



Across an Ocean and Time:
The World as Seen by Harry Nash

John C. Nash

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Preface

This book began as the autobiographical memoirs of Harry Nash, my father. However, while reading files so diligently transcribed by my sister Phyllis, I was also captioning photograph images scanned from Harry's collection, and these suggested some additions to the bare stories. There were also some cassette tapes of conversations Mary and I had with Harry and Erma over the years relating to family history. Moreover, I realized that I either had my own memories, or, as a young child, had been told more details than were provided in the memoirs.

In an attempt to put dates on some of Harry's stories, I learned of the existence of "Rise from the East: the story of No. 247 (China-British) Squadron, Royal Air Force" by David John Marchant (Air Britain: Tunbridge Wells, 1996). The publisher's location is an interesting coincidence. This book provided a number of useful confirmations of Harry's stories, but – as is always the case with memories – it sometimes presents differences in dates and places. However, in almost all cases, we simply have alternate versions of Harry's stories, and he is surprisingly close to most of the official dates. I would put my own comments in the same category – they are alternative viewpoints, hopefully enriching of the narrative, and not contradictions. In Harry's first-person stories I have, however, corrected names or spellings, some dates or addresses, and occasionally grammar, but I have tried to leave Harry's inimitable "voice" intact.

To streamline the presentation, I have put words from the memoirs or the tapes in *italic*. This avoids too many "Harry says ..." etc. I have also omitted repeated references to the book by Marchant mentioned above as well as the "The Hawker Typhoon and Tempest", Francis K. Mason (Bourne End, Buckinghamshire: Aston Publications, 1988). These are simply cited as Marchant (p. ...) or Mason (p. ...) for simplicity.

As I progressed with the editing, and was adding some transcriptions of tape recordings we had made with Harry over the years, I became uncomfortably aware that the narrative was fine, but that modern readers would have no feeling for its context and environment. When such background material is added, this book becomes a social history of the middle years of the 20th century in England and Canada. Given that I left Canada in 1968 to study in Oxford, I have had to rely to a large extent on Harry's words and some extra information from family and friends for the period when Harry was working to build the Alberta Bingo Supplies business.

Harry, like all of us, was selective in what he chose to talk and write about. This left large periods or aspects of his life, and the world in which he moved,

empty of narrative or description. For some of these periods I have been able to use my own records and recollections as a proxy for Harry's words. This may give the overall treatment a somewhat uneven texture as the viewpoint jumps, for example, between someone in their teens and someone in middle years.

There are many people to thank for their contributions to this work. However, in this Preface I will only name Mary, my wife, who is part of the "we" I mention throughout this book. Her skill and perseverance in researching our family histories made possible the current work.

John C. Nash, February 1, 2020.

How to obtain this book

Initially this book was privately distributed, principally as a pdf file customized for each recipient. It is now archived on the Internet Archive (archive.org) and accessible via the Open Library (openlibrary.org) by searching for John C. Nash and the title.

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS

Harry Nash, my father, was born on April 27, 1922 in Tunbridge Wells Kent, England, the son of Henry Horace Ernest Nash and Louisa Elizabeth Cheeseman (Lou). I will call my grandfather Hen, which is written on the backs of some photographs. My great-grandfather Henry Nash, who was born Sept. 25, 1859, and died circa 1928, I will call Henry.

While Harry was born in Tunbridge Wells, he lived in Pembury which clusters along and between the London-Hastings road and the route that crosses it from Tunbridge Wells toward Maidstone. In the fashion of English villages, the roads bend and wander, partly to accommodate the rolling countryside of the Kentish Weald, and partly for reasons lost to history or the meanderings of cows, sheep or geese on their way to market. Tonbridge is a bit to the north, forming a slightly irregular triangle with Tunbridge Wells and Pembury. The two towns, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, did not decide their spellings until rather recently.

By 1839 Pigot's Directory was opting firmly for Tonbridge (and Tonbridge Wells) with an 'o', declaring the 'u' spelling to be 'erroneous', but it was many years before there was universal agreement. Not until the 1890s did the Tonbridge Local Board formally adopt the 'o' spelling, though it was 1929 before the Southern Railway was finally persuaded to call the station 'Tonbridge'. Tunbridge Wells, meanwhile, retained the 'u', the different spellings helping to emphasise to outsiders that there are two different places.

[http://www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk/miscellany/
tonbridge-or-tunbridge.htm](http://www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk/miscellany/tonbridge-or-tunbridge.htm)

In 1895, the year when the Pembury Parish Council was first formed, there

were 1,500 parishioners. By 1931, this had risen to 2,631 and by 1971 to 4,795. The population of Pembury is now (2009) well over 6,500. From one of Mary Standen's books on Pembury, we learn that Henry Nash was President of the Council from 1899 to 1901. He was also an enumerator for the 1891 census and at that time he lived at 154 Henwood Green Rd. In the 1920s, Ernest Seymour and his wife, Gertrude Nash, lived in the main part of Brick Cottage (now called Queen's Folly). Ernie was the manager of the (Pembury) Brick Works. Harry Nash, his sister Desly, together with their parents, Hen and Lou, lived in the smaller part of the cottage. In the late 1920s, Harry's grandmother Emily Maude Nash-Bellingham has the Stores (later named as "H. Nash and Son") on Hastings Rd. Her husband Henry was a building contractor, carrying out small construction projects and building repairs. When Henry died in about 1928, Harry's family took over the Stores and grandmother moved into the Brick Cottage, though it appears Harry spent a lot of time at Brick Cottage, and also with his other grandparents the Cheesemans.

Oddly, I could find no Cheesemans in the Kelly's Directory volumes for the 1920s and 1930s for either Pembury or Matfield in the Tunbridge Wells library under either Private or Commercial sections. Given the story (Chapter 13, Blue Boys) about Dick Cheeseman, I began to doubt my research skills.

In Harry's own Words:

I was born in the Tunbridge Wells nursing home. My father, because of his long name, swore that any son of his would only have one name. I began school in Pembury. My first real recollection of my early years was going to Kindergarten at the age of five or before five at Pembury Church Institute at Lower Green Road in Pembury. Pre-school classes were held in the Church Institute Hall opposite the Pembury brickyard where my father worked. After a few months at the Kindergarten, I went on to Pembury School, which was situated about 300 yards from the Kindergarten and also the same distance from the Pembury Brickworks where we lived in the Brick Cottage.

What was the world Harry was born into? Pembury is a village about 35 miles point to point from Charing Cross Station, but 40-50 miles (65 to 80 km) by road depending on the route chosen. In Canada, we would now class it as a town given the population, which according to www.pembury.org.uk is over 6000 in 2010. Harry's great-grandfather Isaac Nash was baptised in Pembury in 1819. His occupation in the 1859 birth record of his son Henry is given as "peasant", but Henry was a census enumerator in 1891, though not in his own district, where he is listed as unemployed. However, in 1886, when Henry married Emily Maude Bellingham, he is listed as "clerk" and his father Isaac as "labourer". In 1899, when Hen is born, he is a School Board Director,

and 23 years later at the time of Hen's marriage to Louisa, he is listed as a "builder".

England over this period was exceptionally class-bound. While most of the time we can situate the family in the working class, later in this account of life in the 20th century, Harry will call himself middle-class. Given his interests and education, this can be accepted as true for him. But his origins are much more proletarian.

In my own experience, class was found in accents and attitudes. When I first arrived at Wadham College, Oxford, in 1968, an undergraduate with a "posh" accent asked another who spoke with a regional midlands voice whether he was on the college rugby team. This was deliberately posed to force the answer that the second student was on the football (soccer) team. To the outsider, this exchange may seem trivial, but rugby – at least the Rugby Union game – in England is decidedly more classy, if that word is usable here, than football. In other countries, even Wales, this might not be the case. In England it was the difference between the for-money "Public" school graduate versus the tax-funded "state" school alumnus.

Returning to Harry's narrative, in November 1918, the "Great War" had ended after four years of killing, mutilation and destruction. Harry's father and grandfather were both involved, the former as ground crew with the Royal Flying Corps, the latter apparently serving in a role such as a recruiting sergeant. As far as we know, my great-grandfather Henry Nash never went to France. He was almost 55 when war broke out in 1914.

We know very little about Hen's war. He advised Harry to volunteer in 1941 for the RAF rather than be conscripted ("called up") into the army, particularly the infantry, because of the horror of the trenches. In a tape of a conversation (Tape file hnash950222a), Harry said Hen went to France in 1917.

Thanks to many conversations with the Playsted sisters May Green and Lily Hughes, we know more of the experiences of Alec Green, a close family friend, whose war lasted, he said, 20 minutes in the opening attack by Allenby's troops in the December 8-26, 1917, Battle of Jerusalem. Alec was shot or otherwise seriously wounded in the leg. He was carried back by stretcher bearers and set down outside a field hospital tent. As the surgeon came to look at him and tell him the leg would need to be amputated, a Turkish shell (at least presumed to be such, though British shells frequently fell short) made a direct hit on the hospital tent. Whether or not it was fortunate that the surgeon was outside may be debated, as the only instrument available was a ceremonial regimental sword. This had to be sharpened before use. There



(a) Henry



(b) Hen and comrade

Figure 1.1: Father and son in WW1. Recruiting sergeant and Royal Flying Corps ground crew, respectively.

was no anaesthesia. To cap things off, Alec contracted malaria soon after, the fevers of which recurred throughout his life.

While convalescing and being re-trained as a watch-maker in England, so that he could obtain work, Alec met May (Playsted), who even as a young woman suffered from severe eye problems. As far as we know, they were married about the same time as "Hen and Lou". I called them Aunt May and Uncle Alec, and as a four-year-old was Alec's foil to upset guests who had stayed too long. Alec would ask me to help him chase the mice out of his tin leg. It had two ventilation holes, and my assigned task was to take the poker for the essential English coal fire and rattle it in these vents. When you are four, you accept people as they are. Alec simply had one leg. And he could make toys out of old playing cards and matchsticks to delight a small boy.

It is possible that Alec met May through her father. Kath Lambert, a family friend, told me she remembered there was a Playsted Watchmakers and in the 1930s Kelly's directories I found a Frederick Sydney Playsted living at 26 Albion Rd with a store at 61 Victoria Road (now part of Royal Victoria

mall). Desly (Harry's sister) told me a Mr Playsted lived with May and Alec at Elmore, but I did not manage to get dates.

Though Harry says he was born in the "nursing home", I suspect he means "maternity home". I originally thought that this was the Tunbridge Wells Maternity Home, where I made my worldly entrance. This appears to have closed around 1970. An article 'The "Disappearing" Hospitals' in the British Medical Journal of 3 Feb 1962 (p. 323-331) implies that the institution was to be closed or rebuilt in 1971. There are many references in family history records of people born there, in the building called Highlands House at 10 - 12 Calverley Park Gardens in Tunbridge Wells that is still used by the NHS for various services. When I visited in April 2010, it was once again undergoing change. It is likely that the Maternity Home came about as a result of the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918. A rather busy and one suspects formidable suffragette and social activist named Amelia Scott (1860-1952) is credited with having helped establish a (the?) Maternity Home in Tunbridge Wells. (See <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/65/10549.htm>).

Highlands House, however, in its title of "Tunbridge Wells and District Maternity Home", does not appear in street directories until 1935, though other "maternity" and "nursing" homes do. In which of these, if any, Harry was born we shall probably never know.

As <http://www.thebabywebsite.com> claims that 99% of births in 1900 were at home, Harry seems to have been part of a movement towards hospital births, though the maternity homes were set up as 18-25 bed units and my sense is that they were not considered hospitals by the general public.

During Harry's life, we omitted to note in various of our family history works that we had obtained a copy of the marriage certificate of Louisa and Henry, showing that they married on April 12, 1922. There appear to be no wedding photographs. Of course, the certificate we obtained could have contained an error and the marriage took place perhaps in 1921 – people are notoriously sloppy. Possibly they may have had a church or chapel wedding but the celebrant was not authorized to register marriages. Church of England vicars appear have these powers by default, but I recall Harry saying he went to a Baptist chapel as a boy. Perhaps Lou and Hen went to the parish church (of England) to ensure that the marriage was registered after an earlier religious ceremony.

Whatever the circumstances, my grandparents, whom I was unfortunate never to know, seem to have been very devoted to each other, as I gleaned from comments made in passing by the sisters May Green and Lily Hughes (nee Playsted). The few, somewhat grainy, pictures of their holidays in the 1930s indicate two people apparently comfortable and happy in each other's

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER C

Application Number 1005495

1922 Marriage solemnized at St. Patrick Church in the County of Kent in the Parish of St. Patrick

Column - No.	1 When Married.	2 Name and Surname	3 Age	4 Condition.	5 Rank or Profession	6 Residence at the time of Marriage.	7 Father's Name and Surname.	8 Rank or Profession of Father
36	12 April 1922	Henry Ernest Nash	23	Bachelor	Clerk	Washby Road, Penbury	Henry Nash	Builder
		Louisa Elizabeth Cassman	21	Spinster	-	5 Primrose Place, Penbury	John Cassman	Labourer

Married in the Parish of St. Patrick according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Anglican Church by license or after no by us,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, H. E. Nash St. Patrick Church John F. C. O'Shea Minister W. E. Cassman Ernest Seymour

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Penbury day of November 1922

Given at the General Register Office, under the Seal of the said Office, the 16th day of November 1922

MXA 394751

Form A513MX

Form MXA Dd (2080 10/81) 398 (MAG20235)

CAUTION.—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.

Figure 1.2: Marriage certificate for Louisa and Henry Horace.

company. Whether there was any drama behind their apparently rather late wedding is conjecture. There are statements in some sociological essays that imply that pregnancy before marriage was not a major issue for working class English people if the couples' intentions were to marry, and some researchers have used parish registers to note the rate of bridal pregnancy as high as 30% or more at some periods of the 19th century.

There are also questions about the birth of Lou. The only reasonable match to a birth record is a daughter Louisa Elizabeth born October 11, 1900, to John Jeffrey and his wife Mary (nee Day), yet at the time of her marriage she is Louisa Cheeseman, and Harry says his grandparents are Emma (nee Day) and John (Jack) Cheeseman. Could this be an informal adoption? We think it more likely that Jack Cheeseman was born to Julia Jeffrey on Dec 28, 1868, some 10 months before she married his father, Abraham Cheeseman, and proceeded to have seven more children with him.



Figure 1.3: Harry, age 3.

If, however, it was an adoption, as the BBC points out in a Sunday, January 17, 1999, documentary by Lisa Harker, "History of adoption and fostering",

Although adoption and fostering have taken place informally for centuries, it was only in the 1920s that adoption became legally recognised in Britain.

It may be that with a birth certificate giving his name as Jeffrey, Jack registered his daughter similarly, but in everyday usage they were Cheesemans. Still, there are some loose strings to be tied up.

Harry's sister Desly was born a bit over a year later on 26 September, 1923. She says her name came from a newspaper report of a society wedding. My grandparents liked this unusual name and it was given to their new daughter.

Meanwhile in Canada

While Hen and Louisa were starting life together in Pembury, England, George and Ella Moss were trying to build a life in Gleichen Alberta, Canada.



Figure 1.4: The Moss boys in Gleichen circa 1912.

Though born in New Eltham, now a south-eastern part of London (technically now in Lewisham), George had emigrated to Canada in 1908 (at age 18) to follow his widowed father (my great-grandfather) George, who had come in 1907. Georges sister Lizzie came in 1911, at age 14, possibly on her own. They were joined at some time before 1914 by George's other brothers Sam,

Charlie and Jack, and his cousin Harry Lee, but infant Mary was left with Harry Lee's mother and did not come to Canada until after WW1. Indeed, we have an image of her Passenger Declaration from May 10, 1921, when she disembarked at Quebec. By about 1912, we have most of them together, as seen in the rather grainy picture of a rather rough bunch of men in overalls, though we have so far only found George and Lizzie and their father in the 1911 Census for Gleichen. (The others may have been in different municipalities or on farms.) We suspect that they did quite well, given a strong work ethic. However, George Sr. was known as a man who liked a drink. The new province of Alberta, established in 1905, was likely a good place for young men of energy and enterprise.

The Great War (1914-18) saw all the Moss boys join up, though Charlie returned to England and joined the Machine Gun Corps in New Eltham and was killed 13 September 1917 on the Western Front. The others were all wounded in some way. Harry Lee got as far as England and fell off a bus and was invalided out!

We obtained George's service record and discovered he had been wounded several times, spending most of the War in hospitals or convalescent units. While on leave, he met Ella Nacci who worked with his cousin Fan (Lee) in a munitions factory. Ella's Italian family was of aristocratic origins but decidedly diminished fortunes, as evidenced by the back yard in Deptford where the nearby wedding photo was taken. However, they were not keen on having a rough colonial boy in the family, and insisted they wait one year. George and Harry Lee returned to England a year later and the marriage took place.

By 1927, there are four daughters, but Ella found life on the prairie difficult and the family returned to Europe in 1928. George had done well, and was able to buy the Blue Boys (Chapter 13).



Figure 1.5: Formal photo of George Sylvester Moss in uniform.

Elsewhere

To give further perspective on the era and milieu into which Harry, Desly and their village peers were born, consider the following:

- **Zipper**s were introduced under that name by B F Goodrich as fasteners



Figure 1.6: Wedding of George S. Moss and Ella Nacci on March 9, 1920.

for rubber overboots in 1923. The name stuck, but zippers were not terribly common until the end of WW2.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zipper>.

- **Traffic:** <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk> states “The 1920s saw the first traffic-control measures appearing in central London in the form of manually operated traffic lights and white line road markings.”
- <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~alan/family/N-Money.html> reports that the average agricultural labourer worked just under 50 hours per week for a wage of £1 13s 9¹/₂d.
- **Money:** Of course Pounds (£) Shillings (s) and Pence (d for the Roman denarius) was the currency system until 15 February 1971. There were also half and quarter penny coins – the ha’penny and farthing – with 12 pence to the shilling and 20 shillings to the pound, on top of which the guinea (21 shillings) was often used to quote prices, with the extra shilling supposedly for the auctioneer’s 5% commission, but more commonly just to inflate prices and appear posh. My wife Mary arrived in the UK to spend my last two student years at Oxford just in time to have to learn this duodecimal currency, then switch!



Figure 1.7: Ella Nacci-Moss with her four daughters in Alberta. Given the row of grain elevators, likely not Gleichen, since we can find no photos of Gleichen with a row of elevators, but possibly Bassano or Strathmore. Circa 1926.



Figure 1.8: Hen Nash, May Green, Lou Nash and Alec Green in Jersey, July 1935. Note Alec's left knee, where the pivot of his metal leg is visible.

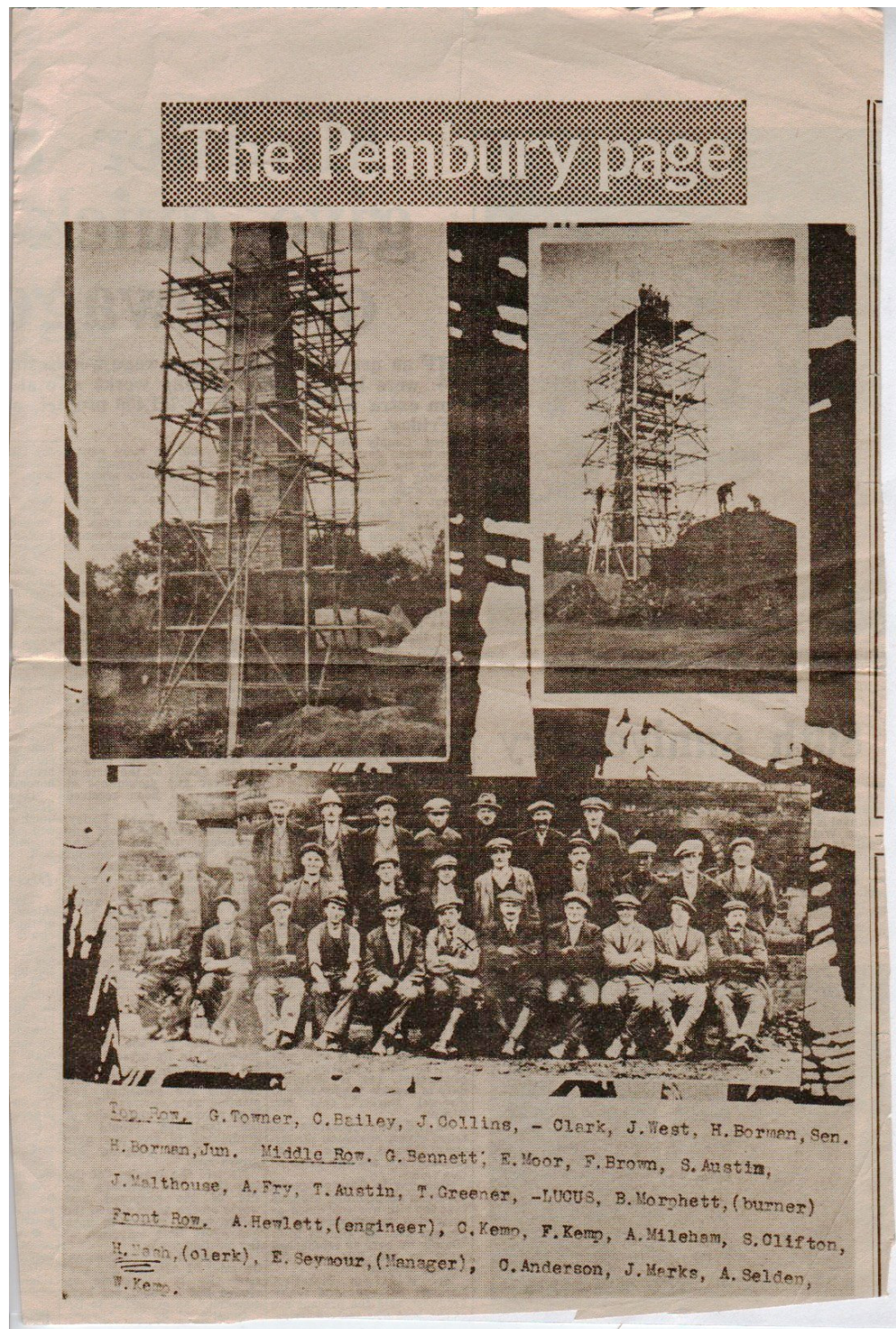


Figure 1.9: Pictures from the Brick Works. Hen is sixth from the right in front row, next to Ernie Seymour (with moustache).

Chapter 2

CHILDHOOD

In the previous chapter, Harry mentioned that he spent a good deal of time at the Brick Cottage, now called Queen’s Folly. We took pictures of it with Harry in 1968. He describes a house-swap that took his family to the shop we always referred to as “The Stores”.



Figure 2.1: Harry Nash at Queen’s Folly, previously Brick Cottage, in 1968.

Sometime before 1930, my grandmother Maude Nash (nee Bellingham), who married Henry, was operating a store on Hastings Road, Pembury next door to King William IV Pub. Maude sold candy, pop and ice cream. [The street directory lists the store as a confectionary.] She made ice cream, because they had an ice cream ice-pit outside in the yard. She used to buy blocks of ice. [She made ice-cream] Right at the top, underneath that living room window facing down the slope.

She made home-made ice cream. And sold candy. But when Henry Nash died around 1928 she left the Stores and went to Brick Cottage about a mile

away and my Dad and Mom and Desly and me moved to the Stores, with my mother running the store and my father continuing to work at the Brickworks.

My mother was more aggressive than her mother-in-law in regard to business. She took on eggs, and local butter, Lyons cakes and she went into Lyons ice cream and also produce, local mostly, but she had tomatoes from the Canary Islands, and oranges and bananas. And she built up quite a nice trade. Vegetables, plus candies, chocolates, ice-cream.

My mother was a good business woman and the store did well. One must remember village stores were small and mostly operated by one or two staff. However, it enhanced our family living in spite of the 1930's recession.

In May 2010, Desly told me that prior to the swap, Hen's sister Gertrude (Seymour, wife of Ernie) worked with her mother (Nash) in the Stores but Gertrude "did her down" (stole from the business). After Henry died, Louise took over business, which was earning 17 pounds a week, and reversed this (in 1930s) to make it 71 pounds a week. This would be a substantial revenue for that time.

My father was running the [Pembury] Brick Works. While we were there, when my mother wanted a holiday, a break – Jersey or Devon were their favourite places, and every other year they went to the Aldershot tattoo which was a big event; they didn't get home until four in the morning – my grandmother Cheeseman used to look after the Stores.

When I was 10 or 11, I got involved in the Stores. Jack and Emma Cheeseman lived about a quarter of a mile away at Bo Peep Cottages, Number 5. Where the Hastings Road joins Henwood Green Road in a Y angle. What I used to do Saturday mornings ... Every week my mother used to write up a list of all the fresh produce she'd got in. Fruit and everything. And I used to take this, on a card, and I used to have to go to about five places. And these were shut-ins, invalid people. And I'd go and visit these people with the list. There were about five houses. They weren't all shut ins, but some people who were busy, and show them the card of all the produce she had. She hand wrote it. They'd give me an order, and Mum used to put it up, and I'd go and deliver it. Sometimes on the delivery bike with the small front wheel. Sometimes I had a cart that I'd pull.

Jack Cheeseman was a labourer. At the brick works. He got laid off when the Depression came. I remember that. And don't forget there was no "Unemployment" [insurance]. One day he went and got a couple of cases of bloaters. Which is smoked herring. And sold them for a penny each or two pennies each. Got the cases from the fishermen at Hastings and went to Tunbridge Wells and picked it up off the train. And he hawked these fish.

And another thing he hawked was crumpets. He had a bell. He'd have a big tray of crumpets and sell 7 for 3d. or something like that. Then my Dad got him a job with a fellow named Granger – had a sand pit. He wanted two labourers there. And my Dad got him a job there until it picked up a little bit in the Brick Works and he went back to work in the Brick Works.

The Brick Works was running out of clay. There was an extra batch of clay next to it. They cut right up to the [property] line – deep. Great big quarry. [Mr] Punnet had to make up his mind whether he bought that land or closed down. And then war broke out. They didn't make any bricks. All housing came to a stop. Everyone was let go except my Dad and one man. If they got orders for repairs But Dad was only on part time. So he went into the Stores with my mother. That's when they took on extra lines. Groceries etc.

Jack Cheeseman was very hard working. And when he lived at Number 5 Bo Peep cottages, behind the cottages he had an allotment on which he kept pigs. This was when I was very young. People used to give him swill. When they peeled potatoes. What we compost now. He'd put meal with it and boil it up in a copper [boiler]. And feed these pigs.

Then the Council built on that land and took away the allotments. But he also had an allotment somewhere else. And then when they built on the allotment where the pigs were he even had another allotment somewhere else. He always had two allotments. And on the one at the corner of Romford Road and Henwood Green Road, he had an allotment there, and he grew strawberries and vegetables and I know he had plum trees and apples. And he also kept chickens. And on weekends, on Saturdays, he'd go round the woodlands, in the autumn, and he'd pick up bags of leaves to throw in with the chickens so they could all scratch. He used to raise chickens so we always had chicken for roasting. Specially for Christmas time. And then the eggs.

Then the vegetables, which he grew a lot of, currants and all things like this, he used to give away for a drink. Sunday morning, he'd take a few baskets and go and visit cronies, and they'd give him a drink. Or give him a bottle of home-made wine.

I remember one day, my grandmother said "I wonder where grandpa is?" She said, "Will you go down and look for him?" It was a Saturday afternoon. And he was drunk in the toolshed.

I spent more of my time with the Cheesemans than the Nashes. When I went to school at Pembury School I used to go to lunch with my Grandma Nash. That's Maude. Not every day, but a lot of times. At the Brick Works – Brick Cottage. But often, if my Mum and Dad had guests I would go and stay with Grandma Cheeseman. This was when I was about 9 or 10. When I was 11 in 1933, Grandpa Cheeseman came home from work, they brought

him home in terrible pain on a cart – brought him home. So the doctor came, rushed him to hospital. But he had a double hernia and he twisted it. That was about Thursday and he was dead by Sunday.

That was 1933. He left perhaps 60 pounds and no property. He was 65 at the time and Emma 67.

During that time, 1930, 31, 32, my mother, in the business, used to advertise films on placards outside. And they used to change the films once a week. And she used to advertise four theatres: three in Tunbridge Wells – the Great Hall, the Cosmo and the Ritz. Actually it was the Great Hall and the Cosmo, then they built the Ritz round about that time.

The Ritz was completed in 1934. It closed in 2000 after being renamed the Essoldo in 1954. (see <http://www.cinematopia.co.uk/tunbridgewells/>). The Great Hall is now BBC Kent opposite the Station. <http://anke.blogs.com/anke/great-hall/>. The Ritz / Essoldo has been closed since about 2000 and is scheduled for redevelopment. When I saw it in 2010 it was an eyesore. A woman waiting with me to cross the street called it "scandalous".

Also in Tonbridge, but Tonbridge was hard to get to. So you only went to Tonbridge cinema if there was something special on. My grandmother Cheeseman was a big film goer. But we only got one ticket per cinema per week. So about every three months she would give the girl in the ticket box a quarter pound box of Black Magic or a quarter pound box of Tiny!

By giving the girls at the ticket desk this quarter pound of chocolate three to four times a year, she used to let us have two free tickets that we'd built up on our card. If we hadn't used it for two or three weeks, she'd back-stamp them. But I used to go with her quite often.

Anyway, Grandma Cheeseman used to like to go to the movies. Well. I didn't mind going with her. She used to meet me from school, in Tunbridge Wells, usually on a Friday, and we'd go to Harringtons on the Five Ways there and go and have Welsh Rarebit or Beans on Toast and a cake. And a cup of tea. Pot of tea. Then we'd go the movie and go home. Those days there was a three to three and a half hour show. You got a main feature, a second feature, you got R E Jeffrey News, you got a Mickey Mouse cartoon, and when the Ritz opened, on the top of Mt Pleasant there, they brought in one of these big Wurlitzer organs. [actually a Compton organ from the reference above] They had an organ and they used to have entertainers as well, with the organ. You seemed to get your money's worth.

Desly didn't recall Harry going to the cinema with Grandma Cheeseman, but possibly they had rather different interests as children. While there are a

number of sources of information on newsreel companies, I have found none with names similar to 'Jeffrey', which was transcribed from a tape made in 1996.

I remember Harringtons from when I was very small. It and the Cadena Cafe (which was on Mount Pleasant below Church Road) were very traditional English cafes. White tablecloths, cakes on multi-level trays, with tea served more often than coffee. As Harry observed, you got a pot of tea in these places, whereas the more common cafe would serve you a cup. The tea would usually be quite strong, with milk in it. Sugar was always served as cubes, or "lumps" with tea or coffee.



Figure 2.2: The Stores, 89 Hastings Road, Pembury in 1968. Harry with back to camera, John Nash next to Harry, Ralph Parks. Mary Frohn at left. Note the sign for the King William IV pub which was next door but set back from the road.

I attended Pembury School until I was nine and it was about this time that my parents who wanted me to go on to better things in education found out that Pembury School had not had a winner of the 11 Plus important school exams since 1911 when Alec Nurden was the recipient of this award. My parents, on checking around, found out that St. Peter's Church School at Hawkenbury, a

suburb of Tunbridge Wells, had very good results over the years; and, with this in mind, we went to see the Headmaster of that school, Mr. Wilmott.

On checking my school expertise, he said that there was no chance whatever that I would be any good to even go in for this 11 Plus exam. So, with this in mind, I had two years of private tuition, mainly in math and English; and, when it came to 1933 and the 11 Plus exam for me, Mr. Wilmott decided that only six out of the whole class of 30 were going to go into the exam because he only picked out the ones he felt had a chance of getting through.



Figure 2.3: Desly, Harry and Lou circa 1931. Location unknown.

He was correct in this assumption since five of the six got through. Two weeks before the exam, I broke an arm and this is when I remarked immediately how lucky I was in it being the left when I am right handed. And, in September '33, I started school at Skinners' Boys' School in Tunbridge Wells.

During my school years, which were the years preceding World War II, several incidents stand out. One of these was Saturday, 4 October 1929 when I went to the home of Dr. Dorritt Waterfield at Lamberhurst Quarter, three miles from our home.

Here in the garage of her home, myself with five other kids had our tonsils removed. Dr. Dorritt administered the anesthetic and another doctor took out the tonsils. We then stayed overnight in the large house being given ice cream to help our sore throats. One may ask how I could remember the date – the

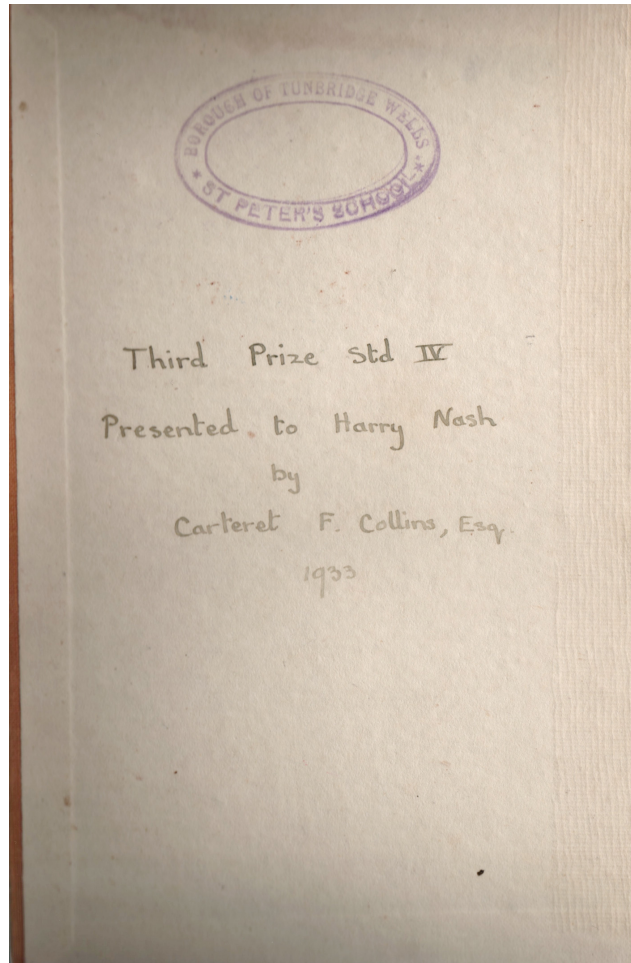


Figure 2.4: Inscription in "The Book of the Long Trail" by Sir Henry Newbolt, given to Harry as a school prize in 1933.

answer being that the date coincided with the R101 airship crashing in flames in France.

Actually the crash occurred on the Sunday, but at about 2 a.m., though I know from my own life that one needs major external events to provide anchors for personal memories, and certainly this would be such an event. Airships made a strong impression on people in the inter-War era, though there were really only a handful of actual aircraft, and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeppelin> essentially lists all the major ones. Only the German Graf Zeppelin and Hindenburg were used in commercial flights for passengers and mail. However, their capacity was very small. When the Hindenburg caught fire and crashed in Lakehurst, New Jersey, on May 6, 1937, there were 36

passengers and 61 crew on board. Of these 13 passengers died, along with 22 onboard and one ground crew. It took nearly six days round trip (with a fare of US \$400 one way) in its fastest journey, so in reality extremely few people had the experience of airship travel. Despite this, airships are popular images of the 1930s, including on postage stamps, possibly as one of the main revenues of airships was carrying post.

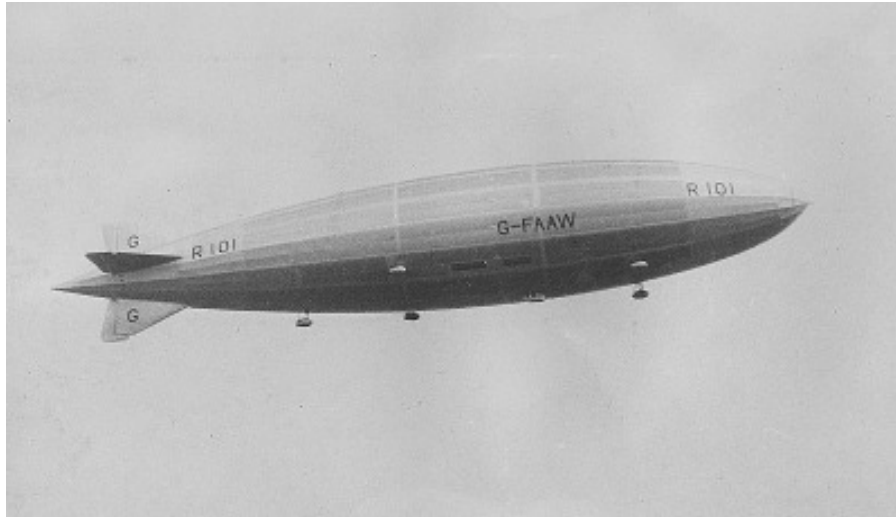


Figure 2.5: The R101 Airship, probably in 1929. Source: Wikipedia.

Chapter 3

GROWING UP IN THE 1930s

Harry's recorded stories, and especially those for the 1930s, are largely focused on news events that coincided with happenings in his own life. Thanks to various historical sources, family photos and the memories of Dolly Barry, Kath Lambert and Don Parks, a more complete picture has emerged of life at this time for Harry and his peers.

Around this period, Don Parks was living in various places in Tunbridge Wells or Pembury. One of these was at Bo Peep. When new at Pembury School, which was where he met Harry, he was picked upon and knocked about. Mrs "Doughy" Woods (her husband was a baker) was at home when he ran there and she cleaned him up. Then she told him to go back and if given trouble to use his fists and his boots. He went back and after school his tormentors came at him again and he knocked the lead kid about and was then accepted as "one of the gang".

The origin of the name "Bo Peep" seems to be lost in history. Kathryn Franklin of the Pembury Historical Committee wrote to me:

The name was definitely well established by 1840 as it is mentioned in the 1841 census, but I have not found it before that time.

There is one theory that it is derived from the french 'beau' meaning 'good' as the land is very high there with good views over the surrounding countryside. Also it could have connections with the 18th century smugglers - the notorius Hawkhurst gang were active in this area - meaning 'good lookout'.

It is sometimes spelt 'bow'.

One thing is certain, it has nothing to do with the nursery rhyme and sheep.

Don Parks was at Pembury school from age 6 or 7 to 14 and knew Harry all along, though Harry went on to St Peters and Skinners. He recalls playing with Harry and Harry's cousin Dennis Seymour, noting he was uncomfortable that Dennis used to steal a few pennies from pay-packets in the Brick Works office to buy sweets.

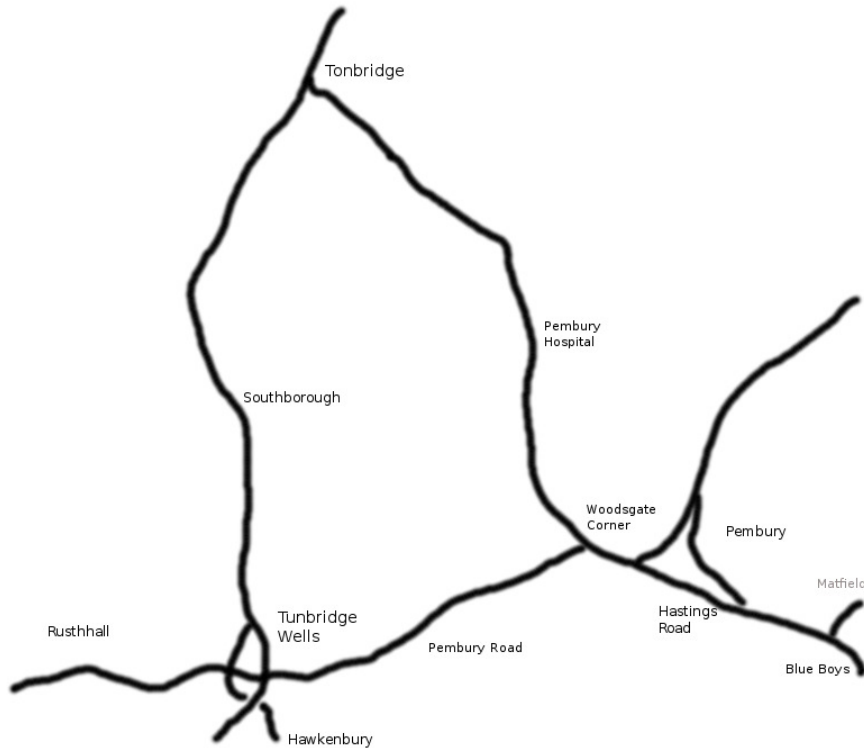


Figure 3.1: A sketch map of the Tunbridge Wells area, with the Hastings Road on its original line, as there is now an A21 bypass of Pembury village.

He also recalled Dennis' sister Shella as “one of THEM” meaning that she was very good looking. He said he knew her well, indeed very well, but noting the eyebrows of his companion Pat Harris rising, added “Well, not THAT well”. Dolly Barry, his sister-in-law, who was with us at the time (in April 2010 in the restaurant occupying the former West Station building), laughed so hard we were afraid she would have a coughing fit. Both Harry and Desly expressed considerable disapproval of Shella who Harry implied led a pretty loose life and treated people badly.

Don's parents separated when he was small – a situation that was rarer than today. His father worked at Lamberhurst as a shoe and leather worker, but before moving to Pembury, lodged in Tunbridge Wells and rode to Lamberhurst

where he had (or worked in) a shop. When small, Don rode in the basket of his bike, which meant being up in early morning, and home after dark until he started school. Later, when he was 8 or 9, Don helped his father make riding breeches for Lord Camden (probably John Charles Pratt, 4th Marquess Camden (1872 - 1943), but possibly his successor John Charles Henry Pratt, 5th Marquess Camden (1899 - 1983)).

For the Moss girls, it seems that most started at Brenchley School after the family returned to England in 1928, but then their academic careers diverged. Dolly and Audrey went to the convent in Tunbridge Wells. This appears to be what is now the (coeducational) Beechwood Sacred Heart School, an independent school since 1973, that was founded by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart as a Girls' School in Tunbridge Wells. The current address 12 Pembury Rd., though Dolly said the location was Calverley Park Gardens, which does extend as Pembury Rd. It seems that it was unique enough that Paule Foeliex, wife of their cousin Domenic Nacci, was able to make contact with the Moss family by saying she knew two daughters went to convent school in Tunbridge Wells. Paule was hospitalized in Folkestone after some adventures as part of the Free French forces that we have still to properly sort out, but which won her the highest order of the French Legion of Honour (Chevalier or Knight).

Betty, by contrast, stayed at Brenchley, then went to the Pitman Secretarial School. Peggy, my mother, went to the Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School which still exists near the main Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge thoroughfare (St. John's Road) near where George S. Moss later lived on Beltring Road. Peggy liked languages, but eventually took some clerical or secretarial training and learned Gregg shorthand. Nowadays shorthand is becoming a scarce skill, though Ann Barry mentioned that she also learned Pitman shorthand.

From birthdates and the school prizes, I believe Peggy graduated in 1941, that is, one year after Harry. I believe Betty would have left school earlier, and may not have completed as many years. Whether Peggy went to secretarial school after graduation, I am not sure. Audrey, who was older, was apparently in the forces for much of the Second World War. Dolly, though the youngest of the girls, worked in the bar of the Blue Boys after she left school.

Skinners' School

As for Harry, let him tell us in his own words.

I attended Skinners' School from the age of 11 to 17, and, before starting, each new member of the school was appointed to one of the School houses and I was appointed to Atwell which in addition to the School colors of red and

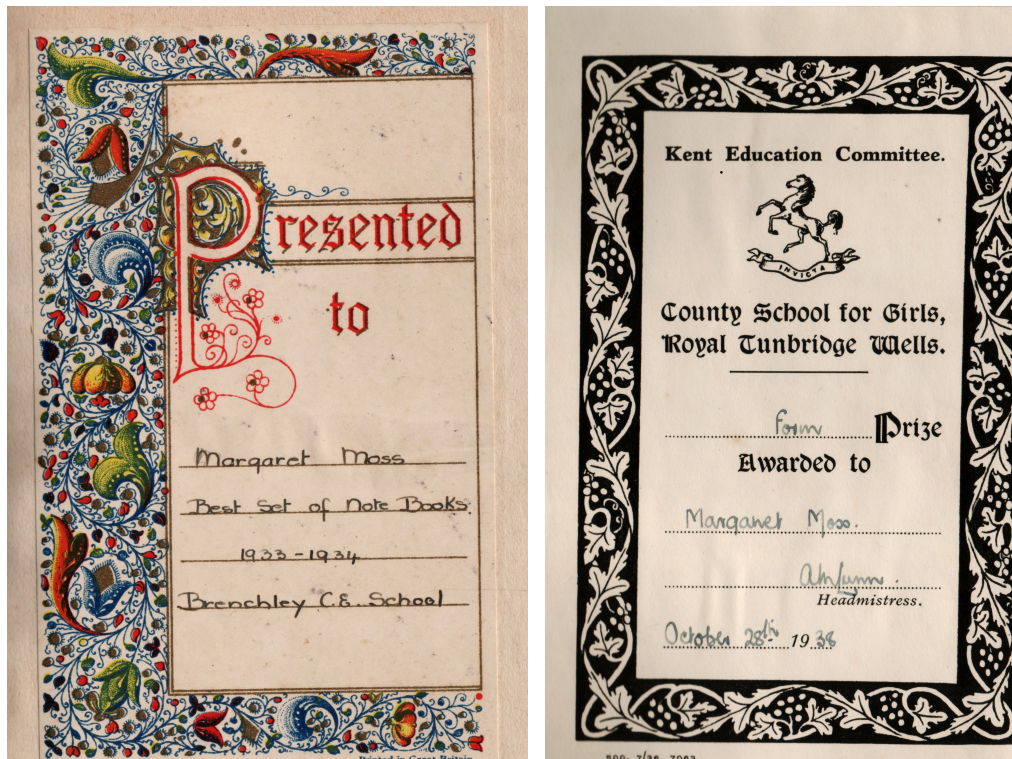


Figure 3.2: Book prize plates on “Peggy’s Last Term” and “In Search of England” that Peggy was awarded for her school work in 1933-34 and 1938 respectively.

black had a green band on our blazers and our caps and ties. The other houses in Skinners School were Sebastian, Knott and Hunt – all houses being named after successful members of the Skinners School Corporation. Skinners was an all boys school and in our third year we all automatically became members of an Officers Training Army Unit.

Since Skinners School had an army training unit, all students had army uniforms with World War I Type puttees (wrap-around wide khaki cloth [bands] that wound around one’s legs between the ankles and knees). We were issued with .303 Lee Enfield rifles, also World War I vintage.

Some of the Lee Enfields were fitted with a .22 Morris tube in the barrel and these were used on the miniature firing range which was beyond the cricket field on the school grounds. I was a crack shot and so graduated to firing on a local army shooting range where we fired .303 Lee Enfields at distances from 200 – 500 yards.

