about 5-0 pm with their orders, we would talk over any problems they had, or snags that had cropped up. Another firm we

dealt with was Wrights Chemicals from Brighton Rd., Surbiton, he originally started by making flesh coloured paint for tailors dummy's for such for GOSSARD, VIYELLA, etc., etc., these dummies were covered with a material which enabled the garment makers to stick pins in them, and to use them to model their garments in the showroom and shop window, but these latter were now being made in light weight plastic which was impregnated with flesh coloured pigment, this loss of part of Wrights business made him look for alternative products so he came up with retail nail varnish, both normal colours and pearlescent colours, so we bought his nail varnishes as well as other well known ones such as Revlon etc. We were growing so fast now that most days I was getting home about 9-0 pm. most bottles in those days did not have screw caps but corks, and with volatile things like peroxide of strengths up to 100 volumes, 880 ammonia, acetone etc., we used VISCAPS, these were white and came in sealed cans in a liquid that kept them soft, when we corked up these pint and half pint bottles, we covered the cork with these VISCAPS, and as they dried they would shrink on the cork and bottle neck making the bottle leak proof. At this time we were looking for more capital to expand and increase our range, for example our own hood dryers which La Reine of tooting would make for us, I had now got very friendly with Mr. Berkovi who was impressed with our forward looking and enterprising way of going about looking for more business and expanding in the spirit of the old merchant adventurers, " Mr, Berkovi's description of us". When we discussed our dilemma at a board meeting, Frank Mattimong ( my brother-in-law) who had bought Sid Pollards shares, and Douglas Drackett-Case, who had become a share holder, by virtue of the shares Frank and I had sold him. I should mention that I was the managing and founder director and Frank was the company secretary and treasurer, we were at the cross roads where we needed to expand, a business cannot stand still, it gets to a point that it needs to go forward or it will go backwards, and we had arrived at that point now. ( It should have been mentioned before that when we were at Whitton road Sidney Pollard had sold his Ford saloon car to the company, and when Douglas Case had joined the firm he had no transport so we bought him a small Austin saloon car. ) At this meeting I explained to the others that the cross roads we had discussed at our previous meeting had now arrived and we had to discuss it, and the need to inject more capital in the business, none of us had any spare money as we had not taken more out of the business than we needed, as a company we were entitled to directors fees, but on our auditors suggestion, we each drew our fees, paid our income tax and immediately reloaned them to the business on an interest free basis. Douglas said he remembered a fellow officer when they were in the RASC (now the Corps of transport) during the war, he used to sign transfer shares certificates for a Christopher Mallett who was an auditor who had amongst his clients such giants as the Quaker Oats firm, he went on to say that Chris Mallett might be glad to join us as an investor, we gave him permission to explore this matter further. To cut a long story short a meeting was arranged for Chris to come and have a chat with me at our premises, he came and went through the books with me, he seemed satisfied and suggested that we meet his solicitors in Egham, after which we could go to a tea shop in Egham, The meeting with the solicitors went very well after which we went to the tea shop in Egham . While we were waiting to be served an elderly gentleman's stick which was hooked on the back of his chair slipped on the floor, I picked it up for him, and he embarrassed me by saying out loud, "Who said the age of chivalry is dead ". This caused me some embarrassment as he said it loudly causing every body to stare. Our agreement at the solicitors was for Chris to invest £1000 in Gainsborough and to be in the position to protect his investment by being elected unpaid chairman of the company, this I was able to do as Frank and Doug gave me powers to take any action which I thought was viable and in the

interests of the company. That afternoon I returned quite happy with the way things had gone. The first thing I did after the cheque had been cleared was to order those things that we had all agreed we needed. The thing that The following day pleased me was to be able to give the reps, including Frank and Douglas the additional items that strengthened their hand in opening new accounts. The £1000 we got from Chris was equal to £10,000 today and the only thing he got out of it was his directors fees as he had waived his interest for the first year. By now we had grown so much that we needed more space, I had heard on the grape vine that Wrights Chemicals were in trouble, I knew that he had ample room in Surbiton and had reps who had very little to sell so when I told the others about Wrights and mooted the idea of a merger they were enthusiastic and suggested calling a board meeting to discuss it, we did, and to our surprise Chris said he thought it was a great idea, and suggested we had a meeting with the board of Wrights Chemicals at our premises and asked me to arrange the meeting. I drafted a letter for Frank to send to Wrights Chemicals, the result of that letter was a phone call from Bill Wrights wife Zena saying the following Friday would be fine. A couple of weeks before this, Peggy and I went to Englefield Green to see my darlings sister Beryl and her husband Ronnie Dart, who had a dry cleaning business which they lived over the top of. Their shop had a double fronted deep window with a couple of show cards in, so I suggested to Ronnie that he might like to put some of our Hair cream, Brilliantine and Hand cream in on a 'sale or return basis', Ronnie did not seem too keen on the idea and said "That would not be a good idea, us being a dry-cleaners. "

The following day David Gray, the MAY & BAKER rep., called for an order. After I had given him our order, I told him about our thoughts about merging with WRIGHTS CHEMICALS, he surprised me by saying in shocked terms, "You will burn your fingers if you tie up with Bill and Zena Wright, though I live in Surbiton, before we moved there, another of our reps was already calling on WRIGHTS CHEMICALS and had been told not to call on them anymore, they had mucked my company about something rotten with their pathetic excuses about settling their accounts, as they were known in the trade to be a bad account payers, he went on to say, take my advice, if you go in with them you will get embroiled in their double dealing.

When I told him that our chairman was pretty shrewd and not a person one could pull wool over the eyes of, he went on to say "Anybody who can beat the Wrights is a genius, I can only repeat my warning, do not enter into any deals with them, they have already got some chemist into their nets as a partner, the reason I am giving you this warning is not just because I shall be losing a customer, but also because I have enjoyed doing business with you, and because I admire the way you have dug in and battled on, I remember your earlier days at 99, Whitton rd. and your early struggles, other reps, who's firms deal with you, talk about you and this firm with admiration, and I have come to regard you as a friend, " When I promised to warn my colleagues about his opinion of the Wrights he seemed relieved. That evening I told Douglas and Frank, they looked suitably worried and agreed with me that it would be disastrous to go in the merger under those circumstances, and that we must call an emergency meeting with Chris Mallett before the meeting with the Wrights board. We had the meeting with our chairman the following evening in our office and I told him what David Gray had told me, Chris, scoffed, and said "He is only worried about losing his customer, I can take care of Wrights Chemicals, by asking to see their books, I should not see too much in the red herring that your Mr. Gray is pulling across our trail, " The meeting broke up, but I was worried, I believed David Gray was sincere and would have liked him to have been at our meeting but

realised that it would have been Infra-dig. The next day he phoned to ask how our meeting had gone, when I told him what had been said, I realised that telling him what had passed at a board meeting, probably was not ethical, but I was so convinced that he was sincere and factual in his assessment of WRIGHTS CHEMICALS, that I had no qualms about telling him the outcome of our board meeting. That evening I was still unhappy about the situation, and told the others about my phone call from David Gray, and the ensuing conversation. They looked worried and agreed to follow my lead at the combined board meeting. On the Friday of the meeting, they were met by our chairman, Frank, Doug and me, we were introduced to Bill and Zena Wright, and to the surprise of Frank and myself, the third member of their board was SIDNEY POLLARD, he grinned and said " Hullo John, I bet you are surprised to see me". This was the understatement of the year. We got down to business, Bill Wright opened up for their board, after our chairman had opened the meeting by welcoming the other board. Bill Wright's opening remark was to say outright, "Your board will have to resign, and we will only take onto our board your chairman, can we take a vote on this before we proceed, I should add that you will all be taken on as reps, for the new company, he looked at Doug, and said "What about you " I noticed Chris look at him and nod, but as Doug was out of my line of sight, I could not attract his attention, he looked uncomfortable and just nodded miserably, then they asked Frank, again he was out of my line of sight, he just looked at Doug, shrugged his shoulders and said "Well it looks as though there is no point in saying no". Then Bill Wright turned to me and said "What do you want to do Johnny ?" I was so disgusted with the spinelessness of the other two that I stood up and said "I will resign from the board of GAINSBOROUGH with honour after stating my refusal to any merger. There was a shocked silence as though I had just announced I had assassinated the Queen. Bill Wright said to his wife Zena, "Take Johnny out side and see if you can talk any sense into him" we went outside, she was young, dark and Spanish looking and tried to use her charms on me, but I was not having any, I was just livid at the weakness of the other two, and resented at the thought of being associated with a crooked firm that was what I considered them, and it tied in with what another firm told me, they were a firm, suppliers of raw materials and chemicals, VINES Ltd, of Harrow road, London. We went back in the office, Zena shook her head saying that I was not altering my stand, so Bill Wright said to Sid Pollard, you are an old friend Sidney, you see if you can talk any sense into him. Sid., followed me outside of the office and tried to talk me out of my refusal to join their firm, he even tried the bait of saying I would only need to call on wholesale firms, getting commission on what the other reps sold in addition to the other reps., getting commission, and that when ever I did not want to go out on the road I could stay in the laboratory with him and help with the formulating and manufacturing, I was still seething at the way the others had ratted on our agreement and the thought that all we had worked so hard for was being washed down the proverbial drain that I shook my head vigorously and said "Never will I agree to a merger " and when Sid asked me why, I shook my head and told him that I had my reasons and that he should be careful., with that he walked back into the office and admitted defeat, with that Bill Wright stood up red in the face and said " There can be no deal without Johnny's formula book, " this so angered me that I stalked into the lab, opened the drawer and went back into the office and said "Here is the formula book, " and handed to Sidney Pollard. Chris Mallett said that he was distressed at my refusal to join the new company, but understood my principal, but he had agreed to go ahead with the merger because this was the second year with Gainsboroughs who were not in a position to repay any part of his loan or the interest on it, he knew that it was not our fault and that we were going on growing, that the success of this firm was due in no

small measure to my Herculean efforts and sagacity but he owed it to his family to make his money work for him much more quickly and that a merger with Wrights Chemicals with 6 extra reps on the road, and much larger premises seemed the ideal answer for him, and that he regretted that the other two would have to resign off the board, he went on to ask me if I would stay on at Tennyson Avenue to see to Lionels deliveries and the completion of the orders that the rest were bringing in, and to continue to take the orders that came in on the phone, and to assure the customers that we would be shortly moving to Surbiton and would acquaint them with the phone number and address when we had it, it would be all over within 3 or 4 weeks. I could see his point about having to wait for a return on his investment, but was conscious of the fact that he had not worried about it before, and that the prospect of being with a much bigger conglomerate was too much of an attraction for him. A few days later my brother-in-law, Ronnie Dart wandered in to the office and said " Well swine, I have decided to take your advice about having to diversify these days and take up your offer of having your products on a sale-or-return basis". to which I replied, " Listen dogs turd, you're too late", and went on to tell him what had happened, he just grinned and said " listen old fruit, can you keep these premises, because if you can, you can start a dry cleaning business like I've done, I get Forsters Wholesale dry cleaners to do my dry cleaning for me, and I could get them to do yours for you, they give a months credit, and I would not have to worry about having dead stock on my hands because when people brought in their clothes for cleaning they wanted their clothes back in a few days and paid cash when they collected it, listen old fruit, Beryl and I will come over on the week-end and discuss it, in the mean time you find out if the landlady will let you keep on these premises, and I will arrange it with Forsters, they do a lot of firms dry cleaning for them, they even go to 2 firms in Richmond, one in Mortlake and one in Sheen. " After he had gone I phoned Mrs. Jones the landlady and ascertained from her that I could indeed keep on the premises, and that she was so glad that I would continue in business. This would be a opportune moment to relate how I got to know Ronnie, we were both courting his Beryl and I my beloved Peggy, he had been living at Kingston at first with his father, his mother having died some time before hand, his father was rushed in to Kingston Hospital, where he lay for a little while before dying, Ronnie was devastated, he had no relatives down in this part of the world, he was at that time working in the shop of Derwent Radio the rental people in Richmond adjoining THE RICHMOND cinema, he got digs in Morley Rd, which is on the right, three turnings before you get to the old Richmond bridge, after his fathers death he was so lost that I went and stayed with him at week-ends, the house he stayed at was a large 3 story building let out into bed-sits. On Saturdays we used to stop at the cafe by the dip in Heath rd. by the railway bridge and get a couple of hot pies and take them back to his digs, we would creep into his landladies kitchen and borrow a couple of knives and forks and sneak up to his room (the tenants were not allowed to have visitors in their rooms at night) and we had to get up early on Sunday morning and be out of the house before the landlady was awake, to ensure we woke up early we used to put the alarm clock in an enamel basin, ( having set the alarm for about 8-0 am. ) balanced the cutlery on top of the clock by bridging it from the side of the small enamel basin to the top of the clock, and at 8-0 sharp the next morning we were woken up by a loud clattering which we silenced by switching the alarm off. we did this as we were both heavy sleepers. We would rise, dress and creep out of the house after returning the cutlery to the kitchen, and go round to my house for a wash and shave and breakfast, my mother felt sorry for Ronnie, he would stay for lunch and then we would go round to the girls house in Popesgrove and wander into Hampton Court Palace and wander through the state rooms and grounds, and

afterwards we would go into the little tea shop just outside Bushy Park. Another incident I remember was when we went to polish our shoes, the tin polish in the tin was hard so we lit a little bonfire with paper in the grate, melted the polish and polished our shoes. Ronnie said he would get a new tin of polish on Monday, when we had finished polishing our shoes I went to throw the empty tin out of the window but unbeknown to me Ronnie had shut the window with the result of polish running down the glass, I was flabbergasted, more so when I saw some of the polish had splashed onto the curtains, Ronnie assured me that we could turn the curtains back to front as they were reversible, in the meantime I had got on top of the dressing table to scrape the polish off the glass, unfortunately I had put my shoes on and when I got up on the dressing table I slipped, grabbed hold of the curtains and brought the whole lot down, scratching the highly polished dressing table top in the process, as a result of that escapade poor old Ronnie had to look for new digs. Back to the dry cleaning project I was able to tell Ronnie that the landlady has agreed to my carrying on as a dry cleaning receiving office. I had been giving the idea much thought and had decided on a name, which when Ronnie asked me what I was going to call it, I said 'GILT-EDGE' and when Ronnie said why call it that, I replied that I would have to have a board outside because as I did not have a large shop window (remember the premises were built as a bungalow with windows that were commensurate with living accommodation) and would have to have a sort of board one sees outside some shops on the pavement with news paper placards on them, and that I would have a large placard saying GILT-EDGE cleaners, == 'Depositing your clothes with us ensures good returns'. . Ronnie commented "Fair enough, I have arranged with STITTS of Ashford to do your price lists when I have your address and phone number and the name you are going to call yourself, I pointed that I have already made out a format for putting in peoples letter boxes, so Ronnie looked at it, said "Fair enough, I will send this to Stitts at once, by the way I've told them the position so they won't bother you for at least a month for payment. Three weeks later Gainsborough had moved out and I started in the dry cleaning business, needing some rails for hanging the garments on, I went down to the council dump and gathered some long lengths of iron and steel piping (gas and steam types, ) and returning to the 'SHACK' as our shop had been named, fixed the piping up by the simple expedient of chipping out a hole in the wall 5 feet up from the floor, measuring along the floor and chalking out a mark at a point where the other end of the pipe would come, I got a 5 foot length of timber, attached to the foot of it, shelf brackets on three sides and screwed these shelf brackets to the floor, to support the other end of the pipe, I repeated this on the other wall, and across the end wall. I still had my Singer car, so when I had finished at the shop, I went along to ' ' Seniors' the local ironmongers, bought a roll of roofing felt and some Stockholm tar 'stopping', some grey and red enamel paint, went home, unrolled the roofing felt down the back lawn, coated the whole surface with the 'Stockholm'tar stopping' then I hung it up on the clothes line and sprayed it with grey enamel paint, when that was dry I lay the whole thing flat on the lawn and with a bit of sponge, stippled it with the red enamel and left it to dry. The next day I went to Alsford's the timber merchants for some lengths of timber, 3" by 2", then I went to see Mr. Rumsey see if he would sell me a couple of tea chests, which were made from three ply wood, returning to the shop I cut these tea chests up into the sizes I needed, then affixed them to the framework I had made, got some 'wood plank' effect wall paper and wall paper paste, and proceeded to paper my 'counter' after the paper was dry I proceeded to varnish the whole lot. My darling hung some pretty lace curtains, she was my greatest support at this change in our fortunes, as she always had been. I remember as though it was yesterday going home and telling her "Well we have lost Gainsborough darling " I think at