In July every year, the School army unit went to a large training camp attended by many other leading schools such as Winchester, Eton, etc. In

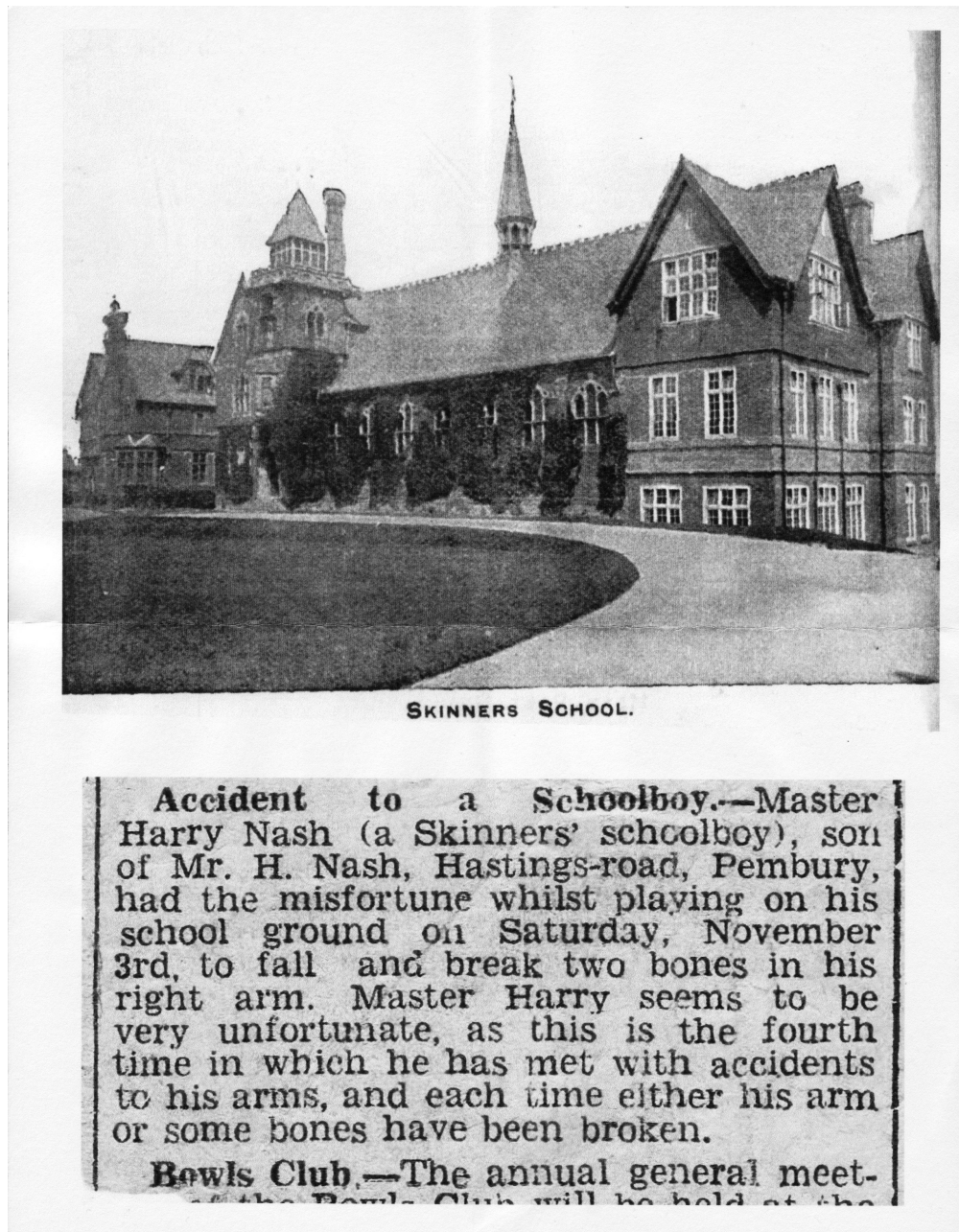


Figure 3.3: Skinners School, Tunbridge Wells, circa 1930s, with a news item about Harry.

1938, we went to Aldershot, a well known British Army Center.

In 1939, because of imminence of war, the British army camp for school units was cancelled so our school commander, Capt. Fowke, arranged for a

small camp with a couple of other schools to go to Haywards Heath in Sussex. It was while at the camp that school exam results came out and since I got matriculation with honours, we celebrated with my first visit to an English pub even though I was 17 years old at the time and below drinking age.

In July 1939, I graduated with Senior Matriculation with honours and my parents and I discussed the fact of what was I going to do with my life or starting of my life and it was decided that I should enter the Civil Service exams which were very much like the Senior Matriculation and it was felt that I would do well and so obtain fairly good choice of occupations in the British Civil Service. After paying my fees to go in for this exam, a few days went by, when we had a letter returning my parents' cheque stating the exams were being cancelled because of the imminence of war. This meant that I'd have a change of plans as to what I might do and I had an interview with Lloyds Bank Tonbridge and met with a Mr. Noel Thomas, the manager.

Events, Outings and Recreation

Don Parks remembers that before the War he would ride every Sunday to Tunbridge Wells to Monson Road to the "slipper baths". He would try to time it so he encountered George S Moss with Ella and the girls going to church at St Augustine's. He would pass them on his bike and wave to the girls. George always drove slowly. I remember him saying in the 1950s that there was never any need to go more than 20 mph!

Dolly says she got into trouble for passing her father George on her bike one day when he was driving. Dolly remembers they had a Morris Cowley, then a BSA. Later, when I went on deliveries with him in the 1950s, he had a blue Ford Prefect van. I had to stay in the van while he went in various shops and houses to make deliveries or discuss orders. While Don thought he had a Jowett that George Moss Jr. later used to move his double bass, he may be thinking of Harry's Jowett Bradford that I mention later.

A picture of Peggy on a motorbike (possibly that of Max Moss) shows a car behind that looks possibly like a Morris Cowley of approximately 1931 vintage.

People rode the several miles between village and town as a matter of course. Don mentioned riding to Tunbridge Wells to get chips, i.e., French fries (no fish!) from Bessie Sawyer (near Goods Station Road or Meadow Rd) and then riding quickly back to the Blue Boys so that the chips were still hot. George Moss was strict, and the girls would have to be in bed early. They

would carefully let down a string and up would go the chips. They had to be careful as there was a window of pub below the bedroom window.



Figure 3.4: Monson Road in 1906. It still retains its essential character with only a change in the vehicles. The Public Baths, which closed in the early 1970s, are clearly marked on the left, and the building is still extant.

Public Baths were the norm for many people – if they took baths at all – until after WW2. Bill Pitcher, husband of Marie Hall, daughter of Ella Moss’ sister Rosie, says he can remember the cries of bathers “More hot for number 5”, meaning the attendant should use his key, that is, a form of socket wrench with a large handle, to add more hot water to the bath in cubicle number five. The attendant walked up and down a corridor outside of the cubicles, and the controls were outside the doors, as hot water was expensive! The “tap” was essentially a brass nut on a brass plate about 10 cm. across.

At the Blue Boys there were several toilets, but likely only 1 bathroom. Dolly recalls the bathroom was large and VERY cold. Ice would sometimes form in the toilet. She said the girls would run out of the bath into the airing cupboard to get warm. (For North Americans, the airing cupboard was generally a cupboard that had shelves above or beside the hot water storage tank. This was one of the few places in an English house that was generally warm most of the time.)

For some reason, British bathrooms were not, until perhaps the last 30 years, heated. When I roomed on Bradmore Road in Oxford, the bathtub overflow went straight outside. As the bathroom was on the west wall of the house, the prevailing wind came straight in at an altitude of about 10 cm. above the bathwater. In winter, this blast would be very cold. I learned to drape a wet cloth so that the holes were blocked.

Even in 1975, when I was invited to work with the Numerical Algorithms Group in Oxford, we were offered a “guest” apartment that had a totally unheated bathroom that was a true “adventure” to use.

Sometime in the mid 1930s an airliner named Hannibal was doing a regular London – Paris air service. This plane was guided over the nearby village of Brenchley where there was a prominent lighted beacon. There were not many aircraft in those days so it was very noticeable when the Hannibal flew over. One day the Hannibal crash-landed at the village of Capel about five miles from Pembury and I remember my father taking me to the crash site, where the tail of the plane was badly damaged. Months later they had the “Hannibal” flying again, this time with a very noticeable new tail.

I mentioned “Hannibal” being an airliner and to bring you into prospective, this meant it could carry 20 – 25 passengers.



Figure 3.5: The Handley Page H.P.42. This one was named the Hanno.

`Handley_Page_H_P_42_-_Wikipedia__the_free_encyclopedia.pdf` says there were two variants of the airframe, the HP 42 and the HP 45, with the latter having more powerful engines (but higher fuel consumption), more passenger capacity but less baggage space. Only four of each type were built and each had its own name, that is, Hannibal, Horsa, Hanno and Hadrian for the

HP42 and Heracles, Horatio, Hengist and Helena for the HP 45. There is no mention of the accident Harry describes, but it may not have been considered very important. Hard landings appear to have been quite common.

I remember in the 1930s going with Lily Playsted, a family friend, with my sister Desly to see a 25th anniversary coronation parade of King George Vth. This event was topped off by having high tea in Lyons Corner House in Trafalgar Square. In 1937, after the death of King George V in 1936, we were witness to the abdication from the British throne of King Edward VII. Edward would not give up his relationship with the twice-divorced American Mrs. Simpson and the Church of England, together with the British Parliament, would not let him marry Mrs. Simpson and become king. I remember clearly listening to Edward speaking to the British nation on radio and abdicating right then and there.

Desly did not recall the particular outing. Jubilee Day was Monday, May 6, 1935, and it is clear from the nearby photo that the family had a picnic that day. However, the Jubilee was a big celebration, and a simple Internet search produces many references to a number of parades besides the open carriage procession of the King and Queen to St. Paul's. Several of these occurred on days other than May 6.

During the 1930s, Adolph Hitler was being idolized by the German people and was gaining power very quickly, He pleased his countrymen by marching into different countries. And because of this in 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, met with Hitler, since the general feeling was that another war was imminent. Chamberlain flew back to England from this meeting in Munich, waving a document and saying: "Peace in our time."

Britain was not, of course, immune to the political turmoil of the time, and there were British fascist groups. One of the principal leaders was Oswald Mosley, who formed the Union of British Fascists. Following Mussolini, Hitler, and to some extent Franco, his "Blackshirts" would rally and cause trouble.

Harry several times recounted the tale of a minor riot in Tunbridge Wells, apparently in 1938 on a Saturday evening. Apparently Mosley came to speak near the "Opera House". Don Parks said that the black shirts would congregate near the back exit of the Opera House which was on Calverley Road – now a pedestrian precinct. The road is quite wide there and the opening for the exit provided some extra space. Don also noted that it was Saturdays that they would be there.

At the time of the event Harry described, there were barrows in the street that stayed open until 9 or 10 pm and who rather quickly sold out of tomatoes



Figure 3.6: A family picnic on Jubilee Day, May 6, 1935. Alec Green reclining in front of Lily Playsted (later Hughes), Lou Nash, May Green, Desly Nash, unknown (possibly Frederick Playsted) and Harry Nash. Likely Hen behind the camera.

and related material. Harry said that after the crowd ran out of tomatoes they started throwing heavier objects and broke Mosley's arm. Not usual Tunbridge Wells behaviour.

So far I've not been able to corroborate this story.

Likely most people – as everywhere – were more concerned with daily life and a bit of entertainment. Don provided a good picture of this. Before or at the start of the War an informal “gang” of 12 to 14 young people, likely mostly boys, would take the bus from Pembury Green (“thruppence” or 3d versus “thruppence ha’penny” or 3 1/2d from the Royal Oak on Lower Green Road) on a Saturday night and get off at the Cosmos in Calverley Rd. The Cosmos (cinema) is now gone, and the Calverley Road is now partly closed off as a pedestrian area. The group would have a drink in the Alma Pub, then go Carpenter's Bakery for 6d of “stale knockers” (old rolls and cakes) which would be enough to sustain all of them. They then would have a drink in The Times, then The Crown. Don estimated they would spend no more than 2/- each on the whole evening. Of course, buses stopped early – they would have to walk home. And in the morning, there would be a return to dealing with the troubles of the times.

Following the “Peace in our Time” speech, Harry continued:

Immediately Britain started preparing for war and one thing stands out for me personally in that time – in a number of school classes the students had the job of assembling and packaging civilian gas masks.

First Jobs

In his own words below, Harry says that at his interview with Lloyds Bank, he was given a mathematical – actually arithmetical – test. While he does not include it here, he once related that Mr Thomas gave him a column of figures on a sheet of paper. Mr. Thomas started to leave the room for a few moments when Harry said “Here you are.” Apparently Mr. Thomas did not believe Harry had done the calculation, but found that the answer was correct.

Many years later, in 1988 in Auckland, New Zealand, Mary and I were invited to the 60th birthday party of Geoff Witney, who we had known in Southampton where he and Muriel ran a small grocery shop to which Harry supplied biscuits. I went with Harry to help them do stocktaking in 1955. This was an era when adding machines existed, but were rare. At the party, Geoff said that he would like to note that one of his longest acquaintances present was also one of the youngest, and told why. He then mentioned that Harry used to take a column of figures and write down the answer, which I can verify he used to be able to do until he started to use calculators. Geoff underlined the real significance of the skill by pointing out that Harry was adding columns of the old duodecimal currency! (That is, pounds, shillings and pence, as well as halfpennies and farthings.)

After a mathematical test, he said, “Now, we do not have any jobs at the moment, but I am sure there will be a job in the region of Kent or Sussex shortly and you will definitely hear from us.” So with this, I got a job at the Pembury Hospital in the office and to my disgust, the very first day I was asked to work overtime and this was without pay. This really upset my thinking, especially as I was due to play soccer that particular evening. However, since it was my first job, I decided that work should come first and this went on every third day, I was asked to do overtime without pay. On the last day of August, which was a Thursday, I was called in the office at 11 o’clock in the morning and the manager said that he felt that I was not suited for the job and Saturday would be my last day. So on the way home for lunch, I thought, “Well, what am I going to tell my parents, especially when my father felt that all that I thought about was sports?” However, when I reached home, as I entered the house,

wondering what I was going to say, my mother greeted with the news that Mr. Noel Thomas had phoned and they wanted me to start work on Monday, September the 4th. My grandmother, Emma Cheeseman, always used to tell me that I would be lucky in this life and this was an incident which was one of many that came to pass over many years.

The next day was September 1st and since I was now going to have to travel five miles to work by bicycle, since there was no public transport from Pembury to Tonbridge – only by going to Tunbridge Wells first – I decided to get my bicycle in good shape and also buy some weather clothing so that I could travel in the bicycle “weather clothing” and change into work or office suit when I got to work at the bank. It was while working on my bicycle with the radio at hand that there was a break in the news in the morning, stating that Hitler had invaded Poland. We all knew that this meant war was really imminent. I finished getting my bike ready and cycled the mile to the Pembury Brick Works and met with my father who was in tears at the thought of what was happening. At 11 o’clock in the morning on Sunday, September 3rd, all of Britain was grouped around their radios and waiting to listen to Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Britain, giving a message to the nation. And, the message was not at all good when he stated that Hitler had rejected all offers and war was in progress. Within a few minutes, the air raid sirens went off and there was a lot of apprehension amongst the local residents and this went on for about 15 minutes when the “all clear” was sounded. What had happened was that plane flying across the English coast was not identified and to play it safe, they sounded the air raid alarms.

On Monday, September 4th 1939 I started with Lloyds Bank Tonbridge.

At the outbreak of the War, Don Parks lodged two doors down from the Royal Oak in Pembury. Possibly his father had a shop there or very close by in the Henwood Green Road. Before he was called up (conscripted) he worked as a Firer in the pottery portion of brickworks, which was often night work. He fired 2 kilns, one for ‘biscuit’, and one for final glaze. The pottery was next to the Brick Works near the butchers. The pots were designs of the “thrower” George Russell. To judge the kiln temperature, they used cones or “chairs”. These bend over at a preset temperature. The kilns were coal fired. Interestingly, on May 3, 2010, while waiting for a train to Canterbury at Tonbridge Station, I smelt the unmistakeable whiff of coal smoke from someone’s fire.

Chapter 4

THE EARLY PART OF WORLD WAR II

Bank Clerk

I began work with Lloyds Bank, Tonbridge, Kent on September 4th 1939, the day after war broke out between Germany and Britain. At that time I was living at home in Pembury with my parents and sister, Desly, who was eighteen months younger than me.

Pembury is five miles from Tonbridge on the A21 Highway from London, three miles from Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge is five miles from Tunbridge Wells. All the three locations form a triangle but there was no bus service direct between Pembury and Tonbridge. Since cycling was the obvious choice of transport I purchased a good set of waterproof clothing e.g. legging, coat and hat and wore cycle clothes to and from work. At work I had change of clothes for business, a suit, shirt and tie.

War time banking hours were 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 10:00 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Lloyd's Bank Tonbridge had a staff of 11 and I was the junior clerk.

Though Eric L. Kohler's Dictionary for Accountants (1952) shows the term "spreadsheet" was in use in the time Harry is describing, "worksheet" or "trial balance" may have been more common in 1939.



Figure 4.1: Harry. Is this the suit?

I had a spreadsheet with 10 columns which I had to balance each day. In addition I had errands to run, the main one being the local exchange of cheques. There were five banks in Tonbridge: Lloyds, Midland, Barclays, National Provincial and New Westminster. These were located in the High Street over a distance of 700 yards with Barclays being the central one.



Figure 4.2: Lloyds Bank in Tonbridge, photographed in 2010, but hardly changed from earlier images.

Because of this, Barclays was chosen as the location to do the local exchange of cheques. The exchange was held at 1:45 p.m. on weekdays and 11:45 a.m. Saturdays. My job was to take with me all the cheques we had collected over the previous 24 hours belonging to the other four banks and meet at Barclays with the other banks' representatives and exchange cheques.

Before I left Lloyds for the meeting I had the cheques for the other four banks all listed and when at Barclays after being given the cheques for Lloyds I quickly listed these cheques from the four competitive Banks, added the four different totals, made sure that we all agreed on the totals then subtracted the difference from the cheques we brought and the cheques we received.

Once this figure was agreed upon we signed and the results meant we either owed money or were owed money after each exchange. If we owed we returned to our own Bank and had a cheque struck to pay the other Bank the difference. If they owed Lloyds they did the same.

We did not have any calculators, everything was done by hand. After a short while I was so fast the staff at Lloyds used to bet on how long I would take. When this happened I used to stand at the front door of the Bank with my briefcase and wait until all the other reps had entered Barclays, then on checking time watches I would run the 200 yards to Barclays and then run back. I was a pretty good runner those days!!

As far as I can determine, Lloyds was (and still is) at 121 High Street, very close to the (now Best Western) Rose and Crown at 125), with Barclays at 105. These are both on the east side of the street. George S. Moss, my maternal grandfather, later owned an off-licence across a side street and a couple of doors down the hill but on the same side of the High Street.

Hostilities

The first six months of the war were quiet over Kent with just the odd night air raid. Our manager, Mr. Noel Thomas and our first cashier Mr. Oliver both joined the Observer Corps, which was a volunteer group. They operated in daylight hours only and both did several shifts a week sitting on the top of nearby Tonbridge Castle with binoculars. Their job being to identify any aircraft flying over Tonbridge, both friend and enemy. They were in touch at times with Air Defense headquarters.

I was at the time as volunteer in the Home guard doing one night per week on patrols since most of the limited action was at night.

In April 1940 things changed. The Germans overran Holland, Belgium and France and drove Britain's expeditionary forces into the sea. It was a miracle that 332000 troops got out thanks to the navy and thousands of small pleasure boats from the south coast of England.

Though many were saved at Dunkirk, others were killed or wounded. Shella, daughter of Gertrude Seymour who was Hen's sister, was either engaged or married to a Mr. Darcy who was a petty officer of a cruiser and badly burned at Dunkirk. He was in hospital at Maidstone and Desly went to see him with either Shella or Gertrude, Desly could not recall which. She said he later died. Harry said he thought that Shella abandoned him after he was wounded.

After the Germans had captured France, the daylight raids started. To start with numerous squadrons of German bombers escorted by squadrons of fighters would cross the coast around Dover heading for London, which meant there were lots of dogfights once British fighter squadrons got off the ground.

A big percentage of these took place over Kent. When the air raids started the Bank closed immediately and customers were given three choices: (1) they could leave the Bank, (2) they could stay in the Bank and sit on chairs in front of the counters or (3) if things got really bad, go with staff into the vault.

The daylight raids lasted in intensity until mid September 1940 when, because of heavy losses, the Germans reverted to night bombing. We then had to spend one night per week each sleeping on the premises. We joined forces with five neighboring business and used to sleep and eat above one of the stores.

When I was on duty I often went to a nearby movie theatre; the only trouble with this was that if there was an air raid I had to leave the theater at once, which happened to me a couple of times.

From what I have written, one can tell there were not many dull moments. One must not forget that once it got dark daily, there were no street lights or lighted signs for the rest of the six and one half year war. There were absolutely no pleasure vehicles on the roads and gasoline was very strictly rationed; only a few coupons per month per vehicle. In addition lots of items were difficult to obtain because of the war effort as such items went to the military.

One item in very short supply was lamp batteries and since during winter months I was cycling home in darkness I was very careful with the batteries for the front lamp on my bicycle. There was only a red reflector on the rear of the bicycle.

In addition everyone fitted a metal can lid (with narrowly cut slits) between the lamp rim and the glass so that there was never a good bright beam of light. Since there was little traffic on the roads at night I often cycled with my bicycle light switched off and followed the white line in the centre of the road.

One miserable dark and damp November evening while cycling home, there was no traffic around so I switched off my lamp, preserving the batteries. As I traveled on a downhill slope at a fair rate of speed I ran head on into a person walking in the opposite direction, also using the white line as a guide. I hit the ditch tangled in my bicycle and as I lay on the ground I switched my bicycle lamp on. I could hear groans in the middle of the road behind me. When I struggled to the person's aid I found it was a woman walking home from work at a nearby Pembury Hospital. Fortunately apart from shock and a few bruises she was okay and I remembered having seen her on numerous previous occasions walking the same road. She said she had not seen any light on my

bicycle and I said "it is very dim!!" To which she agreed. After this accident we began passing the time of day as I cycled by.

Accidents due to the blackout were a serious concern. The British Medical Journal of September 30, 1939, before the War was a month old, has an item on page 704:

Road Accident Statistics

On the outbreak of war the compilation of monthly statistics of road accidents was discontinued in order to release police personnel for more urgent duties, and because circumstances were so changed as to destroy the comparative value of the figures. Captain Wallace is considering the possibility of reintroducing monthly figures of persons killed in road accidents. The number of accidents in the Metropolitan Police District during the hours of darkness has shown a very considerable increase since the black-out regulations were imposed.

On another occasion as I was cycling home from work on a bright sunny September 1940 day the air raid siren sounded, which was a very common occurrence.

Traveling from the south (from the direction of Dover) was a squadron of 12 twin engine enemy Dornier bombers. They were alone and not escorted by German fighters. I stood and watched as they approached Tonbridge and they were being attacked by a squadron of RAF fighters. Already 2 of the twelve were on fire and billowing smoke as they broke away from the formation. As the Dorniers headed towards Sevenoaks and on to London I saw three more shot down and then they were out of sight. The next day the newspapers had the full story as all twelve were shot down, the last of them half way across the English Channel trying to make it back home. The British Fighter Squadron was led by Squadron leader [Douglas] Bader, the legless flying ace. He was a real ace and an excellent pilot, having [re-]joined the RAF after having been fitted with artificial limbs. He had to be extremely good to be accepted!

Pay and Conditions

When war started and throughout the war all the Banks records were made in triplicate each day. At the end of each day one set was sent to Head Office, the second set went to Tiverton in the West Country and the third set we kept, the thinking being that it was very unlikely that all three locations would be destroyed by bombs at the same time.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 1011-342-0803-25
Foto: Kettelhohn [Kettelhohn] | 1940 ca.

Figure 4.3: Dornier Do 17 photographed in 1940. Source: Bundesarchiv Bild Wikimedia Commons

During the one and three quarter years, that I was with Lloyds Bank we only had one adding machine. All interest had to be calculated in ones' head and we had a few affluent clients who insisted on their interest being calculated daily.

My pay to start was 25 shillings per week. I enjoyed my banking experience very much and after five years in the RAF they would have liked me back but having lost both parents during the war, I decided since the corner store my parents had owned was also home I had better head in that direction.

It is interesting that my mother Peggy Moss, later Nash, also worked in a bank. She told me that she did clerical work but was also a comptometer operator. Comptometers were essentially mechanical or electro-mechanical adding machines that were produced from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. There are Sterling currency models which would have been essential for British bank applications. I recall her saying they often had to stay late if the totals did not balance. She worked for the National Westminster Bank at 32 Mt. Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells. This is now

Carlucci's Restaurant. It is across a side street from the Great Hall, then partly a cinema, but now a shopping arcade and home to Radio Kent. The train station is almost across the road.

Peggy mentioned having training as a fire watcher, that is, someone who would put out incendiary bombs, particularly on flat roofed buildings. She mentioned spending some nights on the roof. In my conversations with Kath Lambert in 2010, she mentioned an unpleasant night as a firewatcher on her own inside a building that had been newly varnished with locked windows, with the smell of the varnish making her feel unwell. Many people volunteered or were persuaded to volunteer for these tiresome and boring but important jobs.

A more detailed view of the fire-watcher's job is given in a quotation from an account by Frank Walsh in the BBC personal history project <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/82/a2078282.shtml>



Figure 4.4: One model of Felt-Tarrant comptometer for Sterling calculations. With kind permission of www.vintagecalculators.com.

Many buildings had the aptly named “Fire Watchers” patrolling nightly. Equipped with ‘stirrup pumps’ ready to place in the strategically placed buckets of water dotted round the premises. There were also buckets of sand alongside the water buckets. Fire watchers slept on the premises nightly and began duty once the sirens had sounded. Fire watchers were recruited mainly from the regular staff employed by the firm, sometimes supplemented by a full time night watchmen to do the job. Following the two day ‘Blitz’ the “Fire Watchers’ Order” was strengthened to ensure that every building was covered each and every night.

Although strictly not of age, I volunteered to fire watch, tempted by the small remuneration each volunteer received for the nights work. Abel Heywoods was a five storey building with a flat roof. It had a huge wooden sign on top, approximately eight feet high. The large gold letters spelled out “A H & SONS”. By standing on the middle of the letter H you had an uninterrupted clear view all over the centre of Manchester.

When not on alert some volunteers slept on camp beds while others toured the building on a rota basis. However, once the sirens had sounded



Figure 4.5: Former National Westminster Bank building where Peggy Moss worked. Now Carlucci's Restaurant. The Great Hall is across the side street. Roughly opposite the Great Hall on the side of Mt. Ephraim where I took the photo is the railway station.

everyone went on to the flat roof to watch the searchlights criss cross the sky, occasionally highlighting one of the many barrage balloons floating high in the sky. These were to help deter planes from undertaking low level bombing.

Then, not long to wait before the heavy drone of the bombers engines could be heard in the distance. This noise gradually increased as the planes got nearer and nearer, then the crump of bombs falling and the noise of the anti-aircraft batteries opening up. These helped light up the night sky with the flash of exploding shells. Sometimes on a moonlit night you could see the silhouette of a bomber high in the sky. The straps on the tin hats being worn were always checked and tightened as the patrolling of the building in pairs began in earnest.

There were normally eight fire watchers on each night to cover the two buildings. One night an incendiary bomb dropped between the two build-

ings, bounced through the machine room window and began a fire among the paper stacks and machinery. The fire was soon brought under control with stirrup pumps and sand. Much later the machine room was checked by the regular fire appliances that had arrived to ensure the fire had been properly put out.

War Service

Harry and his contemporaries were between their teenage years and young adulthood as WW2 started for Britain and its former colonies. This is over two years before the USA was dragged, kicking and screaming, into the fray, and almost two years before Hitler's attack on Stalin's Russia. During this period 1939 to early 1942, there was a great turmoil as many people either join the military or are conscripted into it – “called up” in the common idiom.

Harry first joined the Local Defense Volunteers which became the Home Guard. The latter was food for the later television series Dad's Army. The comedy of that program plays on the unreadiness and amateurish enthusiasm of the participants. Perhaps we are laughing at a version of reality. Harry got the only gun in his platoon because he had won some shooting competitions in school.

We should also be cognizant that WW1, or the Great War, was only two decades before. The horror of the trenches was very fresh in people's minds. Many badly mutilated men and a few women were just in middle age. Even as late as the 1960s I can remember seeing a man with half a face – probably a victim of the infamous Ross Rifle that was prone to sending the bolt back towards its user (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross_rifle). Harry chose to volunteer for the RAF before being called-up and possibly ending up in the infantry.

Don Parks was called up at age 19 and became "equipment repairer" 11263341. As "Gunner Parks" he was variously also Lance Bombardier Parks or Bombardier Parks but gained and lost stripes for good service or misdemeanours, the last time because he was late returning to base after the war was over, being caught by MPs at Charing Cross.

On call-up, Don was told to "report to Maidstone" for a medical. One of the recruits appeared deaf and was told he was unfit for duty, but as he was on his way out, the officer called after him “Shut the door please” and he did, so they brought him back and passed him “fit”.

After call up Don was sent to “Satan Camp, Chester”. He queued for equipment and called the Regimental Sergeant Major “mate”, which was not

a particularly good idea. The RSM was named “Chalky” White whose main instruction to the recruits was “Never Volunteer!”

Not only men volunteered or were called up. Audrey Moss became (we believe) a Sergeant and had to sometimes find and bring back homesick girls. We have pictures of her without stripes on her uniform and with the double stripes of a Corporal. Dolly volunteered for the WAAFs (Women’s Auxiliary Air Force) but was declined “too thin” on her medical. Since war was declared on her fourteenth birthday, she would not have been eligible to volunteer until later in the War, of course.

Kath Lambert grew up near Newton Abbot in Devon. Her father was a plumber, but did not enjoy the bookkeeping side of the business and didn’t write up or tender bills very quickly! Fortunately, he eventually went halves in purchasing some property in the form of workshops that brought in revenue. Kath still gets rents. However, it seems that her family were of modest means.

One entertainment Kath used to enjoy in her teens at various places in Devon was English Country Dance. As Mary and I have found much fellowship and enjoyment in this, I was immediately alert, and most surprised that Kath was able to give the instructions for Gathering Peascods and Sellenger’s Round, two of the old favourites from the 1600s. She even sang the words to Newcastle – lyrics I did not know existed beforehand but have since discovered on a web site – and I can attest the tune was very recognizable.

An about turn in her life came as Kath was conscripted into the ATS, that is, the Women’s Auxiliary Territorial Service, and trained at Wrexham, North Wales. The date of her callup fell into cracks in our conversation, but was clearly relatively early in the war. She had her 21st birthday in the service. Most of her work was clerical – rotas, rosters and lists. She was stationed for a while in Croydon, then went to Golders Green for a course. From there she was posted to Naples, Italy, where the Caserta Palace was taken over for military administration. In 1945 she was posted to Padua where she stayed until early 1946. However, there was some time in Venice. She recalled a big square room in a hotel on the Lido in Venice with flowers. Very posh for a



Figure 4.6: Audrey Moss with two stripes for a Corporal.

young English working girl. “The Army paid”. She married Cyril in 1948. He apparently didn’t like “going abroad”, so they never did, though I gather she would very much have liked to.

Not everyone was conscripted into the military. Harry Shaw, who married Audrey Moss, ended up as a Bevin Boy. Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bevin_Boys) presents the story starkly:

Bevin Boys were young British men conscripted to work in the coal mines of the United Kingdom, from December 1943 until 1949. Chosen at random from conscripts but also including volunteers, nearly 48,000 Bevin Boys performed vital but largely unrecognised service in the mines, many not being released until years after the Second World War ended. Of those conscripts aged 18 – 25, 10% were selected for this service.

Harry Shaw was from Huddersfield in Yorkshire. His time in the mines left him with lung deficiency – probably silicosis – and likely contributed to his severe arthritis. He had the thickest Yorkshire accent of anyone I ever knew. It took Mary Nash over two years to understand him. Stephen Nash says he never did. Possibly Mary would never have learned to understand him except for a common passion for piccalilly pickle sandwiches. Personally, I found it fairly easy to communicate with him. His use of the second person singular was a definite throwback to more ancient usage. Typically this would be in the form of “ ’ave thee t’y bonnet?” (Have you got your hat?) This wasn’t an affectation, simply a manner of speaking that existed in one region of England and was rapidly disappearing.

However, Harry Shaw also added his own expressions to his thick accent. “Mind the Axminster” was his way of telling folk to be careful stepping into his car to not track in mud.

There are no pictures of Betty nor Peggy in uniform and to my knowledge neither were in the services. However, people were needed to keep the country running. Betty was a switchboard operator for a garage and a battery supply company, I am not sure in which order. Peggy worked in the National Westminster Bank. Such jobs were, in part, replacing men who had gone into the Forces. Indeed, few men of military age would be left in “civvie street”, though there were some reserved occupations. Men in such a position, as well perhaps some of the Bevin Boys, were sometimes given a hard time for not being in uniform.

Home Guard

Harry Nash relates his own experience of this period with what was a form of militia.

Soon after the Second World War started in September 1939 the LDV organization was formed. This was the Local Defense Volunteers and consisted of men under 19 and over 41 years of age. We did not have uniforms since Britain was poorly prepared for war; nor did we have many weapons; just a few World War One .303 Lee Enfield rifles.

I had personally been trained to fire the Lee Enfield at Skinners School Military Unit and was a crack shot. When joining with the LDV we were issued with an armband with letters LDV clearly marked. In our small town we were placed in groups of 6 for guard duty throughout the night and this we did patrolling the area one night per week. This was in addition to my regular 6 day a week job (one half day Saturdays) at the Bank.

Here Harry means five full days and one half day of work. LDV or Home Guard service would be on top of this.

I have always been a very active person and my days consisted of cycling 5 miles to and from Tonbridge to work in all weather since there were not any buses. Then in the evenings I played soccer, swam, played tennis and badminton on a regular basis.

When on LDV guard duty the hours were 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. and the 6 volunteers split into pairs and each pair patrolled for 3 hours and the worst shift was 12 midnight to 3 a.m.

A few months after joining LDV the name was changed to Home Guard and we were issued with very poor-fitting uniforms. My fit was so big I used to wear a full set of street clothes underneath. It was a good job we only wore them at night.

I should mention at this time that Pembury where we lived was in a war zone whereas Tonbridge was not. This meant I had to have a permit to cycle home from work. After a few days the soldiers manning the post used to wave me through.

I have not yet been able to find documentation of the extent of the “war zone”, but areas near the coast were given this designation and were prohibited to non-residents except for those with military passes. Those who were born in Germany, Italy or other Axis countries were moved out. However, the coastal exclusion zone was nominally 10 miles from the sea, and Pembury is about 20 miles inland.

Every day I passed the nearby Pembury Hospital which was situated on lots of sprawling land. This was one of the reasons Guy's Hospital, a very well known London [medical] facility evacuated a part of their hospital and staff to Pembury, including their Medical School.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/54/a4447154.shtml> Angela Ng (contributor), Nursing in Guy's Hospital (Susan Goldschmidt Taylor), 2005, describes the evacuation of Guy's from a nurse's perspective.

Our hospitals were in Kent and they all had to start building prefabricated huts to be used as wards and as housing for staff, operating theatres, x-ray units etc. We nurses were put up in Bell Tents in a place called Pembury not far from Tunbridge Wells. This was fine during the remaining summer months but when the cold weather started they put in stoves so give us some heat. But they smoked us out and so we had to be moved again. This time it was to an old Workhouse which had only just been evacuated by the "down and outs". Not very pleasant. But eventually we were able to move to the newly built huts.

In the spring of 1940 the Germans launched a big offensive in Belgium, Holland and France and drove over 330 thousand British troops literally into the sea. It was almost a miracle, due to the British Navy and hundreds of small pleasure boats from the U.K., that the majority got back to Britain.

At this time Britain was on its knees and the Germans launched an air offensive and where we lived was in the centre of the action. The enemy knew we were not prepared so sent wave after wave of bombers escorted by German fighter planes above them. The few British fighters would go up after them and then the air "dog fights" would start. We did not have any anti aircraft guns to shoot at them. Over a period of 3 months I saw several dozens of planes shot down, German and British.

Then at night the bombers alone would come back, this time en route to London 30 miles away. Even if the searchlights picked up an enemy plane there were not any guns to shoot at it until it reached the suburbs of London.

It was a night in June 1940, I was 18 at the time and it was my turn for guard duty. When we showed up at 9 p.m. we were told my partner, Mr. Collins (aged late 50s) and I had drawn the middle shift. We did not see the draw but it always seemed if you were the last to arrive you got the worst shift!!

As we were sitting around at the start a Mr. Cook, Manager of Woodsgate Country Club visited to say persons were breaking into their outdoor swimming

pool and using the facility in the middle of the night and he wondered if we could watch out for such goings on when we were in the area.

There is a picture of Woodsgate pool from around the era Harry describes at <http://www.tunbridgewellsmuseum.org/section.asp?catid=1091>.

It was a beautiful moonlight summer's night so we headed towards the country club and sat on a wall in the shadows of some construction equipment. We were dozing when all of a sudden we heard a splash. We waited a short while and heard another one. It was around 1 a.m. and we walked to the pool and I went over the high fence. There were two couples skinny dipping and three swam quickly to the far end of the pool while one of the fellows swam towards me. I stated clearly that they were trespassing and should dress quickly and leave.

An hour or so later when Mr. Collins and I were back sitting on the wall and while there was action of German bombers high up and overhead we heard another plash from the pool. This time there were four couples skinny dipping; quite an eyeful for an 18-year- old country boy. After speaking to the group they left quickly. They were all medical students and nurses and Mr. Collins and I agreed that "boys will be boys and girls glad of it" and since no damage had been done we would say nothing more about it.

On the next day while having supper at home with my parents there was a knock on our back door, which my father answered. He came back to the dining table and said to me, "What have you been up to?" as a policeman at the door wanted to see me. It was Sgt. Skinner, whom I knew, and he said Mr. Collins had reported the pool incident that occurred the night previously. I said that Mr. Collins had agreed not to say anything. The Sergeant showed me the report made by Mr. Collins and asked me to confirm it. Since there was nothing I could do without lying I confirmed the situation.

The next day the Dean of Medicine confronted all the medical students and decided to kick 3 students out of Medical School. These would probably go straight into the armed forces.

Chapter 5

LIFE IN ENGLAND 1941 to 1944

Joining Up

In July, actually on the 7th of July, in 1941, I enlisted with the Royal Air Force and had to report to Lord's Cricket Ground in North London. It was ironical that the day I reported for duty at the cricket ground, Winchester Grammar School was playing against Tonbridge Grammar School.

Harry mentioned in other conversations that they ate in the cafeteria of the London Zoo. Note that at this time, the War had been ongoing for nearly two years.

After doing square bashing at training for six weeks and getting us ready and fit for other work in the armed forces, it was found that the British were so short of aircraft to train on and to use, [so] we would ship to Brighton in Sussex which is a well known south coast resort; and, here we did the labouring duties such as cleaning out the Metropole, the most famous hotel at the time on the shore, to clean out all the furniture and all the other odds and ends as well as clean out the aquarium, and this was to get these locations ready for British troops to house and train.



Figure 5.1: Harry Nash, likely soon after enlisting, in front of his grandmother's cottage



Figure 5.2: Map showing locations of some of Harry's postings. Tunbridge Wells and Birmingham are provided for reference.

I do not know whether it was on this occasion, or on the return from Europe in 1945, that Harry's crowd was put up in the Metropole. He said that the servicemen who arrived first were able to complete their tasks quickly and then go "out on the town", in the process discovering some pedal cars they could rent. This they did, riding by the hotel and cheering to show that they were having a good time while the others were still working. However, they overdid

their display. The men in the hotel found every possible container that would contain water and filled it. When the pedallers paraded by again, on a signal, a Niagara-style cataract poured down from windows and balconies.

It was decided by the Air Force authorities, because of the fact that there were no aircraft available and there was going to be a tremendous shortage for some time to come, that we who had been enlisted for air crew would be given the choice of either getting a discharge and being recruited by the other armed services, or given the choice of going to a ground crew trade. I decided on taking a ground crew trade, and with this I was posted to Detling near Maidstone in Kent to help as a labourer on bombs and this sort of thing, and, after a month or two of this, I was posted to Melksham in Wiltshire on a bomb training course.

After the course, I was posted to Cranwell in Lincolnshire to a Coastal [Command] squadron, which consisted of Whitleys and Wellingtons. And, after several months here, I was posted to Kirkham in Lancashire on a gun and cannon training course. After this course, I returned to Cranwell and we were there for several months before the whole unit shipped out to Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire in Wales. This was known as the little England beyond Wales. After a couple of months there, Les Wilburn and I were transferred to Templeton, a very isolated airfield near Tenby also in Pembrokeshire. At first, this seemed to be a very depressing posting but we were there a year and it turned out to be the best year of the war for us.

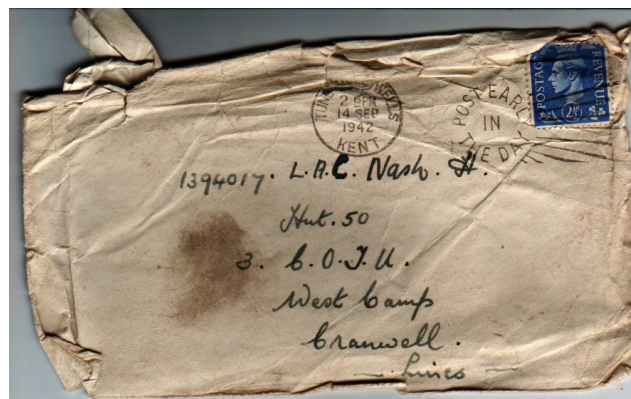


Figure 5.3: The envelope of a letter – probably her last to be sent – from Louisa to her son Harry. Postage was "tuppence h'apenny".

It was during one of Harry's Cranwell postings that his mother died. According to Desly, Lou was on her way to or from Alec and May Green at their house "Elmore" in Henwood Green Road (the names now are almost gone,

having been superceded by numbers, and I could not find it in 2010). She knocked on the door of a house at the bottom of Canterbury Road, about 150 yards from the Stores, and died in the front hall. Harry recorded:

In the autumn of 1942 I was getting ready to go up on a charge in front of the Squadron Leader because I had been caught out of bounds on a day pass in Nottingham while stationed at Cranwell. You were only allowed to go about thirty miles and I was out by about fifty miles. Just as I was polishing my boots and sprucing up to go on, I get a telegram to say that my mother was dead. So they canceled the charge and I went home on compassionate leave.

Lou died on Tuesday, Oct 27, 1942, and her funeral was on Saturday the 31st. The Kent and Sussex Courier published two items, likely a week apart. If they then, as now, published on Friday, this makes sense. Both were under a column heading **PEMBURY** in which there were several items. I have left the periods in the unusual form of "RAF".

LATE MRS. NASH. – Much sympathy has been extended by their many friends to Mr. H. E. Nash, of Hastings Road, in his bereavement by the death, which occurred very suddenly Tuesday evening, of his wife, Mrs. L. Nash, aged 42. Mr. and Mrs. Nash have run a small store and are widely known. A son in the R. A. F. and a daughter are also left to mourn their loss.

OBITUARY. – The funeral took place at the Upper Church on Saturday of Mrs. L. Nash. The Rev. H. O. Edwards conducted the service and the chief mourners were Mr. H. E. Nash (husband), Miss D. Nash, Mr. H Nash, Mrs. L. Pilbeam, Mrs. F. Day, Mrs. G. Hayward, Mr. and Mrs. P. Baker, Mr. and Mrs. Green, Mr. and Mrs. C. Gower, and Mrs. H. J. Gower (representing the Civil Defense).

I wonder if there is a typo in that a Mr. (not Mrs.) H. J. Gower was clerk of the Parish Council from 1927-1950 and would be more likely to be a Civil Defense representative. In the next chapter, we note the possibility that a member of the Gower family may have been buried near Louisa's grave.

After Cranwell, as Harry mentions in the chapter "My Lucky Number", he went to Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire, and was at Templeton Airfield (a subsidiary base) in June of 1943.

Other Activities

Harry was always fairly quiet about girlfriends in telling his stories. However, in his last couple of years, he seemed more comfortable, and interesting tales were told. In particular, he mentioned that while at Cranwell, he had a Saturday pass. He said he had a girlfriend in Nottingham at the time whom he named as Betty White. She had to work (I vaguely recall in a shop) on Saturday, so he hitch-hiked to Lincoln Racecourse. This course was operating as early as 1858 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln_Racecourse), closed in 1965, but there are plans to reopen it by 2013.

Harry was supposed to meet Betty "outside the pictures", but had difficulty hitching a ride and the film had started by the time he arrived. He went to a pub and had a drink, then waited for the cinema to empty. Betty was in a bad mood, mollified slightly by fish and chips. He walked her home and said they were "smooching" in a laneway between two houses (these can be as little as three feet wide between rows of terraced houses) when a German bomb knocked a wall down on them. They had to be dug out, but were apparently no more than shaken and dirty. While Harry was lucky – as usual – in not being injured, it appears his luck with the girl ran out with this incident.

Joining 247 Squadron

In January 1944, we, that is Les and I and six others, were posted to near Chichester in Sussex to a bomb disposal unit, and this unit was responsible for digging out German bombs that had not exploded when they dropped. We used non-magnetic tools and it amounted to lots and lots of digging in the damp climate of British winter and not only was it muddy but it was very wet and damp all the time. We did not relish this job and about six weeks after we arrived, the squadron leader in charge came to me and said that he had asked for a unit of eight men to do the work and had been given two units of eight; one unit could be sent to their old unit and he gave us the chance to say whether we wanted this or not. We jumped at the chance and returned to Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire.

On arriving at Haverfordwest, we reported to the office only to be told that we were posted to Chichester Sussex; and we laughed and said, "Well, we have just come from Chichester Sussex and there must be a mistake." Well, after a couple of hours, we found it was not a mistake and this time we were going back to Chichester but this time to 247 China British Squadron of Typhoons. The Typhoon was a fighter-bomber and carried two 500 lb. bombs, one under

each wing; as well they had four 20-millimeter cannons situated two in each wing.



Figure 5.4: 'Corporal for a day'. HN's war album. 20mm ammunition being loaded. Is this Les Wilburn with the stripes? Note the size of the shells and the fact that the heads have different patterns. That is, some will be high explosive, some armour piercing, some tracer, etc.

After a couple of weeks with the squadron, the squadron was grounded for the reason that it was going to be refitted with a secret weapon, and the weapon was rockets. They took off the bomb racks and under each wing put on four rocket rails. The squadron then traveled to Sheppey, which is a small island off in the Thames estuary, a part of North Kent. We were there about three weeks and this gave us, the armourers, the chance to become accustomed to

fitting the rockets and gave the pilots a chance to fire these rockets into barges situated in the River Thames but the barges did not have any personnel or life whatsoever on them.

Our squadron [Typhoons] were equipped with 8 rockets, four under each wing plus four 20 mm cannons. Being an armourer it was our job to do the reloading, of which there was lots, as well as to maintain the 20 mm cannon and the big job of assembling lots of rockets with the 60 lb. explosive heads, each rocket weighing 120 pounds. Each rocket was loaded onto a rail and secured by a small piece of 1/8" copper wire which was severed when the rocket was fired by an electric current.