the time she was darning one of the children's gym., slips, and without stopping she pushed her head back against my hand and said, Never mind darling you'll fall on your feet again, we'll get by. " all this despite we had lost all our dreams for the future, sending our children to university, having holidays abroad. and having someone to help my darling in the house, all through our marriage she had been my prop, my darling, dependable beloved Peggy, she was always there to encourage me, emotionally she was my rock, I used to tell her so often, without her I was nothing, her physical and mental courage was out of this world, when I was happy, she was happy, when I was down she would brighten me up by her unfailing support and cheerful demeanour, she was a mirror in that she reflected all my moods, immediately dispelling the serious ones. ===== Getting back to the dry cleaning, one day the phone rang and a voice told me it was the railway people on the phone and that there was a large parcel at the station waiting for me to pick it up, I jumped into my car, raced round to the station and picked up 4 heavy parcels. I put them in the car and took them back to the shop, on unwrapping them I found that they were my price lists, I wish I had kept one of them when I got home I told my darling that night I was going out canvassing. The procedure that I adopted was to tell the person that I was calling every (whatever the day was that I was calling on) when they seemed unsure I would point out that nobody had cleaning every week but it would be easier for me to call and that way they would be assured of a regular service, but that they must not worry if they had to say they had no cleaning, it was to be a service that when they had any cleaning they wanted done, they would know that I would be there to collect it and deliver it back to them next time I called, which would be tonight week, but if they wanted it in a hurry I would make every effort to see that they got it back when they wanted it, it surprised me to see how quickly I got established, I found that by going round of an evening I could catch everybody in, so more often than not some member of the family would have an item of cleaning they wanted done. When I got any cleaning it was a case of writing out the tapes, with Indian ink, and sewing the tapes into the garment, in those days we had to sew the tapes into the garments, not stainless steel safety pins like they do today, we wrote on the tape the customers invoice No, and if it was e.g., a 3 piece suit, at the end of the number we would add an oblique and a figure 3 afterwards thus 273/3, this was to enable the cleaning firm to know that there were 3 pieces to the order. My darling's brother Clive came to live with us as he had a row with his father, but just before hand I had gone to the 'Tiger' cycle shop just past the traffic lights, on the right hand side as one goes towards Richmond bridge, he had bought us some old United Dairy trade bikes, these had a carrier on the front in which the errand boy put his deliveries, such as dairy products. When I got back to the shop I immediately hack sawed the carrier off, went to Beasleys in Heath rd, Twickenham and bought a small 'Watsonian' side car contraption which fixed to the side of a bike, some window cleaners used them to carry their bucket and ladder, on this contraption I got my friend to put on the chassis a tall wooden frame about 5 feet high and 5 feet long with a door at the back that opened like a cupboard door, then we covered it sheet aluminium, with a roof angled to shed the rain. When it was bolted to the chassis, we found that the front wanted anchoring to the front of the bike, so we got a 2 foot length of steel pipe, flattened the two ends, drilled a hole in the end which would screw to the front end of the box, and to the other end we drilled a hole, round the head lock of the bike we put a pipe bracket which was then attached to the end of the retaining bar from the box by a nut and bolt, a trial run made by me proved that the box needed to be angled outwards from the bike, otherwise the angle of the box, when it leaned towards the bike tended to make the bike turn left hand circles, We sprayed the box medium grey, then got 'Darlings' the sign writers to

paint our name, address and phone number on both side and front of the box. When Clive arrived he hadn't got a job so I asked him if he would like to come and work for me, he said "Yes please" so I fitted him up with some price lists and accompanied him on his first day, explaining the technique I used when approaching a new customer, he turned out to be an asset to the firm, every body liked him, he was very polite and obliging which is what a good salesman should be, this enabled me to look after the shop of a morning then Clive went home for dinner and after dinner we went back to work but this time I took my darling back with me to look after the shop, while I went canvassing in the Singer car onto which Kyrie made a box that sat on the back seat, and had a door in the upper half which lifted upwards from the top and was reached from the rear of the car. We made such progress that I sold the 'Singer' and bought a small van. 'A three wheel James one for sale, it cost œ45=00, Again we got the sign writers to put our name, address and phone number on the side, plus the words 'Collections and delivery free' 'Please ask driver for price list and details of weekly calls' Shortly after this Clive had a reply from the R. A. F, to whom he had applied when he was at home but was too young by 18 months, but obviously they had kept his name, and written to his old address but his mother kindly forwarded his letter on to him at our house. He was so keen on the R. A. F. that we both wished him well, but he used to visit us when ever he had any leave . about this time the land lady wanted the premises for a nephew of hers who had started up in T, V. and radio repairs and wanted premises, so we had to move out, the firm of Burtols where I used to work had a large double fronted premises in Heath Road half way between Tennyson Ave., and the traffic lights at Crossdeep, but it had been empty for about 6 months or more, Healy & Baker the estate agents in the West End had a board stating that the lease was for sale, so I phoned them up and asked them about the lease and the price, 'They shook me rigid when they said how much they wanted, to the best of my memory it was œ1200 which was way above what I could afford. I was telling the young man who worked in 'Seniors' the ironmongers and asked him if he knew who the landlord was, to which he replied that it was the same landlord who owned the shops adjoining 'Spikins' petrol station and showrooms opposite, and was a Mr. Barsach Davis he gave me the phone number and asked me what I was going to do with it, and I told him what Healy & Baker were asking for the lease, and that there was no way that I could afford that figure, and said that I would ask him if he would let me have the shop as a rent paying tenant and an ex-gratia payment spread over 2 years for the lease which Healy & Baker wanted. Mr. Seniors chap laughed and said you've got a nerve, but good luck to you. When I got back over the road to the shop I phoned this Mr, Davis but a nice soft Irish voice answered the phone and told me that Mr. Davis was out but she would tell him that I had called, but she would need to know what the call was about, so I told her, she doubted very much if he would be interested in that proposition but would pass on the message and who should she say was calling and what was my phone number, The following morning at about 10:00 am the phone went and a voice boomed down the phone, Mr. Webb, and when I "Yes" the voice said this is Mr. Barsach Davis, I understand you phoned yesterday about my premises in Heath rd, I said that was correct, and proceeded to relate my reply from Healy & Baker and the price they were asking for the lease, he seemed surprised at this and said that he never sold a lease but gave them free of charge so how could he help in this matter, At this point I took a deep breath and said would Mr. Davis be prepared to buy the lease and let me repay him over a couple of years as an ex-gratia payment in addition to the rent. He replied "Are you in business now, to which I replied that I was and that I had 4 little daughters and proceeded to tell him about my landlady wanting the premises for her nephew who was doing T, V, and radio repairs but the

local council told him that the house was not for business purposes and that he would have to get other premises to carry on his trade. The outcome of all was that he said that he would contact Healy & Baker but could not promise anything but he went on to say that he admired my cheek in putting such a proposition to him, and would contact me one way or the other, The following day my van started to throw a lot of smoke out and was burning a lot of oil so I went to my old friend Mr, Lowe who came along to see what the trouble was, he asked where my Singer car was, so I explained that I had to sell it to buy a van, He took out the piston out and said he would take it home and fit 'Cord' rings on it, he brought it back the next morning saying "Here you are Johnny, already to go back in your van, I'm sure you can put it back, it will save you more expense, " His confidence was misplaced, in trying to put it back I forgot to disconnect the battery and when I put the piston back over the con. rod I put my arm over the instrument console which was attached to the bulk head and down to the floor, I was down on one knee by the side of the front wheel, in my right hand was a hammer which I proceeded to put across the console while at the same time with my left hand endeavoured to line the holes in the piston for the gudgeon pin, still with my left hand proceeded to put the piston over the con-rod and with my right hand proceeded to hammer the gudgeon pin into the piston boss hole while at the same time putting my finger in the opposite hole to line them up, unfortunately my right arm, with the hammer in it, touched the 'starter' button, this caused the piston, which was half on the con-rod to be snatched down in to the cylinder. When I extracted my hand it was to find that on my left hand the first joint on the middle finger hanging on by a thread and was detached by about 2 inches and my thumb did not look too good, I went back into the shop got a clean hanky out of my jacket pocket and putting it very carefully round my damaged hand, my darling Peggy said "What on earth have you done now, you are as pale as a ghost, I muttered something like " don't worry me now darling, am going up to strawberry hill to Dr, Freeman, when I got there Dr. Maurice was out but she phoned Heath rd surgery to see if Dr. Joe was there, he was still there so she told him to wait and that she was sending me down to him, I set off down Radnor rd., and saw Dr. Joe looking past me for somebody coming down the Radnor rd, not realising it was me that the phone message was about me, as I stood on the edge of the kerb I felt a little faint and was worried in case I fainted half way across the main road so I waited until a little old lady was crossing at that moment so I went across in front of her thinking that if I fainted she would stop the traffic, when I got to the surgery the doctor said "Is it you that the surgery phoned me about, " I nodded and when I opened my hanky he looked a bit worried and said you had better come in, when we got in the surgery he took a closer look and said he did not like the look of my severed finger, telling me to sit still he went out of the surgery and in less than a minute came back in with some dressings and a gouch splint, had threaded a curved needle with gut and told me to look away, I big headedly said I had got used to seeing blood, and with that I must have fainted because I came round conscious of being in a forest with several trees lying across my back, these trees became 2 trees and then they took on the appearance of trousers, it was Dr. Joe pressing on my back with my head between my knees, Dr. told me that he would have to amputate the first joint of my finger, and in my dismay I said "What about my rifle shooting, forgetting it was my right finger that would be on the trigger, any how Dr. said "O, K, Webb, I will sew it back on if you will assure me that you will come back every day for penicillin injections until we can be sure that it has taken alright, and if it doesn't, it comes off, and no argument, now you can take this prescription into Friths and get these dressings". Friths the chemist was only two doors away from the surgery, when I got into the chemists Wilf Huggeson, the dispenser and a neighbour

said, have you just come from the surgery only old Dr. Joe came in here in a great panic, got a packet of cotton wool, bandages and gooch splint and shooting out of the door told me to put them on his account, he looked very worried, I said it was me that these items were for and showed him my hand.

To cut a long story short, 10 days later I had the stitches taken out, it had healed up nicely but the tip was cold to the touch and blue looking and seemed shrunken, but Father Higgs who had studied homeopathy gave me some minuscule pills, I took just 2 of them over 2 days, suddenly I felt some throbbing in my finger and lo and behold, finger normal, well almost, it has an inability to completely straighten. In the mean time Mr. Davis phoned to make an appointment to meet me outside the empty Burtol shop at 10-00am the next day, he turned up dead on the hour, we looked at the shop and Mr. Davis thought the shop might be too big for me, and suggested putting down a partition down the centre, putting in 2 doors and making it into 2 shops and I could have either the left or the right side, I told him that my landlady was getting edgy about me getting out, but he told me not to worry, he would have a word with her pointing the legal aspect out to her so we parted with his promise to get on with the conversion. A chiropodist in the parade was a customer of mine so I told him that I would shortly be a neighbour and told him of my meeting with his landlord. That afternoon Len Smith who had a small shop next door to the chiropodist came in to see me and enquired if I was interested in the Burtol premises, I confirmed it, to which he said he thought the premises were too large for me, I agreed and pointed out that Mr, Davis was going to make them into 2 shops, Len Smith now explained the reason for coming to see me, it was the fact that he was looking for bigger premises, that Burtol premises would suit his purposes very well, and that I might consider moving into his, I said I did not mind as long it was alright with Mr. Davis., and that it did not delay my evacuation of my present premises. The next morning my phone rang, it was Mr. Davis, Who is dis Mr, Schmidt, ? so I gently reminded him that Mr. Smith was one of his tenants, to which he said "Dis Mr, Schmidt is after your shop and says it is alright with you, is it alright with you ? if it is I will arrange a new tenancy for him, and will save me making arrangements to convert that other shop but it is up to you, I replied that I was happy to co- operate with both you and Mr. Smith. Mr. Davis said "If you are sure that you do not mind this other man having your shop and you moving into his, I will make the necessary arrangements and tell this Mr, Schmidt it is O, K. then he thanked me for my co-operation and said when the evacuation of Len Smith's shop was complete he would contact me. Six weeks later I had a phone call from Mr. Davis's secretary asking me to call at his offices in the strand at 10-00 am the next day to discuss my taking the smaller shop in Heath Rd. The next day I caught the train up to London, a bus to the strand and found his offices, when I entered I was surprised to see all his typists all dressed in smart grey costumes and wearing a white carnation in their button hole, Mr. Davis's secretary in a similar costume but with a red carnation in her button hole, his personal office was a large one with a thick plush carpet covering his office, and the outer offices, In his own office there were large framed pictures round the walls of shops all over London, He explained that when a borough or town let him build a row of shops he always let the council have the top floor as council flats whether the building had 2 or 3 floors over the shops, we sat down, it reminded me of my exam at West Middlesex hospital, in that he had his desk across a corner in his office, his secretary was sitting beside him with a note pad on her lap. He asked me for a few personal details, what I had done since leaving school, I gave him a brief outline, telling his as briefly about my time with Gainsborough. he smiled and said " For a man who had so little education you have moved mountains, I admire you for a fighter, " He told me the rent for the shop was quarterly in advance, I chipped in and said could I please

pay weekly for the first 3 months then monthly, and then quarterly, to my surprise he grinned and said certainly, and turning to his secretary " Have you got that down Miss Riley, " She nodded and asked about references, he said " References from this man, he made it very clear, he has nothing, and anyhow I have all the references I want, I saw them in his eyes when he walked through that door and when I went down to Twickenham " with that he stood up, smiled, shook hands, and said " Miss Riley will send you details of paying the rent to a firm of estate agents in sheen " with that he shook hands and said " Promise one thing to me, , Do good business".