The armourers were clearly kept very busy assembling rockets, which meant screwing the head to the rocket motor and fixing on the tail fins with a mallet, then installing the detonator(s). But once fired, the rocket was gone and no longer needed maintaining. Not so the four Hispano Suiza 20mm cannon. They had to be kept clean and in good working condition. I asked Harry how they oiled them.

Washed out with a sort of antifreeze oil. With a brush. Swish it out.

We were mostly concerned with the mechanism. Don't forget it's a big thing like that.

Harry gestured to imply something about two feet long. The whole gun was about 8 feet long and weighed around a hundred pounds.

And we used to make sure that worked clearly. Because we didn't want – I never had any complaints. Jamming. Nor did Les.

The armourers also had to put belts of shells into the ammunition hoppers. I recall Harry saying one time that they also had to make up the belts with sequences of different types of shells. Typical rounds were armour piercing (AP), used against armoured vehicles, tanks, naval vessels, and possibly some reinforced buildings, or high explosive (HE) which were more useful against trucks, barges, and more general targets.

Aircraft weapons typically fired a varied set of ammunition types in specific sequences. All the aircraft in WW2 carried tracer ammunition, either in an AP configuration, or an HE configuration. Thus a gun might fire an HE round followed by an AP round followed by a tracer round, for example. In addition, in order to minimize "grouping" of ammunition types when more than one gun was fired, each weapon had a different stagger to the belting. The first round out of the left gun might be an

HE round while the first out of the right gun might be a tracer round.
<http://www.hoofperformance.wiionline.com/weaponammo.htm>

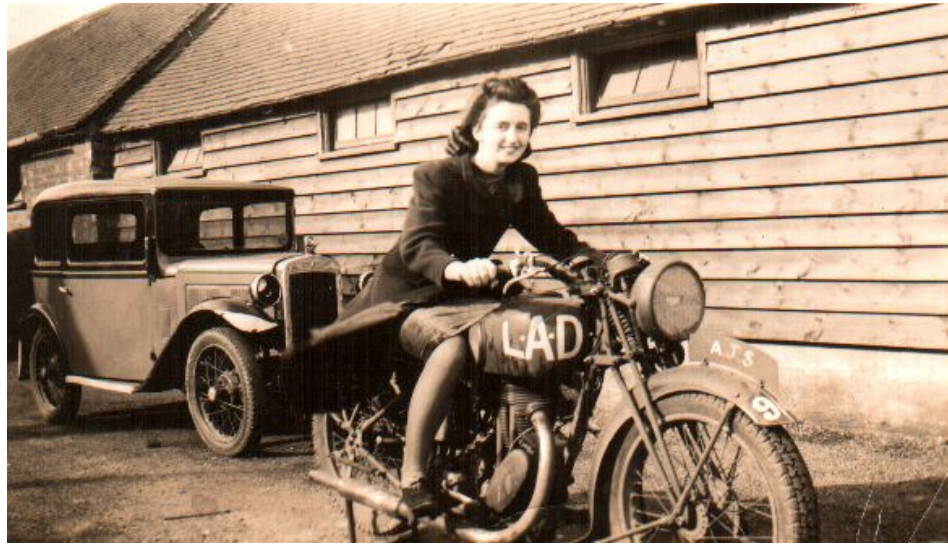


Figure 5.5: Wartime picture of Peggy on a (military) motorbike, possibly that of Max Moss. What model of car is that behind her?

Other characters

In this chapter, we have used Harry as the central player. In part this is because the story of his friends and family are mentioned elsewhere, but it is worth noting that there were three years of difficult, grey times, with dangers presenting themselves frequently. Also Britain was filling up with servicemen and servicewomen from around the globe, preparing for the assault on occupied Europe. The nearby picture of Peggy on a motorbike is indicative. The motorbike likely was that of Max Moss, her cousin who had joined the 48th Highlanders in Calgary. Of the original 500 who signed on, I recall Max saying only 27 survived the War. This seems extreme, and could mean “survived and were still in the regiment”, but no doubt the general sense is what people felt. Harry said once that of thirty who graduated from Skinners in 1940, only six were left (he may have meant alive and not wounded) by the end of the War.

Max was one of the "D-Day Dodgers" who fought up the boot of Italy. Whatever the horrors he saw there, I knew him as a warm and outgoing man. In our genealogical research, we discovered he had been married before he came to Europe, but the relationship failed. On leave, he was known to be wild and

to ride his bike rather recklessly. On one occasion he was going too fast down a rather infamous hill near Sevenoaks and careened into the private drive of a large house, right in the middle of a garden party. Apparently not having done any damage to himself or others – save perhaps his pride – he turned around and roared off again. We have his service record, and he appears to have been a signaller if we understand the abbreviations. This may explain the motorbike.

Until D-Day in June 1944, Britain was full of service people from all over the world, all waiting to be sent into action. This created its own problems and situations. Many British people tried to provide some social life for troops, but shortages meant they had little to offer. Muriel Witney, who we got to know when Harry was working for Weston's and called on Muriel and Geoff at their grocery store in Southampton, was a teenager during the War. She told of a Sunday tea to which her parents had invited some American servicemen. She said there was a Sergeant from the deep South who asked to use the toilet. Now toilet paper was very scarce, so Muriel's mother had recognized that old sewing patterns were tissue and had put some sheets on a string in the "loo". The Sergeant came back with a puzzled expression, and said "Ma'am, that's the first time I've seen it marked 'front' and 'back'."

Elsewhere

- **Invasion of Russia:** On June 22, 1941, the Germans invaded Russia. This was just before Harry joined up.
- **NATO:** In early August, in remote Placentia Bay, Newfoundland – not to become part of Canada until 1949 – the Atlantic Charter is signed by Churchill and Roosevelt.
- **Pearl Harbour:** Japanese naval aircraft attack Pearl Harbour December 7, 1941, bringing the USA into the War.
- **United Nations:** On January 1, 1942, 26 nations sign the UN Declaration in Washington DC.
- **Midway:** June 4-7, 1942, the US Navy wins the pivotal Battle of Midway in the Pacific. In five minutes, the balance of naval power changes. The Japanese lose four aircraft carriers and a heavy cruiser, while the Americans lose one carrier and a destroyer.

- **Second Battle of El Alamein** Between October 23 and November 4, 1942, forces under Bernard Montgomery defeat Rommels German and Italian armies.)
- **Nuclear reactions:** On December 2, 1942, in a rackets court at the University of Chicago, the CP-1 reactor created the first artificial, sustained nuclear chain reaction, ushering in the nuclear age.
- **Relief of Leningrad:** During January 1943, a Russian offensive manages to break the German siege of Leningrad.
- **Stalingrad:** In February, 1942, the Russians take 80,000 German prisoners who surrender the city.
- **Invasion of Sicily:** In July, the Allies invade Sicily. By October 1, they have captured Naples, but resistance is stiffening.



Figure 5.6: Section of 247 Squadron at Warmwell, Dorset, 1945. This is a 3-bladed propeller version of the Typhoon, which was gradually replaced in 1945 with 4-bladed versions. The rocket rails are clearly visible. Harry is third from right, front row.

Chapter 6

INTO FRANCE 1944

By the Spring of 1944, Britain and especially the southern part of England was full of men and women in uniform from many countries getting ready to invade occupied Europe. Most of Harry's friends and acquaintances were involved. Some – such as his chum Jack Cavey – had already been killed. Jack was a navigator on a Halifax bomber that did not return from a mission. Unfortunately his mother refused to accept the bad news and was defrauded of money by so-called spiritualists.

Don Parks, ostensibly in the artillery, managed to be in hospital with a leg ulcer. His sergeant came to say they were moving out and he would be transferred to another unit if he stayed in the hospital. (Note that this was a time when antibiotics were just being discovered and developed. Infections could easily ulcerate and be difficult to cure.) He wanted to be with buddies so he went back with the sergeant on the back of a motorbike to the tent camp. He was very shortly ordered to report to his commanding officer with his rifle. The officer noted that he had passed the Bren gun course, and could therefore “kill more Germans” that way. However, the Bren, although classed as a “light machine gun”, is still much heavier than a rifle. In fact, two other men were supposed to be detailed to carry the ammunition.

So encumbered, he boarded a ship at Southampton, but instead of going to France right away, it went through the Straits of Dover to the Royal Victoria Docks, picked up equipment and men, trucks on top, men below, then went back down the Channel and to Normandy.

The destination was Gold Beach, just to the right of the Canadians at Juno Beach when one is facing the land from the sea. The ship **behind** them hit a mine. Don told me “That cheered us up no end”. At a certain point, the ship stopped and rope ladders were set over the side. However, having had no training or practice (possibly because he had been in hospital) and because of

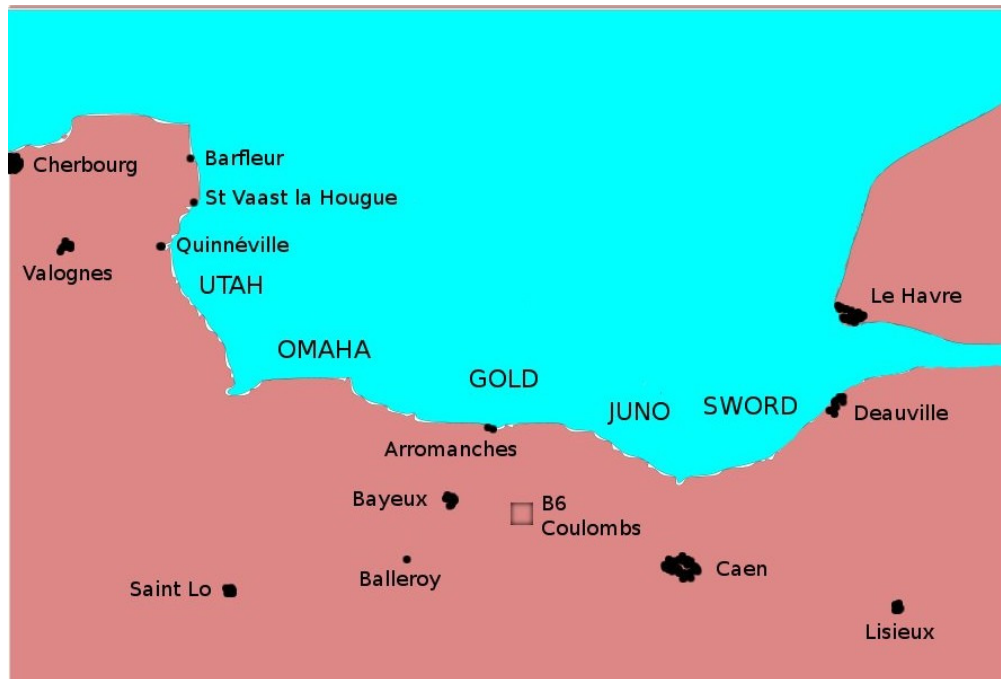


Figure 6.1: Crude map of the invasion beaches, Normandy, 1944. The B6 Coulombs advanced landing ground (airfield) was between Bayeux and Caen.

the curve of the ship's side, Don fell into the landing craft. The landing craft made for shore, but dropped its ramp some way out. Don stepped off in water up to his chest.

I asked him about men ahead of him on shore. The answer was "Just the Germans".

Harry went to Normandy almost two weeks later, though the squadron aircraft were generally busy during that time. The squadron received a briefing from the C/O on June 5. Apparently a message relayed from Montgomery to all servicemen to be careful not to catch VD on the continent was treated with some derision. On D-Day itself, Marchant (p. 72) reports that the squadron was on "defensive standby" until 18:50, that is, almost all the day, essentially twiddling their thumbs while being ready to take off at a moment's notice. But in the evening they were sent to seek targets of opportunity to disrupt the enemy's transport. They were clearly eager to do so (Marchant, p.72).

Stan displayed too much zeal in pressing home one of his attacks and received a piece of exhaust piping from an exploding vehicle in his port mains tank, which necessitated him making a forced landing at Tangmere.



Figure 6.2: C-47A Skytrain with open hatch at the 2008 ‘Flying Legends’ air show in Duxford, UK. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Mike Chongbro.

Harry picks up his own story from the time the Squadron was training with rockets at Eastchurch (i.e., Sheppey):

After this training, we went to Hurn, not far from Bournemouth, in Hampshire, which was a fairly large airfield and the tents we slept in were within feet of the runway. From here the Typhoons soon began sorties into northern France to try out this new weapon and soon after D-Day on June the 6th the Typhoons played a very active part in army support roles. On D+12, we flew from Hurn in DC-3s and landed at a converted airfield. It was converted from a cornfield into a landing strip; and when we got there, the other half of the squadron were already there having traveled by barge and trucks. We were situated half way between Bayeux and Caen, not very far from the front line.

This airfield was B6 Coulombs.

So the next few weeks, life was very hectic since all the allies, that is, the Americans, Canadians and British, were hemmed into a not too big an area of Normandy, surrounded on one side by the German army and the other by the British Channel.

After Harry died, we were going through what he called his “Deed Box”, a lockable tin box used to keep important papers. Among the many items therein, we found a battered shell casing. I had not seen this for over 56 years, but remember my father showing it to me when I was about 4. I recall he said that on the day he arrived in Normandy, there was an attack by a Focke-Wulf 190 aircraft which straffed the airfield where 247 Squadron was setting

up operations. He said that everyone hit the ground and as the attacker went over he felt a sudden pain at the back of his neck. He yelled to Les that he thought he was hit. However, as he tried to move and feel the injury, he realized that it was a shell casing lying on his neck and that he would have a bruise and a slight burn.

The shell is pictured. From the Defense Intelligence Agency “Small Caliber Ammunition Identification Guide, Volume 1, Small Arms Cartridges up to 15 mm”, 20 August 1984, the rather unique shape and 13 mm hole at the “business end” matches Index No. 61 – 13 mm Aircraft machine gun, MG-131.

I had thought that the FW 190 was all-cannon armed (i.e., 20 mm calibre guns), but it appears that there were many variants involving different mixtures of MG 17 (7.62 mm), MG 131 (13 mm), MG 151/20 (20 mm) and MG FF (20 mm) guns. Some FW 190 variants had both 20 mm cannon varieties, since the MG FF was much smaller and lighter, but also less powerful, than the MG 151/20. Thus it is quite possible that the shell casing came from an FW 190, though it was also used in Messerschmidt Me 109 fighter as well as some bomber aircraft (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MG_131_machine_gun).

As a footnote to this, though I can find no evidence of this specific attack in Marchant, Harry said several Typhoons were destroyed or severely damaged by the strafing, including his. Les considered himself less fortunate and said “Damn, I’ll have to rearm mine.”

Harry did not seem to find getting strafed by the FW-190 as frightening as artillery.

My most frightening experience was in Normandy. We had flown in on D-Day plus 12 and because our air strip was so close to enemy lines we had our tents away from the strip in a wooded area. Apart from our daily duties, seven days a week, we had one night of guard duty amongst the aircraft. It was a Saturday night and when it was time for my shift I was on with a friend, Henry (Spike) Jones. It started off quiet enough but then all of a sudden the airstrip was the target of intense shelling. Spike and I jumped into a newly-made crater and kept our heads low. I remember saying that shells rarely hit the same spot twice. This barrage went on for about an hour; some of the aircraft were destroyed. While in the hole, Spike said: “If we make it out alive, when we get to Paris I will buy each of us a bottle of Chartreuse.” I said: “What is Chartreuse?” The sequel to this story is that when the Allies burst out of the Normandy beachhead at the Battle of Falaise, the Americans captured Paris and the British Brussels. We were the first RAF in Brussels and I said to Spike, “This is as good as Paris, how about some Chartreuse?” Spike, in the middle of the afternoon, ordered two half bottles of Chartreuse



Figure 6.3: The MG131 shell casing that hit Harry

and we, during the course of the rest of the evening, drank them. The patrons in the bar guided us to the railway tracks as we knew the tracks went by our tent and we made it back to camp in the middle of the night.

The shelling Harry describes may have been on July 22, when 70 artillery shells landed, damaging all but four of the squadron's aircraft, then numbering 22 in total. Indeed some of the Wing were instructed to return to Hurn from the B6 Coulombs airfield.

Aircraft problems arose with the dust from the *ad hoc* airfields, especially in Normandy. These were simply farm fields with 'wire' laid over whatever vegetation or soil was there after minimal grading. The propellers churned up vast amounts of dust and special filters were quickly developed for the engines. But the guns presented another problem. After one or two rounds

had been fired, the shell casings would be stuck in the ejector chute by dust clinging to the very gun oil used to protect the mechanism. There is a picture in Mason (p.85) where a Typhoon is raising dust, and one in Marchant (p. 76) showing the Sommerfeld pierced steel. In another picture in Marchant (p. 73) a Typhoon shares a field with a cow and calf!

The solution to the dust problem, which Harry talked about but not on tape, was to use airplane ‘dope’ (like car lacquer paint, made largely from cellulose dissolved in something like acetone) to glue a page or two of paper over each ejector chute. The first casing would punch through this, but dust would be kept out. Harry says that old Women’s Weekly magazines were used for the paper. As mentioned, engine air filters were also upgraded (Marchant, p. 78).

The Typhoon was a difficult beast with lots of problems. The engine – a 24 cylinder Napier Sabre H block monster – used sleeve valves that were difficult to manufacture. There are several web pages that discuss such issues. More telling, Marchant (pp. 153-155), in listing aircraft flown by 247 Squadron, reports an appallingly high number of entries “EF” for “engine-failure” as a cause for loss. The engine was also started by using essentially blank shotgun shells to turn a starter motor. This avoided carrying a tank of compressed air, but gave only a quick turn of the engine. Often the Sabre would not start on the first try, especially when cold. The Coffman starter could take several shells, but Harry recounted occasions when all of them would be tried unsuccessfully and the mechanic would have to take time to reload it.

Engine problems led to the death of the experienced Norwegian pilot Sinjo Ryen when the Sabre failed shortly after take-off and he attempted a forced landing at a nearby airfield. Unfortunately his Typhoon flipped over and he died, apparently of suffocation. Marchant puts some blame on the change from a frame to bubble canopy (p. 82), but clearly the engine is the initiating factor. Harry mentioned this incident several times and added that Ryen (who he did not name), like many pilots, drank heavily and that sometimes he had to be assisted into his Typhoon.

Starting could give another problem if the pilot had left some of his rocket selector switches ‘on’. As I understand it, there was one switch for each rocket or each pair of rockets, and Harry said these were essentially domestic light switches of the time. Possibly it was simpler to use commonly available switches than manufacture special ones – the rocket projectile or ‘RP’ came along quite late in the War and was a retrofit to the aircraft. The pilot would select which rockets to fire, then press his firing button. However, with the selector in the ‘on’ position, some sort of current would be passed to the rockets and they could fire while the Typhoon was on the ground. Pictures I have

found of the cockpit show an “RP Mains” switch and a somewhat obscured switch that looks like a selector with “Pairs” marked on it as well as some markings I cannot decipher. There are two buttons on the control stick, which I assume are firing buttons, and one of these is certainly an add-on retrofit. I assume the other is the gun-firing button.

The armourers were therefore told to leave the ignition plug – apparently like a small electrical plug in the back of the rocket engine – unplugged until the engine was started. Then they were to plug them in. Harry says that there were incidents where the rocket went off at this time, so standard practise was to plug in the rockets at arm’s length from the side. He also mentioned that there was one real or reported incident of an armourer killed by backing into the propeller, which I remember being described in association with the plugging in of rockets. However, from the location of the rockets, I suspect that such an incident, if it occurred, was more likely because the armourer was in the way of another aircraft that was taxiing.

Indeed, the aircraft was nose-high when on the ground, since it used a landing gear with two main wheels and a small tail wheel. Thus the pilot could not see where he was going on the ground until he was moving at enough speed to lift the tail. The solution was to have a ground crew member sit on the wing and direct the pilot by hand signals. There is an interesting YouTube video of this (“Hawker Typhoon ground crewman directing.mov.flv”) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xMHjhDr1Hk&feature=related>.

A number of times, Marchant mentions that aircraft would “weave” down the taxi ways, presumably to allow the pilot to get a look forward. There were also numerous accidents where planes collided on the ground.

Adding to the pilot’s discomfort was the issue that they had to use oxygen masks at all times because of infiltration of carbon monoxide from the engine exhaust. Worst, some nasty “accidents” occurred where the tail simply fell off the Typhoon. Harry recalled one in their squadron, but the one I have found in Marchant (p. 59) that killed Flying Officer Burton was in 1943 before Harry was posted to 247 Squadron. On Aug 17, 1944, Flt Lt Guthrie was killed when his Typhoon was hit by flak and the tail came off. Whether a pre-existing tailplane issue was contributory is unknown. And on September 28, Flt Lt Lee (Australian) was killed in an attack on a pocket of infantry next to the airfield. This is mentioned in the contemporary newsletter reproduced in Chapter 9, and Harry implies on one of the tapes we have of him that he saw this happen.

I asked Harry if they ever took the guns out of the aircraft.

Yes. They would come out if we had to. Actually, we didn't dismount them

very often, once we got them.

Don't forget, a lot of those planes didn't last very long. Some a long time. Others be gone the first mission.

We saw ... directly the new pilots came in, put 'em on straight away. One fellow came there, nervous. Went, and he didn't come back. They only had him for less than half an hour.

Well, we lost a lot. Out of 31, we lost 23.

I have not verified these statistics, but they are consistent with Marchant's records.

But the fellows. They were all intelligent. Not all. But most of them were intelligent. We had one Irishman who wasn't very intelligent. And he was just a lackey. And the squadron leader had him as a batman. This was in Normandy. So the squadron leader said he wanted a bath. They got water heated up. And he had one of these sitting baths with a high back.

So he gets in the bath and he's moaning and swearing at this fellow doing his chores. He said "Get me some more hot water". And he poured this very hot water over him. He [[the Squadron Leader]] jumped out. The Irishman wasn't batman any more. Wasn't boiling, but ever so hot.

That squadron leader got the George Cross because – we wouldn't sleep near the planes because the Germans used to shell them at night – So the planes were all spread out. We were say, over here, and this one night the Germans shelled. And caught a plane alight here. It was facing our way. Already armed. This fellow. One wing was already alight and all of a sudden one rocket went off and landed near us. And this squadron leader, he went to the other side of the aircraft. And there was some copper wire about an 1/8th of an inch thick. So he pulled out the wire. And pushed the rockets off the rails. He got the George Cross for that.

I have not been able to find any record that fits this story, for example in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_George_Cross_recipients. It is possible that a different decoration was awarded. However, there were a number of such incidents with rockets going off due to fires. Marchant (p. 80, left column) reports 247 tents came under unintended rocket bombardment from 181 Squadron July 1 or 2 when one of the latter's Typhoons was set afire by German bombs, and the same squadron suffered a similar incident July 7. Later on the same page and the next, a July 6 incident when a wounded pilot with damaged "kite" veered into armed and fueled aircraft and set them on fire led to a citation for bravery to the team of all ranks who rushed to save the pilot and disarm or safeguard the munitions.

Harry says simply *We wondered when the next one was coming.*

I asked him if the planes were tied down or if they could have been simply turned round.

But what they did, they used hedgerows, made a gap in a hedgerow. So you pulled the plane back so the wings were along the top of the hedgerow. For camouflage. And put a net over the tail. So you might not be able to turn it around.

And sometimes aircraft could cause trouble without help from a pilot. The 10 August 1944 squadron diary (Marchant, p. 85) records:

Soon after lunch we were provided with another rather spectacular sight, when a Liberator [B-24 four engine bomber; it weighed over 18 tons empty. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B-24_Liberator] from which the crew had baled out delayed its descent to the ground by performing a series of aerial evolutions which one would have had difficulty carrying out even in a Spitfire.

Starting from about 15000 ft with its engines flat out it commenced a steep dive to earth, which as far as we were concerned presaged its immediate destruction. To our infinite surprise, instead of diving straight to earth, the great machine pulled out and executed a loop, following the next dive with a steep climb, a stall turn and a short spin. This carried on until the bomber crashed in a field about a mile distant. It was a most uncanny and frightening spectacle; frightening because after each stall turn, the machine would head directly for our airfield.

Fortunately the wind was in our favour, in addition to the attentions of a Mustang which made repeated attempts on the kite to hasten its descent, otherwise there might have been a serious accident. As it happened the stricken machine crashed in a small clearing devoid of buildings – the only clearing among thousands of parked vehicles.

This description accords with Harry's except in one detail. Harry said that each time the Liberator headed towards them they would dive for trenches or other cover, while when it headed towards some other unfortunate folk they would cheer!

Despite its difficulties, the Typhoon was effective, especially when operated by a good squadron. Mason (p. 86) describes a particularly direct example:

On the 20th [of June 1944] four more Squadrons moved across the Channel, Nos 181, 182 and 247 being allocated B. 6 at Coulombs – within sight of the “front line” – and No. 175 to B3 nearer the coast in the centre of the British sector. On one occasion, when the Germans chose to launch an armoured thrust towards the beaches, aimed at cutting the British sector in two, the Typhoons of No. 124 Wing [which included 247 Squadron] were being ordered into the air in full sight of the enemy tanks, having barely time to raise their wheels and release their rockets before turning downwind to rejoin the landing circuit and take on a fresh load of weapons. All the time the landing ground was under fire from 88 mm. guns. Five Typhoons were lost to enemy shelling, but no pilot or groundcrew member was killed or injured, and there was never any question of evacuating the landing ground at Coulombs – and the groundcrews kept working without let-up, refueling and reloading the Typhoons without thought of taking shelter – so long as any aircraft demanded attention.

In 2003, I discovered a copy of John Golley’s book “The Day of the Typhoon” available from a Fredericton NB bookstore, and arranged to buy it. I sent Harry the book for Christmas, but did manage to quickly read it first. Harry inscribed it with a message to make sure it got returned to him, as I believe he found the descriptions evocative of his own experiences. Golley was a pilot in 245 Squadron, and I had confused the numbers, but he mentions an event very similar to the above quotation at Mortain in August 1944. When I asked Harry about that, his description was almost exactly as in the quotation above. However, my error in Squadron number confused the date and location, since 245 Squadron was at B.5 Le Fresney and in a different Wing. What is not in doubt is the frantic nature of the Typhoon squadron actions in close-range encounters with tanks in Normandy. These battles were the first directly between armour and aircraft, and established the supremacy of the latter when weather and visibility permitted flying. The RPs (rocket projectiles) were considered the main weapon, but retrospective analysis suggests rather poor hit rates. A direct hit did a lot of damage. Harry showed me a picture that I have not been able to locate subsequently of a German heavy tank of which the hull was bent into a V shape and the turret blown off. (See also report in Marchant, p. 87.) Such sights, along with the noise, sight and heavy explosions of incoming rockets, had a strong demoralizing effect on ground troops. The Typhoon’s 20 mm cannon appear to have been able to disable some armour, even if they could not destroy it.

Personal matters were also a worry. Hen was dying.

Chapter 7

COMPASSIONATE LEAVE AUGUST 1944

It was late June that I received a letter from a Dr. Jacoby, stating that my father was physically in very poor shape and that he was going to die. Dr. Jacoby said that he could state many doctors' terms for this condition but the real trouble was my father was dying of a broken heart. I must add here that in October 1942, my mother had dropped dead on the street in Pembury and I received the news of this by means of a telegram sent to me at Cranwell. I had gone home for the funeral and then returned to my unit at that time. My mother was age 42 [when she died]. Dr. Jacoby, a young doctor who with his wife had become customers of my parents' store, when writing to me in Normandy, suggested that I contact my commanding officer, who felt very sorry about the news, but at the same time stated that there was no leave whatsoever for anybody who was located in the beachhead of Normandy.

My father went all to pieces after the death of my mother, what with the war, the bombing and the rations, as well as running the business and thinking of me away and my sister Desly giving teenage problems. So with this my father was not in a very good mental state.

On top of this, Lou's grave had been hit by a bomb. Desly says Hen was 'on duty' (as an Air Raid Warden, I believe) the night the bomb fell on the graves. She also said the Builder's wife's grave had a direct hit and Lou's grave [was destroyed] too. The Builder's grandson was a famous cricketer, but Desly could not remember the name. Harry says it was Jack (H.J.?) Gower. There were three members of the Gower family at Louisa's funeral and cricketer David Gower was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1957. Mr H J Gower was clerk (not chair) of the Parish Council from 1927-1950, as noted near Louisa's obituary

in Chapter 5.

Harry dates the graveyard bombing to February or March, 1943, but Kathryn Franklin of the Pembury Historical Committee found an interview segment with Rex Turner, a lifelong Pembury resident from 1903 to the 1990s.

Jan 21th 1944

First big-scale night raid for many months – about 90 enemy planes cross coast – 16 destroyed. 8 bombs of various calibre drop in neighbourhood of Glebe House & Pembury Schools, the roofs of which were slightly damaged. Two bombs fell in churchyard with the same unpleasant consequences as the raid on Nov 5/40. Otherwise no further damage was done.

From the perspective of Hen, there seems to have been serious emotional damage, and I find the timing suggests this incident precipitated or aggravated his decline. Harry continues,

My father went down to the graveyard with a fellow named Jack Gower, who was the head town councillor, which would be the equivalent of mayor of the village and found that his wife's grave had also been hit. It was a mess. In May of 1944 I was home on leave and my father was in pretty poor shape. I noticed that he walked the floor at night when I was asleep. I could hear him walking around – uncomfortable and didn't say too much. It was my last leave before the invasion of Normandy and I remember saying I had to be back tomorrow at 8 o'clock in the morning near Chichester and I went back early at about 3:30 p.m. I decided to get a bus to Tunbridge Wells and the train to London. In London I wanted to go to a show and got a seat for the Dancing Years with Ivor Novello. Getting out about 10:30 p.m., I went to have a drink in a pub. Then I went across to Victoria Station and the air raid sirens went. So I got underground and about three in the morning I decided to get up and I was walking across Victoria Station and I ran into an officer in the dark. It was absolutely pitch black, there were no lights and he said, "Where can you get a cup of tea, mate?", and it was Jeff Stanton. He was my best man at my wedding [to Peggy]; he went to school with me and he had just come back from Canada.

And they kept loading up the beachhead. Easy to hit things for the Germans. Keep firing and you're going to hit something. They wouldn't give anybody leave. Not me. Anybody! Then, in the middle of August, [12–21 August 1944; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falaise_pocket] the Falaise Gap came – the Battle of Falaise – and our rocket-firing Typhoons were in it, and all the

Liberators, bombers and everything, and the Allies, Canadians and Americans and British, broke out of the beachhead and headed across France. As soon as this happened, my commanding officer came to me and said that now he had news that if there was a real urgent need with compassionate reasons for leave, it would be granted. And so with this, I hitch-hiked over nearer the coast where DC-3's were landing regularly [Dakotas, C-47s – there several names for the same airframe]. I slept in a ditch. And on the Friday, I flew with a couple of generals to Northolt in North London. From there by train, underground train and bus, I reached Pembury Hospital on Friday afternoon. I went into Pembury Hospital, I found my father was situated in a ward with approximately 30 beds and there was a screen around my father's bed and he was in a coma.

While visiting with him, he came to momentarily and there was a twitch in his eyes as he recognized me and then he went back off into a coma. At this time, behind the screen, I heard a nurse say, "Who is that dirty person?" – referring to me. One of the nurses said "Shhhh." After I left to come out from visiting my father, the head nurse who had made this remark said, "I am sorry I said that, we are running a bath for you and you will have a bed to sleep in, in the ward, if you wish, so that if in the middle of the night or any time your father wakes or comes out of the coma, we will call you."

Desly has a different perspective on the same time which gives another dimension to it. In 1944, Desly (who was only 20 years old) was running the shop with all the rationing and "points" difficulties and getting to the hospital to see her father when she had the chance. Mr. Panto was a representative who came on Thursday, so she had to wait to see him. When she got to the hospital, Hen was really nasty to her because she was late. After the visit, Desly found that her bicycle had got a puncture and one of the nurses, called "Bobby" lent Desly her own bike. Before she went home Desly came back to the ward and Harry was there at Hen's bedside but Desly says he didn't want to come home. Possibly he had by this time been offered a bed and bath at the hospital. Was he more distracted, tired, or emotional than he describes? He never mentioned Desly in his account of his father's death.

There is also a discrepancy of one day, since Desly points to Thursday evening, but Harry to Friday. Given the tumult of events, the mixing of days is all too understandable. I had difficulty remembering which day was my own mother's funeral and had to consult the obituary.

The next morning, being Saturday, I sat up in bed very early and the nurses really doted on me by bringing me a cup of tea and cookies in bed and after that I got up and went to the store in Hastings Road Pembury which was about a mile away and this was not being occupied at the time because my sister was

staying with Mr. and Mrs. Hayward nearby the store because she – who was younger than me – was scared to sleep in the house by herself.

Desly mentioned that Nurse Bobby would sometimes come and stay there with her. Desly described her as a very robust girl, and obviously made of the "right stuff" for those perilous times.

In the next paragraph, Harry has adopted the N. American idiom of “cookies” rather than the British “biscuits”.

On Sunday morning I was in the middle of my cup of tea and cookies when there was a big explosion and windows rattled and then a large one broke. It was a flying bomb that had gone off in the village. I immediately dressed and got on my bike, thinking it was close to where I lived. As I reached the hospital gates, the ambulance came in and it was driven by Alf Styles and I asked where the bomb had gone off and he said “At the Blue Boys”, which was a favorite watering hole for myself and a number of my friends. In the ambulance at the time, though I did not know it, were Peggy and Dolly Moss who had been injured by the blast. They had been admitted to the hospital but this would turn out not to be as serious as some people had expected and they were soon released. But they did have hits on their heads due to the window crashing on them.

I recall my mother Peggy saying that first aid was delivered by the Matfield Fire Brigade, which I believe was a volunteer unit. They treated some of the cuts with adhesive bandages, in North America often called by the Johnson and Johnson brand name “Band-Aid”, but more commonly in England by the Smith & Nephew (now Beiersdorf) trade name “Elastoplast”. Peggy said that at Pembury hospital the staff showed surprise at these and took them off to show other staff. Wikipedia and related sources imply that the Band-Aid product was invented in the 1920s but that automated sterile production did not commence until 1938, with large shipments from North America during the War. However, the Elastoplast product was apparently developed in 1928. The modern plastic version of these products was not introduced until the 1950s. As a child I recall the thick fabric versions and that they were always called Elastoplasts. In any event, in 1944 this class of dressing was uncommon enough to be a novelty.

On reaching my home, I found out that the bedroom window had a broken pane of glass as had the house next door from the blast from the bomb but these small items were shut off and soon boarded over.

While this was happening, there had been a phone call from Mr. Punnet of Applegarth, a beautiful home in Matfield with orchards and other beautiful

grounds. So, I phoned him back and arranged to see him on [that] Sunday afternoon; and so I went over to Matfield on my bicycle and on the way took a good look at the Blue Boys' which was built in the 1600s and the barn and dancehall/tea room combination was just matchwood, and all the windows and everything were boarded up on the pub itself, but it was open for business.

I continued on to the other part of Matfield down in the village and went to visit Mr. Punnet and he greeted me saying, "You know Harry, your dad is going to die." Mr. Punnet was the owner of the Pembury Brickworks. He was also a builder – not in a "hands-on" way but he had lots of men working for him and he had the beautiful home. I said that I realized this and he said that he had gone to his own lawyers after speaking to my dad and had a will drawn up – this was a month before I got home – and the reason for this was he felt that my dad's sister, Gertrude, would cause a lot of trouble. He told me that if anything happened to my father, I was to contact Mr. Bailey of the law firm, Bailey & Cogger, situated in Tonbridge.

The next day, Monday, I got home from the hospital around about 9 o'clock and I had been home only about an hour when I received a phone call to say that my father had passed away. I immediately had to make arrangements for the funeral, which I did, for the next Thursday, three days later, then at the same time the Royal British Legion manager and the town clerk, which is like the mayor, said that it was very sad that I had lost both parents and my sister was younger and there was business to run and they gave me a strong message to take – after the funeral which was Friday, to Air Force House in Euston in North London. And when getting to Air Force House, I went before a 45ish squadron leader and he said to me, "What did you do before you joined the Air Force?" I told him that I had worked at Lloyds Bank; and he said, "You did not work in the grocery store." And I said, "Well, I only had weekends and evenings to help out." But, he said, "You did not work full time in the grocery store." And, I said, "No." He said, "Well, I am very sorry but I do not have any choice but to send you back to your unit in France." And, he said, "You have 24 hours to get from here to home and to New Haven in Sussex and go from there back to your unit."

This I did the next day; and when I got to New Haven at noon, I was ready to sail – but the boat did not sail until dark – and it was like a cork in the rough channels of the sea. Anyway, I was not seasick. The next morning we got off in Arromanches, I got a hitchhike to the airfield in Normandy, only to find it absolutely bare, which was not surprising since the troops had all moved on across France. I hitchhiked across France and spent one night in a school and then caught up with my unit on the Belgian-French border. From there we went into Brussels being the first Air Force [unit] into Brussels and this was

the day after it was liberated.

To provide a timeline, the last Sunday in August 1944 was August 27, so Hen's funeral was August 31. On Saturday, September 1, Harry was in Newhaven, Sunday in Arromanches, which is September 3. The Squadron was at Melsbroek September 6 and went to Eindhoven on September 22. Brussels was liberated late on Sunday, September 3 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/79/a4801079.shtml>), and Melsbroek is in the North-East suburbs, where the current Brussels Airport is located, and indeed is likely the same airfield. This was where Harry and Spike got drunk on Chartreuse.



Figure 7.1: A re-creation of a Hawker Typhoon fighter aircraft at Memorial de la Paix, Caen. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Chapter 8

1944-45

BRUSSELS TO LUBECK

To Belgium and Holland

After four days regrouping in an airfield, Melsbroek, north of Brussels, we went on across the rest of Belgium, across the Albert Canal into Holland. We finished up on an airfield not very far from the Phillips factory, which is well known in Eindhoven. There were pockets of German troops near and in fact adjacent to parts of the airfield, and soon after we arrived, one airborne division, actually it was an American airborne division, dropped parachutists on the German lines. Some of them dropped short and landed amongst us around the airfield. It was now early October of 1944 and the Allies' lines were somewhat extended and although the airborne divisions were dropped at Arnhem and also Nijmegen and Eindhoven, these airborne drops did not materialize as some of the Allies had hoped. So the allies in France got bogged down and the situation remained like this for the winter until early March [1945] when the allies started up the offensive again.

George Pugh, the man who [my sister] Desly married, was a Sergeant in the medical corps in the British Army and I had met him just once in Pembury when I was on leave. He, like myself, was in the Normandy invasion. And, when we were in Holland, he asked questions about rocket firing Typhoons flying over his unit and found out that I was on an airfield not far from the school in which his unit was billeted. He and a friend drove over in a Jeep and found me and it was quite amusing because while he was talking to us, German fighters flew over and sprayed the airdrome with machine guns and an aircraft, within about 200 or 300 yards from where we were standing, got damaged somewhat. George and his friend could not get away from the airfield

quick enough. However, he was there long enough to invite us over to the school and when we got over there that evening, we sat around with some of his friends, all military men and he provided a large mug – it must have held at least 20 oz. of full-proof rum. They kept passing the mug around over the period of an hour or so until the rum was all gone and then we went down to the local café where they sold beer that was draft out of a tap. They used to pump air into it, or it seemed that's what they did, because it was always bubbly and had very little alcohol in it.

While Harry's notes do not mention it, I recall him saying that George gave him some hot chocolate in a tin. The tin had a fuse (like a firework fuse) that you lit. He said there would be a short fizz and they thought nothing had happened, but they burned their fingers when they tried to pick it up, and on opening the tin, the contents were piping hot. There were likely many such experimental products during the war. Desly says George was in the medical corps stores (or supply) service, which would give him access to a variety of "interesting" things like this.

In the BBC World War 2 History Archive a contributor listed only as Desertrat says (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/69/a2730269.shtml>):

"Then we all stood round the tank smoking and drinking warm cocoa from the comp rations. The cocoa came in self-heating tins with a wick in the centre. You touched the wick with a lit cigarette and - schoouuff! Just like that! You had a tin of warm cocoa in your hand. It had been a rough night and the cocoa tasted very good."

We enjoyed these encounters with George and his friends; so as we moved forward with the British army, it was on several occasions tht George was able to spot the Typhoons and used to inquire if it was 124 Wing and if so, he used to contact us. On three or four occasions over the winter we had the pleasure of enjoying a mug of rum with George and his friends.

At some point, Harry also encountered Cyril Lambert, whose job was detecting mines. Harry said he met Cyril beside a field marked with a German sign "Achtung! Minenfeld". Cyril asked him if he wanted some potatoes. It was safer – and more nourishing – to dig up potatoes than mines, and the sign kept other scavenging servicemen at bay. In 2010, I asked Kath Lambert about this story, but she had not heard it before.



Figure 8.1: Money Harry kept from 1945. The larger bill appears to be a Third Reich note, while the smaller one clearly bears the identification of the Allied military.

Drink and Distraction

Alcohol was, as always, a highly desirable substance. Servicemen looking for a break from the hard work and constant stress of their jobs sought bars or cafes or "estaminets". Harry recounted several times that as they went through Brussels they found a small bar and were drinking whatever was available. The proprietor was busy taking down pictures of Hitler and Goering and putting up Eisenhower and Churchill. There was some noise and distant shooting and someone announced that there was a counter attack and they had to move

out. As they did, the pictures were changing again. Someone was for beating up the poor proprietor, but saner voices told him "Forget it. He has to stay alive too."

Earlier we have related the tale of Green Chartreuse. Harry rarely gave advice about drinking, but he said that Green Chartreuse led to a very nasty hangover.

Christmas was another business day for the squadron. Marchant (p. 106) says "Due to the need to press on with operations, the ground crews received their Christmas dinner in three sittings." But on Friday 29th December a Squadron dance was held and described in the Operations Record Book: "This time strenuous efforts had been made to procure a sufficient supply of wines, and the results were humourous as well as fraught." Harry said that the C/O had detailed a truck to go to Brussels to get beer and wine. Marchant says that women were present and that a place had to be found to which the more inebriated ones could be carried to sleep off the effects, but Harry never mentioned this. He did, however, comment that the regulation ties they wore were made of cellulose and were pre-tied, and that at one point a serviceman approached the C/O and asked "Permission to bite your tie sir", which was granted, leading to a general silliness where all ties were bitten off just below the knot.

The general fussiness of the Sabre engine could be an excuse to fly back to England to have it checked out. On the return the pilot would have drop tanks fitted, but filled with beer rather than fuel (Marchant, p. 81). Harry was on guard duty one night when a pilot landed with tanks on (whereas they are meant to be discarded) and asked if anyone knew how to get the tank off. Harry was one of a couple of the "bods" who did this. As a reward, he was given beer (in a mess can) but this made him fall asleep on guard, and he was lucky not to get caught or would have been court-martialed.

One time I commented to Harry that James Lamb, in "The Corvette Navy", said the Royal Canadian Navy lost more men to venereal disease than to enemy action. Harry replied that one of the pilots married a Belgian girl in Brussels. Afterwards several of the pilots who had been at the wedding needed to see the Medical Officer for treatment of VD because one of the bridesmaids had been very eager to please. Don Parks mentioned that the slang for being under the care of the M/O in such situations was "Gone for Number 9s", but <http://www.wakefieldfhs.org.uk/Warsays> the expression "NUMBER NINE" was more generally applicable, namely it meant:

"Sick. The British army's No.9 was a laxative pill. Handed out indiscriminately by the MO, but especially to those men who were classified

M&D (medicine & duty) or NYD (not yet diagnosed). Also known as the Star of the Movies. Gave rise to the bingo caller's expression 'doctor's orders - number nine', the game itself being one of the more popular respectable pastimes amongst soldiers."

Operation Bodenplatte

During the winter months there were a number of exciting skirmishes – the biggest being the Battle of the Bulge and this was when the Allies were driven back. In the Luxemburg region and at Eindhoven, our airfield and many others were really bombed and strafed badly on January 1st, 1945. It was just after this that the 247 Squadron moved up with the rest of 124 Wing to Helmond [about 10 km east of Eindhoven] and instead of sleeping in tents, we were able to sleep in a metal Nissen hut. We were at Helmond until the first week of March when the offensive started and we soon moved forward again and this time we crossed the River Rhine at the town of Rees and we crossed this on a Saturday night on an army pontoon bridge. For light they put search lights up into the clouds and the reflections of light made it easy for the drivers to go across. From Rees, we moved on with a Polish army division into Germany and then went north back into Holland to Enschede.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unternehmen_Bodenplatte describes the attacks by the Luftwaffe on Allied airfields on January 1, 1945. Airfield B78 Eindhoven was home to Squadrons 137 and 181 as well as 247. It was attacked by three squadrons of Jagdgeschwader 3 (JG3). The Wikipedia article points out the Eindhoven suffered "heavy damage" and that

A total of 495 Allied aircraft were damaged or destroyed. Most of the targeted airfields remained out of action for up to two weeks following the attack.

Contrarily, Marchant (p. 108) says 247 Squadron managed to put up a sortie of 6 Typhoons almost immediately after the raid "since we had come off the lightest". One of these was damaged by flak. However, Mason (pp. 97-99) suggests there were no fewer than eight squadrons sharing the Eindhoven airfield and that a total of 141 Typhoons were written off, with 247 Squadron left with only five serviceable aircraft. (Perhaps this was after the sortie by six planes with one being damaged.) There would normally be about 18 aircraft on the roster to be able to mount a dozen on operations, but these numbers apparently varied somewhat. (<http://www.ww2aircraft.net/forum/aviation/number-aircraft-squadron-14400.html>) Marchant does include

a mention that later in the day No. 137 Squadron was helping to make up numbers.

JG3 apparently lost about a third of its 90 planes, with Allied fighters, Allied anti-aircraft guns and German anti-aircraft guns taking approximately equal fractions – to maintain secrecy, German anti-aircraft units were not informed of the plan! The overall plan was audacious and could have severely slowed the Allied attack, but it appears that losses due to friendly fire and to the Allied anti-aircraft crews rendered the tactical victory into a strategic defeat. Mason even reports no less than six German aircraft lost to mid-air collisions with each other over the airfield at Eindhoven.

While Marchant mentioned Me 262 jets as part of this attack, Harry to my knowledge never said much about them. Given their novelty, this is an interesting omission, but clearly what is shooting at you is not very important relative to finding cover.



Figure 8.2: The Squadron at Helmond, in front of Nissan huts. Harry at right, second row from front.

Moving Towards the Surrender

Soon after, 247 Squadron moved quite a few times as the German defenses collapsed. They went forward into Germany, then back for a couple of days to Enschede, then once more forward into Germany.

In the next paragraph Harry relates a story of tragedy at a moment of liberation (or *bevrijding* in Dutch) at the Twente/Enschede airfield. In telling this he pointed out that the Typhoons had often been in action and may have been damaged. I recall him saying, in an unusually subdued voice, that he thought this the saddest day of the whole war. Marchant (p. 121) mentions two planes had troubles landing and came off the runway, but does not mention casualties. Possibly it was someone's responsibility to ensure the runway area was clear of people when takeoff and landing operations were in progress and "keep quiet about this" was the order of the day.