We made arrangements to move out of the 'shack' the following day, I had already told my customers that we might move in to the main road, and where it would be, I made arrangements to get gummed labels to stick on our price lists with our new address and made arrangements to transfer our phone number to our new premises. Our move being completed, I was pondering how to put up the rails when Mr, Davis called, introduced himself to my darling while I was outside at the back putting some rubbish in the dustbin, I entered the shop, saw Mr. Davis who was standing beside Peggy smiling and told me that Peggy had asked him if he would like a cup of tea, and had gone to put the kettle on. I asked his permission to make holes in the wall to fix the garment rails, to which he replied " I do not care what you do as long as you do good business, " After he had gone my darling said "What a nice man, he seems to think a lot of you darling, " We got off to good start in our new premises, I had built a screen so as you came in the door, that was on the right hand side as you entered the shop, you saw immediately in front of you, but about 14 feet back a screen which reached from the right hand wall to the opposite wall with an archway about 3 feet wide on the left for access to and from the rear of the shop. The system was as follows, I would take the children to school in the morning then go to the shop and sort out the cleaning and put the clothes into a canvas bag or bags ready for Forsters van driver, with the urgent orders separate, then he would bring our clean work in and I would sort out the various orders, van deliveries on one rail, and shop orders on another rail, when I had finished sweeping the shop floor and bagging the dirty work and putting the tickets on the clean work my darling Peggy would walk in, leaving me free to go out on my round, this I would do until lunch time, return to the shop for lunch, after lunch I would go on my afternoon round until tea time, when I would return to the shop, the children would have brought themselves to the shop, ( they were always together when they left school ) and we would all have tea together in the back of the shop, from then and until we shut the shop at 6-opm by this time Peggy would mark up the work that I had collected, and put the work into canvas bags, we would then all get into the van and go home. Once I had taken the family home I would go back to the shop, load on the clean work and go back on the round where I would stay until about 9-30 pm, sometimes when I was extra busy, people would be coming out of the cinema from the end of the last programme, and they would look at me as though I was from outer space, I could imagine them saying to themselves 'WORKING ? ?'. I had made my self a box lock trolley about 3 feet long, about 2 feet wide and 2 feet deep mounted on 4 castors which I used to wheel out to the van, load it up with the dirty cleaning that I had collected, take it back into the shop, lock up and go home, then I'd cuddle up with my darling on the settee and talk about the sort of day we both had had. This was what 'working together' meant to us, a shared adventure. One day 'Forsters' van driver said to me that I should do my own pressing, and went on to say that half of my cleaning bill went on 'pressing' my reply was non-committal but it gave me food for thought so I discussed it with my darling saying that for every 10 shillings we gave the trade cleaners we got back from our

customers a œ1--o but if we did our own pressing, for every suit we would only have to pay 'Forsters' 5 shillings instead of 10 shillings. My darling gave it some thought, and looking up said, " First of all can we afford a press, secondly can you do the pressing " I gave this some serious consideration, and after a few moments said " I could go and see Sermac Ltd. of Mortlake, they deal in second hand dry cleaning machines and presses, find out the cost of a second hand press, and boiler and fixing charges, and if I cannot manage the pressing, we can advertise for a presser. By this time we had sold our 3 wheeler James van and bought a second hand Ford from Cheesemans of the Broadway, Teddington (they were florists and fruiterers and wanted to get a larger van. ) There was a dry cleaners at the foot of Richmond bridge on the corner of Cambridge rd, opposite Ducks Walk and the presser did his pressing in the window, so I parked my van in this turning and sitting in the back of the van and looking out of the back window, studied the pressers technique, I did this every morning from 9-0 to 11-0 Monday to Friday for a week and a half. Feeling confident, I went and saw 'Sermac Ltd' i forget now the price they quoted, all I do remember is that, including supplying boiler, press and piping with warranty for a second hand boiler and press and the service of a qualified presser from their staff for a Sunday morning to oversee my efforts. To cut a long story short, the press and boiler was installed, my pressing tutorial went very well, so we were in business pressing like mad. I used to do our pressing in the mornings, it was about this time that I joined the T. A. war had broken out in Korea and I did not want another episode like I had in 1943, when I got to the ambulance depot one of the lads put his hand under the rear collar of my great coat and extracted a white feather, which some kind person had put up there unbeknown to me at the bus stop at Twickenham junction, a different attitude to that that existed during the blitz when they stood back at the bus stop, and helped me on the bus saying " They should give you chaps a medal the size of frying pan. this was an episode that I didn't want to go through again and I understood that they had changed the medical to the new PULHEEMS these letters stood for different aspects of the human body, like the 2 letters E stood for ears & eyes, P was for physique, L was for limbs, I forget what the other letters stood for, anyhow if you lost points on one aspect and you gained plus marks for another aspect, the total marks if they reached the 'pass' mark they got you in. We built up 'Gilt-Edge' to a point where we could now employ a full time presser, it was a young woman called 'Sis' whom my darling interviewed, and when I got back from my round she told me that we had got a good presser with good references who had just moved into our area from the other side of London and married a Twickenham boy, and that she could start straight away, Because I was not a good judge of character, seeing only good in everybody, and my darling was an excellent judge of character, I accepted her evaluation straight away without question, it was the same at the rifle club, if a new member joined the club I would say to my Peggy, "that seems a nice young chap, " and she would shake her head and say "I'll give him a month ". sure enough before the month was up he would have left, on another occasion I would look at another new member with some misgiving and my wise, beloved wife, would say, " You have got a good member there, you want to look after him. " One such was Mike Box who turned out to be one of the best members, and who, in 1989 asked me if I would be 'Best man' at his wedding to Lynn Stanford Taylor, a request I was flattered and pleased to accept.

In the March of that year, I went to TA camp to Bude in Cornwall, when I got back from camp I went straight to the shop, ( we came back from camp on the Saturday, at midday, Brian Basson who was a member of my Battery in the TA ) came back to the shop with me where we found my darling and the presser 'Sis' sitting forlornly drinking tea, when I asked them what the trouble was, they looked a bit

sheepish and told me that when the boiler seemed low in water (there was a glass gauge on the outside of the boiler ) they pumped fresh water into the boiler, but the water immediately burst through the base of the boiler and flooded the floor, Brian Basson who worked at the Hampton Court Gas co., and was a fitter with the company asked how long had the water been low before they noticed it, they said they did not know but when they pumped fresh water into it, it hissed. Brian said they had by pumping cold water in before letting the boiler get cold by turning the gas off, had caused the tubes to shrink, but not to worry, he had a set of tube spreaders at work, and if I picked him up on the Sunday morning we could dismantle the boiler and he could spread the tube ends, and we would be able to light on Monday morning. We did this ( I say we, I mean of course Brian, all I did was to stand around acting as a fitters mate ) amongst my customers were Eddy and Sheila Cox of Elmsleigh rd. She ran a credit drapery business from home, and Eddy had a mobile Fruit and Green grocery van which I often saw on my rounds. One day I called as usual on their home, Eddy came to the door, he invited me in and gave me some cleaning. When I had finished writing out the tickets, he "said, we were coming out of the cinema the other night at 10 40 pm and noticed you taking into the shop a load of cleaning, how often do you do that, to which I replied that is what I do most nights, for that is when I get most of my work, when I catch most of the family home. ( I should make it clear here that the Odeon Cinema stood on the corner of Cross Deep and Heath rd, but is has now been demolished. ) Eddy went on to say that I had told him previously that the shop was on the wrong side of the road to do much trade, so that the shop depended on the van for the bulk of its trade and in that case the van was paying for most of the overheads, the insurance's, phone, van tax, petrol, rent, rates, wages and the rest of the overheads, did I realise that if I had a second van on the road, deducting the cost of the second van including wages, would contribute to an increase in the bank balance, and had I considered taking in a partner, and if I gave it serious thought he would like to be that partner. When I got home I talked it over with my darling, who did not think it was a good idea, and reminded me of the last fiasco of trusting other people, but I did not think that the same thing would happen this time, and I pointed out that if I was taken ill, or the van was smashed up, at least we would be covered by the second van, to her credit she was still doubtful, so I invited the Cox's round home to talk it over, When they came they assured Peggy that everything would be alright. After they had gone my darling said to me " I'm not too happy about them but it is up to you, if you are happy about them go ahead but please get it all tied up by a solicitor darling. " So the next evening I discussed it with the Cox's, he said that when I had got a valuation on the business, he would come in on a 50--50 basis. His greengrocery van belonged to his wife, and she needed the money for extra stock, which she had previously from the profit the van made. Eddy told me that he and his sister had inherited some property down in Somerset consisting of a farmhouse, a couple of fields. The farmhouse was well appointed, he showed me a photo of it. We decided that he would need a van so I bought one on hire-purchase from a finance company. Eddy and his wife decided to buy a three story house in Sheen and let it out in 'furnished flats' in the mean time he would need to earn, until such time that he and his sister sold the farmhouse. When the finance company said yes, I looked around for a van suitable for our purpose, found one such, and went to Fulfords of Kingston to do a bit of work to the body work, which they did. At that time I was taking out of the business a weekly wage of œ7-00, so we decided to give Eddy the same. They sold their home in Elmsleigh rd, so we put them up at 23, Bonser rd., for about a fortnight, with some suit cases for change of clothing, every now and again Eddy would ask me if I had paid the cleaning bill, and could I give them a cheque of his and give him the cash as

his wife Sheila was going to an auction sale to buy some furniture for their house in Sheen, this happened several times. After they had been with us a couple of weeks they moved into their new address in Sheen. Now comes the crunch. I went down to the shop one morning and found that all the dry cleaning had gone, not only the rounds of his own, but mine as well and also the shop work, I felt sick at heart, went round to the police station to give them details, when they asked where he lived I realised I had no idea where they had moved to in Sheen. Inspector Bainbridge from Saville rd, Twickenham was a customer and he came into the shop that day and asked if Eddy had any luck in selling his 2 suits, it transpired that he had given Eddy 2 suits, almost new, to sell as they no longer fitted him, reluctantly I told him the story, as he went out of the door he asked where in Elmseigh rd, Eddy had lived . When he had this information he went out. Two days later he came in and told me that he had traced his new address, he also said they had not only caught us, but Mr. Rumsey was owed money for the removal and upholstery that he had done for them, he had also found out that Jack Bowyer, the manager of the Regal cinema had given him a brand new dinner suit for pressing which he had only just bought, but had got creased up in the delivery box. At night I used to put the days takings in the waste basket for safety, that was gone, At the police suggestion I got new locks fitted, with 2 pass keys. The window cleaner said he could have told me that Eddy was dodgy but he seemed to have settled down with me so he decided to let sleeping dogs lie. Inspector Bainbridge called in and said "I have tracked him down at the address that Mr. Rumsey had moved them to but every thing was in his wife's name and I can only give you the advice I have given Mr. Rumsey and Jack Bowyer, if you sue him you will only be throwing good money after bad, because on paper he has no money of his own, and incidentally I have found out that when he was in Streatham he swindled someone who bought his wine & spirit business, and he caught someone who bought his greengrocery business, he was a real wrong un. For the benefit of my grandchildren who do not know of the Regal Cinema, it was where Regal House stands today near the railway station, it contains among other firms offices some council offices. In Heath rd., we had a window that started at virtually at ground level, so I had an arrangement with Jack Bowyer, the cinema manager that If I put some display material in my window, and fixed a board diagonally across the roof of my van with a poster advertising any forth coming attraction, in exchange for which he would give me a free advertisement on the screen, to which he agreed, he was very keen on this as the company had hundreds of cinemas in the country and they used to give managers 'stars' for enterprise, and the one with the most 'stars' at the end of a given period got a financial bonus. I remember doing a special window display for the film 'SANDS OF IOJIMA' a war story of the USA in the far east during the war, In the window I laid out a long piece of ceiling paper and painted it blue with little splashes of white paint representing wavelets and in an irregular line I scattered some sand, on this I put one of my old khaki shirts, all torn and stained it with red paint to represent blood, to this I added my old air rifle, this was backed by some official posters showing scenes from the film, Jack Bowyer phoned me to ask me if it would be alright if he sent a photographer round. He told me the following week that it had earned him some extra 'stars' and in return for that he had arranged with head office to give us the uniforms and curtains for cleaning.

To get back to the shop fiasco, I was broken hearted, I got in touch with the finance company and explained the situation to them, they replied that as I was the guarantor they would have to make me responsible but that they would try and locate the van, after that I phoned Mr, Davis and told him what had happened. The next morning about 10-0 o'clock My darling said "Mr, Davis has just pulled up darling,

the next moment he walked into the shop with miss Riley his secretary, he started off by asking what all the bother was, I proceeded to tell him what had happened, he asked me if I was financially embarrassed to which I pointed out that I owed the phone bill, the cleaning bill, the rent, the payment on the van, he asked the amounts and I saw Miss Riley writing them down, he said to her "Not counting the rent what does that come to Mary, she told him and took a large cheque book out of her hand bag and handed it to him, but before he could write anything down I stopped him and said "That is not the reason I asked you to come down but to ask you your permission to sell the business " what surprised me was the degree of shock he showed, he just stared at me unbelievably and said SELL, why not carry on, I took a deep breath and said, " you have been too good to us already, we have talked it over, Peggy and I, and we feel that we have had enough, I did not mind working until 10-0pm and later but on top of this I am too shattered and so is my darling Peggy, we are not normally quitters but this is the second time that I have been kicked, " he could see that I was serious, and looking at my darling said "do you agree with your husband ? " and when my Peggy nodded, he said OK if that is what you both want I give you permission to sell, but you are not to worry about the rent until you have sold the business " with that he shook hands with us both, Miss Riley kissed my Peggy, shook hands with me and then they both walked out of the shop. The next day Stephen Glaser from Sunbury popped in to collect his cleaning, he dealt in garment rails fixed and portable ones; I had a couple of portable ones from him also a fixed one, when I told him what had happened and asked if he knew anybody looking for a dry cleaning business, he shook his head, but said " you are a good salesman when you have sold this, could do with a good salesman in the West end of London, I said that I was interested but knew nothing about his trade, he replied I was not to worry, he would explain every thing to me when I had sold the shop. A month later I sold the shop, settles my debts, including the rent on the shop, and contacted Stephen Glaser, who came round to my house, he explained that it would involve me in calling on the garment makers in London, particularly in the Marylebone area and Mayfair. The work was quite simple much to my surprise, the rails were of 2 types, cadmium, and chrome plated, The cadmium cost one shilling per foot and 6 pence per bend, plus one shilling a flange for floor or wall fixing. Chromium plated rails were 18 pence per foot, 8 pence per bend and 9 pence per flange. I forget now the cost of portable rails. My first day went very well, the first contact I made was with RAEL-BROOK, the shirt makers, they were two partners and the main partner was Israel Cohen, they gave me an order for a couple of portable rails in cadmium, and an order for 'laying up spikes' I forget now how many, The first two weeks brought orders from De Maiyo of Great Portland St. and Susan Small the ladies blouse firm, they had a Rolls Royce van with a painting on the sides of an globe of the world and above it the legend ' IT'S A SMALL WORLD' they wanted a portable rail square in shape, to fit their lift, (they were on 2 floors plus a ground floor, so I had to measure the width and depth of the lift, the rail they wanted was a 2 tier rail so that they could hang blouses one above the other. the whole portable rail was, to the best of my memory, about 58 " tall. they wanted three of these, I got another couple of small orders in Wigmore street, Stephen was very pleased, and surprised at me getting Susan Small, he thought another firm had a firm grip on orders from this particular customer, I was only on commission, but not doing too badly, at the end of the third week my Peggy gave me a letter, it was from the finance company about the van, they had traced the van on a 'second hand' vehicles, firms front, the van had been stripped of its tools and battery and had a couple of scratches but the people who had it, bought the van and log book, that enabled the finance firm to work out what I owed them, but the money they got from the second hand vehicle firm and

the cost of searching for the van left me owing more than I had hoped, but anyhow I was pleased they had found it. After a period of about 8 months I got a large order from Richard Shops, the multiple retail shops, and a large order from Harrods but as Stephen Glaser had to wait for his money before I got my commission, this was natural because if the customers cancelled their orders Stephen Glaser, or any other employer would be out on a limb if they had paid out any commission, after all there would be nothing to stop a dishonest person to get a firm to give a large order then cancel it 'after the rep., had been paid commission'. These two orders totalled several hundred pounds which was a lot of money in those days, and the commission there from was pretty high, and as we had to pay our way at home I had to tell Stephen Glaser that I would have to look round for another job but would finish the week out. While I was walking down Oxford street I bumped into Sidney Sulkin who was in the ARP with me, and who when he got called up for the army during the war asked me to go and work for his father on my off duty days. " Said Well-Well fancy seeing you, what are you doing, I heard about Gainsboroughs, the word going round the trade is that they burnt their fingers when they went in with Wrights Chemicals, " when he heard about my getting orders so big that Stephen Glaser would have to wait for them to pay him before he could pay me, so I was finishing the week out for him at which Sid Sulkin said why don't you phone Stewart at this address, with which he drew out of his pocket a visiting card, they had premises in Holland Park Avenue and the three brothers were working together. The following day I phoned Stewart Sulkin and made an arrangement to go up to Holland Park Avenue for an interview, when I got up there they made me feel as though I was interviewing them, they gave me complete freedom what area I worked, they said ' start next week go to the garage just along here in the next parade with Sidney and they will fix you up with a car, then come in here for order books etc., and price lists, glad to have you with us Johnny, " he smiled and said "Perhaps we shall get some of our old customers back. After a month had gone by Stephen Glaser's wife knocked on our door at Bonser rd, and gave me œ10--0 commission due to me saying that Richard Shops had paid some of their account, but they were still waiting for Harrods to pay up. Working for Sulkins was better for me, I knew the trade back to front and was meeting a lot of old friends, and was taking customers from Gainsborough, Lionel the van driver was still with them, and told me that Sidney Pollard had lost everything that he had lost his shop, his house and his holiday bungalow with Wrights Chemicals and that Chris. Mallett had taken all Gainsboroughs stuff out by using a firm of removal people with 2 vans and were using the back of a hairdressers in Whitton until they could find new premises, Chris, Mallet had told Bill Wright we were pulling out and if he tried to stop us Gainsborough would sue him, I asked Lionel what went wrong and he replied " Everything, you were quite right they were very dodgy, when Chris, Mallett saw the writs arriving against Wrights, he decided to get as far away as possible before Gainsborough got sucked into the mire, " This made me sad, and yet in a way, I felt it vindicated me, I knew what it felt like to be caught by dodgy dealing. It was now 18 months since I joined the TA, and I remembered someone telling me to make myself as indispensable as possible because if the regiment got called up the Colonel would say to the medical officer, who would be assessing the men's physical fitness for service for overseas " I would like to keep him and him and him, get rid of him. etc., " When I joined the regiment the chaps in it had in the main been in the regiment before the war, had gone all the way through the war with it, and after the war had remained with it, and none of them had learnt any other job except their own, so I made up my mind to learn every job in the battery, the searchlight was a 180 centimetre light barrel on an 8 ton turntable, one end housed the radar cabin for the No. 2 the man up on the gantry

by the side of the lamp was the No 5, the man on the remote control pillar was the No 3, No 4 worked the 22 kilo watt Lister generator No 1 was the detachment commander and was usually a sergeant or higher, his No 2 was No 2, and when they were out on manoeuvres there were three other chaps one of whom was cook the other two being orderlies. I started in the unit as No 3 on the remote control pillar, this was connected to the projector by a 14 core cable, 75 yards long, it had a 'D' end which slotted in the remote control pillar, the generator was on a 100 yard cable, this was to keep its noise away from the D.C., otherwise when he gave any orders they would not be heard. I learnt all the others jobs and when they had a promotion examination I sailed through it, Battery Sgt. major Griffiths came up to me and said Sgt Webb, I replied "No sir, bombardier Webb" to which he replied, " No longer, welcome to the sergeants mess, " when I looked surprised he said Major Litchfield has given you 99%, he does not give 100% on principle, " ( should mention here that Major Litchfield was a Whitton School Master. ) My first camp as a D.C. (detachment commander) was at Bude in Cornwall, our searchlights were scattered around, about 3 miles apart, our operational site was in a field loaned by a farmer on condition that we put our equipment on a 'hard standing' area made by the simple expedient of placing some boulders towards the middle of the field, this field stood on a corner of a 'T' junction, BSM Evans who was put on charge of locating the searchlights had just acquired a motor cycle from the local 'vehicle pool' and was supposed to lead us to our ops., site, unfortunately he forgot that we had a Matador Lorry towing the 8 ton projector and a 3 ton lorry carrying the 'manning stores, tents, stoves, 'remote control pillar' and 75yd 14 core cable, and towing the 22 kilowatt Lister generator, he just shot off into the blue. We followed as well as we could through the narrow lanes, after following along a particularly tortuous lane, we got to a 'T' junction, we turned right but could not see any sight of BSM Evans, so I told one of the chaps to march smartly for 5 minutes and if he hadn't found the BSM to return, 10 minutes we saw him coming back to report 'No luck' all we had to go on was a piece of paper giving us details of our 'site' and fortunately it gave as our address 'Hartland Point' so we searched for a sign indicating 'Hartland Point' when we found the sign at a 'T' junction indicating our area, so we proceed along to Hartland Point, but only traversed 50 yards before we came to a small sea inlet, and no access for a car never mind a large lorry, we had to turn back, this entailed our unloading the projector and the Lister generator, manhandling them to face the opposite direction, we were able to utilise the winching gear on the Matador to move the projector, which weighed 8 tons, then we returned 50 yards to the sign post looking for a field with a prepared 'hard standing' and it was right by the sign post with arms pointing in opposite directions, saying 'Hartland Point' and in the opposite direction 'Tossbury Corner'. There being no way in which we could tow the projector into the field it meant us fixing the projector onto the front of the Matador and pushing it in, but as soon as the front wheels of the Mat., entered the field we had to stop, reverse the lorry out, then turn the corner so that the lorry now stood by the second boundary of the field, pass the large tow rope round one of the winching wheels on the side of the Mat., pass it through the hedge, fix it to the projector back axle, and by us getting hold of the tow bar, and with the help of the winching gear manhandled the projector into position, always making sure it was on the hard standing all the time we were manhandling it. the remote control pillar, we carried over to the further corner of the large field, the generator we placed in the same lane as the gate of the field, but 100 yards further up the lane by another smaller field where we pitched our tents and cooking stoves, after we fixed up our field telephone from the generator to the projector, and our radio operator had 'tested' his equipment with 'control' we were in business. As always at these annual camps we were

under the watchful eyes of Ack. I, G's, in other words Regular Army Instructors, they were always in residence at all T. A. training areas. The one who inspected us when we were established, asked how we managed to get the equipment how we managed to find the place, (apparently BSM Evans had returned reporting that we were lost) and expressed surprise that we had managed to manoeuvre our projector onto the field 'hard-standing' without chewing the ground up, when I told him what I had done, he whistled through his teeth, muttered something about Royal Engineers, and about reporting my adaptability to our Colonel. (I know that it went on my 'records' because when I joined the London Irish Rifles, they let me keep my three stripes, which was unusual, particularly when an artillery man joins an infantry regiment, and they sent me to Brigade H. Q., for intelligence training as they needed a sergeant in the Intelligence section, who were in the same building at the Duke of Yorks H. Q., and had the same drill night. When I finished my course at Brigade H. Q. and after I had finished a spell at Cadogan Square which was a regular army advanced Military Intelligence centre where I learnt even more, I was returned to the L. I. R. battalion Intelligence section under Major Sir Christopher Nixon Q. C, (he retired when the judiciary elevated him to higher Office. ) On returning to the battalion I had a chance to see my records, they showed a report from the colonel of my last regiment saying, Very resourceful, had displayed leadership of a very high quality, earned his 3 stripes very early on. Attendance level 100%, has a good knowledge of first-aid and is a first class lecturer. ) This last was to stand me in good stead later on in a camp at Stanford P, T. A. (practical training area} We were at a brigade camp, I should explain here that the T. A. camps follow a three year cycle, in other words, T. A, regiments in their first year train at Battalion level, in other words they go to camp on their own and put into practise all that they had learnt at the drill hall, the second year the three battalions went to camp as a brigade and operated on a brigade front. the third year they went to camp as a division, and the three brigades operated on a divisional front. This particular year we went to camp as a brigade, I was still attached to brigade and in the same area were the R, A. M. C., training. The powers that be had decided that the T. A., in London would not go to war straight away but would have to help the civilian authorities in the event of an atomic attack, they argued that if an atom bomb dropped on London, roofs as far away as Slough would lose roof tiles, and in the event of that type of attack the T, A., would have to organise tented cities out side London and organise food supplies as well. At this particular camp Brigadier Lerwill told the B. M., (brigade major) to sound out Sgt. Webb about teaching First-aid at the forthcoming camp, which was in about 3 weeks time. I was to let the brigade clerk have a list of my lectures, organised in a series of lectures each lasting a from 9-0am to midday during the first week, all officers, Warrant Officers and sergeants were to attend from the 4 battalions, these were the London Irish Rifles, Queen Victoria Rifles, London Scottish and the 23rd. County of London Reg. When I had prepared the requisite No., of lectures to cover the periods that the Brigadier had laid down and gave them to the brigade clerk to run a quantity off on the Roneo duplicator. When we arrived at the camp a small marquee was placed at my disposal. My first lecture was on 'shock' the marquee was dingy so when I used the black board I had the canvas at that particular point unhooked which gave me sufficient light for the students to see the board, the only other area where there was an entrance was at the back of the marquee, this entrance was accessible by virtue of there being a loose flap, which flapped now and again permitting the egress or entrance of people who had only just arrived, or who had been called away to do some duty or other. An officer sitting in the front row pointed quietly to his watch and mouthed 'lunch time' I had got so carried away that I had not noticed the time, so I said "That is all for today gentlemen. as

they left the marquee I went out by the opening near the black board, only to see the Brigadier and a couple of officers from the RASMC, one was introduced to me as the DMS, (director of medical services, and the second one was the ADMS (assistant DMS) the DMS said we noticed that you said if you had three patients you would give share the blankets to the two who had the most chance of survival, but we in the RAMC give on a blanket to each casualty irrespective of the seriousness of their wounds, I said I did not know much about war wounds received on the battle field but I know that when animals fight and men fight, their temper is up releasing adrenaline into the blood stream which is a valuable clotting agent, but when people are involved in an air raid, they are already in shock directly the sirens have sounded, and went on to say that though I did not have much knowledge about battle field casualties, my common sense tells me that a soldiers shock pattern is much lower than that of a civilian, particularly a woman casualty, who worries about her neighbours, family, home etc., civilian casualties are very susceptible to septicemia or pneumonia due to shock, I pointed out to them that my experience was gained amongst civilian casualties and that was the type of casualty that my class this morning would probably have to deal with in time of war, a predominance of whom would be women and children and old people, The DMS asked me if I had to take a decision with regard to the distribution of blankets amongst civilians during the war, to which I replied "No Sir, we were very lucky in that we had ample blankets, but in the event of an atomic attack, I am not so sure that we would have enough blankets. The DMS said "We must look into this phenomena with civilian casualties, but I argued that it was not a phenoma but a natural re-action and men are the biggest babies when injured, One of the RAMC said "that is a load of rubbish, I saw many acts of heroism amongst wounded men in the last war, to which I replied that I was sure that was so, but I added that might have been due to the fact of them being surrounded by men, and that probably they wouldn't let any one see them concerned about their own wounds, but in a civilian capacity they felt a loss of their masculinity, it was as though they were being brought down to the level of women and children, and I pointed out that men in those circumstances have to be treated firmly, and I gave an instance in the war when we were dealing with several casualties I went over to one man who kept calling out for attention when we were dealing with a number of women and children casualties and said You really must be quiet you are disturbing the others, you have only got a broken leg, with luck you will be back at work in a month, that poor devil over there has internal haemorrhage, the man looked sheepish and said sorry mate, and he looked across at the one I said had internal haemorrhage, waved his hand and shouted . good luck mate. The DMS said " I am sure that you are right sergeant, I threw up a salute and watched the 2 RAMC officers walk off and Brigadier Lerwill grinned and said " I am glad you stuck to your ground there sergeant Webb, and I think they will look into the difference between service and civilian casualty, I must say that your remarks to the DMS will have him considering them by the way he was nodding his head as you were talking, Well I suppose it is time we went and saw about our lunch, with that I threw up a salute and wandered off to the sergeants mess tent. later in the evening I was sitting in the Sgt.'s mess when Major Withers (the BM) walked in having asked permission from the mess president, who was the RSM, sat down beside me and said "The Brigadier told me what happened outside the lecture marquee and asked me to congratulate you for sticking to your guns. Shortly after this Sulkins had been engaged in some shady business as far as Purchase tax was concerned, I knew the warning signals, but the end was not to come for another year. One day Arthur Clifton and Iris, my darlings sister sold their dry cleaning business in Tolworth and as they had a flat over the top of the shop, they were out of a home for a while so we let them come in

with us, my mother and sister had moved out much earlier, as Joan got a council house in Canterbury rd Hanworth. While Arthur and Iris were with us with their daughter Hazel, my alsation Lady was not well and Arthur had phoned Sulkins and asked them to tell me about the dog, so when I got to Dorking, Nan Kenway said when I got there, "Mr. Webb your office has been on the phone and said please phone them as soon as you get here. " I thanked her and phoned the office and Peggy Sulkin said " Your brother-in-law has phoned about your dog not being well so leave your round and go straight home, I will phone the rest of your customers. ( Us reps had given a list of our calls in the order we called on them and the days too) I went straight home and found that Arthur had taken Lady down to the vet as she had a haemorrhage, But the vet said she had been 'bearing down' in false labour, she had a phantom pregnancy, but not to worry. Some months later Stewart called me into his office and said Johnny, start looking for another job, the excise people may be putting the skids under us, I'm not asking you to leave straight away but only giving you fair warning in view of your loyalty and fair attention to your responsibility with this firm, it is just that we do not want you come in one day and find that we have no business, you can wait until the chopper falls, on the other hand if you can find another job before hand, take it and we will release you straight away " When I said " What about you and your brothers Mr. Stewart, " he replied " Do not worry about us Johnny we'll be alright. " I saw Lionel, Gainsboroughs van driver on my round shortly after my meeting with Stewart, and told him that Sulkins would shortly be giving up trading so he said " Why don't you come back to the old firm, they would be glad to see you, they were only saying they could do with a good rep, as you had taken all our best customers. I just grinned and said " Oh I don't know ".