This airfield which we went to had been blown up by the Germans before they left and we rounded up Dutch people and paid them to fill the holes in so that planes could land; and, unfortunately, the people lined up to cheer the first planes to land and one skidded off the strip and landed amongst the people, killing two of them - a very unfortunate incident. We were only there a matter of a day or so and then we moved on back into Germany again and followed the advance quickly across Germany through the Reichfeld Forest and Celle south of Hamburg; and, the next stop was an airstrip south of Luneburg. We are now at the end of April, the beginning of May, and we moved on past Lubeck.

The endgame period of World War II was a confused and dangerous time. Harry described two incidents that underline this. Marchant (p. 122) says that on April 20 "one or two shots were fired into the airfield, but no threat of organized resistance was encountered." Whether this was the occasion where an armourer working on the next Typhoon to Harry was killed by sniper fire from the tower of a nearby church, I cannot verify. The airfield on April 20 was Langenhagen. Harry said friends of the dead man were very upset and went over to a Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun and told the crew "'op it and 'ave a cup of tea." They then lowered the barrel of the Bofors, which has a 4 or 6 round clip and can fire up to two rounds per second, each weighing about 900g (2 lbs.). They proceeded to destroy the church tower by using all the shells, and when two snipers came out of the church with hands up, the angry armourers emptied a Sten gun clip into them, then returned to arming their Typhoons, leaving the bodies of the snipers where they were. Harry says nobody was about to get in the way of the angry men or say anything. He mentioned he kept on with the arming of his airplane. Given the various

violations of both military regulations and the Geneva Convention, it is no surprise that Marchant has no official record to draw upon.

Langenhagen is now the airport for Hanover. The village had a camp where there were Russian and Italian prisoners. With the retreat of their guards, but a lack of food, these former prisoners attacked the local residents in search of food, loot, and possibly revenge. The RAF Regiment was sent to quell the violence when significant gunfire was heard on April 21. On April 24, when the Burgomeister came to thank the RAF for this, and was trying to cross the barbed wire perimeter, a nervous guard mistook his intentions and shot him in the leg. Harry's recounting of this story was almost identical to that in Marchant (p. 122).

About the same time, unexpected visitors could come from the air. On April 28, Marchant (p. 123) reports bad visibility stopping most flying, but an aircraft came in with the wind, so the controller – Harry says this was just a covered jeep or small truck – fired a red Verey flare. As the airplane went by on the runway, it was realized it was a FW 190 that was (hopefully) surrendering. Marchant says the pilot was escaping the Russians, and brought with him his dress uniform. Harry had a slight variant of this, in that he says the armourers' tents were at the end of the runway where the FW 190 came to a stop. The 'erks' were uninterested in the pilot, but his flying jacket, compass, pistol, etc. were of value. Apparently the dress uniform he brought with him as mentioned by Marchant was needed (it was no doubt inside the airplane) – Harry said they left the pilot to be found by the airfield security personnel in solitary splendour in just his underwear.

On a different occasion Harry acquired an extremely good water-bubble compass that was designed to be strapped to a pilot's knee. From a German administrative officer he "liberated" a Browning automatic pistol that he believed had never been fired. The compass was stolen from basement storage on 18a Street in Calgary, we believe by the children of the upstairs tenants at the time. The Browning Harry turned in during a gun amnesty in the early 1950s while we were in Southampton. Along with it he handed in a quite large OXO tin box of .303 rifle bullets found in the Anderson shelter of 168 Upper Deacon Rd that we – like many others at the time – used as a garden shed. The OXO box must have been an institutional supply issue, about 20 cm by 10cm by 6 cm. and made a good receptacle for bullets.

Then on May the 3rd, we were stopped and told not to go forward any-more. This is by the Lubeck Canal and the Allies or British were on one side of the canal and we had met up with the Russians on the other side of the canal. Lubeck is situated on the Baltic Sea and quite a few miles past the

River Elbe. We marked time for a few days that is until May the 8th, when the war stopped in Germany with the signing of the agreement between the Allies and the German generals at Luneburg.

Don Parks' experiences reflect the general confusion of this time at the end of the War. He was sent on a motorbike to deliver something or some message while his unit was in the region where Belgium, Holland and Germany come together. His motobike failed near the Dutch / German border. Don does not remember exactly where, but he could not get the bike restarted. A despatch rider came along (Don did not say if the rider was from his unit or not) and tried to help, but with no joy. However, he managed – I imagine with difficulty – to tow Don and his bike to a heavy AA (anti-aircraft) battery.

Don's papers indicate he was sometimes in a light AA unit, that is, with machine guns such as the Bren and possibly Bofors 40mm guns. Interestingly, the earlier "2 pounder" gun was also 40 mm caliber, often called a "pom-pom", but it required a heavier mount and was soon determined to be much less successful than the Bofors. A Heavy AA unit would likely have the QF 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns.

After leaving his motorbike with the AA unit, Don rode pillion with the despatch rider over very rough roads for a couple of days until they found his unit. Then he had to go back in a 15 cwt (hundredweight or 15 times 112 lbs capacity) truck but the AA unit was then gone along with the bike which was never recovered. Don said they had shoes in the truck and traded them for things, including clogs. Don actually used the word "klompen", which is the Dutch word for them. At times the truck had to go through fields and woods to get round bomb craters. Such was the state of Western Europe in 1945.

From Normandy until the end of his time in Germany, Don had a pet dog, which unfortunately he had to leave behind. He acquired it as a puppy soon after landing in France.

Occupiers and Citizens

We moved into German billets with really good quality accommodations on the airfield at Lubeck and spent the summer relaxing and playing lots of sports. Also, during this time, the squadron took over a nice lake cottage and it was some cottage in the sense that boats were stored underneath; and the boats included a power boat and sail boats, canoes and every few days we would go down there and spend the evening and do some sailing or swim and it was very relaxing after what we had been through.

The summer went very quickly in the sense that we were having a pretty

easy time and then at the end of July, we packed up and started to make a move and moved back to Belgium at Ostend where we boarded a ship and were shipping back to England with the purpose of regrouping and going on to the Japanese conflict. We were in sight of Dover on August the 7th when the Japanese gave up the war and everything was over. We landed in Dover and were quarantined in any army camp over night so our celebrations were done with NAAFI cups of tea.

Here the date is clearly wrong for the surrender (in fact, it was not signed until September 2), but not, of course, for the news of the first atomic bomb. The news of the bomb took the entire front page of the Daily Mirror of August 7, 1945 (Seymour and Seymour, p 82-83). The squadron officially was stationed at Chilbolton (near Andover, half way between Basingstoke and Salisbury) in Hampshire on 20 August, 1945. The 15th and 16th of August 1945



Figure 8.3: Don Parks on right, with the dog he had throughout his time in the European theatre. Unknown companion on the left. The puppy was supposed to be a "he", but ended up having eleven puppies by an officer's dog.



Figure 8.4: With local children at the Wing Rest Center in Timmendorf. Note that the children do not seem malnourished. Were they from families well-connected with the Nazi party?

(Wednesday and Thursday) were declared public holidays by the new Prime Minister, Clement Atlee. Whether Harry simply got the dates mixed up or the news of the atomic bomb led to an obvious conclusion we will not know.

Surprisingly, Harry does not write about the “khaki election” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election,_1945) though he did talk about it once or twice, even admitting he had voted Labour. I do not recall him mentioning voting while stationed in Lubeck, but almost certainly the servicemen would have voted at the time he was there. He did say everyone loved Churchill, but didn’t think he was the right person to get the country back on its feet. There had been no elections for 10 years, and the country was governed by a National Government involving all parties until after the surrender of the Germans. Almost all those serving would never have voted before. The result was a landslide for Labour, leading to many of the social reforms that have dominated political discourse ever since, in particular the National Health Service.



Figure 8.5: Bill Parkin, Harry Nash, Les Wilburn and Bob Cook with burnt out German aircraft, a rather rare Heinkel He219 from the engine fairing. On the back of the photo was 'destroyed ME 110'. Harry uncharacteristically mis-identified the wrecked aircraft.

Chapter 9

CONTEMPORARY WORDS

In the collection of written material he left, Harry included the transcriptions of two mimeographed documents that his Squadron or Wing had distributed to the men. In both content and form of expression, these reflect the attitudes of their time. And note that the people writing them are likely under 25. For information, 124 Wing was made up of Squadron numbers 137, 181, 182, and 247. Here's how Harry introduces these documents.

124 Wing News

In Normandy and on we received regular 124 Wing News Sheets. I kept a few of these but with age some were lost, others disintegrated. I do have a readable copy of News Sheet No. 79, September 29, 1944. A few excerpts from this sheet are as follows:

[Note: Marchant has the events reported in this newsletter as occurring on Sept 15, and in fact has no mention of the 29th. In the script, the abbreviation MET = MEchanized Transport.]

No. 124 WING SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS NO. 88 for PERIOD 23.59 HOURS.27.9.44 to 23.59 HOURS 28.9.44.

The day commenced with the usual air reconnaissance of the Emmerich-Cleve area and 181 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Vincent D.F.C found a train moving west loaded with tanks and guns; the loco was duly destroyed, as was the loco of the goods train moving south. The mission was rounded off by destroying 1 army truck.

The next mission was by 182 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Gray D.F.C. who continued the hunt for trains. Three locos and 4 [to] 500

trucks were found stationary east and north of Arnhem; these were duly attacked, one loco and many trucks being destroyed, and the large fires left burning led to the opinion that petrol and oil were being carried. 6 F.W.s [Focke Wolfes, enemy aircraft] were seen in the Nijmegen area but they turned away and disappeared.

137 Squadron led by Flight Lieutenant Short were next for the hunt but finding only stationary trains attacked 6 large storage sheds in a wood in the Greater Reich and very large explosions were seen.

181 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Vincent D.F.C. then return for the train loaded with tanks and guns, the loco of which they destroyed on their first mission; the train was duly destroyed with R.P.'s. [Rocket Projectiles]

The next target was for Army support on a concentration of German infantry in a wood North East of the airfield. [i.e., Eindhoven]

12 aircraft of 247 Squadron carried out the task and they were unfortunate to lose pilot Officer Lee (Australian), not due to enemy action but the tail of the aircraft was seen to break off.

We on the airfield at Eindhoven were close to this action and saw everything happen, even the rockets and cannons firing as well as the tragic mishap.

The armed reconnaissance [A/R] of the area Gelden-Cleve-Wessel was carried out by 182 Squadron led by F/Lt Strong. No movement was seen on the roads. A train of 20 coaches facing North-West was attacked and duly destroyed, aslo 10 coaches and a pile of stores were damaged.

12 A/C of 137 Squadron returned to the Army Target on the concentration of infantry N/W of the airfield and duly rippled the area indicated by red smoke with 85 R.P.'s. Another area target of 5 tanks was 181 Squadron's next task, although the target was not seen, it was indicated by red smoke and all rockets were fired into the area.

247 Squadron led by S/Ldr Stapleton D.F.C. on a A/R attached a fuel dump near Afferden, and black smoke was seen up to 3,000 ft. Scattered MET was destroyed to the tune of 2/0/3. [i.e., Scattered trucks – 2 destroyed, 3 damaged.]

An A/R by 182 Squadron led by S/Ldr Grey D.F.C. accounted for 1 loco and 20 trucks destroyed and 25 damaged.

137 Squadron on an armed reconnaissance were led by their new Commanding Officer Squadron Leader Brough D.F.C. No movements on road or rail were seen but unfortunately one burst of Flak destroyed 2 of our planes piloted by F/O Nicholls and F/O Guttridge. F/O Nicholls was seen to bail out and is believed to be safe.

181 Squadron on armed reconnaissance of the usual areas attacked a stationary goods train and 60 trucks at Kavelaer. Three large explosions resulted and 30 trucks were destroyed.

The last task of the day was an Army target of a concentration of infantry at Kranenberg, which was duly attacked and 2 large petrol fires started.

The days work was made up of 9 armed reconnaissance and 4 army support targets totalling 110 sorties.

The score was 5 trains destroyed with 1 damaged. 3 army trucks destroyed and 3 damaged.

Our losses

F/O Lee (AUS) 247 Squadron

F/O Nicholls 137 Squadron

F/O Guttridge 137 Squadron”

As a footnote to this story a few days later a seasoned armored Scottish Army Battalion with bagpipes wailing attacked the Germans situated on the edge of our airfield and captured over 1000 men.

In 1959, in Calgary, when I was recovering from having tonsils removed, we were at the local garage on 26 Avenue S.W., about two blocks from Holy Name School. The mechanic who owned the garage was clearly German and he recognized my father's accent as English and they got to talking, eventually to asking about each other's wartime experiences. It turned out the mechanic was one of the 1000 men. He and Harry got on well, possibly because and not in spite of their shared experiences.

The day after this a “Dignitary” person landed on our airfield and we were instructed to go to a nearby road and cheer as this person drove by in an open Jeep.

It was King George VI.

According to Marchant (p. 98) this was actually nearly two weeks later on October 11, 1944, and the King was with Montgomery. Whether at this time or another, one of Harry's fellow “erks” approached Montgomery and saluted,

saying "Permission to take your photograph, sir". This was granted. The "photographer" later got several months detention for trying to sell 300,000 postcards of Montgomery in Belgium. In this, I believe the authorities made a big mistake. The fellow should have been given a medal, and the proceeds of his venture passed to a charity for widows of servicemen or such like. It would have made great propaganda. Harry's opinion of Montgomery, by the way, was not repeatable in polite company.

Operation Overlord

As I wrote previously one of our pilot officers periodically wrote a two page newsletter depicting the activities of 124 Wing and 247 Squadron. Herewith is his last newsletter written in May 1945 at the end of the war with Germany. At this time we were recuperating and relaxing at Lubeck Airfield, east of River Elbe and near the Baltic Sea.

OPERATION "OVERLORD"

NO. 247 (CHINA-BRITISH) SQUADRON, 124 WING.

NORMANDY

Looking back over the past historic months to the early part of last summer when we began our fight to dislodge the enemy from his dominating position athwart the continent of Europe, one cannot resist the temptation, now that our task has been accomplished, of saying, "We put up a good show." We have done a good deal of which we ought rightly to be proud, since that first great day in June last year when the wing took up its station upon the continent at St. Croix, between Bayeux and Caen in Normandy.

For two months, suffering the combined hardships of shelling by day, bombing by night, lack of water and incredible dust which made life almost unbearable, support of our ground forces was maintained at a tremendous pitch, with devastating attacks upon enemy strongpoint, headquarters, tanks and motor vehicles.

These attacks precipitated the commencement of the great route on August 17 1944 which we proudly entered in our Authorization Book as "The Great Slaughter" of the Falaise Gap.

We shall never forget those three great days which left the roads of Normandy ablaze from end to end with wrecked enemy transport; grim testimony to the lethal power of the rocket firing Typhoons.

BELGIUM

In order to maintain contact with the army, which rapidly advanced across France across the River Seine, forging ahead without opposition, we moved to Danville, thence to Amiens and finally to Brussels.

The gaiety of that fair city, and the sincere welcome given by its liberated citizens seemed to us like paradise to a much tormented soul. Our stay was of an all too short duration.

HOLLAND

30 Corps, in co-operation with the Airborne Divisions, commenced their great operation "Market Garden", designed to force a crossing of the Rhine and capture a bridge head at Arnhem.

In its final objective it failed, due to a combination of various unforeseen factors, including bad weather, but it showed, if any showing was necessary, what magnificent courage and devotion to duty belonged to those selfless heroes, who are known simply as "The Men of Arnhem".

We played our part in the battles, moving up to Eindhoven during the course of it, after having carried out an "op" with our gun bays stuffed with bedding and personal toilet kit.

From then on we carried out more and more reconnaissance as, one by one, this last strong hold of the "hun" east of the river Maas was overrun by our troops.

During the late autumn and early winter our morale began to decline somewhat, an inevitable result of the combined effects of filthy weather, increasing opposition and heavy losses in men and aircraft; with lack of replacements imposing a heavy strain on our nerves. Nevertheless, our work remained of a high standard, and day by day, our scores of locomotives increased as we forged deeper and deeper into Hitler's "impregnable fortress".

Christmas 1944 brought with it a wonderful spell of fine weather, and a breakthrough by Runstedt (Germany) in the Ardennes, both of these factors gave a burst to our spirits, and we surged into battle with all the ferocity we could muster, often against phenomenally heavy flak opposition; until the tide was turned, and stability restored to the lines.

We lost 6 of 17 pilots lost from 124 Wing which included four Squadrons; 137, 181, 182 and ourselves, 247; all in that short month.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, when one considers the nature of the British temperament, the visit from the Luftwaffe on January 1st, 1945, though of a frightful and devastating character, raised our morale to its highest point, from which it has never faltered.

None of us will ever forget those twenty three and a half agonizing minutes when all hell was let loose over the drome. When it was over, the place was hardly recognizable beneath its heavy pall of oil black smoke rising from the shambles of burning aircraft littering the dispersals.

We suffered heavily from this thrashing by the Luftwaffe, which like a shot of Benzedrine to a tired man, imbued us with a new fighting spirit, from which the “hun” suffered a hundred fold in the ensuing weeks.

Soon after this attack we moved to Helmond, and blessed with a spell of cold, clear weather, instituted the short range armed Reccos, which became known as the “Munster Milk Run”, from the results of which, the enemy’s railway facilitation was never able to recover.

Coinciding with the big operation designed to clear the enemy from the whole area west of the river Rhine, came our fortnight’s rocket firing course at Warmwell in Dorset, England. It was great fun and a welcome rest, and at the same time, improved our rocket firing beyond all measure; as the “Boche” was very soon to find out.

Returning to the continent, there followed one or two weeks of comparative inactivity prior to the commencement of the great ventures towards the successful accomplishment of which, all our efforts since “D” Day had been directed – the crossing of the river Rhine.

GERMANY

How we contested with the enemy for the control of the Little Bridgehead is no longer news, nor how the army advanced so quickly that we were forced to use two overload tanks to reach the bomb line for army support work. One by one each stronghold was blasted into oblivion by our rockets, until the “hun’s” withdrawal was turned into a hopeless rout. We began to move our airfield forward – Enschede (Holland), back into Germany to Rheine – Hanover – Luneberg and finally Lubeck; all in a matter of one or two weeks.

The collapse of the enemy was in sight. Roads crammed with unprotected transport fleeing to Denmark were mercilessly subjected to a holocaust

of fire with ships pulling out of Kiel also coming under the withering blasts and were left in their dozens, sunk or burning fiercely.

Then came the end. Germany sued for peace and agreed to total unconditional surrender of all her forces to the three powers, Britain, the USA and Russia.

OUR JOB WAS DONE.

This is no longer news, but it will be history. When the record of this war is written, this campaign, and the part we of 247 (China British) Squadron played in it, will stand out supreme to take the rightful place among many fine names which grace the pages of British and Dominion history.

When this story is written, let not the writer forget to mention the wonderful work of ground crews and all ground personnel, without whose painstaking and whole hearted work, this epic of military history would not have been possible.

This great victory has cost us much more than the suffering of personal hardship more than the separation from our families at home. More than all this it has cost us the loss of many fine friends. There can be only one compensation.

Let us in later years be able to say quite sincerely:

“IT WAS NOT ALL IN VAIN”



Figure 9.1: Celebrating victory at the 'Malcolm Club', Harry Nash at extreme L sitting.

Chapter 10

LUCK AND FORTUNE

Harry states below that he has a lucky number. The rest of the family know better – he always had good luck. While his associations with the number 13 are positive (as are mine), he managed to be in many places at the right time. This chapter spans several periods that are described elsewhere, but the importance of luck and gambling in Harry’s life make it sensible to gather together stories about them.

Protective measures

I am not by nature a superstitious person, but I do have a lucky number.

In June 1943 I was stationed with an R.A.F. Coastal Command Squadron located at Templeton, Pembrokeshire, Wales. Pembrokeshire was as far west as one could go in Wales and was known as “Little England beyond Wales”.



Figure 10.1: Les Willburn and Harry Nash with armed Typhoon. Likely 1945, since propeller has four blades.

Templeton was a very isolated airfield and also “enjoyed” over 70 inches of rain each year. In the five years I was with the R.A.F. it was the only place where we were issued with a bicycle each and for rainwear a calf length mackintosh black raincoat together with rain hat and Wellington boots.

Clothing was rationed in Britain, as was food, and a person needed allocated coupons to make a purchase. Because of this, most of the issued rainwear was stolen and re-sold on the “black market”. We were re-issued with rain clothing but this time we each had to pay. This did not go down too well, given our meagre R.A.F. pay.

My best friend, Les Wilburn, had an idea and he carefully painted a white 10 inch circle on the back of his black coat, between the shoulders, and in the centre of the circle a large white “13”. To be a little different I did the same only with the number “31”. We at least did not have our clothing stolen.

Triskadecaphobia

In early June 1944, as we were all preparing for the invasion of Europe, our squadrons were all secured behind barbed wire, with no one allowed out of camp. Our squadron, No. 247 China British, had like the other 3 squadrons with 124 Wing our maintenance staff divided in half.

The first half loaded equipment and supplies onto 3 ton trucks and took off towards the coast to get ready once the invasion started to travel on landing craft to Europe. After June 6th we knew the destination was Normandy. The second half, which included Les Wilburn and me, stayed behind to service our aircraft so that operations could continue uninterrupted.

When the time arrived, we were to fly into Normandy in DC3s. There were 18 planes for the Wing’s four squadrons and lists were posted with Les on No.2 and myself on No. 13.

Soon after, I was approached by a fellow armourer, “Moggy” Morgan. I never did get to know his proper christian name. He was very upset because he was also on Plane No.13 and felt his luck had run out. I said that if others did not mind I thought Les Wilburn would change with him. His eyes lit up and he was elated when this switch was agreed upon.

We took off in numerical order with a squadron leader flying our plane. We flew low across the channel below low cloud cover and when we reached the airstrip between Bayeux and Caen and only 3000 yards from the German front line the Germans began shelling the airfield.

I should mention that we flew with the door open which did nothing to enhance our nervous systems. Because of the shelling our pilot ignored the



Figure 10.2: Grave of Moggy Morgan.

numerical order of landing and he saw a gap and we were No.2 to land. He taxied to a designated spot, we hurriedly piled out and they immediately loaded a number of wounded troops and then turned around and took off, all in a matter of a few minutes.

By May 1945 we, being an army support squadron, had advanced from Normandy, through France, into Belgium then Holland followed by Germany back into Holland (2 days) then Germany again. We then crossed the river Elbe and reached the Lubeck Canal. It was here that “Moggy” Morgan was killed just 5 days before the war ended. In a collection of photos I have in my tattered war photo album there is a picture of his grave.

Marchant (p. 126) has an interesting note about accidents in the period **after** hostilities ended. Harry recounted the story of the looted gun a number of times, and I always recall he said that this accident occurred after the war ended, which he implied was the worst aspect of the event. The word “before” in the previous paragraph may have been a mental slip as he was recording it.

Low flying exercises were stopped after a spate of mishaps. But not all accidents were in the air: LAC Morgans, one of the armourers, died after accidentally shooting himself while placing a loaded revolver in his blouse.

A close look at the photo shows that the name is ‘Morgan’, not ‘Morgans’. It records him as a member of the 6247 Service Echelon – there had been a number of administrative reorganizations where ground crew were shared

across squadrons, then put back with them after it was discovered there was a strong connection between pilots, airplanes and crew and morale suffered. The date of death, somewhat difficult to read, is 13 May 1945.

The years passed and in 1973 I formed a wonderful partnership with Heinz Oldach and this has been very successful. To my surprise Heinz was born on January 13 and in all our advertising with Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd whenever we used any bingo cards in the Ads i.e. on vans, etc., we always made sure the card had a "B 13".

Cigarettes

Not all Harry's luck is associated with the number 13.

There was a fellow who was a very good friend of mine. And his name was Henry Jones. But they called him Spike because there was a band "Spike Jones" [who] used to play on saucepan lids. Quite a well known band. Scrubbing boards and all this. So they called this fellow Spike. He was a wholesale fishmonger before ... Just a little fellow.

Morale was bad, so he got leave to go to England. And he went to Hull. And he said "You want any cigarettes then?" You could send a 1000 cigarettes, see. So he sent me a 1000 Players. And a 1000 for himself. This was to use as currency. You could get them duty free. 1000 cigarettes!

We get into Enschede and it was terrible there. We were only there one night. The Germans — There were bombs [booby traps] ready to go off in the buildings, so you didn't dare go in any. All messed up. They were ready to go up. And they'd blown some up. So it wasn't very good. And you didn't know where — who was who. You didn't know if people in civilian clothes were snipers ...

So would you believe, we're only there two days and one night, and as we're leaving, a Dakota comes in to pick up wounded, and it brings mail. All these mail bags. And the first thing, literally, when they opened the bags was my 1000 cigarettes. And Spike had been saying "We'd better get those cigarettes before we get into Germany, because we won't be able to do any currency work there."

And he said "I've never seen anyone so lucky in all my life. I'll bet mine aren't on this."

True enough, I got my 1000 and I sold them within 10 minutes. For a lot of money. And he never got his. He was so mad, and everyone else, our friends, laughed like hell because I was lucky and he wasn't.

Rations and comforts

But that Bill Parkin, from Orpington, Kent. He was a Mum's boy. He didn't like getting his hands dirty. And when we were going all the way through, his job was to drive truck and he wore gloves all the time. And we didn't make him put the tent up or anything. But he had to make sure he stole a battery now and again to keep lights on in our tent. And he had to make sure he was driving a truck – there were four kinds of rations – one would be stew and rice. But there was four kinds of rations. For when we moved. And for emergencies. He used to have to make sure he was there first, to make sure his truck was loaded was the one with meat pudding and peaches for dessert.

And what used to happen like from Eindhoven to Helmond. They made sure that when he went to the can somewhere, somebody would rob those off, and we'd have them when we were hungry. They were in cans. So we made sure – we didn't move very often – he had to have those rations, and we had another crew made sure he was told to go to the bathroom. You know, go in the bushes. And they made sure they were off there and onto another truck. And then they'd turn up a few days later in our tent. You have to laugh.

My wife Mary asked Harry if any cigarettes were actually smoked.

Yes I used to smoke. To keep awake. We used to get a ration of cigarettes every week. And I used to smoke mine to keep awake. Because when I was on time off I used to play cards. Work all day, then go on guard all night.

And soap was a good bargain [item]. Soap and cigarettes.

We asked about chocolate bars.

Well, you didn't get many chocolate bars. Used to eat those to keep going sometimes.

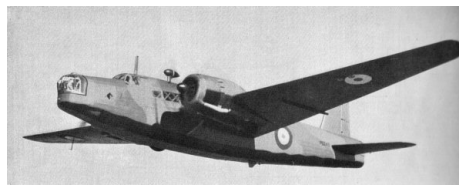
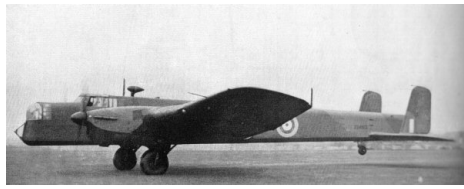
It was funny. When we all landed in Normandy you see, scared as hell. The first thing Wing Commander Cunningham got up and he said "You're the honoured ones, going in first" Someone said "That's a bloody honour, to be first!"

Cunningham said "You're not going over there to dig trenches. You're going to be above ground". And the first thing we did is dig holes. And the next thing we did. We had these emergency rations sewn into the seam of your jacket. Well, when you get nervous, you get hungry, so the next thing gone, in the first 24 hours, was the emergency rations.

These were reinforced chocolate.

Bookmaking

When I volunteered and enlisted in The Royal Air Force (British) the pay was approximately seventy cents per day but you must remember they fed us, provided uniforms, slept us and gave us bus or train passes four times a year when going on leave. Over the course of the five years I served, this pay, including trade and danger pay when in Europe rose to \$1.25 so that during my total service my average pay was \$1.00 per day. This was one quarter of the amount Canadians got and one sixth of the Americans pay for doing similar jobs. The Service and Release book shows Harry's pay. He joined on 22 July 1941. His daily pay increased from 6/- to 6/3 on 23 July 1944, to 7/3 on 3 Sept 1944, to 7/9 on 22 July 1945 and to 8/3 on Aug 1, 1945. This latter sum was made up of "Consolidated Pay" of 6/6, "W.S.I." of 1/6 and "G.C.B.Pay" of -/3 i.e. 3d.



(a) An Armstrong-Whitworth Whitley

(b) Vickers Wellington "Flying Cigar"

There was lots of boredom at times so there was lots of gambling with cards and sometimes dice. Our Squadron of Coastal Command aircraft was stationed first in Lincolnshire with a mixture of Wellingtons and Whitleys, then we were all moved to Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire (Little England beyond Wales, as far west as one could go in Wales).

There were twenty-four armourers on the squadron serving guns, bombs and depth charges. One day the Staff Sergeant said he needed two volunteers to go to Templeton, an isolated airfield twenty-five miles away. No one volunteered and my best friend, Les Wilburn, said he knew (he was guessing) who the two would be. He said that it would be himself and I and I asked the reason for his thinking. He said that when the Staff Sergeant played cards (not often) we were the ones who won his money.

We were flown into Templeton and felt very dejected when we saw the place because it was three miles to the village pub and five miles from the small town of Narbeth. We settled down doing our work and on the first evening off walked the three miles to the Templeton pub, only to find it closed being "sold out" of beer. This did not improve our feelings.

To make things easier we were issued with bicycles and this improved things tremendously. I personally used to cycle and buy several newspapers daily

which the fellows used to help pay for. They were one penny each and all featured in detail horse racing even though because of war they only raced three times per week. The group was in the habit of making bets and I would cycle the five very hilly miles into Narbeth to place the bets with the local bookmaker.

This went on for at least six occasions and the scenario was nearly always the same. I would deliver \$30 in bets and pick up the winnings, usually about half that, or \$15.

Harry has converted all monies to dollars, but not provided the conversion factor. Using what he says his pay was and using the amounts in his Service and Release Book, we estimate he used \$2 to \$4 per Pound Sterling at different times in his stories.

One day it was pouring with rain. One must remember that Pembrokeshire has annual rainfall of seventy inches and I had five miles to cycle and be in Narbeth before one o'clock, the time of the first race. I arrived soaked and out of breath, placed the bets and picked up the meagre winnings. I said to the bookmaker that he should be paying me a commission; he immediately stated that he could not afford to do so.

On the very wet five mile return journey I kept wondering why he could not afford a commission. On my return to our Nissan Hut (it slept twelve) I related my experience to Les Wilburn and said "Why don't we go into business together?"

This we did in the spring of 1943 and we both put in ten dollars. [£5?] We put the money in a detonator can. The detonators were used to fuse bombs before loading onto aircraft. The can is five inches in diameter and about the same depth. We put the can in my canvas kitbag and every time I came into the Nissan Hut I eyed the kitbag and when no one was around would feel the can stuffed amongst my clothes.

It was at this time we thought it wise to get a combination lock for my kitbag. We cycled to the hardware store in Narbeth and purchased a lock using letters as the code. We had to choose a four letter word and Les chose "goal" since he had played in goal semi-professionally for Portvale in the English Football League.

Business went smoothly for a few weeks and then when I entered the Nissan Hut one day I found my canvas kitbag had been slashed with a knife. My heart was in my mouth as I thrust my hand in between my clothes only to find the can intact with nothing missing. With a sigh of relief I relaxed on my bed and sometime later Les arrived. I told him what I had found and he replied he had needed to make a transaction and "could not remember the code"!!

Any monies we accumulated we split and sent home to our local bank.

A second innings

In the early part of 1944 six of us, including Les and I were transferred to another unit, 247 China British Squadron of Typhoons, stationed in Sussex of Southeast England. Because of the change we disbanded our business venture having done very well in a penny-ante type of way.

The six of us did not know any others on the new Squadron but were told many were ex-convicts. This concerned us very much at first but during the one and three quarter years I was with the Squadron I never lost a thing.

Harry once told me about 30 of the 120 to 130 men on the Squadron were ex-cons.

After we had been on the new Squadron for about a month someone I did not know came to me and said "do you take bets on horses". This being illegal I straight away said "No". He said someone is lying because one of the colleagues you came with said that Les and you handled bets. I said I would talk to Les, the result being we started up again.

It was getting nearer to something big in the War so we sent any surplus money home.

Then disaster hit, as on one day Les and I each lost 13 weeks pay. We used the whole lunch to work out the losses in detail and went before this pretty tough mob to tell them we did not have the money to payout but we did have a plan. Firstly, we would pay immediately all the small winners which satisfied the majority; secondly, we would pay half to the several medium winners and thirdly, nothing at present to the two big winners. We would also on each payday, which was every fourteen days, hold back two dollars each for Les and I, and the remainder would [be used to] pay off [the debt] gradually each payday. This, to our surprise, was accepted by all, but to make matters worse I had a Rocket Head (Sixty Pounds) dropped accidentally on my right hand smashing the tip of my middle finger. Because of the dirt and grime and open wound together with broken bone, this – after x-rays in a truck – put me in hospital in a large tent.

There was a card game going in the hospital tent and since I had to stay in bed to start with they moved the game to my bed. Unfortunately I lost my only two dollars fairly quickly and was out of the game.

The next morning the Red Cross distributed cigarettes and chocolate bars. I sold mine and got back into the card game. During my two weeks in hospital I made \$25 and had just as many debts which I never collected.

Being discharged from hospital I hitch hiked back to 247 Squadron. On meeting up with Les, even though he had had a payday, he wanted to wait for

my return before reducing our debts. We immediately picked up my pay and with the \$25 winnings plus \$8 he had won we met up with our creditors and were they pleased.

Then came D Day and we closed business again but soon settled everything. While in Europe we continued to take bets but only on the very big races that were broadcast.

Third round

When the war was over with both Germany and Japan we were back in England waiting for demob. We had lots of time on our hands and business was good. In fact Spike Jones, a colleague, suggested we take him on as a partner, and if so he could get the bets from two more squadrons. This we did, and we did very well, with myself doing all the calculating and pencil work.

When it came time for demob, they suggested we three go into business working the race tracks. My reply was it was difficult for me to do so, since I had lost both my parents during the war and I had a sister younger than me (I was 23), and a family business to look after.

“Spike Jones” went back to Hull in Yorkshire where he was a wholesale fishmonger and Les went back to Doulton China Company where he was Head Paymaster. He was located in the Midlands but only stayed with Doulton one more year before becoming a bookmaker in his own business.

During the five years I was in the services I came out with my entire salary of \$1,900.00 intact plus my \$350.00 gratuity. In addition I also enjoyed life when times permitted.

For comparison, <http://www.29thdivision.com/research/payscale.html> gives the lowest US Private a monthly pay of \$50.



Figure 10.3: Harry's war and related medals displayed at his memorial service, February 25, 2009. These are the 'Thank You Canada' medal to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands, the France and Germany Star for service from June 1944 to May 1945 in Europe, the War Medal awarded to all service personnel who served more than 28 days, and the Defence Medal for personnel in threatened areas. Oddly, Harry received the 'Thank You Canada' rather than 'Thank You Liberators' medal, though he was part of the RAF in Holland.



Figure 10.4: Peggy and Harry, likely at Hastings or similar in 1946 before they married. Note the shattered windows behind and the clothes – Harry’s suit is probably the one given to him on demobilization. Peggy would call what she is wearing a ‘costume’ and is seen in it in a number of photos because clothing required coupons. Note how thin she is, and in some photos the injuries near her left eye are still slightly visible.

Chapter 11

WAITING TO BE DEMOBBED

From Dover we went on to Warmwell in Dorset and there everything was disarmed and all the dangerous things – guns, bombs, and rockets – were all put to bed and then we were just given different jobs to do to keep us busy [while] awaiting discharge from the armed forces. The system the government had for discharge was that you added your age and put the number of months you had served in the services. In my case, I was 23 and I added four years and seven months, which is 55. So, I had a total of 78. This number seems quite big but you must remember that a big percentage of the troops were older than me, so with this system there was quite a wait until our numbers were called for us to get demobbed. In late January [1946], my number came up and in the first week of February I went to Bedford in Hertfordshire to get my discharge papers and also an issue of a suit and odds and ends that they gave everybody as they departed.

Service and Those Who Served

After Harry died, we found his Service and Release Book. This has a Certificate of Service and Release dated Jan 7 1946, an Income Tax form Jan 8, 1946, a Post Office deposit on Feb 8, 1946, and a (torn) form suggesting that he was “Equitable F. Soc.” member no. 48 signed by Harry and dated Mar 28, 1946. Marchant (p. 150) also lists the Squadron location as Chilbolton, Hampshire from 20 August, 1945, to 7 January, 1946, when they were “detached” to Fairwood Common Armament Practice Camp in Glamorgan, Wales and did not return until 16 February. In any event, January, 1946, was the 55th month in which he served. There is a Remobilization Form in the book that

states he will be paid 5s. on production of his identity card if there is a public proclamation of remobilisation. This is dated 11 January 1946 at RAF Chilbolton, presumably by someone other than his (now departed) squadron leader. From the Release Authorization (see the figure nearby) he appears to have left Cardington (near Bedford), which was the Dispersal Centre, on 14 January, and has 13 days leave, during which he is permitted to start work. He notes elsewhere that he will be operating his own business, so leaves blank the name of his employer.

As mentioned, there is a partial page with a form where he lists the “Equitable F. Soc” (<http://www.friendlysocieties.co.uk/history.htm>), which appears to be a form of health insurance, which is consistent with the fact that Harry’s discharge predates the National Health Service, which was launched on 5 July 1948 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/nhs/>). It also appears to be local to the Tunbridge Wells area. The organization still exists, now dealing in savings and mortgages.

ROYAL AIR FORCE
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE AND RELEASE

R.A.F. Form 2520/11

SERVICE PARTICULARS

Service Number } 1394014 Rank LAC

Air Crew Category and/or R.A.F. trade ARMOURER GEN.

Air Crew Badges awarded (if any) 13 MONTHS

Overseas Service France/Germany 27 DAYS

R.A.F. Character V.G. (see notes on back of certificate on opposite page)

Proficiency A Satisfactory (" ")
B (" ")

Decorations, Medals, Clasp, Mention in Despatches, Commendations, etc.

Educational and Vocational Training Courses and Results

DESCRIPTION

Date of Birth 27/4/1922 Height 5' 4 1/2"

Marks and Scars NIL.

Spotsman Signature of Airman H. Nash

Signature of Officer Commanding C. H. Taylor
7/1/46
SQUADRON LEADER

This airman has always had a very good character & has been a good worker, proficient in his trade, & keen

If also in not now in employment, give the name and address of last employer (for last employer's use only)

Figure 11.1: Discharge certificate from Service and Release Book

It is possible that Harry and other armourers did go to Warmwell to disarm munitions even if the formal home of the Squadron was elsewhere. Also that with his pending discharge, he would not go to Fairwood Common, but be an “odd bod” for a while. Furthermore, with many servicemen being released, including those doing the records, and in the general euphoria and confusion of the War’s ending, there are certain to be some inconsistencies. There is no doubt that the men themselves did nothing to improve order.

R.A.F. Form 2520/25

RELEASE AUTHORISATION

PART I
To be completed in Unit except when marked**.

Rank LAC Number 1394014
Initials H. Surname NASH.
(Block Letters)

Release of the above-named airman is hereby authorised as a Class C release, and he is relegated to Class 5.3 of the Reserve.
The effective date of release (i.e. last day of service) is 27 Jan 46.

To be completed at the Dispersal Centre

It is hereby certified that the above airman served in the R.A.F. on whole-time service during the following periods:
From 22/7/41 To 14 Jan 46
(Date of departure from Dispersal Centre)

He is granted 13 days' leave on release commencing the day following the date of departure from the Dispersal Centre

R.A.F. Form 2520/25 (continued)

RELEASE AUTHORISATION

(continued)
PART II
Instructions to Class B releases to report for Employment
You have been released to take up employment

as a
(Industry Group Letters;
Occupational Classification Number.....)
and are to report within seven days from your departure from this Dispersal Centre to the following Employment Exchange

Delete one of these OR with Messrs. of whom you are to report within seven days from your departure from this Dispersal Centre.

You will ordinarily be required to commence work on the expiration of your leave, but you may if you desire commence at any earlier time.

PART III
Date 14 JAN 1946
for A.O. if Records - S.E.76
Dispersal Centre Stamp.

Figure 11.2: Release Authorization – Harry was paid for 13 days leave.

I asked Harry "Who was the squadron leader?" [Note that Marchant lists them all.]

Don't remember, but we lost several.

They had one squadron leader who was 23. We'd had a day down [when the squadron was not on call for operations] and everybody got drunk. Forget where it was. Wrecked things. And then he had a meeting and said the trouble was that this squadron was the best there ever was. Whatever they did was the best. Including when they got drunk and wrecked things.

What scared me was, we knew a lot had been released from prison to join us. And before, I'd lost a lot of stuff. Cigarette lighters, little things. Wallets. Not money, because I slept on my money. Lost a lot of personal things. Then we get this rough lot come to join us, 30 odd of them.

We're still in England. And I said to Les, "We thought we lost a lot before. Wait till we see this lot".

And I never lost another thing!

See the squadron used to stand down at a minutes notice. And if things were quiet in England, they'd say, "Ok. 182 Squadron on standby", just in case a raid comes up. And the other squadrons have the night off.

So we only knew this ... this is 5 o'clock. Then we dash, and we all get

ready and dash downtown to the pubs. And there's 2 or 3 fellows, they shower, shave, dress up, then they'd put one glove and a bicycle chain in their pocket. You knew that bicycle chain was going to be in someone's eye if there was a fight. That's how some of them were.

We had, total, 147 men in the squadron. And when we came back after the War from ... It was August 1945 ... we went down into Dorset again. And they drew for leave. 9/10ths went on leave right away. And the other 10th had to stay just to watch over the aircraft and that. And they gave them 2 days extra for that. They asked for volunteers to start with, then they drew. But I think they got enough volunteers.

Domestic duties

So when we came back, we're on this squadron. Now don't forget, this is a regular English aerodrome with office staffs and everything. MPs and everything. So I said to Les, "I think it's time we did some washing."

In the field you [also] had to do washing. So what you did, you had a garbage can, just an ordinary garbage can, you would make a hole in the ground and put a lot of sand in it and get some bricks and fill the garbage can with water, then get some gasoline and soak all the sand, and then put a match to it. To boil the water.

Marchant describes the same sort of laundry efforts.

So we went over to these offices, nearby. And so I knocked on the door and went in and there was this WAAF woman [W A A F = Women's Auxiliary Air Force] And I said "I wonder if we could have a few buckets of water, we're going to do some laundry".

So she said "Sure" [Was this the idiom of the time?] "Help yourself"

So I went outside and I filled a couple of buckets and took them over and put them in the thing [[garbage can]] and I came back over for another couple and she was standing there. And she said to me "You're not so bad as I thought you'd be".

I said "What do you mean?"

She said "Our women's officer told us that you were like a lot of animals and we had to beware of you".

I asked Harry which airfield this was.

I don't know where it was. Not all that far from Weymouth.

That would be Warmwell; Chilbolton in Hampshire is near Winchester.

But Les, when we came back, Les said to me, “You know, we’re going to get some dirty jobs if we’re not careful because there’s no more guns to be looked after. No more rockets or bombs to look after. We should try to get a job where we get lots of time off.”

So he came back and he said “I’ve got a job for us – 3 of us – myself, you and Bill Parkin.” And we were “washers up”, dish washers, in the Sergeant’s mess. He said, “I think though they said they need three, I think we can work it so one does it and the other two can be off somewhere, to the races or something.” And Bill had a car, but he couldn’t get gas [petrol] to put in it, you see.

So what Bill did, ... [On the tape there is a suggestion that aviation gas would work well.] But when you went through the barrier, they stopped you and took a sample of your gas. And the RAF gas was a different colour. Out of trucks we used to siphon it. So to get us on side, what we used to do – suck on a tube. And it used to seem to make a hell of a noise in the night into an empty can. And we kept Bill in fuel so he could go home.

While there was no explanation on the tape of how Bill avoided the coloured fuel inspection, I recall elsewhere that he used some method of using his rationed fuel when he was likely to get an inspection.

But in this cookhouse we worked. Then if we wanted to go to the races – there wasn’t all that much racing, but we could go to Windsor or to Salisbury. They were the main ones. So then in the cookhouse they had these great big fat cooks, these WAAFs, terrible. They’d say to us “You’re such nice fellows. But you’re not interested in girls.”

Ooohh. We couldn’t afford to be interested in girls because we were taking bets on horses, going to the races, and they couldn’t understand it.

For breakfast they would cook us two eggs – when you’re lucky to get an egg, to get two – it was funny.

Leave and Leaving

That good life didn’t carry on long enough. That was in August. I had leave until the end of August. And then it was September, October, November. Three months. And then Les got demobbed. ’Cause he had a higher number than me. What they did, they took every month of service – 60 – and added it to your age. 60 plus 23 is 83.

So I went up to – I got a weekend off and I hitch-hiked to Stoke. To see Les. He was married. And Joan. And would you believe it, his wife was secretary at a dog track. In Port Vale. So we’re there, and he says to Joan, “You tell that

manager of yours that I've got a friend here for the weekend, and he wants to earn enough betting to pay for his weekend. And would he please tell us which dog is the fittest." And he says "If you don't get us an answer, we're going to go to Bursely to see the races, and not Port Vale." So she told us [the name of] a dog – No 6 it was – that was the fittest. It was in about the fourth or fifth race. But they were short of dogs. And instead of starting in a row they handicapped them. One got 20 yards start, one got 14, one got 10, and the other three had to start level. The dog we've got has 20 yards start. So he didn't have any dogs in front of him to start with to bump into. And I'm sure he won by 20 [yards], the length that he started with. So that did pay – it was favourite – but it did pay for my [weekend] ...

So Les was there, and I had to wait 'til January, when the squadron got transferred to Wales. But just before, it must have been a week before Les was demobbed, in late November, there was a burglary. The officers' mess got broken into and all the booze [taken] and the Sergeants' mess got broken into and all the booze taken, as did the Rifle Club, of which I was a member, got broken into. And their booze got all stolen. So Les said to me – well we knew it had to be somebody amongst our friends who did it. Les said to me "Who do you think did it?" I said "I've just been trying to think it out who did it". Watching to see who's spending a lot of money and that didn't happen. So I said to Les "I think it's this Maxie Sales" the Sergeant. And he said "How can it be him? He's on leave." I said "I bet he's come back and did it." From London.

He [[Les]] said "I think you're right."

Anyway, Les got demobbed. I went up to see Les. And then in January the squadron moved to Wales. And they told me to stay on with one or two others who were going to be demobbed, not to go to Wales then all the way back to England to be demobbed. So they went without me – left me behind. Said goodbye to a lot of them. And I said to Maxie "Well Maxie", It was real good knowing you. And I wish you all the best in civilian life. What are you going to do?"

He said "I'm going to live by my wits."

I said "Do you think they'll have any burglaries in the officers' mess down there?"

And he said "You never know, do you?" So I'm sure he did it.

Christmas 1945

Harry doesn't mention Christmas 1945, but Don Parks provided a very nice account of this time over a pleasant Sunday lunch in the Weavers in South-

borough on May 2, 2010. I was telling Don about a visit a couple of days earlier to Pembury, where I had a useful conversation with Kathryn Franklin of the Pembury Historical Committee, after which we walked round the Lower Green Burial Ground. I had then walked past the Royal Oak and up Henwood Green Road to get to the Stores, had a drink in the newly re-opened King William pub next door, then walked to Tunbridge Wells via the footpath to Hawkenbury.