A few days later Frank, the manager of the paint shop in Heath road, in Twickenham said I understand your firm is not too good at the moment, I said " How do you know that" he just tapped the side of his nose and said " Ve haf vays of knowing such tings mein herr and ve know on the grape vine that your old firm would be glad to have you back. " So I went along to see them at their new premises by Twickenham green in the Hampton road, opposite 2nd cross road. where Doug made an appointment for me to see Chris, Mallett the next day. The next evening I went to see Chris, Mallett, who smiled and said "long time no see, "we discussed things, he told me that Frank Mattimong had left shortly after they had thrown in their lot with Wrights Chemicals for a better job, that I already knew, after all Frank was my brother-in-law, Chris, Mallett made it clear that I could only go back as a rep, that he was the chairman and Douglas Drackett-Case was the managing director with his wife Olive on the board too, and that with himself they only wanted three on the board, I made it clear that I did not want to go back on the board, I had promised My Darling that under no circumstances would I go back on the board, so they made me an offer to start in a months time, that was my request so that I could give Sulkins a fair notice. . . Two weeks after I left, the Custom and Excise shut Sulkins down by putting the receivers in. Gainsborough arranged for me to go with Lionel to Woodham's of Newhaw the other side of Addlestone to collect my car, they did an annual contract hire with Woodhams whereby we changed our cars every year. After the Brigade camp, the following year we went on a division camp which meant the three brigades, Our brigade was well away from the others about 30 miles and Major Withers (the BM) came and said the Brigadier wants you to go to this map reference, (and gave me a map with the pick-up point marked on it, I had to go to the vehicle park and collect a Champ vehicle. Captain Carson the MT officer was not happy about me taking the vehicle and said "I do not know why the brigadier wants you to go when I have drivers standing round spare". My job was to proceed to the map reference marked on the map collect the divisional commander

who was coming in on a helicopter, bring him into our area, stay within ear shot and when he wanted to return, take him back to where the helicopter was waiting. This I did, and after I had taken the vehicle back to the MT park I saw Major Withers and said that Captain Carson was a bit miffed about not having one of his drivers picking up and returning the Divisional Commander, General Erskine, Major Withers said "yes I know, but Brigadier Lerwill told me that you had the fastest and SAFEST pair hands in Southern command and as the Div., Commander could only stay for a short while, that you were the best chap for the job . Another year at camp in the Cressely hills in Wales Major Withers came up to me and said the Brigadier wanted me to take 4 'jerry cans' in a Land Rover and try and find main water to fill the cans, but I was to make sure that it was 'main' water and not 'spring water', so I toddled off, to try and find main water, the first cottage I came to told me I was welcome to help myself, and took me through to the scullery where I saw a deep sink, she pulled out a plug and water gurgled up, she offered me a 'dipper' and told me to help myself, but when I pointed out to her that I wanted main water and not spring water, she said in her Welsh 'singsong' voice " Oh I do not know about main water, we all round these parts do drink spring water. " It was the same where ever I went, but after going about 7 miles I found a public house that did have main water, the publican let me fill up my 'jerry-cans' and I returned to the camp. Brigadier Lerwill explained to me later on that when he was with troops fighting the Mau=Mau in Africa, chaps drank 'spring water' and the army had an outbreak of swollen goitres, known in this country as 'Derbyshire' necks, and as he had chaps who after camp would be returning to their homes, he did not want to take the chance of chaps breaking out into any health disorder, and their wives, girl friends or mothers will not thank me for putting their men folk at risk. Back at Gainsborough things were going well, I regained for them all the customers that I had taken away from them, and I started a round out as far as Guildford and made a circle embracing Byfleet, Knaphill and Ash Vale.

We were in the early 1960's now and Twickenham made me club captain, I had joined the club in 1948, the same year that the Olympic Games were held here, Twickenham rifle club put the club house and ranges at the disposal of the Argentine team, though Twickenham R/C had three members in the British team, Len Hughes was rifle and pistol adjutant, John Chandler and Jack Jones were team members and Sidney Broughton was first reserve, this was very good as Twickenham R/C were only a small club at that time, in fact later on in the 1950's the B. B. C. did a radio 'hook-up' with Canada in a 'disc breaking' competition between Canada and G, B., and Twickenham R/C represented G. B., it was teams of 4 members each, they started shooting simultaneously, the competition was over 25 yards, and the clay discs were about a quarter of an inch in diameter, and the commentator called out every time we or Canada broke a disc, it was a rapid fire competition which we won. When I joined the club in 1948 and we had a very small membership at that time, if I remember correctly it stood at about 30 members, just under half were pistol shooters. In 1950 at the annual meeting they voted me for Chief Range Officer which meant I was responsible for the care of the ranges, target boards, grass cutting and the sale of ammunition etc., but after a while they left every thing to me, and when Len Hughes, the club captain retired down to the coast, the members asked me to stand for club captain, but I did not feel that I knew enough yet to take on that job, but I knew that Vic Gilbert who was captain of Ham & Petersham Rifle club was having trouble with the club members accepting his decisions on some matters, so I approached him about joining our club as captain, which as I told him, would seem logical as he lived in Isleworth which was in the county Of Middlesex, and he was a Middlesex County Official He was surprised by my request and was surprised that

I had not taken the position when it was offered to me, but I explained that I felt I was not ready or knew my way round the shooting world like he did, but that if he came to Twickenham he would find a good ship with a good crew, a first class secretary and a good treasurer and a hard working chief range officer in me. to cut a long story short he came to us and was captain I took over in the early 60's, when he became president. a bit about Vic, he was an electronic engineer who had his own business, before the war he had made his own T. V. set and had stored in his loft until after the war, and when he set it up after the war it immediately worked, he also made the timing device which starts the clock in show jumping events, they tried it out for the first time at Olympia, and took a photo of him in the judges box when they first tried it out. They gave me an engraved clock after I retired as club captain, they also gave me a life membership certificate, when I retired as club captain we had reached a membership of 167 members, were one of the strongest clubs in the country, both in membership and in top shooters, at one time we had 14 county team members, we had 6 internationals shooting for their own country, 5 men and 2 women. Gwen Rebbeck shot for Scotland, Tina bush shot for England Ladies, I shot for N. Ireland, and 3 of us shot for Great Britain, and Andy Tucker Shot for Great Britain in the Olympic Games and all of them with the exception of Andy Tucker and Arthur Clarke received their training from me. It is a strange fact of life that so many things come too late in life, while I was in Ashford hospital suffering from a 'stroke' my darling brought in a letter for me from the Great Britain Sports Coaches Association inviting me to join that august body but I had to turn them down, to be a good coach you have to lie beside them watching their every move closely, and in particular, their trigger finger action and their knuckles, this latter tells you if they are gripping their rifle too tightly with their left hand, reverse if they are left handed. At Bisley in 1962 I was invited to shoot for N. Ireland, that same year I found that I was shooting with my team mates, people that I had metaphorically speaking spilt tea down their shirt fronts, or trod on their ammunition on the firing point the preceding days, not realising that they were potential team mates. Worrying about this I said to Dicky Ward the N. I, Captain that we ought to start our own club so that we could recognise members from N. I who would be wearing a distinctive badge of our own design, he said that was a good idea and that we should call a meeting at the 'Artists Rifles club house' for 7-30 that evening. All the N. I, members were at the meeting and Dick Ward opened the meeting by saying that Dave Webb had suggested having our own club with a special badge of our own for early recognition at the start of the meeting, they agreed, and Dick Ward turned to me and said "The floor is all yours David. So I propounded my thoughts on the matter and the reason for them, I told them that it had struck me that many small clubs were more integrated than us members who represented a country were. An eager discussion began, it started off by some one suggesting that the first thing to do was to elect a secretary, Dick Ward said that as I had started the idea, I should be secretary, they asked for ideas and I replied that as we only met at Bisley we should call ourselves the N, I. BISLEY CLUB, in that the only time we met was at Bisley, and that we could have our own Badge, everybody said what a good idea, and somebody suggested that the Hon. Sec. designed a badge and bring the design up for approval at the next Bisley, but I suggested that as soon as I had designed the badge I would send the drawing of the badge in colour up to Dick Ward who lived in Omagh, he could contact the members up in N. I. and I would contact the exiles down at this end, they agreed that was a good idea, Someone said what about the cost, another person said we should have a treasurer, they all looked at me and said Dave could be a combined secretary; and treasurer, and that we have a subscription of 5 shillings per year to cover the cost of club books, materials for the badge, I suggested that

I run a winter competition, send marked cards to people who entered the comp., and buy medals for the first 3 places, everybody thought this was a good idea, and old Tom Webb (no relative) said he would buy a small shield for the N. I. member who got the highest aggregate in the meeting, the treasurer getting a suitable engraving done on it. this was agreed. This shield I won the following year. The design I submitted for our N. I. was made out of black art felt for the background, a green shamrock, this I cut from billiard baize, which I obtained from Twickenham Rifle club billiard table, it was cloth which the billiard table repairers gave me when they came to renew our billiard table cloth, after vandals had broken in and carved up our table, I stamped out an orange coloured dymo tape with the words N, I, BISLEY CLUB stamped out on it, and stuck that on the base of the badge, sent it off to N. I. to Dick Ward, he got a quorum of members, they approved the design, and I went ahead to produce a reasonable number of badges, this I did by the simple expedient of getting a roll of Fablon 'contact' vinyl, sticking a black art felt to the adhesive side of it, then turning it over and marking it out in 2" squares and cutting the squares out, then adding the dymo tape legend. To make sure all the shamrock leaves were the same size and pattern I cut a plastic stencil and marked the billiard cloth with the necessary number of shamrock leaves.

Later on I got a firm in Hammersmith to print this design on stiff linen and improved design incorporating the 'Red Hand' of Ulster. I shot for N. I. every year from 1962 up to and including 1987 and team captain from 1964, the team matches were in the Home-Countries international events. Through my efforts to weld the N. I. competitors into a cohesive body made me a lot of friends in Northern Ireland, and in the Dublin Rifle Club, including Kevin Walsh, who, when he died, his club presented us with a silver salver commemorating his death and to be shot for annually. We were at Bisley in 1987, the year of our golden wedding, Hampton Rifle club kept us out of the way until the afternoon, then a messenger came for us to go to the club tent, when we got there, the tent was decorated with balloons, we were presented with a hamper with most of the contents having the word 'Golden' used, e. g., Gold Blend coffee, Golden Wonder crisps, a bottle of Golden Sherry and so on, and Mary Solomons had baked a cake in their caravan, and later in the evening we all went to a barbecue party provided by Mike and Mary Solomons outside their caravan. The N. I. team presented us with a heavy lead crystal Waterford glass vase, and Pat and Bill Watkins who were in an neighbouring caravan knocked on our caravan door in the morning and presented us with a bottle Chianti and a nice card.

The highlight of our lives was the terrific party our family gave us at our golden wedding. It must have cost them a fortune in presents.

The following year on the Thursday I had my 'stroke' no doubt because of the worry I had over my beloved Peggy she had a chest infection and I told Dr. Galaca that I would cancel Bisley, to which he replied, " No, take your wife, it will not hurt to go, probably the change of scene and open air will help her, but it did not, in fact her breathing got worse, but a doctor who was a 'shooter' too, and whom I had as my neighbour all the week, (I should explain here that when you enter the rifle meeting you are given a firing point number for every competition but you have as your neighbour the same people as you started the meeting with, this doctor said to me "You are not shooting up to your usual standard this week David, " I told him that I was worried about my Peggy, he asked what the trouble was, so I explained about my darlings difficulty with her chest affliction and that she was an asthmatic, he explained that he had told the N. S. R. A, that if they would give him a little tent adjacent to the secretary's caravan on the front, he would hold a surgery there every lunch time from 1-0 to 1-30 and that I should take Peggy there at that time.

When I took my darling along to his tent he said that she needed a nebuliser but he could only give her a private prescription, and any how the local chemist would not have one in stock, and by the time he had got one we would be going home and could get one on the national health prescription, but in the meantime he would suggest that we get a tube of 'Smarties' sweets, tip the contents out and use the 'Smarties' tube on the end of her inhaler and that would have a similar effect as a nebuliser, The following day I had my 'stroke'. My darling phoned Geraldine who in turn phoned Anne, the latter drove herself to Geraldine, left her car there, Geraldine brought Anne down to Bisley, loaded our things onto my car, and then Anne drove my car with my darling and me in it. They sent for Dr. Moran who when he came round, put a stethoscope to my carotid artery, phoned for an ambulance, and before I knew where I was I was in Ashford hospital. While I was in there, there were a couple of chest infections and one of water infection, I caught them both, chest and water infection, I don't remember much for the first couple of days but I found out later that it was a 'touch and go' and that I was on 'open orders', shortly after that I was back in hospital with pneumonia, again it was 'touch and go' and again I was on 'open- orders'. My beloved Peggy kept that information to herself, because she did not want to worry the children, that was typical of my beloved Peggy, always thinking of others. Whilst I was in Ashford hospital I got a letter from the NSRA offering me 10 days on a course at Surrey University a course that dealt with coaching at national level, I would have met manufacturers of shooting equipment including rifles and ammunition who would have stands there and would demonstrate their wares, and when I got home from Ashford hospital I had an invitation to join the National Association of Sports Coaches as which as a 'national shooting coach which I had to turn down. All these things came too late as my 'stroke' put paid to any further activity in the shooting world, to add to my disappointment I had a call from Pickets Lock, North London asking me if I would go along to give some coaching to their members and said they would pay any expenses involved and I had to turn them down. My darling could see how disappointed I was, and as usual she came across and put her arms around me and said " Don't worry darling, you do have your shooting books going round the country, , Everything happened in 1989, in July Mike Box a rifle shooting club mate and close friend asked me if I would be 'Best man' at his wedding to Lynn Stanford-Taylor, and in August Nicholette our grand daughter married her fiancée, Greg Moore. My darling Peggy went into Ashford hospital on her birthday December the 14th., and in the same hospital the following day our 11th, great grand child was born to Justine, I went over to the maternity ward to see him, and when I got back to my beloved Peggy's ward she was unconscious and passed away that evening at 6-15 p. m, and at that moment three quarters of my life went with her, she was not only my wife and the mother of my children, she was my sweetheart, my lover, my prop, I cherished her fortitude, her great love, her comradeship, and last but not least her caring, selfless approach to life and to other people. Douglas Kelly has been most supportive since I was left on my own, he is 80 years old and has just lost his wife, he too had a good marriage. One memorable trip my darling and I had, was the return from the Scottish meeting in Selkirk in 1972, we camped in Victoria Park along side the river Ettrick, which is the fastest river in Scotland after the river Spey, the local people called in Twickenham village because there were so many of us from Twickenham R. C., all under canvas, except Moret and Trixie Purvey. The journey up there was memorable too, I was working at Gainsborough's at the time, it was on a Friday and I rushed round to finish my round of calls, I got back to the showroom at about 4-30 pm, handed in my orders, shot home, washed and dressed in my blazer and flannels, had tea and loaded up the car with my rifle, shooting bag & mat, ground sheets and tents, Major