Don quickly picked up on the mention of the Royal Oak. He said “Your Dad and I went in there about noon on December 20, 1945, and each had a Whiskey Mack”. This is whiskey (in the UK always Scotch) with ginger wine or possibly ginger beer, but not ginger ale. The reason was that this was the wedding day of Don and Betty (Moss). Don had returned for Christmas leave on December 19 and gone to the Blue Boys to see Betty. They had talked earlier of getting married on Don’s next leave. When he saw Betty she said “We’re getting married tomorrow”. He asked “What am I going to wear for a suit?” She said, “Your uniform”.

What about a ring? She had it. License. Same. Best Man – “Better get



Figure 11.3: Wedding photo for Don Parks and Betty Moss, December 20, 1945. Harry Nash, Dolly Moss, Don Parks, Betty Parks (Moss), Peggy Moss, George Sylvester Moss, Ella Moss.

hold of Harry.” So December 20 near lunchtime they went in the Royal Oak for a drink before catching the bus to Tunbridge Wells. The wedding was in St Augustine’s Catholic Church, now replaced by a large Tesco Supermarket, after which they walked down the Camden Road to have pictures taken at Strickles, if I correctly transcribed this name. The reception, or “Do” in informal parlance, was held at the Blue Boys, after which someone drove the newlyweds to the Tunbridge Wells West Station (now the site of a Sainsbury supermarket, with a Western-themed restaurant in the old station building) so they could go to Brighton for a honeymoon. They came home to the Blue Boys for Christmas on December 24.

Harry was discharged soon after. In his words:

Back home at last!!



Figure 11.4: After the war. Desly Nash, George Pugh, possibly Jeff Stemp, who was Best Man at the wedding of Harry and Peggy, possibly Renee Moss, Harry Nash.

Chapter 12

THE BLUE BOYS' INN

The Blue Boys' Inn is situated half way between London and Hastings, in the County of Kent on the very busy A21 highway. It was built in 1612 of brick, had six bedrooms upstairs and the floors downstairs were of uneven brick. The upper rooms had uneven oak floors.

I have chosen, as Harry did, to talk about the Blue Boys in a separate chapter, even though it does create a break in the chronology. I have kept some of the background Harry included about George and Ella Moss, even though some of this is repeated elsewhere.

Marie Pitcher, Peggy's cousin, said the building, which is T-shaped, had back stairs up to the attic and one could walk through to the front. There were four toilets outside, likely for the customers. There was a big bathroom, already described as very cold in an earlier chapter. Betty's violin hung on the wall in one bedroom. Few of us ever knew that she played.

The Inn was a landmark in several ways since it was on the brow of a hill near a large knoll of chestnut trees. During World War II, German bomber planes, mostly escorted by fighter planes in daylight raids on England, used this knoll as a turning point to guide them to the centre of London.

The owner of the Inn from 1930 – 1951 was a colorful character by the name of George Moss. George hailed from Eltham, a suburb of South East London. Eltham is also notable for the fact that the [entertainer] Bob Hope also [was born and] emigrated from this town. It was in 1908 that George, as a young man, emigrated with some of his family to Southern Alberta. The balance of the group followed within two or three years.

I have Mary Nash to thank for digging into various Canadian documents, including the census, to find information relating to the history of the family



Figure 12.1: The Blue Boys about the time George S. Moss acquired it.

and their movements to and from Canada.

We know George and family left Gleichen, Alberta, in 1928, that they probably spent a short period in Belgium, then looked in England for a business and, in particular, a pub. Ella spoke good French. According to Marie Pitcher, all the Nacci daughters (Angelina, Esther, Erminia/Ella, and Rosina/Rosie) married Englishmen, but spoke French to each other so they could converse privately, since their mother spoke only Italian. George apparently found French difficult to master, and the Belgian possibility was abandoned. There are stories that he liked a pub on the Thames River west of London, but was concerned for the safety of the girls with the river so close.

When George actually took over the Blue Boys is uncertain. Harry thought 1930 or 1931. Harry also says he sold it in 1951, but we believe this is incorrect. George became quite ill with a stomach ulcer and had surgery in late 1948 or early 1949, and we believe gave up the Blue Boys around then. Evidence that George and family left the pub in 1949 comes from Tunbridge Wells directories of 1950 and 1953, where a Cecil G. Law is listed as the proprietor of the Blue Boys. In 1950 George and family are living at 23 Arundel Rd., and in 1953 they are at 7 Beltring Rd. in Tunbridge Wells. Certainly I have only very vague recollections of the Blue Boys, if any, and it does not appear in photos after I am about one year old, though I do recall being in an oast house before I was 3 years of age which may have been the one at the Blue Boys. I also

recall a house with a large upstairs room with a party for children which I believe was Arundel Road. I think Beltring Road was acquired in 1950 just before I was three years of age.

George served in World War I in France with the Canadian Horse Cavalry, He was gassed and wounded, invalided in England, where he met wife-to-be, Ella Nacci.

After the War was over in 1918, he returned to Gleichen in Southern Alberta where Ella, being a wonderful Catholic wife, bore four daughters. All the girls were born in Gleichen next to the Blackfoot [Siksika] Indian Reserve. Audrey was the first born followed by Elizabeth (Betty), Margaret (Peggy) and Dorothy (Dolly). Ella's health suffered with the harsh prairie winters and although George had become a very successful business man, all the family returned to England in about 1928 and George leased the Blue Boys' Inn, together with its adjoining farm.

Harry omits the fact that Ella's Italian-British family were wary of the rough colonial boy, and insisted George and Ella wait a year. Thus George and his Best Man, Harry Lee, returned to England in 1919 for the wedding. The wedding photo, taken in a small, untidy back yard in Deptford, shows the Nacci's dressed to keep up appearances, but clearly not in the best of circumstances.

As far as I can determine in conversations with Dolly and Don Parks, the Blue Boys farm was about 20 acres. I recall someone saying 8 acres, but it is clear that it was much bigger than this. There was a hop field, a hay field, an orchard, a strawberry field, some loganberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, and gooseberries, in addition to a meadow, plus the buildings, including a cowshed besides the pub, barn and oasthouse. There was also a wood where nissan huts were built during the war, likely for the unit running one or more searchlights. All of this was on the north side of Hastings Road (the A21). From google maps satellite view, it was at least 8 HECTARES.

Dolly recalls the farm had several cows, sometimes some sheep as grass mowers, though no pigs in memory. They had chickens, but no ducks or geese, though I remember that my grandfather George Sylvester loved a duck egg. There was a farm horse (also named Dolly) and then a smaller horse for "deliveries" though Dolly could not remember what sort of deliveries were made.

During the War, Stivie Reed, who was a cattle drover, and Fred Randall, a local who may have been an occasional worker on the farm, would remind soldiers to mind their language because a young woman, Dolly, was present at the Bar. Of course, there are levels of coarseness, and Dolly said that Stivie

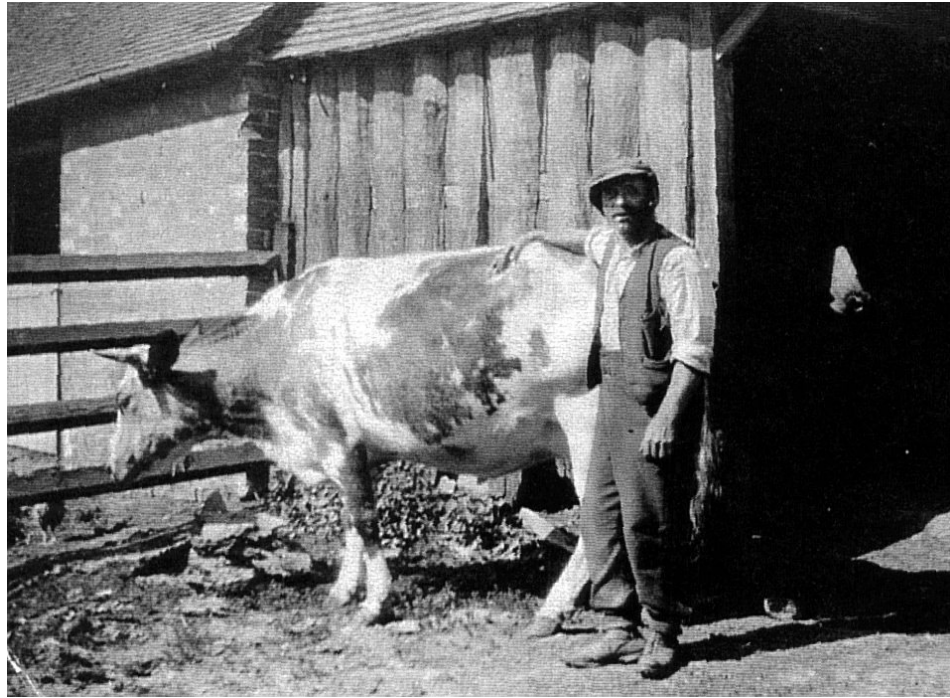


Figure 12.2: One of the cows. Is the drover Stivie Reed?

would say hello to Ella and Audrey on the bus to Tunbridge Wells and they preferred not to have to talk to him.

The Brown family, parents and children, seem to have all been employed by George at some point to help with the farm work, but I believe this was likely a regular but not necessarily full-time arrangement.

The pub seems to have been a popular one, even though it was quite a walk from Pembury, Matfield, Brenchley and Lamberhurst. In fact, it was and still is quite separate from other habitation. However, the clients seemed to like it as a place to meet and spend time, and George seems to have had the right demeanour to keep them coming back. He clearly was generous.

Peggy once told me they had a large English Sheepdog that would guide one of the patrons home. This man was either blind (Peggy) or had very bad eyesight (Dolly). After a while George told the man he'd better have the dog, since he needed it.

In 1931 a fifth child was born, this time a son, George. As a matter of interest the Moss family brought Nurse Frankton all the way from Gleichen to England to act as midwife when George was born since she had attended the births of all four girls.



Figure 12.3: Peggy, Betty and Dolly Moss in front of the Blue Boys in the mid-1930s.

George Jr. spent his adolescence during the War, but went to a Christian Brothers boarding school near Oxford as far as I can determine, so was not home for much of the time. However, he does appear in a number of photos of the period, presumably during holidays. I recall him saying that he and Peter Brown would see German bombers flying so low over the high ground near the Blue Boys that their faces were clearly visible.

On the west side, adjacent to the Inn was a photogenic oasthouse, used to dry the hops grown on the farm. On the other side of the Inn was a large barn.

The Blue Boys' Inn sign was very colourful and in 1936 it was entered in the National Brewery exhibition at the Olympia in London. It illustrated a coach and horses with the coachmen dressed in blue uniforms.

Though we have searched, there does not appear to be a photo of the sign. However, the author of <http://www.kentresources.co.uk/pubs/pubs-tbb.htm> says

When I first saw this pub on the Tonbridge to Hastings Road, the thought went through my mind that this was a very queer name. However, as unusual as it is, it is based on historical fact.

It seems that while travelling this road, George IV had to stop here to have two of his horses shod. The two postillions on his coach were clothed in royal blue and this is how the pub derived its present name. Now a “Free House”, the pub was once owned by the Page and Overton’s brewery. The actual sign has not changed in years which is nice to see.

In the mid-thirties one of the improvements George Moss made was to turn the barn into a tea room and dance hall. The tea room became very popular with tourists, especially those on coach excursions. [since the Blue Boys is mid-way from London to Hastings]

Esther Perollo, one of Ella’s sisters, sometimes worked in the Tea Room. I have heard she was famous for her poached eggs on toast, dropping the eggs into hot water. I seem to have the same skill and reputation. Dolly says that Esther always worked in pubs as a barmaid and that she had special orthotic shoes to protect her feet.



Figure 12.4: The Blue Boys in the 1940s, looking westward towards the pub along the A21. The furthest building with the conical roof is the oast house.



Figure 12.5: Ella Moss and (?) Esther Perollo in the Old Barn Tea Room.

War Visitors

In a tape recording, Harry said

When the war came, just to the south of the Blue Boys there was a big Army Camp. In fact Reg [Barry] was stationed there [with a searchlight unit]. So he [George] got all the custom from the troops, and there were lots of troops. There were lots of dances there. He would sell everything he could. With the dances and the tearoom, and of course he got rations for serving in the restaurant, he got a permit. With the money he bought houses. He had seven houses in Pembury. He had the one in Eltham, which was the first one he bought.

Dolly recalls collecting rent from Mary Standen in Canterbury Rd. Mary later published accounts of Pembury history. She was, however, inclined to listen to herself rather than others, and would offer Dolly a cup of coffee. Despite a refusal, she would serve a cup of “Camp” coffee, made from a chicory-based liquid concentrate – in fact http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Coffee suggests 25% chicory vs. only 4% coffee – which most people abhor.

There may have been troops both sides of the A21, but the road used to have an S curve, so they could have been south of the pub but still on the north side of the road. The layout of the A21 has been changed now that it is a dual carriageway.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and with thousands of troops stationed in South East England, the barn became a landmark for troops, including many Canadians.

The Blue Boys had quite a lot of space, but it appears much of it was used by various people who stayed. Harry said that George told him he and Ella had only one weekend throughout the War with no visitors staying. Harry was quite negative about some of the visitors, saying that they “sponged” off George and Ella. However, I am not sure whether this was actually the case. Renee Moss, wife of Ray, seems to have lodged there and I suspect paid rent and would leave her ration book with Ella. Ray, Don and Max, along with Don’s wife Chris, are seen in pictures.

Also we see Ella’s youngest sister, Rosina (Rosie), with her husband Horace Hall and daughter Marie (now Pitcher). Horace served in Italy and was killed in action in, we believe, 1943.



Figure 12.6: Rosie and Horace Hall with daughter Marie at the Blue Boys, likely early in the War.

Paule Foeliex, wife of Ella’s nephew Dominic who was a (French) POW of the Germans, had made her way across France from Roubaix (next to the Bel-

gian border) to Spain, been imprisoned for false papers by the Spanish, bribed out of prison by de Gaule's Free French because she could drive a truck (the ice cream truck of the Arcari family business). She hid her rings and similar jewelry in the bun in her hair and did not wash it to discourage inspection. She ended up in a hospital in Folkstone, and managed to communicate that she had an aunt-in-law with two daughters in a convent school in Tunbridge Wells. Through this she arrived, at a date I have not been able to fix, at the Blue Boys.

Dolly says, however, that on arrival there were many servicemen in the bar and she had a fit of hysteria, mistaking them for Germans. Reg Barry spoke enough French to get her to calm a little, and she was put to bed in one of the many upstairs rooms. There are photos of her later in uniform with a broad smile. As mentioned elsewhere, she was awarded the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur for something she did for the Free French that we have still to determine.

Misunderstandings developed because Paule (or Paula as she was called by Harry and others) could not speak English and most of the family apart from Ella and Reg could not speak French. Paule said to Mary and I in Roubaix in 1999 "J'étais chauffeur avec de Gaule" (I was a driver with the Free French). Harry and others heard "I was de Gaule's chauffeur." The last sixty years seem to be gradually breaking down these sorts of mis-steps as the younger generations on both sides of the channel are less bound to a single language.

There was also the story that her husband Domenic had great facility with English, to the extent of being able to use regional dialects. Paule herself said this was not true. He volunteered to be a translator to get better treatment, which he did, apparently including fraternization privileges with female prisoners. And through doing translation, or trying to, he acquired English, possibly with a Mancunian accent. However, at the start, he nearly got himself shot because he thought "blanket" was some sort of stew, that is, like "blanquet de veau".

That George "looked after" Canadian servicemen must have become widely known. Dolly said a fellow named Teddy Inglis showed up one morning at the Blue Boys when George was lighting the boiler (i.e., the water heater that used coal or coke). He looked fairly poorly. Dolly says he stayed for a while at the Blue Boys recovering. She thought he was from Gleichen and was on corvettes. Many prairie boys, for reasons that seem to be obscure, chose to exchange one featureless plain for another. George's nephew Bud Keyte (son of his sister Lizzie) served on corvettes, of which the last remaining is HMCS Sackville, now a museum in Halifax harbour. Corvettes were very seaworthy, but very wet, cold and uncomfortable. The duties were long, arduous and mostly boring,

with sudden and nasty action. I can recommend Lamb's "Corvette Navy" for a nonfiction account or Nicholas Monsarrat's "The Cruel Sea" either in book or film form for a not-quite-fiction portrayal.

While residents of the Blue Boys would have seen plenty of German aircraft, both bombers and fighters, it was not a target, though some bombs fell nearby, possibly jettisoned by escaping planes.

On one occasion, Dolly recalled that "Taffy", a cook for the army camp near the Blue Boys, came to get some sugar or butter. I asked about rationing, but Dolly said "We had some", and possibly the pub was used as a delivery point rather than the huts or tents in the camp. A bomb fell with no warning. Not so close as to damage the Blue Boys, but the blast threw Taffy into the field. He was white with shock but otherwise unhurt.

That bombing caused more than physical injury to people was common. We came across an odd colour photo of Dolly with (we believe) Edie Frankton, Nurse (Emma) Frankton's sister, who had been in Coventry at the time of the infamous bombing. In the idiom of the time "she was never quite right afterwards". From the photo, it appears Edie was yet another member of the Blue Boys refugee group.



Figure 12.7: Dolly Moss with Edie Frankton, sometime during WW2. Edie suffered from psychological problems as a result of being in Coventry during the bombing of November 14/15, 1940 or April 8, 1941.

Buzz Bombs

Late in the war, the Germans introduced their V1 pilotless aircraft and V2 rockets. The V1 used a pulse-jet engine. There is a cutaway image of one from German archives that have been put in the public domain.

(<http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/shared/media/photodb/photos/090928-F-1234S-010.jpg>)

Nearly 9000 V1's were launched from northern France from June 13 to September 1, 1944, when the launch sites there were overrun. More were launched from Holland, most against Antwerp, but few hit England after October 1944, though one V1 hit Datchworth in Hertfordshire 29 March 1945.

(<http://coalhousefort-gallery.com/V1-flying-bomb-Vengeance-weapon-site-Hazebrouck>)

The V2 rocket attacks began 8 September, 1945, and the only sensible countermeasure was to attack production and launch sites. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-2> reports that of the nearly 3200 rockets launched, more than half hit Antwerp.

However, the bulk of the V1's flew over Kent and many were shot down. (http://www.lamberhurstvillage.co.uk/acme/uploads/DHwartimeinKentnew_j5yw.pdf) Some did not need to be. Reg Barry one time related how they were lined up for pay parade, when the unmistakeable sound of a V1 (or "doodlebug" or "buzz bomb") was heard, but was nowhere to be seen. It got very loud. The campsite was in a typical Kent field with hedgerows all round. On the other side of the hedgerow was the A21 Hastings Road. Suddenly they saw a V1 passing the gate where there was a gap in the hedgerow, and it was flying at the great altitude of about 1 metre. As the A21 used to make an S curve, all the servicemen hit the ground. The V1 exploded and took away a large chunk of hedgerow a bit further along the road.

Animals often could hear the buzz bombs earlier than humans. One of the farm horses would get very spooked by them.

In August 1944 with the Germans launching V1 and V2 missiles, this area was in direct line with London, the main target. Early one Sunday morning, a V1, which is a pilotless plane loaded with explosive, ran out of fuel over the Blue Boys'. The family and guests did what they had been told and got under the sheets and blankets. After about sixty seconds, which seemed an eternity, nothing happened and two of George's daughters, Peggy and Dolly, thinking the missile was a "dud", raised themselves in their beds and at that exact moment there was a terrific explosion. The ceiling, windows and frames collapsed on them. Both girls received head and body injuries but fortunately no one else

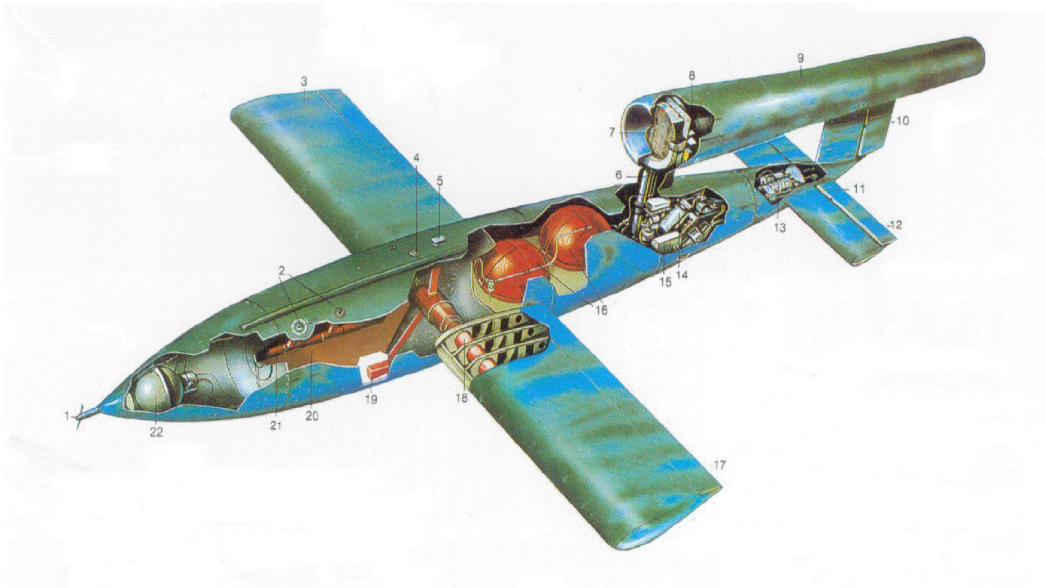


Figure 12.8: Cutaway drawing of a V1 flying bomb.

was injured or killed. Neighbors got them out and an ambulance rushed them to hospital.

There are various recollections of the V1, which appears to have landed across the road from the Blue Boys. Peggy said the bomb that came down was shot down but Renee [Moss, wife of Ray] contradicted this. Peggy told me that she got out of bed to look out the window when she heard an aero engine as well as the unmistakeable “buzz-bomb” noise and gunfire from the plane, which I believe she told me was a Tempest. She said she dove back under the covers after she realized the V1 was coming down and didn’t manage to pull the covers up completely. Harry thought that they got under the covers when they heard the bomb and when it did not go off, they started to get out from under to see because they thought it was over and then it went off. If they had been fully under the covers they would have been OK. Instead, the window blew in on them with all the glass, plaster and bricks.

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-1_%28flying_bomb%29:

In daylight, V-1 chases were chaotic and often unsuccessful until a special defence zone was declared between London and the coast, in which only the fastest fighters were permitted. Between June and 5 September 1944, the handful of 150 Wing Tempests shot down 638 flying bombs, with No. 3 Squadron RAF alone claiming 305. One Tempest pilot, Squadron

Leader Joseph Berry, of No. 501 (Tempest) Squadron, shot down 59 V-1s, and Wing Commander Beamont destroyed 31.

There is also confusion as to where people were in the building. Renee Moss said she was under the window and the glass went over her. Dolly says Betty slept there and Renee was in another room, which clearly is more likely.

The missile had exploded in the field in front of the Blue Boys'. The Inn was a sorry sight with windows and doors demolished but the old 1612 foundations and solid walls were intact. The tea barn and dance hall were like matchwood, completely destroyed. The barn was never rebuilt and now in its place there is a large car park.

In 1946 I married Peggy. When she died with cancer of the brain in 1966 the neurosurgeon asked if she had ever received a head injury.

I can add that she had faint scars from glass cuts around her left eye, behind which the tumour was discovered.

The Blue Boys' is still a landmark and I visited the inn in September of 1995 with friends and with Dolly, then 70 years of age. When we arrived on a Friday evening I felt I had seen everything! There by the Blue Boys' Inn sign was a van displaying flowers for sale. The flower stand was being operated by a young couple with the girl using a cellular phone!!

The "pub" was a favorite "watering hole" to many of my friends and it was located only one mile from the village of Pembury where a number of us lived.

The time period was when I was in my late teens and early twenties and during the time most of us were doing military war service. When on leave all of us would visit the Blue Boys and George Moss, the owner, would tell us who else was on leave.

In 1946 Peggy and I held our wedding reception there and the whole place holds many happy memories.

The farm was not very big but had a number of acres devoted to the growing of hops. It had an oast house, a colourful unusually shaped building used for the "drying" of hops. The oast house was shared by the adjacent small farm owned by Dick Cheeseman; no relative of my mother, whose maiden name was Louise Cheeseman.

In late August 1946 when George Moss was preparing for harvesting and drying of the hop harvest he hired a professional to do the "hop drying", an important position. A day before hop picking was to start, the hired professional came to George to say he had been offered considerably more money to

dry hops for another farmer. George surprised him by wishing him well! When George approached his neighbor Dick and told him the news, Dick wondered what they could do without this help. George again surprised Dick by saying Dick could do the hop drying. Dick was in a real “tizzy” until George informed him that as a boy Dick had helped to dry hops and with George’s watchful eye could do it himself.

Dick was then in his 60s, a bachelor, a hermit, kept his animals underfed including his dog and very rarely went anywhere. The only exception to this was he dressed up in a suit with collar and tie twice a year; once to go to the Epsom Derby horse race and again a day at the World famous Ascot horse races where everyone dresses up, many in top hats.

He was “very tight” with his money and one amusing thing was he made a tea pot full of tea, let it get cold and then drank it when he felt like it out of the spout.

I used to often sit in the oast house and talk to him during hop season and was amazed at his knowledge of stocks and shares since he had very little



Figure 12.9: Wedding photo of Harry and Peggy Nash at the Blue Boys on Wednesday August 14, 1946. The wedding dress was used in 1953 by Peggy Brown for her own wedding who we believe is in the picture but we have not definitely identified. The Brown’s were local smallholders who helped out with the farm and pub.

schooling and was only self educated. I was at this time 24 and not yet able to afford investing but I have always been interested in numbers.

To our surprise he went missing one day and after searching they found he had hung himself behind the barn door. A farmer friend of mine, Les Bowman, was working nearby and was the one to cut him down.

Dick Cheeseman lived for many years with his spinster sister but to the surprise of many he left his sizeable portfolio to a cousin in Australia; leaving house and farm to his sister which she quickly disposed of. He was quite a character!!

By the end of the War, George Moss had serious health concerns with a stomach ulcer and by 1948 needed surgery. This was carried out at Guy's Hospital in London. While he was there, Dolly went to visit him by Green Line Bus that went from a station near the Five Ways in the center of Tunbridge Wells. She walked both way between the Blue Boys and Tunbridge Wells because there were no local buses at that time of day. I used Google maps to give directions and distance: 4.5 miles each way!

I remember being told that George's surgery was complicated because he managed to break the stitches of his surgical wound. At the time, in any event, he would have had quite a long stay in hospital. Angela Coulter and Klim McPherson (in "Waiting times and duration of hospital stay for common surgical operations: trends over time", Community Medicine Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 247-253) do not give figures for stomach ulcer surgery, but report that in the period 1948-1957, the median hospital stay for a gall-bladder operation was 15 days, and even an appendix operation led to a nearly 10 day median stay.

After he recovered from the surgery, and possibly after selling the Blue Boys, George went to Canada (we believe in 1949) to see his siblings. As far as we know, Ella did not go along.



Figure 12.10: Looking across the Five Ways to Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells. The Black Shirts would have congregated roughly where there is a tree on the right about 60 yards down the road. The two images on this page are from old postcards courtesy David Cooper.



Figure 12.11: The High Street, Tunbridge Wells. This is much as I remember it in my earliest memories. There was a toy and pram shop roughly where the bicycle is situated on the right hand side. The White Bear was two thirds of the way to the end of the street on the right.

Chapter 13

RESETTLING - THE STORES

In early February 1946 I was demobilized from the British RAF after having served for 4 years and 7 months.

Since I was one of the younger members of our squadron, many others including Les (he was six years older) were let go some weeks earlier. I went to the town of Bedford in the county of Bedfordshire to get my discharge and receive a new two piece suit, tie and trilby hat. We kept our Air Force uniform.

Starting Over

On reaching home in Pembury the house was not being lived in as my sister Desly was afraid to be in the house by herself. She lived with the Hayward family nearby and Gordon Hayward, a retired family friend, had stepped in to help run the Nash store when my father was sick and after he had died. I knew literally nothing about groceries and running a store and Desly, my sister, was contemplating marriage to George Pugh and moving away from the area.

I knew, without any surprise, that the business was really “run down” and found that there were lots of mice in the house and store and rats in the storage building behind the house and store. In addition, all windows had a 6 inch wide strip of black paint around them as part of “blackout” wartime precautions necessary to prevent light leaking out around the curtains. The outside windows of the store had numerous advertisements pasted on, mainly for different soaps and cleaners. Also, several of the four storage sheds needed lots of cleaning out and many odds and ends disposed of.

So I was left with Mr. Hayward and business was not very brisk so I decided I would do my best to get things orderly. I spent my days – to start with – cleaning up the storage sheds at the back of the premises. It was terrible, in the fact that the main storage shed was alive with rats. This shed or “warehouse”

was the size of an average Canadian two car garage and strongly built with a concrete floor. And the house where Desly was scared to stay and which had been left empty at nights – that was alive with mice. It must be remembered that you never see mice and rats together in the same building – one seems to get rid of the other one or drives them out. Some person in the village was able to tell me where to get some powder called Liverpool Virus and this we put down in little lids and saucers in the house and around the general store. And it was amazing that the mice really like this stuff to eat, and within a couple of days, all the mice were dead. I should point out that this substance that I was able to get hold of was later banned by the government and I don't know what the true name of it was, but as I said, it was called Liverpool Virus.

“Liverpool virus” was actually a culture of salmonella.

“Many different isolates of *S. enteritidis* were made and used as rodenticides (eg. ‘Ratin’ in Denmark and the Liverpool ‘virus’ in the UK) but tests showed that all were, in fact, Danysz’ organism. Disillusionment with these baits set in rapidly.” [because they led to human food poisoning outbreaks].

Reference: T D Healing (1991) *Salmonella in rodents: a risk to man?* Communicable Disease Report, CDR REVIEW, Volume 1, Review Number 10, 13 September 1991 ISSN 0144-3186, <http://www.hpa.org.uk/CDR/archives/CDRreview/1991/cdrr1091.pdf>

From my May 2010 visit, and assuming the shed still present is the same as in 1950, I believe the “warehouse” was much closer in size to a single-car garage in North America. Everything seemed bigger in the past!

In regards to the rats in the storage shed, I started emptying the shed by taking cases of various commodities and lining them up in the backyard. By myself I put case after case of canned goods in the driveway until at least one third of the merchandise was outside. During this movement I never saw a rat but knew they were there. It was then that I noticed black track marks from rats going through the handle openings on bread trays that had been put upside down on the concrete floor and on which sugar cartons were stacked for protection from dampness. When I'd got between a third and a half of the commodities out of the shed into the yard, I locked myself in the shed with three cats. We never had cats as pets but kept them outside to help control mice, feeding them only milk and water. One of the cats we called Old Bill, because it was so old and partially deaf. The second cat was a female that had a fully grown kitten of about six or seven months old. Once locked in the shed, by

myself with the three cats, I started using the broom to move difference pieces of storage and groceries. Using a broom I lifted an inverted bakery tray that was about three feet by two feet. Rats ran in all directions, as they did also with a second tray. In very short time, two or three minutes “Old Bill” and the mother cat had five or six rats killed.

It was then I saw a rat looking down at me from a wooden beam. I jammed this rat with a broom until it fell and I killed it. As I jammed the rat my “backside” wobbled a case of oranges and the wobbling case caught a large rat by the tail. “Old Bill” went after the rat but since his age had slowed him down the rat bit him through the cheek. Blood spilt everywhere so I opened the storage door and let him out. I then continued hunting rats with the mother cat and within two hours we caught seventeen rats. I thought we had cleaned house but on opening the doors and moving things around two more rats ran out into the yard and away down the alley.

I had lots of bonfires and salvaged lots of recyclable containers. I then continued to clean out the windows and take all the posters down from around the building that a number of companies had pasted on. It took me about a week or two, scraping and tearing off the paper; I got everything nice and clean. And then, Mr. Hayward started to teach me about the general store and grocery business. At this time, I slept above and behind the store and provided my own cooking and cleaning after work.

Bonfires were one of Harry’s favourite activities; I inherited this love of fire, and augmented it by studying chemistry. Harry liked big bonfires, which generated a lot of heat. I know that on one occasion at the Stores he scorched the fence between us and our neighbours, who were also his tenants, and he had to pay them for killing their blackcurrant canes. Much later, while working with Acme Novelty in Canada, he acquired an Alberta Pyrotechnician’s License – all the better to sell fireworks!

Dolly Moss-Barry also noted in 2010 that Harry did not manage to eradicate the rodents. Mice got into the “warehouse” once the rats were gone. Dolly worked shifts in the Stores as well as behind the bar in the Blue Boys. One day a customer wanted some light bulbs, which were on a high shelf. Dolly shares the Moss and Nash tendency to small stature, and had to reach up into the box. Out tumbled some mice – and Dolly does NOT like mice.

Weddings and New Households

The period right after the War ended was a very busy one for weddings. We have already mentioned Don Parks and Betty Moss on December 20, 1945,

where Harry was Best Man. Harry was home only about a month before his sister Desly married.

A few weeks later on March the 13th, Desly got married to George and directly afterwards moved 150 miles away to Wolverhampton in the Midlands of England.

Note that Desly and Harry both married on a Wednesday. Today this may seem odd, but throughout most of the 20th century, Wednesday was a popular “Early Closing” day, meaning that shops would close around lunchtime. Indeed, even in 2010, I am able to find an East Sussex web page listing the early closing days for many municipalities quite near the Pembury area, and Wednesday is popular, though the site admits that many shops remain open.



Figure 13.1: Wedding of Desly Nash and George Pugh, March 13, 1946.

About a year later Dolly married Reg Barry on 23 April 1947, also a Wednesday. In 2010 she mentioned that on the morning of her wedding she made grocery deliveries for Harry on one of the heavy bicycles, in rather poor weather, then went home and dressed for the wedding that took place at St. Augustines. Reg and Dolly went to Weymouth to take the overnight ferry to Jersey. However, the weather was worsening to hurricane strength. Reg put

Dolly in the cabin and went to help out as many, including the crew, were desperately seasick and he was not.

The weather situation showed up in news events. The Southend Lifeboat

“was launched four times in 12 hours and rescued seven people from the barges Maid of Munster, Asphodel and Adriatic, which were in distress off Southend-on-Sea in a full south west gale with a very rough sea on 23 April 1947.”

On the other side of the UK, forty-seven people lost their lives, including the eight-man crew of the Mumbles Lifeboat, when the hurricane drove the *Samtampa*, a wartime liberty ship, onto rocks near Porthcawl, Wales.

All of the new households needed accommodation, which was in short supply. George Moss had realized that this would happen, and had been buying properties. Reg Barry, with equal prescience, applied a bonus he received from his boss at the start of the War to a house at 46 Rose Hill Park West in Sutton, which he bought for £100 circa 1940. He installed his parents there, and eventually he and Dolly made it their home. Indeed both George and Ella Moss died in that house, which I recall as having a very attractive location on a hillside with a large park behind.

Don and Betty Parks lived with George and Ella at the Blue Boys, then on Arundel Road (which was possibly a house George rented) and at Beltring Road until 1951 or 1952 when they got a flat in the newly built Ramslye. In fact, at Beltring Road George and Ella also had George Jr. and Audrey as part of the household as well.

Kath and Cyril Lambert managed to get part of a house on Napier Road in Hawkenbury that belonged to relatives of Cyril. The houses there are small and the road very narrow. Parked cars render it a single lane road today. A condition of their rental was to look after an elderly relative who was there, but who had a part of the house that was separate.

Clearly there were many makeshift arrangements. Much of the housing stock was destroyed or damaged. Even those houses and apartments that escaped bombing were unlikely to have been fully maintained during the War. And there were many couples now wanting their own place. Eventually housing was built or repaired, and those who could improved their situations. Kath and Cyril moved to Rusthall in 1955, buying the house Kath still lives in. They bought the house on a second try due to difficulties getting financing at first. This was well before the era when banks and financial institutions were quick to lend. This house, with others in Longmeads including the one Lily Hughes and May Green lived in, were built by a Mr. Yates in 1938. Kath says

he is spoken of “reverently” as a builder. The houses seem to have been very well-built, if unexciting in design. Even today, the plaster, which Kath says is original, is flat and uncracked.

On a tape we recorded in 1993, Harry recounts:

I mentioned the fact that George had quite a few houses in Pembury and I myself had two owned by myself and my sister, and I used to collect the rents. The rents were \$2 [Probably £1.] a week, out of which we had to pay the taxes and do the repairs. So we didn't intend to do many repairs. And one day when I was collecting the rents – I used to collect every six or eight weeks – and when I came back and gave George the rent, always cash, for these seven houses, he said “Were there any complaints?”. I said “Yes”. He said “Old mother Standing”. I said “Yes”, and he said “The old bitch”. It was funny, he always used to ignore her complaints anyway for the rent she was paying, and she'd been resident in the house for 20 years or more. It was funny, in the houses I collected rent from I could peel the wallpaper back from the wall at the bottom of the stairs and see through into the next house. But these houses, one day when I'd sold the business, he offered me three of these houses for the total of one thousand pounds. And I said, “What the hell do I want with three houses?”.

The “mother Standing” may refer to the mother of Mary Standen, from whom Dolly collected rent and suffered cups of Camp coffee, since Harry may have not known the proper spelling of the name and I may have mis-transcribed the tape.

Rationing and coupons

Food rationing was still in existence in Great Britain and the population had to register with a grocery store for the basic rations of butter, cheese, sugar, bacon, eggs. In addition each ration book contained coupons for tea, candy and canned foods. A person had 20 coupons per month for canned goods and to give you some idea as to value; a large can of peaches was 20 [coupons or “points”], a can of evaporated milk was 2, a can of pork and beans 2 and a 12 ounce can of corned beef or 8 ounce can of salmon was 12. In addition meat from the butcher was rationed; each person allowed \$1.00 worth per week so you got more if you chose cheaper tough cuts. This meant not only taking money when you sold goods but also collecting coupons which each grocery store banked with the Government Food Office and then issued coupon cheques to suppliers to make purchases to resell. In addition all prices were government controlled.

The coupon requirement varied over time. It was very onerous on the shopkeeper, and Desly was still, in 2010, very negative about all the fiddly work it entailed for her when she was running the business during the War. Rationing actually got worse during the winter of 1946/1947 due to very severe weather combined with labour unrest among the coal-miners. Indeed, potatoes were rationed, which had not happened during the War.

Electricity and some broadcasting was cut for some hours a day, and some factories closed, putting people on unemployment benefits. Eventually this all passed. However, sweets – candy in North America – were the among last to be dropped on February 5, 1953, which I recall as very important to the small boy I then was. The last items were “meat and bacon”, for some reason separate classifications, on July 4, 1954 – Independence Day? (http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/4/newsid_3818000/3818563.stm)

It was not an enjoyable situation. After I had got the place cleaned up, and being unmarried at the time, I lived above the store. Local people were saying that Harry Nash would be broke within 12 months. I “scratched my head” and wondered “How can Harry Nash go broke when we owned the house, shop and storage and I could live off scraps such as cracked eggs, out of date foods and only had one mouth to feed?”

Becoming the boss

Just after I had finished cleaning off the walls and windows from posters put on by grocery firms, on a Thursday morning, Mr. Hayward said, “I would like you to meet a gentleman who will be along shortly.” And soon after he said, “Here’s the man in question.” And so I looked out of the shop window and saw the traveler who was from a soap firm and sold Oxydol amongst other things. I noticed he looked out at the store front and leaned over in the back of his car to get a couple of posters. He came over and got the paste and pasted two posters on the windows. So, then he put the paste back into his car and came into the store with his briefcase and Mr. Hayward introduced him to me.

Before I shook hands or acknowledged his arrival, I said to him, “Who gave you permission to put those posters on the store windows?” And he said, “Well, I always put them on.” And I said, “Not now you don’t.” I said, “If you want to put posters on my store windows from now on, you will have to pay me for the privilege.” And he replied, “Nobody pays for the privilege of putting posters on shop windows.” I replied, “Well, if anybody wants to put posters on my property, they have to pay. And to prove it,” I said, “if you look outside on either side of the building, one facing south, the other north, you will see

two billboards standing on the edge of the property – both advertising movie shows in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.” And I said, “These people give me free tickets to go to the shows for having the privilege of me advertising their material.” So I said to this gentleman, “Before I give you an order, you’d better clean those two posters off the windows and then we’ll carry on from there.” And, he looked quite strange at me; but, afterwards we became good friends and everybody knew they did not put posters on our store.

Here Harry has adopted “movie” and “show”. I recall, and think that contemporary writings and films could confirm, that “pictures” would be the common term, with possibly “film” or “cinema” being used also. But “movie” and “show” are American usage.

Mr. Hayward stayed on until the summer months [of 1946] and then I hired a young fellow by the name of Tony Bateup and business was not all that brisk because rationing was still on in England and even if goods were not rationed, they were in very short supply and we, being a small general store, did not appear to get our fair share of even what was available.

Wedding and honeymoon

On August 14 of 1946, 6 months after being demobbed from the RAF Peggy [Moss] and I were married at St. Augustine’s Catholic Church in Tunbridge Wells and after a short honeymoon, three or four days in London and seven days in Bournemouth, it was down to real work trying to get the business going so that it was a reasonable living.

Mary asked Harry about the honeymoon.

You could only book [some] hotels Saturday to Saturday. So when we got married, we had the “do” at the Blue Boys, and directly you got married you went away. They had the party afterwards. We had the wedding breakfast. And we went off by train. And we stayed at the Strand Hotel in London for three days. Wednesday. Thursday. Friday. We went to Kew Gardens. We went to see a couple of shows. And we went to speedway at Wembley. And then on the Saturday morning Oh we went to Kew Gardens on the boat. We got up on the Saturday and we went to Bournemouth for one week. ’Cause you could only book from Saturday to Saturday.

Making money

So then when we got back, well we still didn't have much business. But in 1944 when my Dad died, a fellow named Voyce, he worked for a food wholesaler. Well. He came to me when I was at home. Dad had died, before I'd gone back, and he said "If you want to sell, I'll buy it off you". I said "Mr. Voyce, I don't have anywhere to stay if I do. And I've got my sister younger than me. I'm against a brick wall really. But I'll bear it in mind."

In talking about Voyce, Harry and I later worked out that he had eventually become a grocer in Tonbridge. His shop was on St. Mary's Road, not far from a house George and Ella occupied in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

I decided not to [sell], but when I came home, one day, I had to go to the Food Office in Tonbridge, which was just a little bit past the Rose and Crown, past Lloyd's bank in the [upper] High Street there. Went to the Food Office because you had a deadline to get these coupons [ration and points] in. You had to give money for food and you had to give coupons for food. And if you didn't have a bank of coupons ... and, rather than post them, I thought I'd go down there. On my bike. When I was at the Food Office I ran into Mr. Voyce. And he said "How are you doing Harry?" And I said "Bloody awful". This must have been September [1946]. Perhaps late August. 1946.

He said. "I'll tell you what. When you've finished your business at the Food Office, why don't you come over to my place. I might be able to help you."

So I go over to his store. There's line ups. Of customers. Terrific business. We had a cup of tea. And he said "Look. I've got too much of these certain kinds of things." And I said "Well, I haven't got any." He loaded up his van full of stuff. A case of this, a case of that. And he said "You pay me when you've sold it. 'Cause you haven't got the money. But here's a black book of the names of the sales managers and presidents of all the firms I deal with. Write them a letter what's happened to you. They'll cry when they read it. Tell them you want them to serve you COD."

So Peggy wrote 50-odd letters. All by hand. And we got 30-odd replies.

Well. We had to have the store remodelled. The warehouse – put shelves up. Another shed at the bottom for vegetables and that. Because we didn't have the customers for this food. But once we loaded the store up, that turned the business around. And it was Mr. Voyce that did that.

When all the merchandise came in, we got a carpenter in and he worked like mad through the night and everything. And then we had to spend from Wednesday noon to Thursday morning to get everything on the shelves. And

Peggy worked 'till 2 [am], and Tony Bateup worked 'till 3, and I worked 'till 6. And I had about an hour's sleep, and was back up, shaved and ready to go at 8 o'clock. And everyone had their eyes open wide to see all this merchandise in this small store. It just ran to the rafters.

And people came back when we had the stuff. Because we had stuff the other stores didn't. And we had good displays.

One thing I did [with the store] was to start specializing in fresh fruit and vegetables which did not have government controlled prices, although to do well one had to be very competitive. Because our store was very small, I had a large display of produce outside in the elements right across the front of our property. The fixtures were on wheels and we had to fill and empty daily. We also had a large awning across the front of the store which could be easily pulled out for rain or bright sun.

In the 40's in England, the only time they saw lettuce was early spring when some could come in from Jersey. And if there was a bad spring, even those were non-existent. Came to spring, and I was selling watercress at 2/- a pound, 6d for a 1/4 lb bunch. Then Les Bowman came to see me and he said "I've got some of that." So he came back an hour later and he had a bathtub with some in. He said "You sell it and give me half after you've sold it." People loved this watercress. It was good. I said, "Where you getting it from?" He said, "In the stream next to the haunted house. At Bayhall [Manor]."

For about 2 weeks, I was phoning up regularly, sometimes twice a day at weekends. And on his way home at lunchtime he would bring in this [watercress]. And a lot of people were coming from all over to buy this watercress. So then one day I called him and he brought some more.

Two or three hours later, somebody came in and said "It burns your tongue". So I said "What do you mean?" So I tasted it, and it burnt my tongue. So I took it off sale and I phoned Les. And I said "What's wrong with the watercress? People are complaining it burns your tongue. And it does burn your tongue."

"Well", he said, "I ran out and I went over to another stream. I guess it's a different weed there." So we did not get sued or anything. And did not kill anybody.

I did very well but I did not like the job. It was a seven day a week job and I went without a holiday for six years although Peggy got away the odd time.

If the cress was the same species, it is likely the last batch was too mature, but the story illustrates the general lack of food safety standards at the time.

Moreover, today we would not allow cats and dogs around a food store. But we had Beauty, the cocker spaniel. And several cats. The cats could



Figure 13.2: 1951 at The Stores. Tony Bateup at left, Mr. Eldridge, Harry Nash, with John Nash in front. Harry was at most 5 ft. 6 in., so Mr. Eldridge was extremely short!

sometimes be less than contributing members of the household. One of them in particular decided he/she liked cucumbers, but only one bite out of each at the end. Harry sold “half cucumbers” that week. Of course they were half price but nearly full cucumbers, so sold quickly.

Even the rationing system could sometimes work to his advantage. On his rationing list for sugar was a couple who kept bees. There was an allocation of sugar for feeding the bees over the winter, but it happened that the bees all died. This is still common today from such causes as foul brood or varroa mites. In any event, the paperwork was not done in a timely way and there was a buildup of sugar for the bees. This would be awkward if there were an inspection audit.

Ever inventive, Harry noticed he had for sale a dried fruit mixture for making fruit cake. Until I came to Canada, birthday and Christmas cakes for me were always fruitcakes, preferably with glacé (candied) cherries. The fruit mix, “South African dried fruit”, had currents and mixed peel, but most importantly there were a few sugar crystals visible. Taking currants and mixed peel, and liberally adding the surplus sugar, Harry created “Irish dried fruit mix”. Rather quickly, local housewives discovered that a sieve would allow them to separate the sugar from the dried fruit, and the product enjoyed great popularity while it was available.

Occupants and activities

I can recall Tony Bateup doing target practice in the yard behind the Stores with his air gun during his lunch break. The yard was of concrete, but very smooth, perhaps oiled, and got used for lots of activities. I can also remember Harry cutting the ribs from a side of bacon there. I can recall him also doing this on the floor of the “back room” and then slicing it on the mechanical slicer. This was behind the public shop area. Also in the yard I remember my parents boiling beetroot in the laundry boiler – a large legged tub that one usually filled with soapy water. The tub had a gas ring below it to heat the water – hence “boiler” – and the gas ring was linked via a rubber hose to a gas spigot similar to that used in laboratories for bunsen burners.

Harry’s recollection is that he/we had no family life. From his perspective this is likely correct, but from the point of view of a small child, The Stores were a wonderfully rich environment with plenty of stimulating interaction with adults. They were, of course, always “around“. Perhaps because they did not have time to learn parenting skills or take classes or read books, they treated me more as a small adult than as a child. I read at an early age, and there were always newspapers around, so I read them. Apparently the headmaster of St Augustine’s School discovered that I did so, and would amuse himself by asking me what I thought of the news at lunchtime. I do not remember this, but it was sufficiently unusual that he asked my parents how I came to know the newspaper headlines.

Biscuits (e.g., Rich Tea, Digestive, or, special treats, Bourbon or Ginger Crisps) were sold in bulk from tins that were 1 foot cubes. The biscuits were weighed into a paper bag, possibly with tongs, possibly bare hands! Across the yard from the “warehouse” there was a lean-to behind the kitchen and down the concrete slope where we would store the empty biscuit tins.

I have already mentioned that there were cats to keep down mice and rats, but our black cocker spaniel bitch “Beauty” considered cats her particular nemesis. Harry could always get Beauty to eat leftovers by making a fuss of putting them in the cat’s dish! When Beauty was let out into the yard, and a cat was present, she would give instant chase. The cats knew to run for the lean-to, jump up and over the tins to safety outside. Beauty would realize, always too late, her imminent collision with the tins. I can still recall the sound of dog claws slipping on the polished concrete of the yard and the crash of empty tins.

Beauty was, moreover, notoriously good as a guard dog. She would allow deliveries, but regarded the removal of empties as theft. Harry had to keep her tied up or the deliverymen would refuse to do their job.

The Stores had a hallway with a staircase behind the “back room” of the shop. The telephone – an old vertical model with earpiece hanging on the side and microphone horn at the top of a pedestal – had number Pembury 13. Harry’s lucky number, but it implies the exchange (with an operator) had less than 100 lines. Indeed, the Blue Boys was Pembury 61. Off the hall was the toilet (just the toilet!). I cannot recall this without feeling cold. Off the other side of the hall was the “front” door and an entrance to the living room, a rectangular room with window at the back onto the yard. It seemed large to a small boy, but from inspection in 2010 was extremely small.

The living room had a fireplace in the middle of the inner long wall. This fireplace possibly did not work very well. I can remember my father using a newspaper to block the opening except at the bottom to “make it draw” then having the paper catch fire! Moreover, the living room was so narrow that you could roast your knees sitting on the sofa. Today the same space is simply a passage between the front and rear of the Chinese take-away that the Stores has become.

As I have noted, the Nashes are definitely pyromaniacs, and Harry eventually had an Alberta licence as a pyrotechnician when he sold display fireworks. Even Beauty the dog adopted the trait, and used to crowd the front of the fire to the extent that the room would get the smell of singed dog-hair. By the window we had the square oak table with heavy carved spiral legs where I recall finding a silver threepenny bit in a Christmas pudding. (I wish I still had this! It was last produced in 1941. <http://www.coins-of-the-uk.co.uk/three.html>). At that meal, I believe on a Boxing Day, I recall Don, Betty and Ralph Parks being present. It was likely 1951 or 1952.

At the back of the building was a large kitchen. It had some sort of boiler for generating hot water. I can recall being bathed in the kitchen sink – a large porcelain affair with two large old-fashioned taps. The floor was big red tiles. The dog and cat dishes were by the door. This was the “back” door, but I believe was only a few feet from the “front” door into the hall. Baths were taken here in a long galvanized tub. We certainly didn’t bathe as often as today.

The tiles were cold, very cold. Dolly recounted in 2010 that Reg, whose occupation was valuer, came by one day in 1946 or 1947. Peggy was in the kitchen when Reg arrived. He noticed she was standing on half a carpet she had acquired to have a mat to stand on in front of the sink. It was a genuine Persian carpet she had cut in half! Reg was horrified, but apparently said nothing. Of course, the carpet – and no doubt its value – was already cut in half by the time he saw it!

In that kitchen I can remember some odd breakfasts. On one occasion

my mother was away, and my father got a tinned Cross and Blackwell black-berry and apple pie onto which we poured the “top of the milk” – a pre-homogenization luxury that left the tea drinkers annoyed by the thinness of the remaining milk, literally skimmed milk. I do not recall having homogenized milk until we came to Canada in 1957, but it was in stores when I returned to the UK in 1968. Whether it was available when we visited the UK in 1963, I cannot remember.

I also recall having banana with sweetened condensed milk (we called it Nestles Milk). This was a treat before the rationing of candy (sweets) was lifted. This was brought back to me recently in a documentary on the period between the accession of Queen Elizabeth II until her coronation. Shortly before the Coronation, in fact February 5, 1953, the rationing of sweets ended. The time before that was, as the documentary described, “grey”.

From the nearby picture of The Stores with its staff, the very short stature of Mr. Eldridge is graphic. He was kind to me, but sometimes would joke. Once, when I was four, he offered me an orange (not exactly rare, but not common). I thought he was joking, and said, “It’s rotten” and threw it into the road where a passing sports car squashed it in spectacular fashion. The sadness in Mr. Eldridge’s eyes was an introduction to the emotional impact we can all have on others.

Once, Mr. Eldridge also took on the thankless task of unblocking the drains. There was a big rectangular manhole cover at the corner of the house between the yard and the driveway. When the cover was removed, the hole, which gave access to incoming and outgoing 6 inch clay sewer pipes, was full to the brim – about 4 feet deep. And it was nasty, smelly stuff. Mr. Eldridge patiently used a bucket to transfer this to the lower garden. But his efforts were painfully slow. Rods that screwed together were used, and finally the blockage cleared, but it turned out to be very far down. Mr. Eldridge was trying to empty the waste of several houses!

There was always a ladder in the back yard. Harry was notorious for forgetting keys. I can remember him breaking into our own house by climbing up and getting in the side bedroom window upstairs.

Dealing with customers

There was no family life whatsoever.

People are cruel. Imagine dealing with a demanding customer. They only get 2 eggs a week and one of them is bad.

I had this delivery boy named Scripps. They used to call him Kipper. Likeable kid. Very polite. This woman used to phone Thursday mornings. About

quarter to 10. When the phone rang, Peggy knew she had to answer it. You've got to remember eggs were rationed. Each person got 46 eggs a year.

You think that's one a week. The chickens were laying. Some weeks you got 5. So now there's a lot of weeks you don't get any.

So one day Peggy answered the phone. And this woman – McDonald – and they'd been in Africa – and the sun had got on their head. Real English. "Man" she used to call you. Used to servants. No wonder the British got kicked out of some of some of those countries.

So Peggy answered the phone. And the first thing Mrs. M said was "How many eggs this week?" And Peggy would say "Two". And she'd say "Only two!". That was two for her husband and two for her.

Kipper. He cycles all the way round Romford Road. And he's got a big driveway to push the bike up. And they've got a bungalow up there. And the woman opened the groceries and she really laced into him. She said "You've cracked one of the eggs."

We wrapped them in a bit of paper. We put the groceries in a box and put the eggs on top. We didn't have any of the plastic egg boxes. But they were pretty well packed.

She really laced into him. Because she thought he cracked one of the eggs.

He said "We'll take them back and I'll change them." Remember, he'd cycled a mile and a half there.

So he got the empty box and the four eggs, and as he came round the front of the house, he threw them up against her garage door.

So she phoned, and I got the phone this time. Well, I laughed like hell when she was telling me all this. But this is the type of person you were dealing with.

About the same time

March 13, 1946 - Stalin denounces Winston Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, USA, as a "dangerous act" designed to sow discord among wartime allies.

March 13, 1946 - At Nuremburg, Hermann Goering personally admitted he did

everything in his power to strengthen the Nazi movement and assure Hitler of his place as Chancellor. January 1, 1947 - Canada's Citizenship Act became

effective. Prior to this, Canadians were British subjects. January 1, 1947 -

Britain nationalizes coal mines. January 25, 1947 - Al Capone dies of syphilis,

aged 48. February 7, 1947 - Arabs and Jews reject a British proposal to split

Palestine. April 16, 1947 - A lens that provides zoom effects is shown in New York. May 7, 1947 - General MacArthur approves the Japanese constitution as a democracy. May 31, 1947 - Communists seize power in Hungary. June 3, 1947 - In Britain an announcement is made in the House of Commons that India was to be partitioned and that independence would follow.



Figure 13.3: The Stores in 2010. Note the “warehouse” at the back right is quite small, but I believe it is likely the original.

Chapter 14

PEMBURY UP TO 1953

Harry spends little time in his memoirs or on tape talking about life apart from his work with The Stores. However, going through photographs of the era and allowing these to prompt my own memories suggests that life was much more rich than he recalls. Perhaps it is that life for me – early childhood in a stimulating environment – was more intense for me than for a man who had lived through six years of war, being shot at, shelled and bombed. In this chapter, I will look at things we did away from The Stores.

Time off

He also states that he didn't take any holiday in this period. This is almost certainly correct in the sense of taking a week or more away. However, I do recall going to Brighton and staying in a boarding house. Possibly this

was for just one night. There are pictures to prove the visit to Brighton, and similar ones that reveal a vanished era when people wore a suit to the seaside!

Moreover, Tony Bateup appears in the picture to be quite mature, but I believe he was only in his late teens.

My recollections are also that my parents made the most of the days when the store did not have to open. This was especially so once he acquired the Bradford van. He mentions using the van to take my great grandmother



Figure 14.1: Peggy Nash, Tony Bateup with John Nash, Hove, 1951



Figure 14.2: Beltring Rd. number 7 in 2010

Maria Theresa Nacci a Christmas present in 1949, but I remember the delivery bicycles too. Whether there was much overlap in usage I don't know, but I can vaguely remember going to Hawkenbury to dinner with Kath and Cyril Lambert and coming home without a car.

In particular, I remember that Kath and Cyril lived in a typical "2 up, 2 down" row house on Napier Road in Hawkenbury. They had, I believe one that was the end of a group of four, and there was a narrow passage way between the groups. This was paved with bricks. And there was a peculiar ringing echo that I can recall to this day, heightened by the dampness of recent rain. Whether we walked (Hall's Hole Road, then Comford Lane or Pembury Road, about 4 km) or took the bus I don't recall.

From an elderly relative, Kath and Cyril had acquired a strange and quite large music box, probably twice the size of a modern laser printer. It played large metal disks with holes in them. Mary and I recently September 2010) were shown a similar instrument in operation by one of the Sisters at the Presentation Convent in St. John's, Newfoundland, where we had gone to see Giovanni Strazza's "Veiled Virgin" statue. Kath says I always managed to pick out the disk that had the tune of Three Little Pigs. I don't recall this detail. The adults wondered whether I could read, being 2 and a half or three at the time.

Harry recounted getting Cyril a chicken. Rationing and points were still ongoing, so this was a luxury. Kath remembers Harry took Cyril to a house where women were sitting in a quite small room plucking chickens and smoking. Feathers everywhere. Cyril got a chicken because they had promised to bring chicken to friends or family in Theydon Bois (pronounced Boyce) in West London. Kath carried the chicken by its legs on the train and Underground. When they got to the friends' house all was dark, but they knocked and were let in to a darkened room where the owners were watching a newly acquired television. The intent watching continued with Kath still wearing her coat and holding the chicken!

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_television#United_Kingdom points out that 405-line picture television transmission began November 2, 1936 with the BBC broadcasting from Alexandra Palace in London. This was only for four hours daily from 1936 to 1939 and there were fewer than 15,000 receivers. War suspended service from September 1, 1939 to June 7, 1946. Sets were big, screens were small (9 inches seems to have been the norm!), and they cost a lot – 50 Pounds, plus 2 pounds a year for a license. This was like a week's wages just for the license.

Near Hawkenbury was also Dunorlan Park. This was, and is, a popular public recreational amenity, and I was certainly taken there. Whether I was

in the boat where my father took a picture with my mother, I do not know. In 1969 I remember rowing on Dunorlan Lake with Gillian Murphy (now Seagrave), an Oxford friend.



Figure 14.4: Peggy Nash on Dunorlan Lake, undated

Further afield, I was taken to London Zoo. I got to ride on an elephant, in a donkey cart, and had my first encounter with penguins. Penguins are special because a particular one – Tux – is the symbol of Linux.

Besides the Brighton pictures, there are some of Eastbourne and Broadstairs. I know that when I was very small Harry and I spent an afternoon in Hastings – I believe by train, but possibly by bus. Harry loved seafood and until I was older I would sample cockles and whelks, a taste that I managed to de-acquire even as I learned to like many vegetables that were then considered “foreign” by the English such as pimentos and artichokes. However, on this trip to Hastings he ate a plate of either cockles or whelks, and his love of such street snacks gave him a nasty case of food poisoning so that he was up all night. I was not sick, so possibly the cause was something else he ate that I did not share, or else only a few of the cockles were bad.

Grandparents

I was too young to recall the Blue Boys. In later years I have visited this public house, about a mile or so east of Pembury toward Hastings. As mentioned, soon after World War II, George Moss had surgery for a stomach ulcer. He sold the pub and took a holiday in Canada to see his siblings. George and Ella Moss moved to a house not far from the Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells (Arundel Road). I can just remember a party there – I think it was upstairs – with a

magician or clown. I was likely 2 or maybe 3. However, I remember No. 7 Beltring Road quite well.

The house (see photo nearby) was a very traditional British design. It had an entrance to a hall and stairs. On the right of the hall was the “Front Room“ which had a very stiff leather sofa and chairs, stuffed, I would guess, with horse hair, and a piano on which Audrey used to give piano lessons. Once I sat there very quietly during one of her lessons then made a rush for the upstairs bathroom to throw up – I’d managed to get some sort of food poisoning. Like Harry’s incident, we seemed to accept such events, indicating food safety was a much less prominent concern than today.

Next down the hall on the right was the kitchen, which was quite large in my memory, but probably only 10’ by 10’. There was a scullery behind this, with a door to the outside (the side street was Whitfield Road) where there was a shed George Jr. used for his bicycle. The scullery had the sink and the “boiler”, a stove that had water pipes and heated the water for the house. This was similar to the one we had in the kitchen at The Stores. I recall there was also a pantry coming off the scullery, with it’s door opposite the sink and the “back door” of the house. The boiler was to the right of this in a small alcove. Returning to the main main corridor, there was a cupboard under the stairs, then to the rear of the house was the “dining“ room, which was relatively large. It and the kitchen served for most of the activities. The dining room had French doors leading to a small garden that had an apple tree that Ralph Parks and I used to try to climb. It had a fireplace where there was always a fire in cool weather.

Up the first flight of stairs the principal bedroom level had a medium



Figure 14.3: John delighting in seeing penguins at the London Zoo, 1949

bedroom at the back, a bathroom above the scullery (no doubt to simplify the plumbing – the drains were on the outside of the house), then a modest bedroom above the kitchen and a very large master bedroom at the front. Another set of stairs led up to an attic level that had two rooms, one of which George Jr. used for his drums and record player and which had a skylight. Ralph and I were often there; sometimes a cymbal askew would alert George that his drum set was very attractive to small boys. There was also an accordion that we had to cooperate to get to make sound – we were fairly small. I do not recall the attic rooms being used as bedrooms, nor did they appear to have heating, but they may have been used for bedrooms from time to time.

I have puzzled over where Audrey slept in the Beltring Rd. house. After Betty and Don moved to Ramslye I believe she had the back bedroom. Before that, it is possible George used a room in the attic and she had the side bedroom.

George Jr. was, until approximately the time he went to Canada in about 1953, working with Stephenson's Garage (I believe as an apprentice), which was located at 12-16 London Road in Tunbridge Wells where most recently 4X4 Kent occupies premises that have changed very little in nearly sixty years. George rode a "racing" bicycle with drop handlebars and came home for mid-day dinner. He would wolf down his food, then go to the attic to practice his drums, accompanying jazz records that were played on an electric "pick up" that was connected to some sort of radio amplifier.

There was, however, some problem with the vacuum tubes, or "valves" that were used in some part of this setup, and beyond amplifying the music, it was transmitting on a frequency that played this music through the audio of televisions tuned to the BBC television. On February 15, 1952, the funeral of King George VI took place over the lunch period. Unfortunately George Jr. chose to practice "I ain't got nobody". This was thought to be a subversive anti-royalist act. Eventually, detector vans found where the signals were coming from. I have seen, but can no longer locate, a clipping from the Kent and Sussex Courier where George Jr. was in court for mischief but discharged, possibly at the preliminary hearing stage once the cause of the problem was established.

The house had fireplaces in the three bedrooms, the "dining" room and the front room. I don't think the kitchen was directly heated, but it did have the cooker (in North America the "stove"), which as I recall was electric. There was also heat from the boiler in the scullery. I think the choice of electric cooker was because my grandfather feared gas with small children around. He also had a simulated wainscoting made of some sort of artificial leather (like

vinyl) along all the corridors as he did not want marks from sticky fingers. Smart man, my grandfather. The fake wainscotting was easily wiped clean, though it made the whole ambience rather dark.

The front room had the leather smell of the sofa and always seemed out of bounds. I never recall a fire there. Living was done in the “dining room” at the back, which always seemed warm and always had someone in it. Or else in the kitchen, where my grandmother would be cooking. I can remember all the daughters taking turns with what seemed like a huge bowl – brownish on the outside, white on the inside, like an upside-down dome of a church, stirring the Christmas cake and then making the pudding. The bowl was about 24 inches across and the work was heavy (no electric mixers!).

I can also remember an occasion at Beltring Road when my grandfather took a day at the races. My grandmother made her favourite lunch – a fried pimento sandwich – the smell of which my grandfather disliked. At the time – early 1950s, pimentos were uncommon in the UK. I have, from that time, loved the smell of cooking pimentos and the association with my Italian-heritage grandmother. And they were called pimentos, not peppers or capsicums.

After leaving the Blue Boys, George Moss acquired an off-license – to North Americans a liquor store; the “off” means that products cannot be consumed on the premises. He had this from as early as I can remember. It was at 117 High Street. This was on the east side of the High Street in Tonbridge, near the northern end quite close to the Castle, in fact two doors south of the side street next to the Lloyds Bank where Harry worked in 1940. I do not include a picture here of the nondescript present-day building, as in May 2010, it did not look as I remembered it. Ann Barry says this was redeveloped in the 1970s or 1980s. The shop I recall was long and narrow, with a tiny office at the back and a rather forbidding cellar. It was always very, very quiet there, but I believe he did a quite good business. I think that walk-in trade was fairly minimal. He likely made his sales through having been a publican. People all over the area knew him as someone they could trust, for example, to “Send over enough for a good party for a dozen people”. They would get an appropriate selection of drinks for a mixed crowd at a fair price. Possibly he took back unopened bottles from regular customers.

Moreover, his store had a selection that would do credit to many much larger liquor vendors today. He also had soft drinks, and I remember my first ginger ale – Canada Dry of course – thanks to my grandfather. He used a blue Ford Prefect van for deliveries. He made a point of not driving more than 20 mph as I have noted before. On at least one occasion he took me with him. I must have been fairly well-behaved, as I had to stay in the car when deliveries were made. Business was business.

School

I started my schooling at a kindergarden in Matfield. I don't recall how I got there, but possibly I was taken in the van or there was a bus. I think the kindergarden was in a church hall. Ann Barry and I tried to find it in April 2010 without success, though there were some semi-recognizable buildings. The "blackboards" were actually some sort of material like vinyl that was affixed to the wall. We learned our letters and numbers and some very rudimentary reading as I recall, though possibly once I had the letters I had my parents "read" with me and learned a bit more than the other children. I can recall music and marching around to it. I don't think it was a full day, but could be mistaken.

When I was five, I started at St Augustine's in Tunbridge Wells. This meant taking the bus. The school was behind the church, and both have since been replaced with the Tesco supermarket on Grosvenor Road at the corner of Hanover Road, with the School entrance on the side street. Since there were several older students from Pembury who went to St. Augustine's, I was expected to tag along with them. I have been told I was very unhappy when Harry left me at the School on the first day – Harry attributed this to the noisy crowd of parents and children in a rather small space, something that I still dislike – but I soon settled in.

At lunchtime we formed a "crocodile" and went two by two and hand in hand to a hall where large ladies doled out the notorious school lunches from bins the size of oil drums. This hall must have been somewhere behind the opposite side of Grosvenor Road either in or very close to the location of the current Royal Victoria Place shopping center.

The CBC program "As It Happens" had a discussion of British school lunches a few years ago. It reminded me that there were some things we liked and some we didn't, as well as the strange names we used or invented. To North American ears, the name "Spotted Dick" for the traditional boiled pudding with raisins that would be served with custard seems rude, but in fact was not an invention of nasty schoolboys. However, "pink sick" was the appellation we gave to rice pudding with strawberry or raspberry jam. We stirred in the jam and likely used the name to try to persuade a neighbour to demur so we might have a double helping. Similarly "Frog spawn" was tapioca pudding.

Many desserts were accompanied by "custard", in reality a milk and corn-starch sauce that was slightly sweetened and coloured yellow. Lumps or a skin on top were apparently mandatory, and something that I actually came to expect and like. The purpose of the custard was, I suspect, to lubricate dry

and possibly tasteless pudding past our tonsils.

I don't recall much specifically about the main courses, except some rather unpalatable brown fish (likely reconstituted salt cod). There were also stews I believe. Mashed potatoes featured prominently, as did extremely overcooked cabbage. Cabbage was for many years something I would refuse, though today, knowing that it can be properly prepared, I like it. I have no recollection of what we were given to drink at school "dinner", as the mid-day meal was called. The evening meal was "tea". School milk – under the 1946 School Milk Act (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ED1946.htm>) – was a third of a pint served at morning break. I don't think we called the break "recess". The milk would sometimes be placed near the heater or stove "to take the chill off", which I would have preferred was not done, as I found the lukewarm milk less palatable than either cold or hot versions.

Before we came to Canada in 1957, I do not remember ever having fruit juice to drink, except for some rather medicinal variety supplied through a health clinic that was used to augment our vitamin C intake, as was Rose Hip Syrup. The fruit drink of the era was "Squash" or "Cordial" or "Barley Water", a concentrate one mixed about two tablespoons to the glass. The concentrate came in bottles that were about 700 ml. in size.

No matter the temperature, boys wore short pants. We survived the cold as well as the smoke that was pervasive, either from tobacco in restaurants, sports venues, and the upstairs of buses, or else the coal fire smoke that led to the "pea-soup" smogs so prevalent in London in that era.

Transport

As Harry mentioned in the chapter on The Stores, at first all deliveries were by bicycle – big heavy delivery bikes with a small front wheel so that there was a large frame above for carrying boxes with orders. Later we got a Jowett Bradford van that had an immense collection of mechanical quirks. Perhaps the most important of these was a vicious clutch. If it had a friction point, only the most delicate of operators could find it. The motor was a 2 cylinder 1000cc engine similar to, or derived from, those of large motorcycles. The cab was big enough to hold 6 of us with slide-in chairs in the back (no recognition of the lack of safety here!). My mother, Peggy, attempted one time to learn to drive. Betty and another woman (possibly Dolly, but I don't think so; maybe Kath Lambert) were in the back in the loose seats, and the Bradford was at Beltring Road (my Moss grandparents' place at the time). Peggy let out the clutch and I recall seeing legs, suspenders, and panties as the seats toppled. (Recall that this is before panty-hose, which were developed for the

stage and screen in the 30s and 40s, but not marketed widely until the 1960s. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantyhose>.) I don't think my mother tried driving again.

The van also had an electric starter that would jam. You then needed to loosen the start motor, move the car or the crank slightly, and tighten up the start motor again. Harry carried a spanner (in North America called a wrench) and arranged a small flap in the floor of the van so he didn't need to go outside and crawl under the vehicle in the frequently wet English weather.

My first driving experience was with the Bradford. Harry sat me on his lap and I steered (or thought I did) along a quiet lane.

I had thought this van was made in the 1930s, but the Wikipedia article on the Jowett Bradford (which has some pictures – I could find none in our family collection), suggests that it was made from 1946 to 1953 as a van, with a windowed variant from 1947. We had windows at the back, but I believe they were a retrofit. Wikipedia reports a price of 740 pounds in 1952, and Harry says he got 400 pounds for it in the sale of the business.

When I was perhaps 18 months to two years old, my mother took me to Sutton to see her sister Dolly. From there we went to Bromley to see my great-grandmother Nacci and my great-aunt Rose. I can recall being on the top of a tram – one of the last in London. The tram was blamed for my later being “sick”, i.e., throwing up. While motion sickness might have been the cause, the lack of food safety already mentioned that was general at the time could equally have been responsible.

“Operation Tramaway”, the replacement of the tram service by diesel bus, was announced in July 1950 by Lord Latham of the London Transport Executive. Retirement started in October 1950 and London's last trams ran in the early hours of 6 July 1952 to a rousing reception at New Cross Depot.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trams_in_London

We also took trains from time to time. I loved trains with a passion and still find them fascinating. From the age of less than two, my mother could not pass the station without buying a platform ticket for 3d that let her take me on the platform to watch the trains. At the time these were steam, and typically tank engines (i.e., they have a tank beside the boiler for water and a coal hopper behind the cab, but no tender). They hissed and puffed and were simultaneously terrifying and fascinating. Interestingly, an earlier class of tank engine was converted to a tender type after a bad accident caused by sloshing



Figure 14.5: British Railways Standard Class 4 tank engine at the Locomotive Parade, Rainhill, 24 May 1980. Dr Neil Clifton, Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license 2.0.

of the water in the tank initiating a derailment at Sevenoaks on 27 August 1927 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sevenoaks_railway_accident).

When I was six, just as we left Pembury, I got a bicycle for my birthday. Harry took me to learn to ride it in the St. John's Recreation Grounds at the end of Beltring Road. There was a large floral fountain about five feet high and twenty feet in diameter in the middle of a lawn. Harry held the saddle and trotted behind me and round and round we went. At least I did until I came round and found him standing there. I fell off. However, it was clear that I had made it round on my own, and by the end of the day I was riding a two wheeler.

Visitors and visits

There were visits from Canadian family too. Harry comments on an extended visit by Jack Moss, my grandfather's brother:

In 1952, he was having a real schmozzle with his wife. And he sold a hotel, I think he had just sold the Calmar Hotel.

Calmar is about 50 km south of Edmonton, about 15 km north of the Wizard Lake cottage Harry and Erma later built.

I can remember a big dinner for Jack at Beltring Road. The table was extended and it was hard to get into the back dining/living room. I was squeezed between two people, and may have had to sit on the dreaded wicker chair, which made nasty lines on the backs of bare legs. That was the first time I'd had corn-on-the-cob. Jack had bought it somewhere. He had found somebody who grew it in England.

There was someone else at that dinner, another Canadian. Possibly a fellow named George Cornford who was mentioned by my grandparents regularly. However, I don't think whoever it was stayed long.

Jack had been given a long list of things to see by Tid Healy (his neice, daughter of his and George's sister Lizzy), who had studied in Europe. (Her husband ended up as Principal of Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, in 1970.)

And Tid had told him, "Jack, when you go to Europe, you've got to see this church and that museum." So he came over, and he started doing this. Then he came to see us [George Moss etc.] It was Easter. And we asked if he'd like us to take him to the dog races and the horse races and a football [soccer] game. Yes, he would. So after the weekend, he got the list that Tid had made, and he said "I'm going to tear this up." He said, "I'm having a much better time with you fellows."

I remember them going fishing in a stream not far from Penshurst. I was a tag-along, and we went to a pub – I was outside in the garden of course – but it was quite sunny and spring-like. Don Parks says he vaguely remembers an outing near there, but did not recall Jack.

And one Wednesday, in May, he said, "Can you get off work", because I had the grocery store, "and come to Lingfield Races?". I said "I'm sorry, I'm too busy." But he went. And when he came back, he said, "You know, I've got the winner of the Derby". The Derby wasn't coming up for a month. And I said, "Who's going to win the Derby then?" He said, "Tulyar". He said, "I saw it run today." It was a Derby trial. And it was a similar course.

They start over here and they come up a hill. Round and down a hill. And into the straight and they've got half a mile to go to the winning post. And he said, "There was a horse, and it was boxed in, and the jockey had to ease it up, and ease it up until it was last, and it came and won by three lengths. It's going to win the Derby."

So we bet it 3 weeks before the race at 14:1. Which is a nice return. 14

to 1. And on the day of the race – now if the horse doesn't run, we lose our money. We'd bet it before the day of the race. But on the morning of the race it was 10:1. In the 5 minutes before the race started, 5 million pounds went on the nose of this horse. And it came down to 3:1. And it won. It beat the royal horse. Must have been the Queen Mother's horse. But we got the money and he paid for the party out of that. That's the party you remember.

I was only 5. The Derby is held on the first Saturday in June, so June 7, 1952.

Oh. Gay Time was the horse it beat. "But you know", he [Jack] said, "that the St Ledger over a mile and 3/4 – Tulyar will not win the St Ledger." And I said, "I think it will." And so we bet each other a shirt. And he went back to Canada. Tulyar never used to win by very much. And it beat Gay Time again. He didn't send the shirt, and I reminded him. Well, you've never seen such a horrific coloured shirt in all your life that he sent me.

Actually Jack went to the Derby.

And being a Saturday, I couldn't get off. He said, "What's it like?". And I said, "When you go, and I've been, you'll have to buy an orange box to stand on. They sell orange boxes to stand on." And I said, "You'll laugh at this. They have little canvas sheets up and shout 'Piddle and poop a penny'.

So he went. What shook him most, was when he went to have a pee, the fellow said "Wait a minute". They had to let a woman out before he went in. He said, "You lied to me". I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "It was 'piddle and poop tuppence." It had gone double.

The other thing he did. When the first race came, he couldn't see anything. So he paid a fellow 10/- for standing on a box. 10/-! So he stood on the box and saw the race. And when the race was over, the fellow took the box back. And it was 10/- for the next race.

Note that this is pretty steep. Even at today's prices. (50p for each race.)

Entertainment

While a few people had televisions, I do not recall anyone in the extended family having one until the 1953 Coronation, when Reg and Dolly acquired one that gave a very fuzzy picture. Radio, or rather "the wireless", was prominent in our lives. Weekday evenings at a quarter to seven in the evening – just before my bedtime – the fifteen minute episode of "The Archers" came on. At a quarter to two in the afternoon, I would "Listen with Mother". Later in the

afternoon, and repeated the next morning, was “Mrs. Dale’s Diary”, to which I usually did not bother to listen.

I very clearly recall the Goon Show. For some reason, I believe I used to hear it on Sunday in the early afternoon, though the original broadcasts were on Monday. Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe, and Peter Sellers I knew as named performers from that time, as well as some of the more wild plots, such as,

- Selling insurance against the Channel catching fire (it did!);
- Providing “leg lagging”, like pipe insulation, as a means to keep warm;
- Failing to launch the world’s first moon rocket with Neddy Seagoon as pilot representing Britain because a large enough milk bottle – into which the stick stabilizer of Guy Fawkes rockets would be placed as a way to launch them – could not be found.

Radio was mostly the BBC. If you had a radio, you needed to have a license. In 1968, when I got to Oxford, I bought myself a transistor radio to be able to hear news and music. A license was then required that cost 25/- (1 pound, 5 shillings), and you had to pay for it when you bought the radio. My account book shows a renewal in 1969, though I don’t recall doing this, and in 1971 a license was no longer required for radio only, but TV receiving licenses are now about 150 pounds per year.

There was no British commercial, nor any local, radio. However, Radio Luxembourg, which broadcast in English in the evening from the Grand Duchy by bouncing its signal off the ionosphere, maintained a certain share of the audience. Their broadcast frequency in the Medium Wave band would not propagate well during the day.

We also had local entertainments in the form of the Village Fete. A nearby picture shows me in a cowboy outfit with some other costumed villagers.

The cinema was also popular, and every Christmas there were pantomimes in the Opera House.



Figure 14.6: Pembury Village Fete, held in the Recreation Grounds off Lower Green Road, sometime in the Spring or Summer of 1952. John as a cowboy. Two unknown girls from Pembury. As I recall the girl who dressed as a Zebra crossing used oranges for the lights on the “poles”, or Belisha beacon, named after the Minister of Transport during which such crossings were first set up in 1934.



Figure 14.7: A K6 telephone box and Edward VII pillar box at the Amberley Working Museum. Source: Wikimedia Commons. To operate, one put in money, dialed or requested number, and when the called party answered, one would push button A to connect, or button B to send money to the refund chute. Both buttons had about a 1.5 cm. action and were quite heavy to depress. I believe it was 2d. for a local call (2 old pence).

Chapter 15

LEAVING THE STORES

The long tedious hours were taking a toll on our marriage. So that's why I put the business up for sale in May 1952. And I didn't get an offer until April 1953.

A fellow hooked me. He said, "Look, I've got a buyer for your business." So I said, "Well, where is he then?" I told him what the price was. I said, "I don't want to mess around. I've got to get that money." And what he was doing was getting a listing for the business. Once he got it listed, then all of a sudden you get a phone call, someone wanting to view it.

I phoned him and said "I thought you said you had a buyer for the business"

"Well, he changed his mind." But he'd got it listed for six months or a year.

So when people used to bother me I'd say, "No, it's not for sale".

Then one day a fellow phoned me by the name of Clark. He said "Your business for sale still?"

I said, "No."

He said "I've just phoned the fellow who said it is, and I'd really like to get a business." He came back and looked at it. And we did a deal, and a month later he took over. It took exactly a year. May 1953.

We got 6500 pounds plus I got the van extra. 400 (pounds). And he paid for the inventory. I did not have a job to go to.

Desly was a silent 50 per cent partner and like me was pleased with the deal we made. So I sold to a Mr. and Mrs. Clark from Chelsea, London and this couple liked "the bottle". It only took 12 months for this business to deteriorate and they sold out.

About 25 years later Heinz (my business partner in Canada) and I were in London doing business and we took a few days to visit friends and relatives

as well as visit the “Nash” Store. When we introduced ourselves to the owner he remarked that he was the 7th owner since I sold out and that no one had made “real money” since I left. Heinz smiled.

We then did a tour of the world renowned Whitbreads Hop Farm at Paddock Wood, 5 miles away. It was after this tour I decided to take Heinz to see Eric Burgess (Paddockwood) who was my main supplier for produce and with whom we had done lots of good deals. When we saw Eric he immediately said, “No one has made much money since you left that business!!” Heinz really laughed this time.

Since the mid 1990s the “Nash” Pembury Store has been a “take out” for Chinese meals. It does not have any tables and seats for patrons to sit down and eat. Not only did this store change but our nearest competitor sold and that location became an outlet for East Indian “take out”.

Lots of changes!!

The period following the sale of the Stores, May to September 1953, when I was just turning 6, I recall as quite unsettling for a small boy. But it must also have been difficult for my parents, though I did not recognize this at the time. Note that I had been in school at St Augustine’s for what in Canada is Grade 1, but was somewhat advanced relative to my peers because I had learned to read more or less in Kindergarten at Matfield. As I remember I stayed with Dolly for a while. Then we stayed with Grandma Moss for a bit at Number 7 Beltring Road in Tunbridge Wells. However, I may be partly mixing up these stays with one that occurred sometime when I was 4 or 5 because Peggy had mumps.

George Moss, Peggy’s father said, “Look, we’ve got this big house on Beltring Road. You’re not going to stay with us longer than you have to. Why don’t you come there till you get settled?”

So we stored the furniture. And we moved in there. George Jr was home. And Audrey was home. Dolly was married and living in Sutton. And Betty was married and had a flat in Ramslye. So we moved to Beltring Road. Just before that, while we were still in Pembury, we went to see the Coronation on TV because Reg had a TV. And Reg was fiddling the whole time. I remember when Reg pointed to the shadows and said “There’s the carriage”. All you could see was possibly a circle. But you could hear the commentary.

This was the first time I saw television. Given the several hours of fuzzy static on a screen that was possibly 10 inches across, in a room with my parents, Dolly and Reg Barry, Betty, Don and Ralph Parks, Mrs. Barry (Reg’s mother), and Peter Barry who was at that time about a year old. In the time,

“watching television” was a big deal, and packing ten people in a small living room to look at rather low resolution images on a tiny screen was not unusual. Outside, it was typical English weather and rainy, at least in Sutton.

From <http://www.terramedia.co.uk/Chronomedia/years/1953.htm>:

June 2 10:15-18:00

BBC Television coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation achieves a UK peak viewing audience of over 20m, overtaking the radio audience (12m) for the first time. A total of 21 cameras are used for the event. The programme is also carried by 12 Continental transmitters and is seen by 1.5m people in Europe.

Cinema-Television, Rank-controlled successor to Baird Television, shows the events on large screens to capacity audiences in a number of cinemas around the country, including the Gaumont Haymarket, Marble Arch Pavilion, the New Gallery and the Gaumonts in Doncaster and Manchester.

While Harry remembers George Jr. and Audrey both living at Beltring Road at that time, I thought George may already have left for Canada, though he may have gone later in the year. Audrey married Harry Shaw from this house on December 26, 1954.

Harry continues:

Then I looked for other businesses to buy. Groceries mostly, in food. I looked and couldn't see anything. And I looked for quite a few jobs; firms I'd dealt with. And I didn't have many ... I did two or three interviews. I went up to Birmingham for one. Then I went up to Slough for Weston's Biscuits. And I got a job with them.

They didn't give me any training. And I went with a fellow out on the road for a week. In Essex, Guildford.

I suspect Harry means Romford. We could find no “Guildford” in Essex.

And then they gave me a territory, but I worked out of Tunbridge Wells. I did round Walthamstow. East End of London. Tough! I went into one store – real Jewish, real tough area – I didn't mind that, I'd been through the War. Tough areas didn't bother me a bit. And I was never scared.

I go into this store and there's this Jewish fellow. And the rule was you got his order and you had all his invoices from the month or two before. And you got the money. I started fiddling in my briefcase for this invoice for him. And

this Jewish fellow said, “You know Garfield Weston should be the one pacing the floor at night”.

And I said, “Why?”

He said, “Worrying whether I’m going to pay this bill or not”.

They were quite comical, these fellows. They were characters.

At some point in the summer of 1953, I suspect July or August, we took a holiday on the Isle of Wight. There are a number of photos. There was a heat wave of sorts, or at least unusually fine weather. This is in an era before sun block. I managed to get severely burned and also got sunstroke – one really felt that death would be preferred. Medics have on occasion asked me how I got the radiation burn on my back. At the time, this was what happened in the UK when the sun shined. Today it would be child neglect. Such is the change of attitudes.

Nonetheless, the holiday was a great success. There are pictures of us sightseeing – in rather formal attire!



Figure 15.1: Overlooking channel from Isle of Wight 1953. The original caption was 'On the cliffs facing E @ Blackgang'

I worked in London for a month. I'd come home weekends. About three or four weeks. Then they gave me a territory based around Winchester.

I didn't get a car until I went to Winchester? I'd ordered it. But it didn't come. It took ages to come. I ordered a new Austin A40, and they didn't have any in stock.



Figure 15.2: Harry Nash, Blackgang Chine. Isle of Wight 1953

I finally got the car and went to Winchester. I came back after one week. And then Peggy and John came down and we lived in a boarding house for two or three weeks.

I recall going to school in Winchester for a short while (I believe at St. Peter's). It was a strange situation. We were living in a boarding house bed-sitting room. I believe we got our evening meal provided. My mother would walk me to school through the narrow, medieval streets. Some in Winchester had width signs, but every few days some fool would try to drive down one of these and get stuck.

Then we moved in to a bungalow with Mrs. Swanell. We shared this little bungalow. Number 4 Caxton Avenue. We looked at properties to buy. One night when I was coming home I saw them nailing up a sign round the corner.

So after getting home I went to see her. She knew us and had seen us around, walking the dog and that. We still had the a dog at that time. Beauty. She didn't come with us to the boarding house. We left her in Tunbridge Wells with Audrey. But she was getting old and soon after I had her put down.

I saw them putting up a sign. And I went to see her. It was just like the Black Hole of Calcutta inside. Like a gambling den. Painted dark green and dark colours. Low light, and you could imagine the money going into the kitty. So I told your mom it was for sale. And I said, let's go look at it after supper. But I said, "When you go to look at it, don't worry about the dark

paint, because that can be changed.”

The woman [the vendor] said “Why don’t you look at the house five doors down, exactly the same model as this? But they’ve got theirs all painted light.” The agent wasn’t there. She was doing everything wrong. So she wanted 1650 pounds for it. I went with Peggy to see the house 5 doors down and told them we were looking at the house on the corner.



Figure 15.3: 168 Upper Deacon Road, Bitterne in 1992. Joanna Barry and Mary Nash. It is actually next to, rather than on, the corner.

Peggy was pleased with what she saw. And I went back to the woman and said what do you want. And she said 1650 pounds. And I said. “I don’t want to go into debt. I’ve only got 1400 pounds”. Told a white lie. And she said “Ok you can have it for that”. She must have been anxious to sell. She’d just listed it that night.

The real estate agent said “You can’t do that”. And I said “Whether you like it or not, I’ve done it. I gave her a deposit of 100 pounds.” And he was mad. But I sold it – when we were leaving for Canada – for 1750 pounds.

Note that this was quite a good return after only three and a half years.

Chapter 16

SOUTHAMPTON

From 1953 to 1957, we lived in Southampton, and apart from the very early period of boarding with Mrs. Swannell at 4 Caxton Avenue, we lived at 168 Upper Deacon Road, Bitterne.

In the memoirs Harry dictated and Phyllis transcribed, there is little mention of this period, even though it was the time when Stephen came along, and it was also a period when both my mother and I developed very serious illnesses that went undiagnosed until we were in Canada.

School and City

I went to School at St Patrick's in Woolston, which is on the River Itchen. I either took the bus or sometimes walked. Generally I came home for lunch, so it cannot have been as far as it seemed. Google Maps shows a walk of about 3 km. The streetscape shows St. Patrick's Church much as I remember it.

From the top of the bus one could see across the city of Southampton to the other river – the river Test – that combine into Southampton Water (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Test) which is where the major docks were located. We could see the funnels of the big liners that were still plying the Atlantic at the time, principally the Cunard Queens – Mary and Elizabeth – and the Blue Riband holder SS United States, which was only 2/3 the size of the Cunard ships.

Not far from the school and church, the main road led down to the Woolston Ferry or Floating Bridge (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Itchen_ferry or <http://www.plimsoll.org/Southampton/RiverItchen/TheFloatingBridge/>) which pulled itself across the River Itchen on cables for over 140 years until a true bridge was built in 1977.

At the time St Patrick's School had a very mixed set of buildings. There was a tall, late Victorian or Edwardian brick building with two or three large classrooms in the centre of the land. In the front was a rather utilitarian green building that I suspect had been a church hall. At the back of the property on the East side of the paved (asphalt or "tarmac" as it was called there) recreation area was a shed-like classroom, while on the other rear area, behind the church, was a set of nissan huts. At the time I did not think this unusual, but in retrospect it clearly was very much a make-do set of arrangements.

The Headmaster, a Mr. Clitheroe, was nicknamed "Clicky". All teachers seemed to have nicknames in English schools, as R.F.Delderfield points out in his novel "To Serve Them All My Days". Clitheroe was a tall, sixty-ish man with badly nicotine-stained fingers. I remember that two of my teachers were a Mr. Newton who was a thirty-ish rather shy man, and a Mrs. Clements, who was a forceful middle-aged woman who brooked no nonsense in her classes.

I don't remember much about the classes themselves. Some fragmentary episodes stay in my mind. One was that we had to build a model skyscraper from match-boxes. This was in my first year at St. Patrick's, so the equivalent of Grade 2. I had no idea what a skyscraper was, nor anything about where they existed apart from some rather fairy-tale place called "New York". As far as I can determine using Internet searches, St. Paul's Cathedral was the tallest building in Britain from 1710 to 1939, when Battersea Power Station took over until 1956. From 1956 to 1991, the Crystal Palace Transmitting Station was the tallest free-standing structure in Britain (some antenna masts were taller).

Another recollection was the rather messy nature of ink-wells in the center of the two-student desks. We had straight pens and were given blotting paper. On one occasion a student soaked a wad of blotting paper in the ink on the end of his pen and flipped the inky blob at another, I recall female, student. I think that resulted in a caning (on the hands) by Mrs. Clements, who put her back into the job. At the time I thought it brutal, though deserved. Today I would applaud the rapid punishment of such a messily destructive act, even though I generally am opposed to physical violence.

The centre of the city had been very badly bombed during WW2, and the conventional wisdom was that only the Lyons' Tea Room and the Norman city gate were left standing. I suspect this to be an exaggeration, but perhaps not an extreme one. It was said the Normans built the walls of the city gate so thick that bombs literally bounced off.

For readers outside the UK, it is perhaps notable that Southampton was not officially a "city" until 1964. While in Canada the definition of a city is, for most provinces, governed by population (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

wiki/City), though the numbers vary by jurisdiction, in the UK a Royal Charter is required. This used to be based on the presence of a Cathedral, so that Winchester was a city, but the much larger Southampton was a town.

One of the most attractive features of Southampton, then and now, is the chain of parks near the centre of the town. In one of these there used to be (I cannot see it now on a satellite image) a large model boating lake. I remember that I had a Jetex model speedboat. This used a tiny rocket engine. As the jetex.org website points out, these rocket engines were exceedingly fiddly to charge and ignite. The thrust was not very straight and the boat never made a very smooth trajectory. Then we had to wait a long time for it to drift back to the side!

Trips back to Tunbridge Wells

We took quite regular trips to Tunbridge Wells. Christmas of 1954 was a “big” occasion, as Audrey (Moss) married Harry Shaw on Boxing Day (December 26). I recall that Harry Nash, Don Parks and some others took Harry Shaw to the White Bear, a pub on the Tunbridge Wells High Street that is now the Tunbridge Wells Bar and Grill. Ralph and I spent a rather boring time sitting in the car – we were not allowed in the pub of course due to our age – while Harry Shaw was plied with drink. I believe there were some sharp words about this later from the ladies. I know the whole proceedings were rather boring to little boys who would rather be playing outside.

I would not have remembered this incident except for the coincidence that Elly Buckler’s 18th birthday party was held in the White Bear building on May 1, 2010, when I was visiting Dolly and others. I was able to note to the waiter that I was finally allowed in, over half a century late!