Archer from the rifle club lent us an inflatable tent as issued to the services, for storing our shooting equipment, food etc. and we set off for Scotland, we met up with Eric and Mrs Gulliver at Twickenham Rugby ground and set off for Scotland, Eric had slept all the afternoon so we only stopped once for a sandwich and a cup of tea from flasks, and that was the only stop we had all the way to Scotland, when we got to Victoria Park 9-30 am, I inflated the two air beds, lay down on the to test them for leakage and promptly fell asleep only to find my darling trying to waken me to a cup of tea, she said " Come on wake up it is 4-0 and time for tea. On the last Friday of the meeting after shooting all day, we all went up to the Selkirk town hall for the prize giving which finished at 6-0pm. I had at that time a Morris Minor estate. One of the competitions was the New Zealand Shield Trophy for teams of 4, which we won, it was very large, and in a large box that had hinged doors to it, it was almost as wide the estate car and I could only just close the doors, and even then I had to move my driving seat forward, and all the way home the wretched thing kept tapping me on the head whenever we went over a bump in the road. as we left Selkirk there was a very heavy rain storm, which had persisted all day, in fact it had been a feature for most of the week. We soon found out on the way home that many of the smaller brick built bridges (Scotland has many of these) had been washed away due in part to the fact that, that part of Scotland had a very limited catchment area for rain water. At about 10-30 that night we reached a large town where we got some fish and chips, it was our intention to stop at a 'bed and breakfast' place, but as we proceeded on to keep an eye open for such a place, we ran into heavy fog, somehow we had got onto the motor way due to the fog thickening, as we proceeded the fog got worse, we did not know where we were, just hoped we were heading towards home, There was a red rear light in front of us, too close for comfort but as I watched, it disappeared as though it had turned off, but it hadn't, as we caught up with it later on, when we thought it had turned off, it had merely disappeared from 'sight' owing to the thickness of the fog, my eyes at that time were getting tired through straining to see in the fog, I had no idea where we were and just kept hoping for the fog to lift, I couldn't even see the 'hard shoulder' to stop on, or even be sure that there was a 'hard shoulder' My darling had been asleep for a couple of hours by now, and had just woken up, I asked her to keep an eye on me to make sure that my eyes did not shut, and if they did, to give me a sharp dig in the ribs, the fog did not clear until we got to Hendon. We arrived home at 5-30 am, went to bed and I woke up at 8-0am, gave my darling a cup of tea in bed, went down to the super market, did some shopping for the family, then went down to the rifle club to organise a working party. Working hard to improve the facilities at the club, and building an international type 50 metre range was my way of thanking the members for their support. We built the 80 metre range firing into the reverse side of our 100 yard 'stop-butt' wall, all it cost the club was the cement, we got the gravel by digging down behind the pistol 'stop-butt', this was for the construction of the concrete firing point. (we only had to dig down about 8 inches behind the pistol pit before we hit gravel, we dug down about 6 feet and 5 feet square for sufficient gravel to give us a firing point about 10 feet from front to rear and a length of about 18 feet and about 3 to 4 inches thick. The rest such as the roofing and protection from the wind and rain, I got by the simple expedient of going round demolition sites and scrounging these materials so all the 50 metre range cost the club was the cement. We had an inaugural shoot on this range to officially open it, we invited several Middlesex rifle clubs to an open match and gave the shooters commemorative medals, this was the occasion that Mike Solomons surprised me by asking Ray Jacklin the Middlesex County chairman, who came to make the presentation of the medals after officially declaring the range open, and to present me

with a plaque or plate about 18 inches long and 3 inches deep, it was of ivory with the letters proclaiming the 'DAVE WEBB RANGE ' which later on was attached to an overhead wood beam over the 50 metre range firing point. Prior to this I set the ball rolling for another indoor range. My happiest days were when I met and married my beloved PEGGY, . . . When our children were born. . . and later when they married good partners. When we celebrated our Golden Wedding. My proudest days were when I won various individual championships, . including the N. I individual championship several times. The Welsh open championship on the only two times that I entered. . . . When I led the club team to win various National team championships such as the MACKWORTH-PRAED teams of eight, . . . the NEWS of the WORLD, teams of six. the BURROWS & WATTS, match for team of 4 and the BROWNE-MARTIN trophy for teams of 6 with in the boundary of the Greater London area which we won more times than I care to remember all the above were postal matches which were shot on your own range with the exception of the BROWNE-MARTIN which was a knock-out comp, with the finalists shooting 'shoulder to shoulder' at a neutral range in London in London, normally at the Shell centre. ) and when Twickenham juniors won the CLIFF-EVERAL junior national team championship. . . . We won several team championships at national and county meetings such as the 'ASTOR', this was a competition for teams of 5 which were shot by all clubs in the county, and the winning club would go on to represent their county at Bisley during the national championships, we won that about 6 times. Another proud moment for me was to know that in the late 60's and when the NSRA were in Southwark St, Blackfriars, they would tell anybody who contacted them about joining a rifle club, can you get to Twickenham and if so, go to Twickenham rifle club and ask for their club captain, Dave Webb, he will make you welcome and you will get good and patient tuition from him.

But the thing that pleased me the most in my shooting history was the day I bought my Darling a second hand ANSCHUTZ rifle, taught her to shoot it, and when her team, of which she was a member, won the WOMENS county team championship, and for several years shot at Bisley which was an achievement for someone who suffered asthma and had a leaking heart valve, EVERYBODY AT BISLEY LOVED HER. . . . When the Greater London borough of Richmond- on-Thames called the representatives of all sports clubs in Richmond, Twickenham, Teddington and Whitton together to a meeting, the aim was to form a local sports council.

Each sport at the meeting had to elect a member to represent their particular sport, all the rifle clubs elected me as their spokesman on this committee, another member on the committee was David Braysher, the Olympic runner, he was chosen by the athletic clubs, The other clubs represented were Football, Rugby, Swimming, Cricket, Tennis, Squash, Bowls, Yachting, Rowing, and Archery. We held meetings once a month, the aim of this was to liase with the National Sports Council for grants etc. The month of April crops up a lot in my life, and in that month the following events took place, I started to learn to drive, Passed my test towards the end of the month, Started my first driving job on the last day of the month, Met my darling Peggy, Alan and Anne married, Sharon, Tobias and Tania born, David drove my darling and myself in a Rover saloon that cost £90, in 1971 drove us both in a Ford Zephyr which he had traded his Rover in for. Took a team up to Birmingham for an inaugural shoot to open their new range, was proud of the fact that Twickenham rifle club were the only club invited up there. Took some members to the church where John and Maggie Dance were getting married. We surprised them by making an archway of rifles, they did not know that I had found out where they were getting married, we did not embarrass them by hanging round but immediately left, ( their first son was also born in April. )

After I came out of hospital, Mike Box phoned me to ask me if I would be his best man at his marriage to Lynn Stanford-Taylor, he went on to say that as I could not drive down to Kent, he would invite Geraldine and Keith. He asked me what size hat I took, I remembered that when I was a boy I took six and seven eight's, and the one thing that change from your teenage years is the hat size, in fact if you lose your hair, or most of it, you will probably need a smaller one, he also asked my waist size, and chest size for the jacket, and asked me about the trousers, waist size and inside leg measurement, which I gave him, and that same evening he turned up at my house with the necessary clothes, Grey trousers, Black morning jacket and grey 'topper', the hat was loose fitting, but Mike suggested we change hats as his was a bit too tight, we changed over, and his hat fitted me quite well. Looking back on my life I do not think that I have done too badly since I met and wed my beloved Peggy, she was the inspiration for everything that I've achieved. From the first day we kissed I felt capable of anything, and overcoming any obstacle, and she in her wisdom was aware of this even before I was. Before I met her I had no confidence in myself because of missing out on schooling. My first awareness of achievement was in first aid, I found that if I wrote out my notes, and then transferred them to another book, and repeated the process, I could remember them more easily, that gave me confidence, and I finished up being the best first-aider in the area, and that was not my opinion but the opinion of the doctors in Hounslow, both hospital and panel doctors, in fact the nurses in Hounslow, West Middlesex, Staines Emergency (now Ashford ) and Harlington Cottage hospitals went as far as to say that I was gifted, and that was the reason for the three doctors in Hounslow wanting to sponsor me for medical school, unfortunately I had to turn down their kind offer, but I would be less than human if I did not admit that their confidence in me made me very proud. With regard to the Wrights Chemicals, fiasco, Sidney Pollard lost everything in the crash of that ill fated consortium, He sold his holiday bungalow in Middleton-on-sea, his chemist shop, and mortgaged his home to go in with Bill Wright and lost the lot, shortly afterwards he died from cancer. That had as great an impact on me as when I lost out on both businesses, like me he wanted the best for his family, but he not only lost his business like me, but unlike me he lost his home and life, and made me realise that material gains are not as important as a good, warm, loving, close and abiding marriage that my darling, beloved, wise, mate, lover and mother of our children, who have got most of her good points. If she had lived for a thousand years I could never have repaid for all her physical and moral strength and courage, when GOD took her, I lost three quarters of my life, and as the years go by, I lose a bit more of my life, I was nothing when I first met her, and I am nothing now, but in between I was everything, because she gave me the confidence, support, the courage to face adversity, she had the courage of Odette and the deep caring of Florence Nightingale or Sister Theresa, she was the acme of motherhood and wife, Radnor gardens I remember with nostalgia because in the summer and spring we would creep in there after we made love at home and cuddled up on a park bench, albeit 1-0 am and watch the clouds drift past the moon between the branches of the trees, and then creep back indoors so as not to waken the rest of the household and continued almost up to the time when we left Bonser Rd for Horsham Rd it was our private joke that there were no Radnor Gardens here. There will not be another PEGGY. In closing these memoirs I salute her and honour her and thank GOD for the privilege of knowing her and having the chance to love and cherish her and thank her for our family. I have had the weakness, and proud of it, of shedding more tears after I lost her, than I had done all the years before that halcyon day, when my darling accepted my engagement ring, we were sitting on the grass verge inside Bushey Park when my hand felt something in the grass, it was hard and small, and

turned out to be a ring with a small stone in it, it was obviously only a cheap one, but putting it on my beloved's finger made me feel like a prince with his princess, and even at this distance in time I can still feel her hand and see her lovely smiling lips, albeit giggling, as I placed the ring on her finger, and as we kissed, a couple of motorists passing at that time, sounded their hooters, we felt so embarrassed, but it was not long before we got over that shyness, and were kissing even as we walked along the road. All I can do now is to say how deeply sorry I am, to your lovely mother and all of you for losing the chance to improve your lives by being so gullible as to lose two businesses, both of which got off to such a good start. Further back in my memoirs I said that if my father had returned from the war I might not have had met my darling Peggy, you might feel the same about meeting your spouses, if either of the businesses had got off the ground you may not have met your partners, as I see it, I think all of you have done very well in that field, with the exception of poor Geraldine, who was robbed of her spouse too early in life. 'GOD' BLESS YOU ALL. Just remember this, I love you all very much, When I am gone, please give my grateful thanks to my dear friends, Mike & Lynn Box, , Alan & Valerie Wright and family, . Mike & Mary Solomons. . Leroy & Margreet Bryan, Maurice Rumsey, and last but not least, Douglas Kelly, it has been a joy and a privilege knowing them, and having shared so many years with them. May I take this opportunity of thanking them all for the great kindnesses and comradeship they showed to my beloved Peggy and me too, and assure them that I shared her love for them all. Today I am 80 years of age, and do not know much longer I shall be with you all, but rest assured, when I go, I shall be keeping an eye on you all. . . . . February--19th, . . 1993. David John Webb.

## ADDENDUM

One can lose a child's trust, this is where my memories stand me in good stead again and I was to appreciate what young people would feel during the war when I was on the ambulances. It is funny but if you suffer pain when you are young, your memory can recapture the event as if it was yesterday, I can see the doctor now and if I was asked by the police to do an identity picture I could do so, he was tall, had sandy hair, high forehead, had a Scottish accent and seemingly had a permanent amber cigarette holder in his mouth, more often than not with a cigarette in it. He took one look at my elbow and said "The boy has dislocated his elbow which has been badly reduced, we shall have to re-dislocate it and then reduce the dislocation by resetting it again".

My mother told him that my arm hadn't been touched by anyone but it made no difference, if he had asked my mother she would have told exactly what had happened and that the only treatment my arm had received was to be bathed in treated water to reduce the swelling, but I don't think that the doctor would have believed her, at this distance in time he struck me as to be unhelpful when his patients or relatives of the patient made a point of his prognosis of the recovery of the patient. They took me into the hospital the same week, after I came out of the anaesthetic my awareness as to what had happened hit me like the kick of a horse, my arm was encased in plaster-of-Paris, in those days when they put a limb in plaster it consisted of plenty of cotton wool and over this they put miles of plastered bandage, unlike today when they put a 'back' plaster on a limb. After a couple of months they took the plaster off for this I had to attend the outpatients department. I can see old John the hospital porter with his shears and I can still see the back of the blade where it went between my arm and the plaster digging into my arm. When they took the plaster off, the forearm was at right angles to the upper arm and was locked in that position, so every day I went down to the hospital where they attempted to straighten it by the very scientific method of putting my elbow on the table. Placing a bucket in my hand and putting or slopping water in the bucket out of enamel jug, this technical part of the operation was undertaken on by the doctor with great expertise, the nurse was probably very expert at giving her patient a blanket bath or giving the correct dose of a dangerous drug where an overdose of one milligram would be fatal but slopping water from a jug would test her expertise to the limit. It wasn't as though they were measuring out the amount of water and writing down the exact amount it took to move my arm an inch, they could do this by the simple expedient of taking a tape measure from the shoulder to the wrist noting the figure and estimating the amount of water it took to straighten an arm like mine and how many turns of a Spanish windlass it would take to get my forearm up towards my shoulder because that's exactly what they did when they got my arm to move a couple of inches downwards, despite me fainting a few times during the water splashing mayhem, from pain. The Spanish windlass consisted of a chamois leather wristlet, a chamois leather necklet and the two linked together by a length of bandage, a flat bone being inserted through the bandage loop and giving it a few twists each day to pull my forearm back again, again I fainted quite often. As the doctor was a Scot by his thick accent and probably a supporter of the Scottish Kirk and I was an R/C, I could be forgiven for thinking that this was the Spanish Inquisition in reverse. It was at this time that a neighbour told my mother she ought to take me up to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. We went up there and the bone specialist went spare when he saw my arm and the state of it and he wanted the name of the doctor or surgeon who treated me, when my mother told him he wrote down the details and the names and told my mother that he would be making a report to the right authorities.

How do I remember all this I can hear you asking I am not relying on my memory for the later details, my mother wrote a diary that I kept. The surgeon that we saw was a Mr Elmsleigh.