In the period 1953-57, there were essentially no motorways (freeways) in the south. We had to take a series of small roads, and tried many routes. The 92 miles from Southampton to Tunbridge Wells via the small roads through Petersfield and East Grinstead was the route I remember, though we tried several. It took 3 hours. Even today the M3 / M25 has a suggested timing of 2 hours, which I suspect is calculated with some optimism relative to the generally congested state of the M25. The motorways add about 10 miles to the distance, as one must go too far north.

We had a couple of different Austin cars during this time, both small grey models that were part and parcel of Harry’s travelling salesman job with Weston’s.

We came back to Tunbridge Wells in 1956 for the August Bank holiday

and went to the races on the Monday. Don Parks remembers that we went to Epsom, and were late getting parked. He says Harry jumped out the car and raced to a bookie to place a bet, then stood on the bookie's stool to watch the outcome of the race.

A more striking recollection is that there were hailstorms over the south of England that August 6. I had forgotten this until I was visiting Joanna (Barry) and Ian Walker in Stevenage in 2005 and we went to a local fete that was raising money for junior football (soccer) teams. From a book box I bought three paperbacks for about 10p each so I'd have some reading while waiting for the airplane the next day. This was at the time of the July 2005 bombings, and I expected delays. Indeed, Ian dropped me at Luton Airport, since he then worked at Vauxhall very nearby. I caught a bus from Luton to Heathrow, narrowly missing the arrival of police who found one of the bomber's cars parked at Luton airport with explosives materials inside. One of the books I bought was David Nobbs "Pratt of the Argus", and the incidence of hail in Tunbridge Wells was mentioned there.

Indeed, this hail on August 6, 1956, was quite spectacular. We drove by the Pantiles – either to drop Don and Betty home to Ramslye or possibly the next morning – and there was a solid mosaic about 6 to 8 inches thick of marble sized hailstones that had fused together. Workers were chipping away at the ice with shovels in a desultory sort of way.

When Stephen was born, my mother Peggy was hospitalized in case of complications. I do not know the details, but apparently when I was born she had considerable problems. On the day I was to go to my grandparents, Harry was to pick me up after school. I waited and waited. He was an hour late. For an eight-year old standing on the steps of St. Patrick's church, this seemed an eternity. I do not remember if he had a specific excuse, but his timing was often erratic at this stage in his life.

Exploring the Area

The south and south-west of England are very attractive areas. We took frequent trips to different places. Salisbury is frequently pictured; Winchester less so. We went to Bournemouth, Lulworth Cove, the New Forest, Stonehenge. I don't recall going to Weymouth or Portland.

In 1955, Don, Betty and Ralph Parks came for a holiday. We have pictures with ponies in the New Forest as well as at Stonehenge. We also went to the Isle of Wight on the ferry as I recall. Strangely, I don't recall where everyone was accommodated, but they must have stayed with us. I can remember some

picnics, and some snacks in the gardens of pubs, but no restaurant meals, but we almost certainly had fish and chips at least once.



Figure 16.1: Holidaying with the Parks family in 1955. This is at Southampton Docks.

Harry took me to the Portsmouth Navy Day at the start of April, 1956. We went through HMS Seascout, an S-class submarine notable for sinking a number of Japanese small vessels at the end of World War 2, and on HMS Plover, a minelayer that distinguished itself by laying a mine 20 minutes after the declaration of that war. We tramped around the aircraft carrier Bulwark, but did not make it onto Ark Royal (the successor to the one involved in sinking the Bismark in WW2). I don't know if we went on Nelson's HMS Victory that day or another, but when we did so, I recall being impressed by the number of cannon in different calibres, and the terribly tight space in which they all were arrayed. Especially cramped was the orlop deck area where Nelson was taken to be treated by the surgeons and where he died.

In 1956 we spent our holiday in Devon with the Lamberts, that is, Kath, Cyril and Stephanie. We stayed with Kath's Uncle Tom and Aunt Elsie in their Bed and Breakfast in Dawlish Warren Station near Newton Abbot.. Tom made interesting toys such as tops out of old tin cans. Stephen was a baby at the time. I remember we went on Dartmoor, saw the tors (hills) and the famous prison. Of course there was "seaside" time. And being England, it rained too, but pictures show some nice weather. Kath remembers that Elsie

and Harry went to a whist drive. From his own words, Harry always enjoyed playing cards, something that has never captured my interest.



Figure 16.2: Weston's sales convention, 1956. Harry 2nd from right, 3rd row from back on right side. Note the attire and lack of any women in the sales force.

Harry's Work

During the time we lived in Southampton, Harry worked as a salesman for Weston's Biscuits. He was a travelling salesman or "traveller". This term now has come to replace "gypsy". Then it meant that one drove around to shops and tried to get them to order your company's product.

As always with sales, Harry was very good. He was often on the list of leading representatives. This sometimes meant his commissions earned him more than the managers, and he began to find that his territory as being reduced. This was one of his reasons for emigration in 1957.

I think he liked the work. He got out and about. Each year the company would have a sales convention. He kept the programs and some photos. It all looks terribly serious, with motivational speeches that bore me even reading

the titles. There were no women sales staff. In fact, it appears the only women at the convention were decorative, and that in a way that today we find sexist and demeaning, though at the time it was considered normal.



Figure 16.3: The only women present at the Utmost sales convention, 1956.

In some of his travels, he would note what was going on. I recall that in 1955 he was quite upset about the rabbits dying on or beside the road from the myxomatosis epidemic that killed about 90% of wild rabbits in the UK. This was a disease of rabbits that caused a rather nasty slow death, generally by secondary infections. While initially a natural disease, it had been made more lethal by researchers in Australia in an effort to control the damage being done there by rabbits. Privately introduced in Europe, where rabbits were less of a pest, it devastated the population. There are suggestions that governments were unwilling to promote the use of myxomatosis, but were willing to do nothing official to prevent its use. However, the general populace were unhappy about dying rabbits, often blind, in public view.

One of Harry's business acquaintances we got to know was a Mr. Reeves. I never knew if he had a first name. He was at the time middle-aged and had a rather odd lifestyle. He liked to sail, and did not like British winters. Therefore he would have a small cruising sailboat built for him – likely less



Figure 16.4: Cyril Lambert and John Nash in 1956, at Dartmouth, Devon.

than 30 feet in length, but big enough to live on – during the summer months. Then he would arrange to have it shipped on the deck of a freighter to the Caribbean, where he would charter out to tourists. In the Spring, he would sell the boat and return to the UK.

Reeves seemed to have a house. I remember it as almost completely empty. He had some boxes of supplies in the living room and he used to buy biscuits from Harry. I believe he would sell these and other things to small snack bars, particularly those in vans that would park in roadway lay-bys or visit construction sites. I think his main income was the boat, both in the charters and the sale.

Domestic Life

Our house was a very modest two-bedroom bungalow. It had a tiny kitchenette at the back, then a small dining room that gave onto the hallway that ran parallel to the street – the “front” door was on the side, as can be seen in the photo in the previous chapter. There was a bathroom between the dining room and the living room at the front of the house. Beside the living room, off the narrow hall was the master bedroom. My bedroom door was across

the hall and at the back, with the kitchenette sticking out further. I forget whether the toilet was separate from the bathroom or not, but would guess that it was, and furthermore that the sink had only cold water. The bath water was heated with a "Geyser" that used gas. It was difficult and possibly dangerous to light. In winter, I can recall washing using a small enamel bowl in front of the dining-room fire, which further supports the idea that there was no hot water in the washbasin.

All heating was with fires, though I think we did have one portable electric heater, which would have been called an "electric fire". There was a fireplace in each of the bedrooms and in the living room too. The kitchen hot water was produced with an "Ascot", a gas heater that heated water on demand. This system produces a stream that starts cold, then becomes steam if the regulation is not quite right. In any event, it rarely produces a stream that has constant temperature, so one is forced to put the hot water in a bowl to use it safely.

The roof at the time was slate I believe. This was clearly replaced with tiles some time after we left. Apparently there was a gap in the slates somewhere. Harry returned one night when Peggy and I were away (in Tunbridge Wells) and found the plaster ceiling of the living room down. I believe we stayed away a few extra days while workmen fixed it. I don't recall seeing any mess.

As I mention elsewhere, there was no refrigerator. My mother, Peggy, went shopping most days to the strip of shops in Bitterne. Sometimes she took the bus into Southampton. This went via a circuitous route to get across the various water bodies. While we were living there, several bridge projects were undertaken to improve communications. Sometime soon before we left Southampton, a small supermarket opened in the strip of shops in Bitterne. The idea of "Self Service" was considered quite different from the usual pattern of shopping. Indeed, the large Sainsburys in Southampton had long marble counters with staff behind. They had full hams which were put in rotary slicers just as at the deli counters in modern supermarkets. For about three decades in my life, few supermarkets offered such freshly sliced cold cuts. Now it is back again.

At home we acquired a television in about 1955. I think I was limited to a maximum of an hour a day, but I don't remember being very interested in the single BBC channel. In any case, my bedtime was 8 pm. I would come home from school, have my "tea", then go out to play on my bicycle. There was some rough land behind the houses on Caxton Avenue, as well as behind our house. We had a sort of rough track that we would pretend to race around. Further down the hill a Mr Fox had greenhouses. Sometimes it was known that a delinquent or two would throw stones. There would then be some trouble

around the area.

If it was bad weather, I had my toys. I was very fond of Meccano and would make things that were not in the books of projects. With a local boy named Anthony Bugden whose father had at one time been valet to the Prince of Wales (the short-reigning Edward VIII), I built a quite serviceable cable car that would carry loads diagonally across my bedroom to the top of the wardrobe. I also built houses and shops with a strange construction kit called Bayko (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayko>). This used a base of green plastic (I believe Bakelite) that had a grid of holes into which one pushed wire rods. There were various sets of panels, windows, doors, etc that slid down the rods. There were various roof parts to complete the buildings. Today the small or sharp parts of both Meccano and Bayko probably have safety experts hot under the collar. However, we seemed to survive and learn.

I also acquired a quite large set of electric train gear. I think I got this at Christmas 1955. It was the Tri-ang 00 gauge. The initial set had just an oval of track, a Princess Class locomotive (4-6-2 class), tender, and two passenger coaches. There was a speed regulator and a battery box. The latter used two large square lantern batteries and failed for some reason. Reg worked on it and got things working, but it was clear that a transformer/rectifier was needed. I see from the <http://www.tri-ang.co.uk/> that these cost 45/- (45 shillings) at the time. These were quite massive, but only had to produce 12 Volts DC at 1 amp, which is a very modest power rating.

In the week I am writing this (end of August 2010), I purchased several external cases for computer disks with USB interfaces and small “brick” switching power supplies with the same rating, each for \$15. So the price of such a device has dropped in real terms from more than a days wages for most workers to about 1 hour’s worth (including the disk case). In any event, Reg put together a transformer / rectifier for me as I recall, and I used this until we came to Canada, when we bought one for 110 volt use.

The speed regulators were rheostats with a circuit breaker. This breaker was a red button that would pop up if there were a short, which could happen if the train derailed. Strangely, the connection to the transformer was a threaded post so one could attach a ring or spade lug, but the speed controllers used rather small brass plugs, rather like shoe lace ends, and these went into brass holes in the controller. There were two for input and two for output on opposite sides of the plastic box which was about 4 inches by 2.5 inches by 2 inches high. The wires were 14 or 16 gauge and black. There was no colour coding for positive or negative, though this likely made no difference, since one could run the trains forward or backward, and it was up to the person running them which way they were pointed on the track.

Eventually I acquired quite a lot of track, an X-crossover, four sets of points, a postal wagon that would pick up and toss out small model mail sacks, a shunting engine (modelled on the 0-6-0 diesel-electric), some goods wagons and some station and related accessories, plus a second speed control to run two trains separately.

I also read quite a lot. There were weekly comics. I don't think I subscribed, but did occasionally read Beano, which has been going since 1938. Generally I preferred books, particularly ones about airplanes, trains, etc. I also enjoyed typical British boy's books. There were, for example, "The Boy's Own Annual" which contained various articles and stories. I know I read some of the Jennings series of books by Anthony Buckeridge about some boys at a boarding school (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jennings_%28novels%29). I never went to boarding school, nor wished to, but enjoyed the books nonetheless. Richmal Crompton's "William" books were another favourite, though from a slightly earlier time. Crompton was a single woman who never married nor had children, yet she captured the nature of 11 year old boys very well. She always thought her "William" work was a sideline, but it is what she is remembered for, and I believe that it is very special in capturing the essence of the time and place about which she wrote. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richmal_Crompton for more about her.)

Health non-Care

The 1950s were an awkward time for health care. The NHS had been thrust into being by the post-War Labour governments and subsequent Conservative regimes could not reverse the trends. However, the demand for services meant that they were of uneven quality.

School physical exams included teeth inspections. Teeth never were a strong feature of the English, as underlined by Cleo Laine's "English Teeth" song. In the 1950s the standard treatment for a bad tooth was extraction. I apparently needed two teeth extracted. The anesthetic of choice was "gas" – nitrous oxide. The arrangement was the dentist was in one room and there was a neighbouring area with a sink to rinse and spit out the blood. I realized quickly I was missing four teeth, not two. The aging dentist – probably recalled from retirement to meet the demand – had extracted the wrong two teeth, then (possibly!) the right two.

After this, Harry found a dentist in Gosport through his business connections. He took a more proactive view of dental care. I got some fillings and brushing became more regular. However, the extractions had a sequel in

Canada when the tooth opposing the gap (which eventually filled in) grew too far and had to be extracted. I now have a bridge in its place.

As we were planning to emigrate, I came down with a series of sicknesses, with some sharp pain in my hips. Our GP was a young woman who Harry said was having troubles in her personal life. Whether this was true or not, she missed the obvious signs of rheumatic fever. I describe the consequences of this later. However, in the meantime, with polio and tuberculosis as possibilities, I was subjected to a skin test at the local hospital. This involved putting a weakened culture on the skin and puncturing the skin with six small needles. These needles were in a round base. To sterilize the needles, an alcohol burner was used. One is supposed to let the apparatus cool a little. I got a burn from the round base which then gave concern as to whether I had a positive reaction to the test.

I recall being tested also for muscle strength, presumably for polio. This was a time of great concern about polio. 1955/6 was the last big epidemic of polio and coincided with the Salk vaccine being introduced. As usual, there were concerns about the possibilities of harm from the vaccine, and some real cases of infections and deaths from improperly inactivated virus (<http://www.accessexcellence.org/AE/AEC/CC/polio.php>). In retrospect, Salk's work was monumentally important. At the time, it was difficult to figure out whether to face the disease or the cure.

Suez

World events of 1956 intruded on our lives as Egypt's President Nasser took over the Suez Canal. The subsequent actions by Britain, France and Israel in October of 1956, leading to various reactions around the world, meant the reintroduction of rationing of "petrol". I recall that before rationing, Harry would fill the car every time he could, then siphon the fuel into containers we stored in the old air-raid shelter / corrugated iron shed. Mary recalls that her father, Peter Frohn, did this too in Holland.

My memory is that the ration was 1.5 gallons of petrol per week. Clearly this was not enough to allow Harry to continue his usual regime of visiting clients. I do know he tried all sorts of fuel-saving measures, such as turning off the engine going down hill!

Petrol rationing was introduced on Dec 17, 1956 and was not withdrawn until May 1957 <http://www.rrbew.co.uk/FeatureHtms/F-Excise-PB.htm>. As a matter of inconvenience, this was one of the more obvious reasons for moving to Canada.

Chapter 17

REASONS FOR EMIGRATION

Over the years a question I have been often asked is why did you emigrate from England to Canada? It is quite a long story that built up over the years.

To start with I came from a middle class family and had won a scholarship to a prestigious boys' school, "Skinners", at the age of eleven. This meant I had a good, well-balanced education with lots of sports; in fact my father often said there was too much sports! I graduated in July of 1939 with matriculation and honours and decided to enter further government exams with the intention of getting a good start with the British Government. However, this idea was squashed because war was imminent and my entry fee for the exam was returned.

At that time Alex Punnett, owner of several businesses including the Brick Works where my father was manager, asked my Dad what my intentions were now. He also said that if he was my father, he would give me 500 Pounds and a ticket one-way to Canada. I was seventeen at the time. However I got a job with Lloyds Bank, Tonbridge, thanks partially through an introduction by Alex Punnett.

Then, followed the 2nd World War during which both my parents died. After six years of war, of which I spent one year (part time) in the homeguard, followed by 5 years in the Royal Air Force, in February of 1946 I was demobbed from the RAF and took over management of my parent's small general food store.

In August 1946 Peggy Moss and I were married, and in September 1947, John arrived.

I ran the store for seven years, building up business all the time until it came to the point I had little leisure time (I did not personally take a holiday

during this time). The long hours were beginning to take a toll on our marriage and we decided to sell the business. I did not like the type of life with so many government restrictions on pricing and in the early years, rationing with coupons. I then looked around for different types of business, but not finding anything suitable, went to work with Weston's Biscuits. I worked briefly in London, then Winchester, and finally Southampton. This job I liked and it gave us plenty of leisure time at weekends and holidays. I did extremely well with my work and won numerous awards for sales, so much so that because of my sales they cancelled, in midstream, the commission scheme.

This was in 1956 and coincided with the Suez Crisis. Bitterne Road in Southampton, [near] where we lived, was lined with tanks and military equipment waiting to move to the docks on the way to the Middle East. I remembered back to 1944 when military vehicles were lined up in the same area preparing for Normandy D Day. The only difference being in the camouflage colours on the vehicles. In 1944 they were green, black and brown, whereas in 1956 it was sandy colours.

This situation of impending war was coupled with the scenario that, however one did successfully with one's job, the playing field was changed so all sales people earned roughly the same amount.

Also over the years, Peggy, being Canadian, her family often had visitors from Canada. On speaking to these it did not take long to figure out that Canadians, often in lower types of positions than I had in the United Kingdom, were far better off. Peggy and I had discussed numerous times the situation in Britain. Unions were overly strong with ideas that mediocre efforts should get the same rewards as the good ones.

In addition we had been through one long war, with Peggy injured in a V1 Flying Bomb incident, and we felt Britain was not a good place to bring up our two boys. So our decision was not lightly made.

At this time Geoff and Muriel Witney, who were in a grocery business in Southampton, asked if Peggy and I, with now two boys, John and Stephen, were interested in emigrating to New Zealand. After much research I felt that if a mistake was made, New Zealand being four weeks via boat from the U.K., was too far away.

Instead I thoroughly researched Canada and then we visited with Peggy's parents, George and Ella. I asked George, who had been in Canada successfully from 1908 to 1929, how he thought I would do in Canada. His answer "You will really do well, but the first five years will be tough".

This was the understatement of the century. Peggy, myself, John and Stephen set sail from Liverpool, England, on June 28, 1957.



Figure 17.1: The Nash family ready to go to Canada. This was, I think, taken at Lily Hughes house in Longmeads, Rusthall. The rather formal attire was more or less everyday wear.

Note that we did not leave from Southampton. It appears there were fewer or no Canadian destination departures from there. Nor did we leave directly from 168 Upper Deacon Rd. Harry picks up the narrative.

We did not quite go to Canada from that address. When we decided to come to Canada. A month before – well, I’d listed the house – I sent Peggy and the two boys to the grandparents Moss in Tunbridge Wells. They still had Beltring Road then.

And I stayed behind, and I sold everything to the walls. What I used to do, I’d put an ad in the paper, “House full of furniture for sale. Owner emigrating”. And I’d list a few things. And one night I listed, “Men’s wardrobe - 4 pounds”. The first 10 calls I had were for this wardrobe.

About 6 o’clock the first people arrive to buy the wardrobe. And I say, “It’s sold”. Of course it wasn’t. I relisted it because there was so much demand. Ten pounds a week later. Another funny thing was we had a Pedigree Pram.

We'd bought this brand new for John. With the big high wheels.

There's a picture of John and Ralph sitting in it. After that, Ralph had it, then Peter. Then Steve. And we said John could have the wheels off it to make a go kart. Remember? But then we were going to go to Canada. There were a lot of marks on it by now.

Anyway it was a Sunday morning. I'd put an ad in on the Friday night and this fellow phones up and says, "You still got that pram?" I said, "Yes", so he came over. And he said "It's pretty sound. Beat up a bit. Buy everything in sight for the first kid. Second one has to take what he can get. Here's a quid." And he was on a bike and it was raining. And he hooked it on the bike and rode off in the rain with the Pedigree pram tailing behind him.

The hardest things to sell ... I had a set of ... George Moss used to know we played golf every now and then. And I had those clubs ... with wooden shafts ... rotten golf clubs. And a lot of little stuff. When I went selling on the road with Westons, I'd put some little stuff like the Westminster chime clock in the car – the chime-forever clock. It wouldn't stop when it started. This dark oak clock. So I put that in the car. And I put these golf clubs in. And ornaments and that sort of thing that we didn't want. And I was in Bitterne. Down right on the borders Down near Southampton. And I went in a store and I sold them some biscuits. And I got the money. And the woman says, "And anything else?". And I said, "Well I've got a set of golf clubs." She said, "We've got a son who's going to start playing golf".

So I brought them in. She called her husband. And he got hold of one like this [[Here Harry made a motion like swinging.]]

I said "You've broken the bloody thing in half!"

He said, "They're rotten". They were too.

And there was a bag that was pretty decrepit. I sold them for 35 shillings to somebody.

The funny thing about it was the chime clock. I was right down by the dock-yards. I saw a ship launched. And they launched it sideways. Not down the shute. They rolled it in. And I'd seen one launched. I was down in that area. It was pretty ... well it was very industrial. And I went to this store, I knew this fellow. Well. I knew him because I called on him every month. He said, "Anything else". And I said, "I've got a Westminster chime clock. And then I've got one or two other things." He said, "What?" I said, "I'm leaving. I'm going to Canada." He said, "You think you're doing the right thing?" I said, "Whether I am or not, I'm going." So he said, "Let's have a look at the clock"

He said to me, "Does it work?" "Yes. Start the pendulum like this." "How about the chimes?" These worked. But the striking of the hour would not stop!

He said "I'll take it. How much do you want?" "Three pounds." So he gave me 3 pounds. And then he said "I'll test the hour."

I set the time at twelve and got in my car. As I'm leaving he said "They don't stop". And I called back, "That's your problem."

The chimes were fine. The hour was the problem. It would strike until the spring ran out. That was probably relatively easy to fix. He actually got a good deal, because that clock today would be worth several hundred, maybe even a thousand or so pounds. And there are people who will fix them. That was in '57. And the thing was old then. It was one that you got in a jewellery store that Mother bought.

The last thing, the toughest thing to get rid of was the big furniture. And I was sitting there and I had a sideboard with a table and four chairs. A big oak table with spiral legs. And I had a settee with big arms. And a chair with big arms. Perhaps there were two chairs. Two chairs and the settee. We had a television too. I gave that to grandma Moss. They didn't have one.

Somebody came about 9:30 at night. This fellow. And he said, "What have you got then?" And I said, "We haven't got much left. But come and have a look." He said, "Well you've got a sideboard and dining room table and chairs and that." And he said, "You know, I've just bought my first house. And I didn't want to pay quite as much. But I paid more than I intended to. This is one cheap way to start filling it up".

I had my job until the end. In fact, I had it when I got to Canada. And I travelled on my holidays. Worked right up to the last day. Went to Tunbridge Wells. Then next week I went to Liverpool. And when I got to Canada I was still on holidays from Weston's. After 2 days I went to work for Weston's again. That is, I went to work for Paulin's which was part of the Weston group.

Date	Amount in Writing	Initials	Amount Deposited	Amount Withdrawn	Balance
1937	Feb		1414 1 4	50 1 3	1364 1
Feb 20	sixty four pds			64	1300 1
Apr 5	fifty pounds			50	1250 1
May 10	four hundred & twenty three pds 2/-		473 2		1723 2 1
28	three hundred & fifty pds			350	1373 2 1
Jun 20	Interest		21 1 10		1394 3 11

Figure 17.2: Last page of Harry's bank book from Southampton.



Figure 17.3: Postcard from the Empress of Britain, 1957.

Chapter 18

IMMIGRATION/ACME NOVELTY

On June 28th 1957 Audrey, Peggy's eldest sister, saw us off to Canada from Liverpool sailing on the "Empress of Britain", one of the Canadian Pacific Line.

When we arrived in Quebec City and cleared customs I had my first taste of Quebec way of doing business. The Customs Official eyed our luggage and numerous boxes including a plywood tea chest with metal strapping. Since we had no tools an assistant cut the strapping with snippers and pried open the wooden lid to find a Doulton dinner service which I had bought sight unseen through my friend Les Wilburn who had connections with the factory. After a quick look (two seconds) at the contents he said we could seal the crate but since we were without tools and materials the assistant charged us \$5.00 for his trouble.

We arrived in Canada when I was almost 10. I don't recall clearing customs in Quebec, but in Montreal. We did stop in Quebec, and some people got off, but our crate(s) were not unloaded or checked until Montreal. My parents may, however, have cleared immigration in Quebec. One thing I do remember is the shock of seeing a policeman with a gun. Guns were very uncommon in England. Police did not carry firearms at all at the time.

I recall the noise and confusion of the dockside shed and the big men who cut open and sealed up the crate. And I recall that they did lift out a couple of the Doulton figurines and that when we got to Calgary, one of them was broken and we glued it together.

I remember we got this luggage and got it put on the luggage car. And gave

CANADIAN PACIFIC STEAMSHIPS LIMITED
EMPRESS OF BRITAIN

*"As this voyage draws to a close I wish to convey to each and every passenger the good wishes of my crew and myself.
We were very glad indeed to have you on board, and we hope that you enjoyed being with us."*

Commodore J. P. Dobson, D.S.C., R.D., R.N.R.

ABSTRACT OF LOG

(Staff Commander, B. Ford, R.D., R.N.R.)

LIVERPOOL to QUEBEC and MONTREAL

SAILED, JUNE 28th, 1957

Date	Lat. N.	Long. W.	Dist.	Wind	Force	Weather, Remarks, Etc.
June 28	Stage to	Dept.	129	Var.	3	18.34 Left Stage. 18.46—20.53 anchored for tide.
29	55.29	10.31	189	S	4	03-00 Pilot left. 03-06 dep. Bangor, N. Ireland. Mod. sea and swell. 06-37 Inishtrahull.
30	54.42	25.02	500	SW	4-7	Rough sea. Mod. to heavy swell. Cloudy and clear.
July 1	51.50	39.09	535	Var.	6-2	Moderate sea and swell. Cloudy and clear.
2	47.31	50.27	509	Var.	2-6	Moderate sea and swell. Cloudy and misty weather.
3	48.39	62.38	536	Var.	1-5	17.40 C. Race. Slight sea and swell. Cloudy and misty weather.
4	To	Father Pt.	248			Expect to arrive Father Point 00-15.
4	To	Quebec	162			Expect to arrive at Quebec 09-00.
5	To	Montreal	139			Expect to arrive at Montreal 08-00.
		Total	2947			

BEAUFORT WIND SCALE. 0 Calm. 1 Light Airs. 2 Light Breeze 3 Gentle Breeze.
4 Moderate Breeze. 5 Fresh Breeze. 6 Strong Breeze. 7 Moderate Gale. 8 Fresh Gale.
9 Strong Gale. 10 Whole Gale. 11 Storm. 12 Hurricane.

R. F. Miller, Chief Officer

J. Bennett, Chief Engineer

F. C. Benson, Chief Steward

B. M. Jensen, L.M.S.S.A., Surgeon

F. C. Talbert, Purser

Figure 18.1: Page of the souvenir ship's log from our Empress of Britain passage to Canada in 1957.

the porter 2 bits. 25 cents. And he said "If that's all you've got, you'd better keep it." Pretty tough on new immigrants.

While I recall moving the crate and boxes somewhere, I don't recall where we put them. I think there was some sort of shuttle service to the train for the

luggage as we certainly did not have to be encumbered during the afternoon we spent in the city. We may have taken a cab downtown, though the Old Port is a walkable distance from where the railway termini were located near the intersection of Peel and Dorchester (now René-Lévesque Boulevard). But I do know we had a nice sunny day, and I remember sitting in a park by the Cathedral of Our Lady Queen of the World, which is very near the former Windsor Station from which we departed in the evening. I did not, of course, remember the name of the Cathedral at that time.

I also recall the strangeness of seeing a “Drug Store”. The usage in England at the time was “Chemist”, with refinements such as “Dispensing Chemist” (i.e., pharmacist) or “Photographic Chemist”, since these shops were the usual place for developing and printing camera films. “Drug” in England at the time, at least in my mind, meant something that was given to someone to incapacitate them – I was a bit young to know about recreational drugs.

On the train we had one upper and one lower bunk I think, with curtains. The washrooms were at the ends of the car. We went to the dining car for meals. I watched out the window as we crossed Ontario. Later I would come to know the Great Canadian Shield better – rocks and trees, and for variety, trees and rocks. We seemed to be moving very slowly compared to British trains.

I also recall walking outside the station at Winnipeg in the morning. The total journey was about 3 days, and I am fairly certain that the morning following Winnipeg we were in Calgary.

Harry summarizes all this in one sentence.

In Montreal we disembarked and took a CP Rail train to Calgary. We arrived on Monday July 7th at 7:00 a.m. just as the Calgary Stampede Parade was forming up. We were met by George Moss Jr. and taken to a point on the parade route, watched the parade and then met Archie and Ciss Toole at a carpark, old friends of the Moss family who took us to their home for a welcome lunch.

I remember Archie’s car. The interesting feature for a 10-year old boy was the push-button automatic transmission. The buttons were to the left of the steering wheel, so I am fairly certain from some Internet research that the car was a Chrysler or Dodge.

Chrysler Corporation automobiles introduced pushbutton automatic transmission controls for their PowerFlite and Torqueflite transmissions for the 1956 model year. Instead of the traditional placement of a gear selector on the column, Chrysler’s system mounted the gear buttons in dashboard

Pods to the left of the steering wheel, becoming the first U.S. carmaker to offer such a system.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teletouch>

And of course, the car was huge by comparison to British cars of the era. It also drove on the right hand side of the road, which seemed very odd for a day or so.

Archie and Ciss lived in South Calgary, probably 15 or 16 Street about the level of 24th Avenue, in a typical bungalow of the era. Ciss was probably a very distant relation of George Moss. The table for lunch was beautifully set. I think there was a jellied salad as part of the lunch – another novelty.

Harry remembers Anne Smith (Ciss Toole's sister) and her husband (Albert?) being there also. Later Archie (or possibly Albert) drove us to Safeway for groceries, then to the house George had arranged in Parkdale just north of the Bow River about 25th street and 5th Avenue, next door to Bud and Olive Keate. Bud was the son of Lizzie, the sister of George S. Moss.

George implied we could have this house – furnished – as long as we wanted it. But after 2 1/2 weeks, we're just sitting down to supper, and there's knock, knock at the door and there's this rough looking fellow with a beard. Well, unshaven.

I said, "Yes". He said, "I'm the owner of the house. Bill Bevan." I said, "Come in". He said, "When are you moving out?" I said, "I thought we had it"

"Look", he said, "the family aren't coming back for another week to 10 days." He'd come back to go to work. He said, "I'll use that bedroom in the basement. If you want to move in the basement when they come back you're welcome to."

Well, I went out and had a place within a day. It was unfurnished. We had to go out and buy furniture.

We never learned the full story of the mixup. George Moss Jr. led a quite unfocussed life until his middle years when either responsibilities of family or the recognition, like Mark Twain says, that folks are as happy as they decide to be, helped him settle. He was always generous and helpful to me, but was possibly a great obstacle to himself. He was a son born after four daughters and had been given a private (in England "public", rather than "state") school education, then training as a mechanic and a passage to Canada. In Canada, he had been trained and had worked as a blaster with a seismic crew in Northern Alberta at the height of the 1950s oil boom. Yet, when we arrived, he was out of work, even though the crews were still active. In subsequent years,

he drifted through a series of jobs as a bread deliveryman, liquor store worker, and various other things in Canada and England. Eventually, he settled on getting training and doing social work related to corrections, where he seemed to find his niche.

As Harry puts it:

Well, when we got there ... the second or third day we were there – and he used to write [to England] how much money he was making on the seismic rigs and all this, and doing that and doing this. On the second or third day he tapped Peggy for money. And she said “George, we didn’t come here to support you. We’ll have a tough time supporting ourselves. But I’ll feed you, but that is all.”

Bill Bevan and his family became important friends to us. In the early 60s we spent a few days with them at their cottage property near Kimberley BC. With Harry moving to Edmonton and Bill and his wife retiring to Vancouver Island, we largely lost touch, but Harry did call them in 1995 on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary.

Buying furniture gave me an important memory. That was the day I remember sitting in Archie Toole’s car while Harry and Peggy went into Steinberg’s Furniture, which was down near the Calgary Zoo. They bought a deep blue sectional sofa that was the fashion at the time – two straight pieces and a 90 degree curve, a kitchen table and chairs, and a bedroom set that had a bookcase in the headboard, a dressing table with mirror and a tallboy. Mary and I know the bedroom set well. When we had no furniture at all in 1973 and I got my first “real” job with Agriculture Canada, we moved it with us to Ottawa and used it for many years. Then we had Mike Simms of Ashton Kitchens make us a new bed and tallboys in the same approximate style – we found the headboard so convenient that we could not do without it.

While my parents were shopping, I saw an oil-fired steam locomotive pulling a long train. Black, inky smoke pouring out of the funnel. It was around the end of the steam era in Canada. And then the sky opened with a massive electrical storm. In England I’d heard thunder and probably saw flashes of lightning, but always they were behind clouds. Now I saw bright pink sparks cross the sky from one side to the other. Everything in Canada seemed different!

On a recent trip to England to talk to surviving family and friends who knew Harry, I happened to stop on Monson Road to have a coffee after doing some checking in the Tunbridge Wells Library. I happened to ask if the maple walnut croissant had real or artificial maple flavour and was told it was real.

However the lady running the shop did not seem to understand that there could be artificial maple, and I opted for a chocolate croissant.

A fellow sitting having a coffee commented that I must be a Canadian and we got talking. He turned out to be in Tunbridge Wells for a family funeral, but have emigrated to Okotoks Alberta, where he ran a Condo management company. I told him how I came to have similar links in Alberta and Kent and asked him how he found living in Canada after England. His reply was that it was really difficult to explain to those in England how different the country was. I asked if that meant the sky and the light and he said that was precisely what he meant. The big skies of the foothills provide a great contrast to the soft greyness of England.

Right after our arrival in Calgary, Harry set about work. In the next paragraph he seems to contradict his earlier account that he had continuity of employment with the Weston group. However, it may be that he was told he would find some sort of employment with the group if he wanted it. I know that the company he joined was Paulin's, which I believe to be a contraction of the Paulin Chambers Biscuit Company. I cannot find any record of their purchase by Weston's, but they did lose a trademark case in the Supreme Court of Canada to Rowntree for a confection called "Smoothie" that was deemed to be too similar to "Smartie". The Paulin name was, even in 1957, fading, and I don't recall any products under that name beyond a year or so of our coming to Canada.

In the meantime the day after arriving I went to Canadian Immigration Department and asked about any Weston's Biscuits outlets being in Calgary. I immediately went to the given address saw the area manager and was given a job starting in the warehouse. The going rate I had been told was \$250.00 a month but I was only offered \$200.00 which I accepted knowing I had not come to Canada to handle biscuits.

This Company I joined shared a lunchroom with several other firms and on my first day there was a "stook" card game in action with half a dozen young workers. Since I had played lots of cards during the war I asked if I could join the game and I was welcomed in. The warehouse manager said I was "nuts" since they would take all my money. On the first hand I was dealt a seven and a two as my first two cards so I said I would "stay put" and people watching me play said you do not stay on a nine. So I took another card but left an impression I did not know how to play properly. Now that their guards were down I played with my usual skills and in the few weeks that I worked there each day was good for \$3.00 or \$4.00; which brought my income to around \$250.00 per month.

In August I was approached to sell life insurance for Imperial Life, a large Canadian Company. I was by this time selling cookies to the stores and hotels as a relief salesman for men on holidays. The area was parts of Calgary but I did not have a car; a colleague used to drive me to the first call daily and from there I walked and sometimes hitch hiked with other trades people to other calls. The Company was very pleased since my sales were often better than the regular sales people and when I handed my notice to start with Imperial Life on September 1st the manager offered more money for me to stay.

The salary at Imperial Life was \$275.00 monthly paid bi-monthly. On the 15th of September when I went to get my desperately needed cheque Stan English, the manager, stated you do not get paid for the first two weeks as that time is training. I thought "you rotten b——-!"

However I stuck it out and in October they announced that anyone selling six new policies in November would win a turkey. This I did, but I was beginning not to enjoy working in life insurance, but being winter was glad of the money.

In January 1958 I got a job selling Remington Typewriters door to door with just pictures of the typewriters; no samples. Commission was \$30.00 per unit, and this first day I sold two machines; then went a week without a sale. During this time I was still selling life insurance and each morning went to the insurance office and listed my best typewriter prospects as those also for insurance.

I knew pressure would be put on me to sell insurance policies, so when I sold I would keep up to four insurance applications in my brief case and would hand one in when the heat was on.

In February Peggy was concerned that even though I worked so hard with long hours I was not getting any "breaks".

A few days later while I was shaving early in the morning Peggy heard a radio ad announcing a company was moving. She took down the new address and suggested I should investigate.

After the insurance meeting I went to the address at 735 10th Avenue SW in Calgary and asked if the "boss man" was in. The general manager was in Ontario and in his place, one of the owners, Bryce Van Dusen, was standing in, having come from Edmonton.

I did not know what they did and he did not know what I could do. He asked and I said that I could do anything in the way of sales and promotion and to prove it I have this thick roll of papers showing Skinners School reports, Air Force discharge document, financial statement of grocery store I had operated successfully for seven years, numerous prize awards selling for Weston's Biscuits, plus limited success with life insurance and typewriters door-to-door.

He said with that expertise, how much money are you looking for. I said I was looking for someone to give me a chance, and I would go to work immediately if someone would offer \$275.00 per month, since this was my break even point when I had a wife and two sons.

He said “I’ll tell you what, I will start you on Monday (this was Friday) at \$250.00 per month and review it within three months”. We shook hands and he added, by the way we are open on Saturday mornings; why don’t you pay a visit to see what we do.

As usual, I was up early Saturday morning and was at his office at 7:45 a.m.; they opened at 8:00 a.m. He said, “Jesus Christ! You and I are the first here. Why don’t you take off your top coat, stay to 1:00 p.m. and I will give you a days pay.” That was the start of thirteen and a half years working for Acme Novelty Ltd., where I went from warehouseman to Operations Manager of seven outlets in Western Canada and well over 200 in staff.

As I write this on September 12, 2006, I am going for supper with Bryce, now 91 years of age, at the Yellowhead Casino, part of the ABS group. At the same time Erma and Florie Van Dusen are going to Gyrettes supper meeting at the Mayfield Golf and Country Club.

We have come a long way!!



Figure 18.2: Harry Nash in the Acme Novelty warehouse store, likely in 1959.

Chapter 19

CALGARY 1958 to 1961

Harry included surprisingly little mention of this period of his life in the material he dictated for Phyllis to transcribe. On the other hand, he took old 8 mm home movies, edited and narrated them into a collection for Stephen and I. (I think we likely should thank Erma for pushing this project forward.)

We had arrived in Calgary in July 1957. Calgary was booming during this period. It had about 129,000 population in 1951, a quarter of a million in 1961 and over 400,000 in 1971. Suburbs chewed their way across the rolling prairie, and we joined thousands of others in occupying those tracts of houses.

After we left the Bevans' house in Parkdale, we rented the main floor of a two-storey house at (I recall) 1823 18A Street SW. The upstairs was occupied by an army family. There was a basement with an "octopus" furnace and some storage space, but this was a shared area. Some things went "missing", notably a German aviation compass with water bubble that strapped to a pilots leg above the knee. Very nice, and likely attractive to boys of 12 to 14 years.

While we were on 18A Street, the Soviets scored a big propaganda victory with the launch of Sputnik. I remember standing outside and seeing a moving star traverse the sky. This may have been the booster final stage (Wikipedia and others assert the 580mm sphere of Sputnik 1 would not be visible). Or perhaps it was the larger Sputnik 2 with its canine passenger – an unfortunate animal that made a one-way trip.

Finding our Feet

Harry has mentioned his troubles with work and eventually finding a job. He did not mention an additional concern resulting from my own health issues.

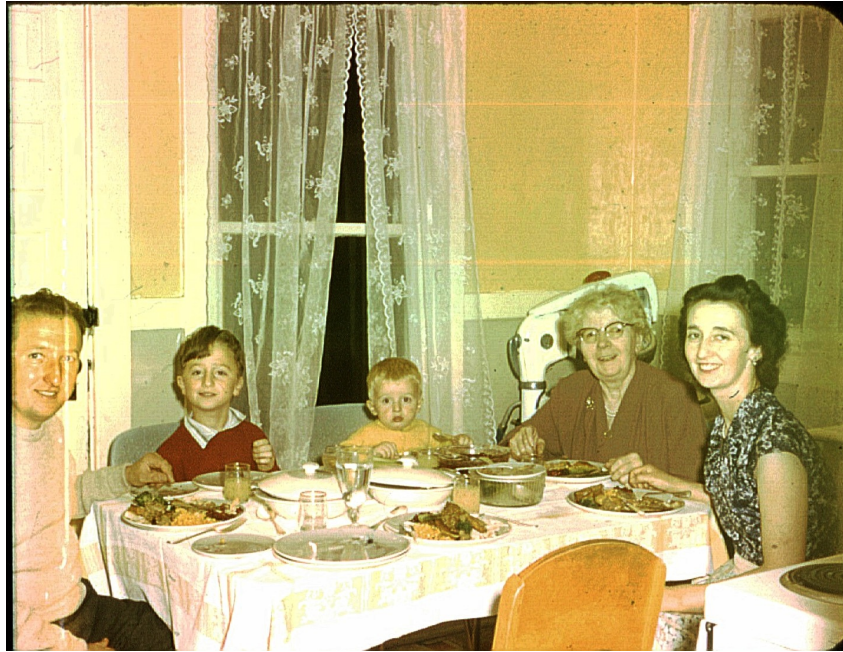


Figure 19.1: Dinner on 18a Street, 1957. Harry, John, Stephen, Nurse Frankton, Peggy. George Moss Jr. likely took the photo. Note the wringer washer behind Nurse. This was in the kitchen too, as the stove is to Peggy's left. The dinner service is the "good" one, and Erma Nash reminded us in 2009 that a few pieces of the service (which Harry bought before leaving England) were still in use at the Wizard Lake cottage. There are the formal serving dishes on the table. The imperfections in the image are the result of degradation of the photo.

In the winter of 1956-57, I had been complaining of sore legs and hips. This was investigated, with the primary suspects being polio – this was at the time of the introduction of the Salk vaccine and very much in the news – and tuberculosis. Nobody thought of rheumatic fever. Eventually my pains were put down to fear of moving to Canada, which was very much NOT the case. My grandfather's stories of his life in Canada had me enthusiastic to go there, even if my imagined Canada turned out to be very different from the reality I eventually found.

Soon after we got to Calgary, I began to have episodes of slurred speech and involuntary muscle movement. I remember more or less throwing a spoon once and being mortified that I was thought to be doing this wilfully. This was well before the Canada Health Act, so the cost of a doctor's visit must have weighed heavily on my parents. However, sometime around the beginning of

the school year – I suspect around the middle of August – I was taken to see Dr. Atkinson, an almost stereotypically brusque Scottish physician and surgeon, who immediately recognized the classic case history of rheumatic fever followed approximately six months later by the common sequel of Sydenham’s chorea, sometimes known as St. Vitus’ Dance.

The treatment was bed rest and aspirin. I remember rather strongly the figure of 16 aspirin a day in four sets of four tablets. Each tablet is normally 325 mg, so I was taking 5200 mg per day. The maximum recommended adult dose is 4000 mg per day, but for treatment of rheumatic fever a dose of 100mg / kg / day is suggested (Wikipedia). I would guess that as a 10 year old, I weighed no more than 90 lb and possibly less, that is, about 40 kg. 16 tablets would be about 130 mg/kg/day, or somewhat above the published dosage, but possibly within the range that physicians might prescribe.

Today fear of Reyes’ syndrome has much diminished the prescribing of aspirin for children. After a couple of weeks, I was also prescribed cortisone, I now surmise because I was not responding to treatment fast enough. My recollection of how long I was in bed is vague. A figure of nine weeks sticks in my mind, but I also remember starting at Sacred Heart School in grade 6 on fairly mild autumn days. This is consistent with first seeing Dr. Atkinson in an office that I believe was on 6th or 7th Avenue in the middle of August.

During my time in bed, I read a great deal and listened to the radio – we did not have a television until Nurse Frankton left hers to Harry in her will in 1960. I believe we mostly tuned to the CBC. Harry always liked dogs, and for a few days we had a mongrel terrier, but it ran off, was captured by the dog-catcher, bailed out, but ran off again. I believe we did not pursue a second release.

New and Different

Our new life was markedly different in many respects from that in England. We had no refrigerator in England and Peggy would shop most days, usually in the small, family-run shops of the “High Street”. In Calgary, we immediately had a large refrigerator. I can remember the first supermarket, tiny by today’s standards, opening in Bitterne in 1955 or 1956. But in Calgary, there was the local convenience store on 17th Avenue (I recall it was operated by a Chinese-Canadian), and then there was Safeway. All other supermarkets seemed to be struggling to keep going by comparison, for instance, the small Jenkins’ chain. The Glenbow Museum has some images of the Jenkins’ stores on their web site.

On Sunday's in the late 1950s one went to church in the morning. We went to Sacred Heart Church, though I am not sure how regular we were. Certainly I did not go while being treated for rheumatic fever. I can remember Harry going off on a Sunday afternoon with Stephen in a push chair. I think Peggy stayed home. It was less than 2 miles to the Mewata Stadium at about 12 Avenue and 11 Street, where he could watch amateur (Canadian) football games for a donation of a coin or two. The laws relating to what was allowed to be open on a Sunday required only a "silver collection". Harry would wheel Stephen up and down the walkway and watch the proceedings. The Calgary Stampeders also used Mewata Stadium then, but moved to the newly built McMahon Stadium in 1959. Mewata was torn down in 1999. It had opened in 1906.

Later in the year, as winter came, we would go the Stampede Corral on Sunday afternoons. Again a "silver collection", typically a dime for a boy my age, let one see two games in the Big Six league. Hockey was fast and furious compared to soccer and cricket, particularly as 1-day cricket was still years into the future. For 5 cents one could get a box of salted popcorn. 10 cents got a small tub of it with melted butter on it. We usually got the box. Harry recalled that Peggy was a great fan of the Big Six hockey.

We also acquired a car at some time during our first year, when we bought a dark blue 1949 Ford V8 from Harry Lee, a cousin of my grandfather George S. Moss. I cannot recall if it was a 2 or 4 door model. This let us explore our new land more widely.