The Orthopaedic surgeon had some X-ray's taken and informed my mother they showed much concern and that they would have to arrange for an urgent admission into the hospital and that they would be in touch with her as soon as a bed became available. After we returned home she was very agitated and worried, two or three days later we received a letter from the hospital saying that there was a bed ready and informed my mother what she should take for me in the way of pyjamas, soap, face flannels and towels. My mother took me up to the hospital the next day. On arriving at the hospital they made a few things very clear to us (you won't find this in the diary, but I remember it very well) things like eggs, 'relatives would have to provide', and

they would have to be left on a table outside the ward with the recipients name on them. So the children with parents who were affluent would have eggs for breakfast and others like me would have to have what ever the hospital could dig up which in the majority of cases was porridge oats, the other thing I remember was a large chipped enamel mug filled with Epsom salts, it was foul, the other thing I remember, but not with nostalgia was "coming round" after my operation, the memory of those days is with me still, the orderlies had put me back in bed when I returned from the operating theatre, if my head was under the sheets as I "came round" I was very conscious of exhaling the anaesthetic and breathing it in again and that memory was re-awakened during the war when I was in the A. R. P.

That smell in hospitals brings back memories of those early days plus those privileged few who had the luxury of eggs for breakfast, the thought used to cross my mind 'wouldn't it be nice if the nurse put a double dose inadvertently of Epsom salts in their mug' perish the thought.

The next 2 or 3 years was a period of trips to the hospital, initially as an outpatient, then as an in-patient for a further operation with such scattered remarks like "We will have to amputate the arm, the boy will never be able to use his arm, he will be able to use the shoulder". Another op. , he will be able to use the shoulder and the hand but not the elbow, apparently the problem was, the elbow had suffered a fractured dislocation, the Olecranon was splintered and diseased and taken root, like throwing a spanner in the cogs of a wheel. (The Olecranon is the knob on the point of the elbow).

The National Orthopaedic Hospital sent me to St. Bartholomew's for radium treatment, this consisted of putting me in a darkened room with a pale blue light, getting a strip of oxide plaster , laying on the adhesive side a row of what appeared to be a number of gramophone needles and laying the strip, needle side against the scar which stood out like a long purple garden worm, to reduce the deep colour of the scar and to flatten it and speed up the healing, This didn't please me much as I was proud of my scar. Its a good thing everybody didn't think like me, otherwise the beauticians and the plastic surgeons would be waiting in a queue for the arrival of the soup kitchens. During the odd times I was home from the hospital I did not go to school, there was no point, and that was when I started writing poetry. I remember on one occasion when I was in Richmond Park I was walking under a tree when I heard a sharp crack, but instead of running I stopped and looked up just as a rotten branch, a large one, came falling down and caught me on the side of the face causing a small fracture to my upper jaw and when we attended the Orthopaedic Hospital on our next due date Mr Elmsleigh said after studying a couple of X-ray's that the bone had splintered but added that the upper jaw was in it self a splint and that the splintered bone would heal itself, but to this day I have a very noticeable dent in my cheek when I smile.

On a later occasion my arm was to land me in a further mishap the evidence of which I still carry to this day. It occurred after I had joined the 14th Richmond boy scouts and I went to camp at Herne Bay with them. The local inshore fishermen during holiday times convert there boats to carry trippers on excursions or trips round the lighthouse. I think this is due to the activities of holiday-makers sailing boats, of swimming, and motor boats frightening the fish away, I bring this matter to explain what happened to me on one of these trips in a fishing boat, this boat was a round bottomed one and had temporary seats in the rear half on the starboard, port side and the stern, the deck was covered with duck boards. On this particular day we went on board for a trip out to the lighthouse and back. We sat on the seats provided the sea was rather choppy and the boat rocked slightly and when it caught a small wave sideways on, the scouts opposite us fell forward as their side of the boat rose up, we all laughed but it was the turn of the other side to laugh when we all fell forward too, the only thing was that because of the awkward angle at which I had to hold my arm, my thumb went through the duck boards it swelled up and the cub mistress put a cold compress and bandage on it (her name was Dorothy Barrett and she was engaged to Bill Bettles the assistant scout master). Unfortunately when we came home I removed the bandage on it and saw the base joint of my thumb was distorted, and today that distortion is manifested. Shortly after this we went on a church parade in the vineyard where our drill hall was situated, this church was next door to the R. C. church. After this church parade I rejoined my friend Dicky Heal who lived in St. Margarets about a quarter of a mile from the old Richmond bridge, we walked along the river towards Marble hill gardens, pass the old 'Pelabom' works which was a wartime ammunition factory but is now the Ice rink. It was still summer, and we were in short sleeves, (our uniform

included jerseys instead of the usual shirts, but we wore long sleeves in the Winter), as we passed some people sitting on the seats by the side of the gardens one woman said "look at that poor boys arm", I left Dicky Heal standing there looking stupefied, I don't know what people must have thought seeing a boy scout running over the bridge and through Ormond road crying his eyes out, I got indoors and flung myself on the sofa-come-bed my mother asked me what I was sobbing for and when I told her she said "some people can be very cruel". My beloved Peggy used to say "Why don't you roll up your sleeve on your bad arm and let the sun get to it, you look odd walking about with one sleeve up and the other one down, but I wouldn't and for a very different reason to the one I had before, I didn't want people to feel sorry for her for being married to a cripple, that is why I always walked with my left hand in my pocket.

Because I was always trying to catch up and never did, my exercise book for e. g. was full of W. L, W--VLW in red letters, these letters stood for Warning, Last Warning, Very Last Warning etc. , etc. in red letters, this was because of my bad writing--- well more of a scrawl. Most of us were war orphans, Italian children, Belgian refugees and the bulk of us were Irish.

My mother had wanted me to be a proper gentleman and taught me all the social graces such as when she met a friend in the street I would have to stand with my cap in my hand and only speak when I was spoken to and only put my cap back on as we walked away. When, in later life if I was out at a dinner to stand at the side of a lady when helping her to sit down and not at the back of her where she could be embarrassed by knowing that if she wore a dress with a low neckline I could see more than she intended. In the event of my accompanying a lady upstairs I should not disadvantage her by walking behind her she is not likely to fall but more likely to do so coming down the stairs and in those cases I should always go first. It seems at this distance hilarious when one remembers our early days, we lived in one room and my sister shared my mothers bed and I slept on the other side of the same room sleeping on a sofa and my mother going out charring, looking after a ladies cloakroom and playing the piano in a cinema for silent films but you should remember my mother was brought up as a socialite and had private tuition for the piano, violin, zither, harp and sketching and drawing and that shows my mothers strength of character and in this respect I can only admire her for this, my children remember her for a fun loving cheerful person. Speaking of my bringing-up brings me to when I started school, I got ribbed for having a 'posh' accent. Whilst I am on the subject of school I must relate two episodes which caused a temporary hiccup, the first was when a boy named Bert Griffiths fired a couple of blank cartridges from a starting pistol, when we got back from the play ground, Sister Norbert, who took our class asked who fired those 'caps', Bert Griffiths wouldn't own up at first but when sister said we could all stay in after school, (I think it was the clenched fist shaken in his direction) made Bert reluctantly own up, sister asked him for the caps and he willingly handed over a few and when she demanded the rest he sheepish handed her some more. It was winter time and in front of the fireplace stood a blackboard and easel and as Sister went behind the blackboard we thought 'she isn't is she'--she was--and did, there was a muffled explosion, the blackboard got blown over and red-hot coals came flying across the class room, with all the row and commotion plus the explosion all the other teachers came running in only to find Sister Norbert completely unruffled, (she was at the side of the fire when she threw the blank cartridges on it and so was out of the line of the flying coals) for the rest of my days I shall always remember the impertability of Sister Norbert. The other occasion Sister Monica, tubby with an owl like smile and steel rimmed glasses (she was the teacher who took science amongst other subjects) and one day was taking the class in science in what seemed an innocuous matter at the time, she poured two chemicals into a lab, jar with a tight fitting cork bung out of which protruded two glass tubes one extending about half an inch the other tube had a right angled bend on it, Sister held a light to the tube that was angled, but nothing happened, after two or three abortive attempts she gave the jar a good shake, lit another match and again the school was treated to another atomic explosion, broken glass flew all around the class room but fortunately nobody was hurt but whenever I hear a bang I instinctively look up expecting to see Sisters glasses hanging from the ceiling because on that occasion that's where they were embedded in the plaster minus the lenses and the ear pieces hanging down.

After I left school I got a job in a builders office as an office boy, the firm was Foulshams Ltd. , my mother bought me a wing collar to wear with my white shirt and a black bow and Mr. Foulsham bought me a bowler

hat, I felt a proper 'Burlington-Bertie-from Bow' until I passed the school at the top of Eton street along Paradise road. It was Winter time and in those days you could rely on snow through most of the Winter time, certainly during December and January and most of February and as I walked pompously past those boys waiting for school to start I was rapidly deflated when a well aimed snowball would knock my bowler hat flying into the gutter so after a couple of episodes like that I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and proceeded to carry my bowler hat in a paper bag until I got clear of the school. When I first arrived at the office I was introduced to the office manager a nice enough man who wore a pince-nez glasses with a slight blue tint to them, the other person I was taken to was Mr. Foulshams daughter, she had just like me just left school, she had a private school education where she had learnt typing amongst other things. Mr Stevens showed me how to take copies of typed letters into a thick book of thin tissue paper leaves. The procedure was to place the typed letter behind the next blank sheet in the book and behind that an oiled card (by that I mean a water proof card) on top of the page that you wish to take the copy you place a damp cloth, on top of that you placed another oiled card, closed the book put it into the press and clamped it down, leave it for about 5 minutes open the book and gently remove the letter and the damp cloth and left the book open so that the copy would dry.

Foulshams had two building projects on at the time I worked for them, they were two housing estates, one in Richmond, this was called the Manor road project and if my memory serves me right was called Manor Farm road and was the first turning on the left just past Manor road, this project was under a foreman, an Irishman, the men called him Paddy but his name was Mr. Doyle. The second site was at Kingston in Fife road, I forget the name of the foreman but I think it was Saunders. We had a lorry driver who used to come into our yard (which was behind the office but the entrance was beside the office) he came into the yard every day to collect supplies, his name I remember very well, it was Harry Shimmell, he lived at Silvertown. (I remember that because it seemed to me that it was a funny name for a town. ) At every opportunity I would go out into the yard to help Harry to load up.

Mr Foulsham worked at times on projects with a firm of architects called Couch and Coupland and who had offices on Richmond Green. Mr Foulsham was a convert to the Roman Catholic faith from the Jewish one and was a kindly sort of man and very considerate, one day I was copying a letter into the book (I don't know whether carbon papers had been invented in those days or not but one thing was sure, with this method copies couldn't be lost) this letter I was copying was addressed to my mother and asking her to come along to the office to discuss my future as it seemed to him that the four walls of the office were like hell to me and he thought that I would be happier in a job where I could be more active. After I left the office I went to the juvenile employment office for a job, they sent me to Broomfield House school at Kew, this was in Broomfield road along Kew road opposite Lichfield Gate which stood halfway between Lion Gate and Kew Green and was service gate to Kew Gardens Botanical gardens. At the interview I met the two principals, by a strange coincidence their names were synonymous, the senior one was Miss Jessica Crosse and the second one was a Miss Jessica Wilde but there the similarity ended Miss Crosse was as blonde as Miss Wilde was brunette and their natural cosmetic was again as varied. Another oddity about their names both were Jessica and both surnames end with the letter 'e' I was never aware of Miss Crosse having a boy friend but Miss Wilde had one, he was a scientist (Botanical) working at Kew Botanical Gardens. When he called for her to go to the theatre, opera or ballet he always had a collapsible or folding top hat and an evening cape that had a red silk lining, smart evening dress suit, black patent shoes and a silver knobbed walking cane and brought Miss Wilde a box of assorted silk tipped cigarettes, The silk tips being of varying colours.

At the interview I was told that my job was to take any letters that needed posting for the teachers or the pupils, feeding the goldfish, tidy up the classrooms and make myself generally useful and help Hannah the cook and Bridget the maid whenever they wanted help, for this I was to be paid the princely 'sum' of 7 shillings and sixpence per week, my day off would be Thursdays from 2:30 p. m. , but I had to be in by nine thirty p. m. and one Sunday off a month, that was fiction, the fact was very different. It consisted of rising at 06:00 am. light the kitchen fire for Hannah, go round to the three dormitories, pick up the footwear outside the doors, they consisted of tennis and assorted shoes and riding boots, the shoes were of so many different colours, I was amazed at the varied colours of Meltonian cream, after cleaning them I had to replace them

back outside the dormitories. After that I had to take myself down to the ground floor and take down the shutters from inside of the windows in the dining hall. (I should have said that the first thing I did on rising in the morning was to don my green baize apron). After taking down the shutters in the dining room I would start my brass cleaning trip, this involved cleaning the heavy brass furniture on the big double front doors, then the large brass plates on the stone pillars either side of the gate at the front of the school then inside to the dormitories and polish the brass knobs, and the floors with a mixture of bees wax and Ronuk floor polish (which I had prepared previously by the simple expedient of melting the bees-wax in a saucepan with the Ronuk and stirring same). After polishing the floors I had to hurry downstairs and clear the breakfast things away. (I should have said that before I went up stairs to polish the class room floors I served breakfast). After I had cleared the breakfast things and washed up I sat down with Hannah and Bridget had my own breakfast. Afterwards I had to go round and pumice stone the front steps by the front gate and then the steps from the tradesman's gate, from there I had to go to the wide steps leading up to the front doors and the large stone platform leading to the single step at the front door.

When I had finished these steps I had to go to the rear of the school to the fire escape, the bottom flight of steps were stones ones that needed pumice stoning. When I finished these and swept out the dining room floor and laid out the dinner things, I went into the kitchen and helped Hannah by Zebo blacking the kitchen range and cleaning the fender and Zebo blacking same, this fender was topped by brass filigree which I cleaned with Bluebell polish. The bell went and that meant that Bridget and me were to serve elevenses, Bridget would serve the teachers and I the pupils. After all this I would clear away the cups and saucers and wash up the same while Bridget went back and sorted out the bed linen and making the beds. While Bridget was doing the pupils beds I would polish the dinner trolley and lay out the dinner things, by the time all this was done it was time to serve with Bridget's help, before we cleared away the dinner things we went and sat down to have our own dinner. After dinner I washed the dinner things, this didn't just mean the plates, etc. , but also the dishes and saucepans. After I had finished these duties I took myself up to my room , washed myself and changed into my uniform, this was in the school colours which are red and grey, the jacket was like a hotel bell hops just covering the top of the trousers. It had silver pointed buttons, the trousers were grey with a broad red stripe down the legs. My afternoon duties were multifarious ranging from laying the tables in the dining room to posting letters or running messages for the staff.

On reflection I must have cost the school a fortune in breakage's, I remember on one occasion it seemed a waste of time to me to run backwards and forwards from the dining room with dirty crockery so I had the bright idea of putting all the crockery in the galvanised bath with the two carrying handles, placing it on the trolley in the dining room and wheeling it out to the scullery. My intention was to lift the bath with the dirty crockery in it, unfortunately I failed by the margin of an inch to heave the bath into the sink, CRASH, the next moment the scullery floor was covered with broken crockery, Miss Crosse came flying down the stairs, took one look at the scullery floor and went out like a light. Hannah fussed around like a broody hen and looking very pale said "Jarn Miss Crarse 'ave fainted", at that moment Miss Wilde came down and took over. Later on when Miss Crosse had recovered she called me into her study and said "John, you will have to take a weeks notice". Miss Wilde must have had a soft spot for me because as I left them I heard Miss Wilde say "You can't mean that Jessie, he is so willing and very industrious, after all it was an accident". When the end of the week came I knocked on the study door to collect my cards but instead of giving me my cards Miss Crosse said "Of the crockery that was broken Hannah has managed to save this cup that was not broken, so on Monday you must go up to Harrods and take this cup and order a complete set, you will come up to my study and collect your fare, (they bought everything from Harrods). When Monday came I left after lunch, as I walked to the bus stop I thought, if I walk over Kew bridge and catch the bus the other side I can save a couple of coppers but as I passed Kew Green swinging my hand with the cup in it my hand hit a post and the cup went flying into the road and a passing bus crushed it, (in those days buses had solid tyres) but I thought I could remember the pattern, when I got to Harrods I went to the china department, I picked out what looked like the same blue pattern and gave them the letter with the schools heading on with the request that they send the set as per sample. Unfortunately what I had broken was a coffee cup, Willow pattern but what I had picked out was a tea set, blue but not Willow pattern. A couple of weeks later Miss Crosse came down to Hannah and said

"Those fools at Harrods had a sample, but they still sent the wrong service, we shall return it and say we ordered a Willow pattern 'coffee set'".

When Harrods delivered I used to go out to the van and help them to unload their deliveries to the school, on this particular day they brought 4 x 7lb stone jars of marmalade and jam, 2 of each, a sack of flour, two sacks of potatoes, drums of butter, drums of cooking fat, a sack of sugar and assorted parcels. When I went out there they loaded me up, but big-headed John said "Put some more on, I can manage", reluctantly they put another stone jar of jam, back I stepped from the van loaded up, tripped over the kerb, the parcels were alright but the jars of jam, ----- 'UGH, at first I had visions of Miss Crosse throwing another dramatic collapse in the best traditions of a dedicated thespian, but Harrods van men saved me from that scenario by saying that they would say that they dropped these things or that they slid across the floor of the van as they negotiated a corner. Hannah was good enough to cover up for me, while the delivery men from Harrods were having a cup of tea in the kitchen they told her what had happened and said they were taking the blame. Hannah told Miss Crosse what had happened and Miss Crosse was overheard to tell Miss Wilde "Do you know Jessica, those fools from Harrods have spilt all or most of our provisions all over Broomfield road, fortunately I understand from Hannah that we are not short of jam so we are alright for a few days".

At this point I should explain that Broomfield house school was a day school or preparatory school for about nine little children whose parents work in embassies abroad, the rest of the pupils were young ladies attending what could be described as their finishing school preparing them for their debut into society. I remember another episode when a pupil had some Dutch mice, she had permission to keep them as pets, when the summer holidays came round her father asked me if I would keep an eye on them and gave me ten shillings (which was a small fortune to me in those days) I used to clean out their cage every day, putting them in a box while I cleaned out their cage and then returned them to their cage, fed them and made sure they had fresh water. One day I took them down stairs and put their cage outside the kitchen window on a table in the garden to get some fresh air, I sat down to read an Edgar Wallace story when Hannah started up and shouted, "Jarn, what 'ave that cat got on the lawn?", I looked out and was shocked to see the cage lying on its side. I rushed out to the rear garden but I was too late, Hannahs tabby had just decided that Xmas had come five months early, thank you very much, the first thing in my mind was how could I explain the kitchen cats early Xmas.

Miss Crosse had a nasty habit of going round and rubbing her hand or fingers along, for example, the picture rail and if there was any dust, would call "John I thought you had cleaned in here?", so when I was told to clean out the stock cupboard at the top of the stairs (this cupboard stood on the cross landing against the wall between two class rooms on the second floor and contained exercise books, stone bottles of red and blue ink, chalks, etc., etc.), I took the steps up there and cleared the cupboard out neatly putting the things on the floor, placed them all back in order and took the steps downstairs. On returning upstairs I realised that I had forgotten to dust off the top of the cupboard, this precipitated the nasty thought that Miss Crosse would probably check the top of the cupboard for dust, I did not intend to go all the way downstairs for the steps so I opened the door of the cupboard and used the shelves as steps, it was on the second shelf that I felt the cupboard move away from the wall, in a panic I jumped clear with the result that the cupboard fell forward and slightly askew so that the contents fell out and cascaded down the stairs with catastrophic results, areas of red and blue ink mixed with crushed chalk and exercise books camouflaged likewise in vivid hues. The next day I was out on the lawn with seventy five feet of carpet, scrubbing brush, bowl of water liberally endowed with Hudson soap powder, Scrubbs cloudy ammonia and a large bar of yellow kitchen soap, scrubbing the length of that carpet (all seventy five feet) it was then that I realised that most of my mishaps were self inflicted but not the following one. It was my day off and I had got back fairly early, it was about 08:30 p. m. and I was lying in bed reading one of my favourite authors, Edgar Wallace, there was a knock at my door and a girls voice said "Are you awake John, only there is a mouse in our dormitory". I was too naive to realise they were having me on, they knew it was my day off and that I would be in bed early and then they had waited until they thought I would be in my pyjamas and in bed and I fell for it hook line and sinker. When I got into their Dormitory which was occupied by about 8 beds the rest of the girls were standing on their beds screaming their heads off and giving me conflicting instructions as to the whereabouts of the alleged mouse I

had just dived under one bed where some girls were pointing when the door opened and one of the teachers (Miss Palmer) stood there and said "Girls what on earth is all the ----(at that moment I emerged from under the bed looking very guilty but the blushes were due to my embarrassment) At the sight of my dishevelled appearance she said or rather stammered "John, wwhat ever ar-are yyou do-dodoing in the girls bedroom at tthis ttime of the night?", the girls to their credit jumped to my defence and chorused, its our fault Miss Palmer we thought we would have a game with John and called him in to deal with a mouse that we pretended that we had got under our beds, the duty teacher looked at me and said "Is this correct?", discomfited and red with embarrassment I nodded sheepishly, she dismissed me to my room and as I left I heard her say to the girls that was a silly prank, do you want John to get the sack, is that what you want? and there was a chorus of "Oh dear, No Miss".

On another occasion Miss Crosse had invited a couple of influential parents to dinner out in the garden one evening. It was during the first week of the summer holidays, I should explain here that the rear lawn was a sunken one, very large and with a flight of steps at both ends. The end furthest from the house contained a large flat area reached by one of the flight of steps, this area contained a semi circle of trees hiding the pavilion, the open end facing the sunken lawn. It was in this area that Miss Crosse intended to entertain the guests. On the day in question the parents duly arrived and I was conducting them out to Miss Crosse who welcomed them and said "John you may serve dinner". One couple had a small terrier with them that was very lively. As I crossed the lawn and started to mount the steps up to the upper area of grass where the table was prepared I was carrying the first course of Tomato soup, the little terrier, who had broken free from his tethering ran across to me and effectively tripped me up by his loose leash entangling my feet with the result that I tripped up and deposited some of the soup over the gentlemen's suit. "Miss Crosse said John you are very clumsy" but the gentleman came to my rescue by saying "It wasn't the lads fault, I should have made sure the dog was more secure.

On another occasion Miss Crosse organised an important dinner for a few influential parents, one or two were very wealthy, the dinner was to take place in her dining room, a very large room on the first floor. Miss Crosse said to Hannah "What a pity we don't have a proper butlers suit like Mr. Robby's" Hannah replied "I think that when Mr. Robby left, he left his dinner suit up in the attic or box room, John could go up to the attic and look in the basket and see if there is a dinner suit and if so bring it down here. " Miss Crosse said "What an excellent idea, but do you think it will fit John?, Mr Robby was a big man". Hannah considered this for a moment and said "We could have a look it and probably make a few adjustments to it, John go and bring down the suit from the basket in the box room there's a good lad. "

When I got up to the box room and took the suit out of the basket it had a musty smell mixed with the smell of camphor, I took it down to the kitchen Hannah gave it a good shaking in the scullery and brought it back into the kitchen. Miss Crosse told me to take it into the scullery and try it on, returning to the kitchen so they could see if there was anything they could do with it. I thought, that's fair enough, when they see me in it looking like a heap of clothes on the move. . . . . I should be so lucky. . . . . when I came back into the kitchen it was obvious to my simple mind that they were both determined to make the suit fit me, no matter what!

When I look back on it now I'm really amazed that they could let me go round looking like a scarecrow, an overdressed one to boot. Hannah was getting old and anything in dark clothes or black ones looked acceptable, I think it reminded her of the poor peasants in Eire, the wealthy folk gave their old clothes to the church, who in turn handed them on to the poor and needy, who being impoverished, didn't have the stature of their benefactors and so didn't fill the clothes out like their donors. Miss Crosse was so blind to my ridiculous appearance that she said to Hannah "I think you can make John look fairly presentable can't you"?.

You are not going to believe this, at times like this I too have difficulty believing that two people could be so beguiled as though by Leprechauns, to start with the trousers were too long and too big around the waist. . . Miss Crosse supervised Hannah in making the necessary alterations, if ever there was a case of making a silk purse out of a sows ear this was it, the alterations were done by the judicious use of safety pins. Tucking the cuffs up into the sleeves and then tacking the same with needle and thread, as far as the waist of the jacket was concerned they got over this by the judicious use of two large tucks in the back securing again with needle and thread and in case this gave away reinforced it with two large safety pins. . . The trousers were a

different kettle of fish, they pulled my trousers up by the braces so tightly that I was in danger of becoming a male soprano. Hannah got a large pair of scissors and cut about two inches off the trouser legs. They secured the large waist, by the timely use of tucks in the waist band at the back and a belt pulled very tightly, the tucks in the back were secured by pins. The waistcoat was no problem at all, not to these pixilated couple anyhow, all that was needed was to slit it up the back, cut out the surplus and sew the remaining pieces together. The next problem was the shirt and collar, the shirt looked like a tent on me, two Bedouins would have considered it very spacious living accommodation but tucked into the trouser and with a jacket on it didn't look too bad, however the collar was another proposition, the fact that it was size 17 and I was 14 1/2 didn't dismay these two assassins, Hannah suggested that they could be overcome by removing 2 inches and sewing the two ends together. (The collar was a wing type and almost cut my ears off). I don't know what I looked like from my back but if the front was anything to go by all my instincts told me that the rear must look ghastly. This was made very clear when Miss Crosse said that under no circumstances was I to serve the dinner but to leave the room BACKWARDS, she would serve the dinner, Hannah would put the food on the small service lift, my job was to remove the food from the lift, place it on the trolley, push it into the dining room and BACK out. Miss Crosse would serve the guests herself. This last instruction gave me some idea how ridiculous the back must have looked.

When the evening came I did everything right for the first two courses but when I pushed in the trolley with the dessert I completely forgot and turned to come out of the room face first, an outburst of laughter rang in my ears and I realised that it was the sight of my rear that had prompted the hysterical outbursts of laughter. When dinner was finished Bridget was asked to take in the coffee. After the guests had gone Miss Crosse came flying down stairs to the kitchen, she was absolutely livid and told me that I had made her a laughing stock in front of her guests. I stood there feeling very sheepish and shifting from one foot to the other, Miss Crosse finished her tirade by giving me a weeks notice. By the end of the week it had been forgotten but I suspect that Miss Wilde had a hand in it because Bridget said she heard them arguing about it and Miss Wilde had asked what was wrong with me wearing my uniform it would be the logical thing and would be an ideal opportunity to show off the school colours to perfection, anyhow I heard no more about the sack Miss Crosse went so far as to apologise to me for putting me in such an embarrassing position.

Miss Crosse ordered from Harrods a Summer House and got a local firm of builders to erect it. The whole thing revolved on a concrete base set in the front garden, into this concrete base was a large wooden cross piece let into the cement when it was wet, in the centre of this was a metal tube, this was to receive a spigot which was in the centre of the floor of the summer house, under this floor on the corners were four castors. This completed the principal of making the summer house rotatory. Onto this assembled base was erected the Summer House, the idea of the rotary effect was to enable one to turn the house to face the sun by a simple push with the hand.

It was a Whitsun holiday week-end and it was Hannah and Bridget's Sunday off, Miss Crosse came down to the kitchen in the morning and said as Hannah explained to you about my mother, I nodded my head and Miss Crosse continued "Miss Wilde and I are going to get Mrs. Crosse down into the summer house in a moment and you are going to give her lunch and then serve her tea at tea time, Hannah has prepared everything for you both. I replied that Hannah had explained everything to me, with that Miss Crosse gave me a nice smile and left the kitchen. At mid-day I took Mrs Crosse her lunch, she remarked to me that the sun had gone in. I didn't think that merited any reply but remembered my mother had always impressed on me the need of good manners, I replied "Yes Mrs Crosse" and went back indoors to get my own lunch and got on with reading my novel by Edgar Wallace. I had just got to the part where the villain was to be caught when there was a commotion in the passage outside the kitchen, and the next thing I knew was Miss Crosse bursting in like an avenging angel and screaming at me, that they had found Mrs Crosse. . . . her poor mother. . . . in the summer house looking like a drowned rat, and did I know that it was 7:45 and her poor mother had had no tea, and that the summer house was ankle deep in water. Apparently after I had taken her lunch out to her it had bucketed down and a gale force wind had blown the rain into the summer house, Miss Crosse continued in a menacing voice "I am going upstairs to give my mother a hot bath and then I shall come down

to deal with you, you wretched boy". . . . I don't know what happened next but I never heard any more about it I think that old Mrs Crosse must have said something.

At the rear of the back garden was a large gymnasium, there was access to us but anybody hiring the gymnasium had to go through the door in the side street. (Broomfield House stood on the corner of Broomfield road and a side street). . . It was my job once a week to go to the gymnasium and light the radiators in the winter early in the evenings for a religious group and then go over and switch them off when they had finished, when it got near to them finishing I would watch for the light to go out and then go over to there and switch the fires off.

A Couple of times I forgot to go over and light the radiators, the tenants would complain to Miss Crosse who in turn would berate me but now and agan I would forget to go and switch them off when they had finished and that would really upset the apple cart and Miss Crosse said that if that happened again she would stop the extra amount on her gas bill out my wages. One night my mother came to the school with a new pair of pyjamas for me about 9 p. m. and said "I suppose John is in bed", but Hannah told her I would be in shortly when I had finished scrubbing the gymnasium. When I returned from my scrubbing job my mother said "Right son, you are coming home with me Wilberforce got the government to abolish slavery years ago". I prevailed upon my mother to let me give a weeks notice, my mother realised that it would be putting too much on Hannah and Bridget so she said "Alright son it is Saturday now and on Monday you must give a weeks notice". I was rather reluctant to leave if only because of the meals, I remember her saying "where does he put it all he must have hollow legs, that is the third rice pudding he has had".