Though it did not register directly in my consciousness, money was not plentiful. We had food, and we entertained ourselves with inexpensive outings, picnics, "silver collection" events, and so forth. We did not eat out, but I don't think that there were all that many restaurants. I can recall trying buttermilk in the cafe in either the Bay or Eatons – they were both between 7th and 8th Avenues, one at 1st Street W, the other at 3rd. While buttermilk sounded like a good idea, I discovered that I did not like it. Today I do, so possibly it was simply the unexpected tartness that put me off. I did like the hot chocolate at Andy's Ranch Room on 17th Avenue and about 15th Street S.W. The marshmallows that were added were a great novelty.

In fact marshmallows were, in England, treated as rather special and presented in a fancy box, typically with pink and white marshmallows arranged in a checkerboard fashion. In Canada, they were an ordinary confection sold in a plastic bag, and were used in cooking. For example, they were used in Rice Krispie squares and in salads. How un-English! In 1970 or 1971, Mary and I even figured out how to make marshmallows ourselves because they were so expensive in the UK.

Andy's also introduced me to grilled cheese sandwiches, which my mother learned to prepare in the frypan. Again, this was not something that I recall in England. And certainly not with processed cheese slices. Today we consider these as something to be avoided in favour of cheese cut from the block. Then, they seemed very progressive. And of course, they were heavily promoted in TV commercials where Kraft was the sponsor, with the deep voice of Joel Aldred extolling the virtues of products we really did not need.



Figure 19.2: Typical Calgary street view in 1960. I believe this is 1st Street SE looking north from about 16 Avenue S.

Whereas my grandfather had a pub and then an off-license, in Canada in the 1950s drinking was very circumscribed. All private purchases had to be made through the Alberta Liquor Control Board stores. There was one on 17th Avenue SW at about 12 Street. Purchases were made by requesting items at a counter – no “self-service”! There were a few bars in the major hotels, I am sure, but as a child I never saw them as they were hidden from view. Sometimes there would be a door marked “Men” and another “Ladies and Escorts”. It is amusing to consider the consequences today if a hotel proposed such an arrangement. And many bars were referred to as beer parlours. In England, I was not allowed inside a pub, but was often the recipient of lemonade and chips outside, either in the garden or the car.

I don't recall my first Calgary snowfall. I had seen snow in England, indeed there are some blurry photos of sledding down the field that is (still) more or less opposite the Stores in Pembury. I was very small at the time of this

unusually heavy snowfall. So the novelty of snow does not sit in my memory, though purchasing rubber overboots does.

I do recall the thaw that came with a chinook, and the remarkable – at the time threatening – arch of dark cloud in the West and the warmish, strong wind. The roads became slush, and little boys like me managed to make icy snowballs and get wet. I don't recall my mother being angry. Perhaps we had already learned to set up a boot tray and coat hooks.

To the End of the Line

In the Spring of 1958 my parents began looking for a house. They had owned the Stores, followed by 168 Upper Deacon Road and also some rental properties, and I fully understand the desire to own the house one lives in. We looked in Haysboro, which was just being developed. From Wikipedia:

“Haysboro was established in 1958 on land owned by Harry Hays until the annexation (1956).”

Hays was Calgary's Mayor from about 1959 to 1963, when he became Alberta's only Liberal MP, serving for a while as both Mayor and MP. Lester Pearson asked him to be Agriculture Minister. He failed to gain re-election in 1965, but was made a senator in 1966.

We were shown round Haysboro by a real estate salesman who managed to close the door of his large, two-door car on Stephen's finger. Whether this or other factors were at play, we did not buy there.

On the 15 of June, 1958, “Mr. and Mrs. Harry Nash” bought 4536 25th Avenue SW for a purchase price of \$14,112.40. This house had been built in 1955, with an original mortgage from London Life of \$10,047 at 5.5% on a term of 25 years. The original document for the mortgage stated a monthly payment of \$61.33. Peggy and Harry took over the mortgage with a principal remaining of \$9,462.40. A letter from their Lawyers, McLaws, McLaws, Bancroft and Deyell, informs them that the first payment of \$82 was due on June 24, 1958. The difference of about \$20 is likely to cover property tax. The Statement of Adjustments charges them \$94.94 in tax adjustment, so this is of the right scale.

The property was near the edge of town at the time. 45th Street was interrupted by a gully that ran behind our house. A causeway was built across the gully (with a culvert as I recall), probably in 1958 or 1959. Stephen does not recall 45th Street before this roadway was constructed but does remember the gully. About a year later, the gully sides were sloped and eventually

sodded. We have pictures of Stephen skiing and tobogganing on the slopes and skating on the rink that was set up in what eventually evolved into a substantial community centre in the gully.

At this time, as Stephen has reminded me, bread and milk got delivered, as did laundry. While there are still laundry services today, they mainly serve a more institutional market. However, then it was more common to send out laundry, and in particular shirts. I remember shirts being delivered in cellophane wrappers, all nicely folded, so Harry could have fresh shirts and my mother did not have to iron them. We did have a wringer washer in the basement that had to be manually filled from a pair of taps. It had a pump to empty it into the drain in the floor. There were clotheslines in the basement, but the laundry tree outside was preferred.

In front of the house was an open field that became St. Thomas Aquinas School which has its address on 26 Avenue S.W. It is still a Kindergarden to Grade 5 school. The building I remember is still there in Google Streets. Stephen started Grade 1 there in 1961. This was possibly its first year of operation or else the second. He did not go to kindergarden, but learned how to read at home. Our mother was very big on reading early, which helped us both enormously. Though earlier I had some teaching in kindergarden in England, there was also reading with Mom at home, and she made sure Stephen could read also. Stephen finished grade 6 in Calgary and then went to Edmonton with Harry in the summer of 1967.

Stephen remembers getting books from the library, which we recollect was the Killarney Branch on 19th Avenue and 26 Street SW. This is no longer listed as a library. Google satellite view shows some sort of building and parking lot on a green space there.

The library branch was quite a way from home – a good 20 blocks or over 2 miles. It was near the HMCS Tecumseh Naval Base. This was really a naval reserve and cadet assembly hall with a Sea Fire (I believe model XV) displayed in front. We probably took the bus to the library.

The house was, by today's standards, very modest, but we seemed to find it suitable. It had a living room, bathroom, three bedrooms and a kitchen, as well as a full basement. There was a quite large fenced back yard and an open front yard. This was the style of the times. The bathroom had a chute for laundry to be dropped to the basement. There was also a milk chute with room for three or four quart-sized square bottles. This was next to the back door. There was a small door at each end of the chute, which ran between the outer stucco and inner plaster. As I recall, the house still used plaster rather than wallboard, though I could be wrong.

Bus service ended at that time at a loop between 37th and 38th Streets.



Figure 19.3: Our house in SW Calgary when George and Ella came to visit in 1959.

This was the “Killarney 26th Avenue” bus. Another terminus was a loop on 17th Avenue at about 47th Street opposite the 17th Avenue Drive-In Movie Theatre. We did not use this bus often, especially before 45th Street was linked across “the gully”. I recall this route being named “Killarney 17th Avenue”, so one needed to watch for the right one. The split was at 24th Street, which has since been over-laid with the Crowchild Trail. Indeed the Richmond Road / 26th Avenue intersection has been very much changed since the late 1950s. Stephen also recalls the bus route split. Initially these were electric trolley buses. I believe they still were trolleys until I left Calgary.

There was already quite a community in the area of our new house, which was called “Glendale” for reasons only real-estate developers could fathom. The “field” opposite was essentially raw prairie, replete with gophers (more correctly, ground squirrels) and large, noisy grasshoppers. The latter were a source of entertainment if one had an empty jam jar.

As I recall 25th Avenue was paved. In fact, I think all of Glendale streets were paved and had sidewalks, but the older neighbourhoods east of 37th Street SW were dirt roads that were “oiled” yearly, though they had concrete sidewalks. A grader would break up the old dried surface, which by then had ruts and bumps, then “fresh oil” would be applied. Driving fast over the oil meant a nasty cleanup job on your car with solvent to remove the tar. And mothers would yell if one wore shoes in the house or got oil on one’s clothes.

I cannot recall oiled roads after my own grade 9 year, which ended in 1961.

My Schools

My first school was Sacred Heart School which was on 15 Street and 14 Avenue behind the church of the same name. In the schoolyard I met Luigi Dimarzo, and our lives have crossed happily ever since. I had started school in England at age 5, but had been advanced a year there because I could already read and quickly advanced in arithmetic (Stephen and I both seem to have inherited that facility from Harry). My bed-rest delayed my start, so I was put into grade 6, yet was still about a year younger than the rest of my class. Catch-up in Social Studies was needed, but not in many other subjects. Luigi, as I recall, was in grade 5, having followed a more usual pattern of schooling.

In the Autumn of 1958, I started Grade 7 at Holy Name School, which was on 35th Street at 28th Avenue, a walk of 1.3 km. Generally I walked or cycled home and back for lunch. We got our exercise naturally. Our teachers were serious, rather dedicated, and mostly very young, though they seemed mature to us. I believe my teachers in the three years were Gladys Thielen, John Stoeber (who was also Principal), Vera Moynihan and Bernie Andrea. The outer two married at the end of my time at Holy Name (1961). The school yard took up all the city block and there was a playground to the south. Trees were non-existent at the time, and the regular prairie wind blew quite mercilessly.

My health problems were not quite over. In the winter of 1958-9, I developed tonsillitis and the ever-busy Dr. Atkinson removed them and the adenoids in the Children's Hospital. The operation had some complications of bleeding. I believe I was returned to the operating theatre to control this, and kept in hospital for a day or two after other children had been discharged. By this time, we had some sort of medical insurance, but government-run health care was some years distant. Tonsils were, fortunately, my last major health issue for my parents. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada_Health_Act#Health_insurance_before_the_CHA)

I would guess that I got a bicycle in 1959, possibly when my grandparents were visiting. It was a new three speed Raleigh, and I used it until I went to England in 1968. Stephen remembers it, so it was likely passed on to him. This bicycle was rather unlike the usual type that children had in Canada at the time. It had front and back hand brakes that are the norm now, and had been in England, whereas most Canadian bicycles just had the pedal-backward rear-wheel "coaster" brake.

At that time, we needed to get a city bicycle license. This was made of

painted pressed sheet metal that wrapped around the cross bar or similar part of the bicycle. A couple of small bolts secured the ends together. I have found pictures of old plates on web sites for collectibles and antiques, and the wrap-around plates seem to have existed until 1961-62. Thereafter, up to 1983, when they were apparently discontinued, the plates seem to be flat. However, I do not remember getting one after the early 1960s, but was riding the bicycle until 1968. In fact, I recall one windy day when I had ridden to the University of Calgary where I had a summer job in 1968 with Prof. Peter Krueger, Chairman of the Chemistry Department. My route took me down University Drive, past the McMahon Stadium, and onto the road that is now the Crowchild Trail, then 24 Street NW. (At the time I rented the upstairs of a house on 9A Street NW near the Bow River.) The wind and the hill, plus a little pedalling, had my speed quite high. In fact, there was a 35 mph limit on 24 Street, and I was passing a car on the inside! The driver looked very surprised.



Figure 19.4: Stephen on his “coaster” brake bicycle in the school field opposite our house. This was taken in 1962, so the field has been levelled and mowed, but it is still very rough grass. The posts and single wire demarkation fence were also added.

At Holy Name School, I started to do quite well in my studies. I also became yearbook editor. This was to my knowledge the first yearbook produced at the school. A few of us also produced several mimeographed foolscap single-sheet “newspapers” based on articles we wrote. This involved typing

(cutting) a stencil, repairing errors with nail polish. There was also a cartoon, but I cannot recall who provided the drawing. Drawings were traced onto the stencil with a stylus. The stencil was then mounted on the Roneo machine drum, and the crank turned. It was common to get ink on hands and other places where it was not wanted. While we had a Roneo machine, other brands such as Gestetner were also present in the marketplace. However, I don't recall a photocopier at Holy Name. Even as late as 1968, I was using carbon paper to make copies of my undergraduate thesis, with formulas written in using a drawing pen and stencil.

The early 60s were a busy and optimistic time in Calgary, with a new decade starting, prosperity, and a belief in the powers of technology. The Space Race was in full cry. Science was "Important".

While crystal radios had been around for a couple of decades at least, they made a comeback with Chinese and Japanese varieties, in particular a Rocket Radio in the general shape of a V-2 rocket with a pull rod in the nose that one slid in and out to tune different stations. This moved an iron slug inside the main coil to change the inductance and hence the frequency to which the radio responded. The circuitry was very crude, essentially a coil and diode with some wire for an antenna, which I believe came out the tail. Reception improved if one could find a way to ground the other end of the antenna. These radios would not be as useful today, as they only could handle amplitude modulated (AM) signals. Frequency Modulated (FM) stations and corresponding receivers started to appear in Alberta in the mid-1960s, but the deployment of FM was quite slow there as far as I can tell. In fact, I do not recall that FM was common until the 1970s. While transistor radios had started to appear in the mid-1950s, they were quite costly and also needed a battery. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transistor_radio says that by 1962 prices of transistors had dropped to around \$15 US. By comparison, I recall that the Rocket (crystal) radio was \$1.

The Holy Name students were a motley collection of Canadian-born and "new" Canadians. Many of my friends had names that were distinctly different from those encountered in England. Of course, my own family had its share of "foreign" names. In those times, slang names were common for various ethnic or other groups, but there was a growing awareness that their use could be inappropriate. Mary's sister Sylvia has said that, as a child, she experienced one or two incidents where she was made to feel less than a full member of the society, in particular, called a "DP" (displaced person), which was not, of course, correct.

John Stoeber (who was Principal of Holy Name) once made a school announcement over the loudspeaker system that such names for ethnic groups

should not be used. Al Scrobogna, one of our Italian contingent, commented “Us Wops can’t call ourselves Wops any more.” That may serve to underline the general acceptance and assimilation that was going on in spite of some xenophobia. However, we had no students of African, Middle-Eastern or Asian background. Immigration in the 1950s was from Europe. While language and cuisine were different, the cultural and religious backgrounds were not greatly different from the mainstream.

While popular culture was Rock ’n Roll and the Twist, some of us pursued the classics. I had a modest turntable phonograph (gramophone in England) and some LPs, including the Readers’ Digest Festival of Light Classical Music. Harry bought a set of Strauss Waltz LPs. As shown in a later photograph, we had a “hi-fi” stereo that was a piece of furniture (in fact made by the Deilcraft company that was very fashionable in the 1960s). However, I generally listened on my own player, or else that of my friend Francis Zichy at his house.

Work

I started work with Acme Novelty Ltd. during the last days of February 1958. This company, whose head office was in Edmonton had two branches, one in Vancouver, the other in Calgary.

When I joined the Calgary office at 735 – 10th Avenue SW it had just moved from a location in east Calgary.

Acme Novelty was a discount catalogue business and its customers had to have a “wholesale” card to get in the door to make purchases. [This is rather like the current Costco or Sam’s Club operations, but Acme Novelty did not charge for the card.] Merchandise sold was mostly gift type goods such as jewelry, luggage, small appliances, cameras and gift items. In addition they sold trophies to clubs, fund raising equipment, games for churches and organizations. They were also big distributors of toys at Christmas.

There was a staff of seven when I started in Calgary as an inside warehouse salesperson. After a few weeks I was sent out around Calgary doing public relations work and selling.

About this time (2 months after I started) the second in command got caught stealing a case of one dozen Philishave electric razors and after his firing I assumed his job.

I remained selling around Calgary (population of approximately 200,000 at the time) and did so well that I was given a commission on any non catalogue items that I sold. This reward plus a car allowance and plenty of overtime pay in October, November and December, although not a large amount, did begin

to make life somewhat easier for the family and I was enjoying the job and felt there were possibilities for advancement.

In 1959, the general manager who had an alcohol problem was caught driving the company station wagon while “under the influence”. He was fined and lost his license for six months. During these months I had the company vehicle and this period coincided with the visit of Peggy’s parents from England, Ella and George Moss. This sure made it pleasant to get around with our guests.

As time went by Calgary’s [Acme Novelty] business kept improving; the building was more than doubled in size and I was being invited to travel to the other branches for meetings.

I was chosen to go to the Banff School of Advanced Management for a two week course. I was also sent to Regina and Saskatoon, both in Saskatchewan, for the openings of new branches in those cities.

One big assignment was to travel to Winnipeg as manager in charge of our top accountant in Edmonton and a manager from Saskatoon to inspect and take over a well known jewelry company.

I remember the night we traveled clearly as it was the evening when “The Sound of Music” won the Academy Awards Best Film.

We arrived in Winnipeg at 4:30 a.m. only to find our reserved hotel rooms had been let go since we were not there by midnight. We immediately went to work with myself interviewing all the staff to determine which ones we should keep or let go.

Wilf Gardner with the company’s staff lined up all the inventory with a view to taking stock when the takeover came.

Ron Meredith, the accountant, checked the books. We estimated that things would be ready to take over the company on the Friday; we had arrived in the early hours of Tuesday morning. On Thursday afternoon, late in the day, Ron Meredith, the accountant, met with Wilf and I to say there were things in the books he did not like, and he thought the firm we were about to purchase was bankrupt.

We brought in an outside accountant to work the evening and midnight hours, and around 2:00 a.m. they conceded that indeed this company was bankrupt.

We had instructions to phone Wes Van Dusen, the Chairman of our company in Edmonton, to inform him, whatever the hour.

When doing so, he said checkout of Winnipeg and come home as soon as possible. We were surprised we could not get a flight home on the Friday, so had to stay over another night and fly home on the Saturday.

When interviewing the staff, I tried several times to meet with their general manager, since he was a person we really wanted because of his expertise in

putting together catalogues. I had a feeling he was dodging me, so I asked the accountant to invite him to lunch and I would join them unexpectedly after they had started their meal.

Ron Meredith said he would do so on condition that he himself did the interviewing, since he said my questioning often embarrassed him. I joined them in a fine restaurant at the Viscount Gore Hotel, much to the surprise of the general manager.

Halfway through dessert Ron Meredith had not yet asked one question, so Harry Nash moved in. I found that he did not want to leave Winnipeg because of a wife and young son.

Before going to Winnipeg I was told not to interview the two Director Owners, only the hired staff, and there were a surprisingly good number of attractive looking women. After returning home and making a detailed report of the happenings of our trip, I said there was something strange I could not put my finger on.

Several weeks later the President [Wes van Dusen] of our company phoned me to say how right I was. The general manger that we wanted in Edmonton, who did not want to move for "family reasons", was having an affair with the top girl in the office.

In a later chapter on people in his life, Harry talks about joining Kiwanis, which he did in the Winter of 1959-1960. This was, for him, a very important social and business connection that perfused much of his later life. It is worth mentioning here as a facet of life in Canada that has now all but disappeared.

Grandparents Visit

George and Ella Moss came to visit in the summer of 1959. They arrived by airplane, which was the first time they had travelled this way. However, Mary has found them arriving by sea at Montreal; they did not fly all the way. We were able to see them walk down the stairs from the DC-8, which was then in the "Trans Canada Airlines" livery. The change to the Air Canada name did not occur until 1965, and enclosed loading bridges were still some years in the future.

The importance of this visit, viewed in retrospect, was that I got to know of, and meet, many of the family and friends of my grandfather. The video of the period, from the 8mm film (likely taken by George Moss Jr.) shows us with Nurse Frankton at the Calgary Stampede, in Gleichen, on trips into the mountains, and visiting Sam Moss and others. Much of this is lost to my memory, except for small fragments. How we all fitted into the car and house

I don't know, though Harry has pointed out we had the Acme Novelty vehicle, which I believe was a very large station wagon. We were clearly much more flexible then. There was just one bathroom, and unlike the UK, the toilet was not separate.

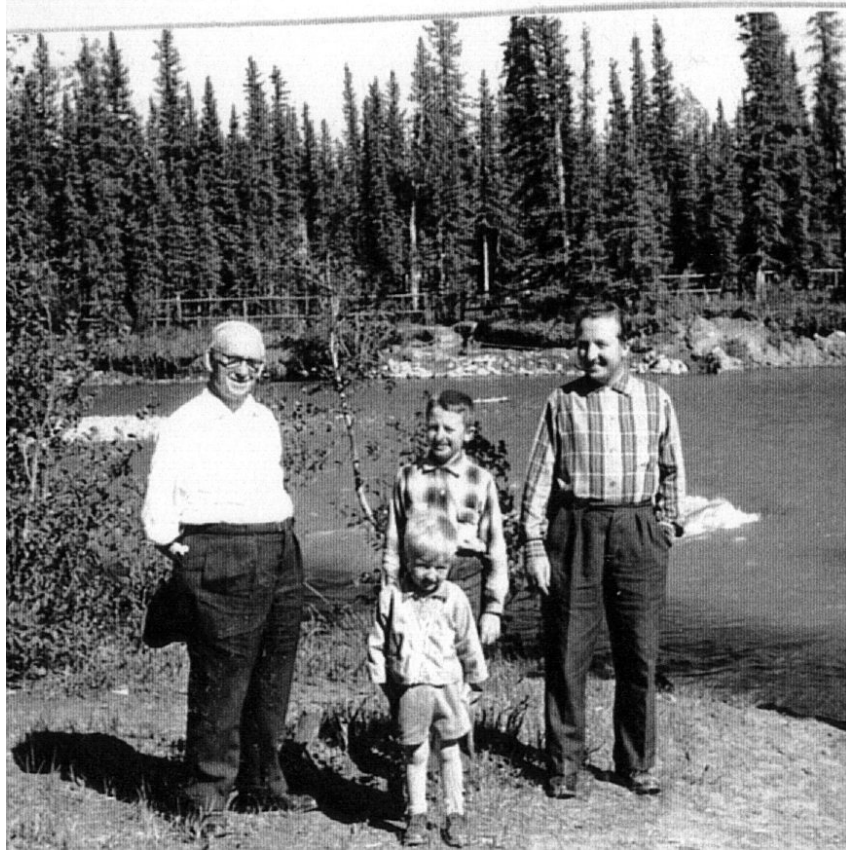


Figure 19.5: During grandparents' visit in 1959. I believe this was at Bragg Creek or Kananaskis. The Bragg Creek area is now essentially a semi-urban residential area of Calgary. Then it was a place one went for a picnic etc. On one such occasion, likely not this one, Stephen cut his foot on a beer bottle someone had discarded in the area of the creek where people would wade.

Activities and Recreation

For some reason, Stephen and I recall very little of what our mother did in her daily routine. She did not drive, so must have felt very limited. I know she kept busy as a homemaker. We both recall a wringer-washer in the basement,

but no drier. We had some lines in the basement for winter drying, but the laundry tree in the side yard was the main drying venue. I also recall we got her a pedestal mixer that she liked very much for baking. It had two very nice stainless-steel bowls. In 1972, Harry and Erma gave us the mixer and we used it for many years. Eventually the nylon gears broke so only one beater would turn. Mary and I kept the bowls and we used the motor for a project to print catalogue cards for the Supreme Court of Canada, as it had a very good speed control. I rigged some rollers to pull the printed cards which tended to jam in the dot matrix printer we used. By putting an empty cotton bobbin on the single turning spindle of the motor, and driving a rubber band using that bobbin so that the band would slip, I could get a fairly constant tension on the cards. This allowed us to let the printing run for some hours unattended. We even wrote a journal article about the way we conducted this project.

Eventually the bowls – still in good shape – were donated to a shelter for abused women by the IODE group to which Mary belonged because they were so solidly made. Within a few months a request came for replacements because they had been dented!

Certainly a lot of Peggy's time was taken in housekeeping, but she also read quite a lot. She did not believe in television, but the wily Nurse Frankton left her TV to Harry when she died in 1960. We used to go to the house where she was housekeeper on Friday nights and watch the boxing. That is something that has disappeared.

Television was, of course, one channel (I believe channel 2) at the start, the CBC affiliate. From Wikipedia:

“CICT-TV signed on October 8, 1954 as CHCT, an affiliate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the first television station in Alberta.”

It was a big event when we got a second channel, channel 4. Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CFCN-TV>) says:

“CFCN signed on September 9, 1960; It was the first independent television station in Canada. It became a charter member of the Canadian Television Network, now CTV, on October 8, 1961.”

We have 8mm movie footage of Stephen taking part in one of CFCN's programs for children called “Romper Room”. This was (thanks to David Cooper for the information) a syndicated program that ran in many cities across North America, complete down to the children's desks, equipment and



Figure 19.6: Romper Room, 1960. Stephen on the hostess' left.

layout. Six pre-schoolers, typically three of each gender, took part 5 mornings a week. The hostess wore a blouse and skirt and high heels.

The CFCN studios and transmitter were on the top of a hill that was not far west of our house. At Christmas, someone at the station got the bright idea to string Christmas lights on the guy wires of the transmitter and label it "Canada's largest Christmas tree".

Other movie footage shows that we kept quite busy on weekends and holidays. With money still fairly tight, we camped in a large blue rectangular tent. On our first major trip, however, Harry had to drive home from Glacier National Park in Montana because the poles had not been packed. Peggy, Stephen and I had a rare motel night.

Like so many other Albertans of the time, we went to Coeur d'Alene in Idaho, to Spokane and to the Okanagan. We picked fruit, and Harry overdid the consumption of cherries. We had some moments of urgency seeking a "Cherry Relief Station".

When I look at our pictures and movies, one thing that stands out is that the suits and ties are no longer worn at recreational times. We are wearing the plaid shirts that were a marker of the era. Even my grandfather has his sleeves rolled up and collar open.



Figure 19.7: Bow Falls, Banff, summer of 1960.



Figure 19.8: Christmas 1961. My first personal computer, an analog GE kit.

Chapter 20

CALGARY 1961 to 1966

New Schools

In 1961, I started grade 10 at St. Mary's Boys' High School in Father Lewis' home room. The school was run by the Basilian order that is also in charge of St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto. We had the legendary Father Whelan for history. He and Father Moran (known as "Zeke" for some reason) ran the football teams. "Thou Shalt not Kill" seemed to have a special Vatican suspension during games. I recall the teams as being successful but also being noted for their roughness. The teachers were again serious. Most were quite good; only a few were not.

Given the tenor of the times, a lay teacher who was also named Lewis was nicknamed "Mother Lewis", possibly because he was unmarried and by deportment and dress may have seemed gay. He taught French, and I suspect we all would have learned more French had there not been a nasty undercurrent of inuendo, which at the time meant very little to me. Whatever Mr. Lewis' private inclinations, he was always proper in his behaviour, but other teachers were not.

At the time I was largely unconscious of the meaning of comments "Don't let Father Whyte get you on your own". This was 1961-4. and he was one of the counsellors. In January 1990 he entered a guilty plea to a number of offenses with minors that took place over the previous 20 years. (Sylvia Strojek, Canadian Press, January 18, 1990). It seems likely some offenses in the era when I was at St. Mary's Boys' School were not included, though I have no direct information to support this suspicion. My only interaction with him was when Harry and I went to discuss my future after high school and he tried to sell us on a Catholic college in Nelson, BC, that was becoming a university

that offered Arts degrees. Both Harry and I considered his suggestions less than worthless and the counselling session was short. Notre Dame University of Nelson became David Thompson University Centre when the Province of British Columbia took it over in 1977. It closed in 1984.

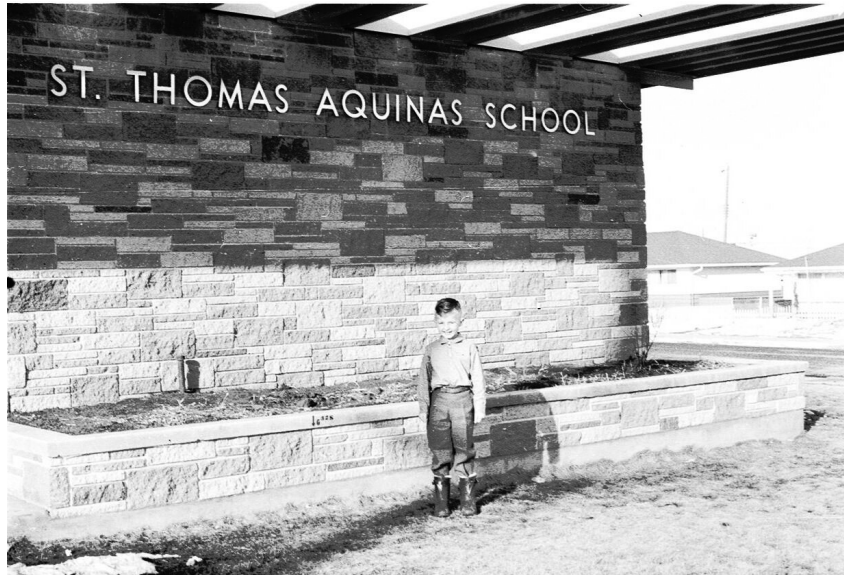


Figure 20.1: Stephen in front of the main entrance (which was on 44 Street, though the address is 26 Avenue SW) of his school.

The students at St. Mary's Boys' High were rather similar to the population of Holy Name. In fact, many were the same people. There was a mix of Dutch, Italian, and Hungarian immigrants alongside the descendents of English, Irish and Scottish settlers and earlier immigrants from the Ukraine. I was one of very few English immigrants. I think there may have been one or two German kids. I don't recall any Asian, African, or South American students. There may have been one or two Métis, but I did not recognize them as such.

They were a fairly rough bunch, often as a result of some hard knocks, but they mostly seemed to be trying strenuously to get ahead, and I don't recall much nastiness. Discipline in the school was pretty strict but by no means oppressive.

An example comes from a spring Phys. Ed. class that was given over to a softball game. Someone hit a foul ball that went over the 14 foot high chain-link backstop. Louie Peregovits was near the middle of the backstop (possibly he was catcher). Instead of walking round the end of the backstop to get the ball, he made a very fluid jump, followed by two very simian grabs on



Figure 20.2: From Holy Name to St. Mary's. Waiting for the bus home at 17th Avenue and 1st Street S.W. Jim Brackenbury, Bob Walls, Al Scrobogna, Frank Vandoremalen; John Vandoremalen in front. Note the trolley wires.

the fence, rolled over the top and dropped on the other side, all in about two seconds. Someone yelled "Neat move, Louie. Where'd you learn to do that?". The reply was "That's how I got out of Hungary".

As mentioned, Stephen started school in 1961 at St Thomas Aquinas across the road from our house. By then the prairie had given way to a more regular grassed area, but it was by no means a lawn, as can be seen in the picture of Stephen on his bicycle in the previous chapter.

Holiday Trips

On Sept 3, 1962 we waited in line on the way home from the Seattle World's Fair for John Diefenbaker to open the Rogers Pass section of the Trans Canada Highway. We had seen (and I believe went up) the Space Needle and rode the monorail, which really did not serve a particularly useful route for the city of Seattle. We camped well outside Seattle in an area called Kent, which seemed appropriate to our earlier life.

The Rogers Pass portion of the Trans Canada Highway was a significant project. At that time, the road was one lane in each direction (as much of it remains). Before it opened, travellers had to take many hours on the gravel of



Figure 20.3: Harry liked fishing, but was not always very successful. Stephen may be holding his first fish.

the Big Bend Highway, which I have never taken. There was just one service station at about the mid-point of that road, and people seemed to worry about getting stuck somewhere along the road.

We also did shorter trips. Harry always liked fishing, but he was not always very good at it. I also feel, in retrospect, that he did not have sufficient respect for how unforgiving the Canadian backwoods can be. One time we went fishing with one of his Acme Novelty co-workers in the Kananaskis. We forded the river easily, but on our return the water was much higher – probably the power dam upstream had opened a gate. We had to wade through dangerously deep and swift water. The journey home was very uncomfortable, even with the car heater on full blast.

Suburban Life

While we did not think much about it, we became typical North American middle-class suburbanites. Life was “good”, even if we were living in a small house with one toilet, no dining room, no garage for our single, rather old car. By this time we were, I think, driving a 1956 Plymouth we acquired from George Moss Jr. when he returned to the UK in about 1960 for a hernia repair operation, probably because of the expense in Canada prior to government run medical care. George married Joy on November 4 1961. They were back in Canada in approximately 1963, and present in Christmas photos. However, their daughter Susan was born in Pembury, in England, on 21 November 1965. Thus George was not around when Peggy was very ill, and I believe they returned as a family to Canada in 1967.

When we went to the Esso station, we could get a “tiger tail” that attached with an elastic around the cap to indicate one had a “tiger in the tank”. An Exxon-Mobil history says this slogan was developed by a Chicago copy-writer in 1959. British American Oil (which I believe was essentially a Canadian oil company) put a cartridge filter on the fuel hoses and advertised “final filtered” gasoline. One time we were filling the tank and asked the attendant if the filtering really helped. He replied that “it removes the tiger hairs”. And note that there was an attendant. Self-serve pumps were rare until the 1970s according to Wikipedia (and still not allowed in New Jersey).

We had the Calgary Herald delivered, and also the Star Weekly. From the viewpoint of 2010, it is difficult to see why the magazine section of the Toronto Star would have much relevance to Southern Alberta. The parts of it that I recall were mainly comics and features.

For children, there were the usual fads. Marbles were a perennial spring-time passion, and teachers would confiscate them if they were a classroom distraction. However, there were the episodic “crazes”, such as yoyos (for which the Duncan Toys Company launched a large promotion in 1962 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yo-yo#The_Duncan_era) and hula hoops, trademarked by the Wham-O corporation who started manufacturing them in 1958 (http://inventors.about.com/od/hstartinventions/a/Hula_Hoop.htm).

As with other suburbanites, we added a room in the basement. I know George Moss Jr. used this for a while, then it became a storage room. After my mother died it was used by one of the housekeepers we hired (Mrs. Offord). At some time we also partly finished the rest of the basement. We also acquired a bird, a cat and, for a short time, a dog. The bird, a blue budgie, was Stephen’s pet. It was relatively tame and would sit on one’s finger. We had a very tall cylindrical cage for it that was and would still be unusual. The cat walked



Figure 20.4: Stephen skiing in the park (the gully) behind our house, which is one of those in the background.

in as a kitten one spring evening and stayed. It was a medium-sized tomcat, and we never got him “fixed”. In the summer he stayed outside a lot, chasing gophers, grasshoppers and birds, as well as female cats. I saw him stalk gulls as big as himself, and believe he once got one, as he returned home one day with his stomach so distended that it nearly touched the ground. He slept for three days. Cat food did not get eaten in summer. At night he would wander, and driving home we would see him more than a kilometer away. With this sort of life, he aged fast, and one day did not come home. He was useful in electrostatics experiments. Cat’s fur is a favoured material with which to rub amber rods. We used plastic rods instead but could generate a good charge. Nobody said the cat’s fur could not still be on the cat.

For a short while we had a golden spaniel puppy, but it proved impossible

to house-train. I think Harry wanted a dog. In his later life, he has always had one or more dogs.

The Fascination of Flight

Those of us interested in science and technology could hardly have lived through a more exciting time than the 1960s. The USA and USSR were racing for space, and in particular the moon. Locally, there were rocket and model airplane clubs. With others, notably Robert Walls, I made model airplanes, some free-flight gliders and others control-line motorized ones. Calgary is very windy, so after we managed to smash one glider – I believe it was called a Trooper and had a 30 inch wingspan – we realized that the design was not robust enough. The original was intended to weigh less than 3 oz. We used the original plans, but increased the balsa dimensions of the longerons for strength. We carved the nose block of pine rather than balsa, and used some special modelling plywood that was intended for mounting glow-plug engines to make side panels with skids on the forward nose and fuselage. The extension of these side panels that became the skids also protected the tow hook. We also strengthened the wing mounts and dihedral joint with plywood and dowel. The result was a rather heavy 6 oz aircraft that could be launched using a short fishing pole in a near-gale. A quick flick on release would allow a loop-the-loop. A wind shear dive into soft ground meant no more than the elastic band mounted wings popped off. Occasional tears in the tissue covering were repairable with more tissue and some airplane dope. We eventually had to cut off the much patched covering and redo it, but we had a lot of fun with that plane.

When I was about 12 I bought a Cox Piper Cub control line model. I think it cost the grand sum of about 15 dollars, which meant three months of saving my dollar a week pocket money plus doing some extra household jobs. This model had a Cox 049 engine, i.e., a glow plug engine displacing 0.049 cubic inches. The plane was plastic and did not survive very long. However, I had by now learned how to build balsa planes, and we designed a pretty crude control line plane of about 16-18 inch wingspan. The fuselage was made of solid balsa about 3/8 inch thick, with a similar plate on the front to mount the 049 engine salvaged from the shattered plastic model. We used heavy fishing line for the control lines, and kept them a little short so we could fly the model in the U-shaped space between the wings of a local school. This protected us from the near-continual Calgary wind. On this model we added a bomb rack, held on with elastics. We used copper wire and made loops on cap bombs bought

at the local Five and Dime, and the bomb rack had a hole for a cotter pin that was attached to a third control string. Pull on the string and the bombs dropped. Of course, the model is circling and so the bomb trajectory was a bit odd, but we had fun. Two or three of us would carry the model, fuel, large dry cell (the size of a big tin can) with wires to energize the glow plug, and assorted repair gear “just in case” but frequently needed.

Stephen was a bit young, but was sometimes conscripted to release the airplane. This once led to an unfortunate, rather Monte-Pythonish, incident. I got the engine going, closed off the needle valve until it screamed nicely, and told Stephen to hold the model until I signaled. I ran towards the center of the flying circle. In this case we were flying in the rough grass of the “field” – we had the take-off zone on the sidewalk. However, whether from nerves or misunderstanding, Stephen let go early. The model moved, and the control lines wound round my legs. Closer and closer. I tried to grab the fuselage, but the nylon propeller managed to slice my finger. On a cold day I can still see the half-moon scar. However, the plane survived to fly again. I trust Stephen has forgiven some impolite language that resulted from the frustration and shock.

At one point we largely rebuilt this plane after the castor oil from the engine exhaust got in the main wing mounting and caused it to fail. The model lasted until about 1967, when I offered Mary a chance to try. She let it get too high, so it side-slipped, resulting in a loss of control and a near vertical nose-first into the concrete. I must have had a lot of affection for her even then. Thus the balsa crumbles.

Balloons were another alternative. With Bill Peters, whom I met through the Science Fairs, I can remember inflating a large “weather” balloon using calcium hydride put in a bottle of water and quickly putting the balloon over the bottle mouth. It was night-time. We taped a bit of Jetex fuse to the balloon, lit it, and released the balloon. At about 150 metres, there was a nice blue flame, almost noiseless, but quite eerie. Whether we started any UFO reports, I don’t remember. Bill went on to head the Alberta Science Centre very successfully.

We (I think Bob Walls and I) also built rockets. Nowadays this would likely be prohibited. After a few failures, we found a successful design using spent Sparklets carbon-dioxide cartridges. These were intended to charge soda water fountains. We drilled out the metal plug, put in a charge of rocket fuel, added a fuse and wad (to stop the fuel from falling out), and had our rocket engine. We fortunately started with a small charge of about half a teaspoon of fuel, for which we found that zinc metal powder and sulfur powder with a small portion of potassium chlorate worked extremely well.

One of our problems was, once again, the prairie wind. We used a wheelbarrow for our launch pad with a laboratory stand holding a guide wire. We walked the 800 meters or so beyond the houses to the open prairie (about the level of 55 Street). For a fuse we used string that we had roughened by drawing it across a concrete step, then dipping it in a hot solution of potassium nitrate or potassium chlorate and sugar. The solution needed to be nearly saturated. When dry, this fuse burned at a couple of centimeters per second.

The trouble was that matches would blow out, or their flame would light the fuse too high up near the bottom of the rocket. Some thought led us to realize that concentrated sulfuric acid will dessicate sugar to pure carbon, giving off a lot of heat. An eye dropper bottle of "conc. sulfuric" had a dropper or a solid glass rod. Touching this to the fuse would give ignition, and at the proper end of the fuse.

Half a teaspoon of fuel in our engine, about 100g of sand in the cardboard rocket fuselage to which we glued fins, and we got a nice bang and a 100 foot altitude. We put in a full, possibly heaping, teaspoon of fuel, and repeated our ignition sequence. Bang, but louder this time. We saw the rocket lift off along the 3 foot guide-wire mounted on a wooden base that was sitting on the wheelbarrow. About 10 feet off the ground it moved too fast for our eyes. We never found it.

The knowledge gained in this exercise was not wasted. When St. Mary's Boys' High School presented "All Quiet on the Western Front" as the school play, a goodly bang was needed. Fr. Moran offered to use his shotgun. He set up a large waste can of sand on two layers of 2 by 10 wood. He stood on a chair and fired. There was the requisite bang, but the lead shot managed to go through the sand, wood, and floor. It did not penetrate the ceiling tile, but found gaps and dribbled down on our caretaker, Mr. Hagenaars.

The powers that be recognized that I and a fellow student, Peter Peters, knew how to make good bangs. We used the same zinc / sulfur / potassium chlorate mix that we used for rockets. The key to a good bang is to constrain the burn, so we used old cash-register tape cores. These were hollow cardboard tubes. We sealed one end with plaster of paris, put in a wad of tissue, then about a level teaspoon of powder. For ignition, we took some varnished copper wire, twisted it to produce a Y at the end, cleaned off the varnish from the ends of the Y, and then crimped a single strand of wire from a multi-strand light cord across the gap. We soldered over the crimp for a good connection. This we pushed into the powder, put in a wad of tissue, and sealed the end with more plaster. After things were nice and dry, we used a panel Peter had constructed that was powered by a battery charger or a car battery. The panel could put a high resistance in series with the igniter and test continuity, then

be switched to having only the thin wire across the source of 12 volts. The igniter actually would make a nice crack on its own, but the explosive device, of which we put two inside an open garbage can in the wings of the stage so the (green) flash would reflect off the scenery, was very impressive. Some of the ladies in the audience screamed. And we used very, very little explosive.

This unfortunately gave me a reputation, and one student (I will suppress his name here) asked if I could make him a smoke bomb. I said the chemicals were expensive, and I'd have to charge 25 cents! The smoke bomb was duly constructed of a tube of paper with one end closed, some potassium chlorate, sugar, carbon and a bit of sulfur powder that gave a nice whoosh of whitish smoke. The usual treated string fuse was used. I gave strict instructions: put in a bucket of sand making sure the open end of tube was not constricted (to avoid explosion), light the fuse with a taper using a stretched arm, and stand back.

I did not count on him lighting the device in Religion class and rolling it up the aisle. This resulted in his suspension. I expected to be hauled in front of the Principal (Fr. B. McCarron), but was not. I suspect that it was well-known that I was the source of the device, but that the miscreant had acted alone in how he used it. Furthermore, he did not "rat" on me. I have no idea of his motive.

Science Fairs

More formally, I was engaged in the student Science Fairs. In Grade 10 I teamed up with Paul Ryan and we distilled coal to get coke, gas, and some liquid components that were from a fractional still. I don't recall managing to identify the various components. However, the apparatus had a nice mad-scientist appearance and won us a minor prize.

At home Harry got a gas connection set up for a bunsen burner. This was a great help in my later projects. It would give insurance brokers a migraine today.

In Grade 11, I was more ambitious and looked at the metallurgy of iron. I was helped enormously but two very generous local men, Bill Liddell of Calgary Foundries and Walter Stayura of Canadian Liquid Air. The resulting project won me the Grand Prize (tied) and a trip to the Second Canada Wide Science Fair at Casa Loma in Toronto. I stayed in the Ford Hotel, which was educational if uncomfortable. Some Kiwanis contacts of Harry very kindly took me to Niagara on the day after the Fair closed.

In Grade 12, I managed to win the Grand Prize again, this time outright,

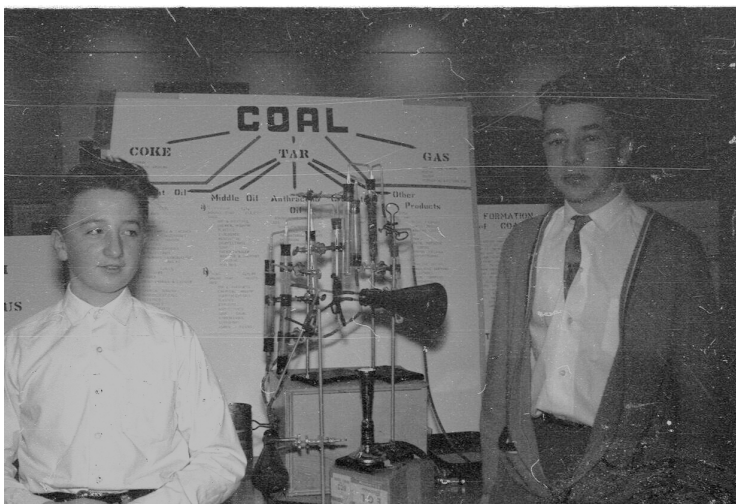


Figure 20.5: Our Grade 10 Science Fair entry. John Nash and Paul Ryan. The negative was badly scratched on this photo.

with **Silicon Carbide and Other Carbide Compounds** as my project. By now I was managing at least in part to verify the products of my syntheses, which for this last project required very high temperatures. As in the rocket and “bang” work, I liked to keep things small and compact to minimize the dangers, and was able to build three very tidy furnaces. As evidence of this, my cat used to like to lie on the top of the furnace used to make silicon carbide because of the warmth. Using good fire bricks, he could be just a few inches from the 2250 degree Celsius reaction without suffering any ill effects. St Mary’s teachers were helpful, both in helping to find scientific instruments and also to build the furnace casings, namely Fr. Kelly (Chemistry), Fr. Moran (Physics) and Mr. Keinick (Industrial Arts).

The 1964 Calgary Fair was pre-judged for the purposes of sending two entries to the Third Canada-Wide Fair, and Bill Peters and I were chosen. The Fair was held in the Université de Montréal. The hotel, I forget which, was a great improvement over the Ford in Toronto.

At the subsequent Calgary Fair, which followed the Canada-Wide Fair by a week or so, another exhibitor was Mary Frohn, and we certainly chatted, I think on May 3, 1964. We both consider it a fortuitous meeting, leading to a marriage of over 40 years.



Figure 20.6: The Grand Prize exhibit in 1964. I still have the red ribbon, which was hand-lettered! Harry helped with lettering the posters.

England in 1963

In the summer of 1963 Peggy took Stephen and I to England for a holiday. We flew from Calgary to Heathrow on TCA. We somehow got linked up with a chain-smoking woman who Stephen thinks was a friend, but I believe she may only have prevailed on a very weak link through someone we knew. Her carelessness with her constantly burning cigarette – for eight hours – gave Stephen a nasty burn on his forehead.

Harry noted:

Of very much interest in their flight was the fact that it was on the inaugural non stop Calgary to London on the “Western Arrow”. It was loaded with

dignitaries and a load of prime Alberta beef for politicians, etc to have a BBQ in Trafalgar Square. Peggy and boys, as many other passengers, were not included in the BBQ festivities.

On the day of our arrival, I can remember that before “dinner” (lunch to us in Canada today, but the big meal of the day in England), I walked with my grandfather George to his off-license. The compressed bustle and noise under grey skies were a striking contrast to Calgary’s open skies and wide spaces. At the meal that followed, jet-lag caught up with me and I retired at about 3 in the afternoon.

We spent possibly six weeks in England. I remember taking a number of trips by train or bus. We went to London to see the Horse Guards and various museums, especially the Science Museum. We took a coach (or charabang) to Cambridge. Our mother Peggy bought a very elegant muslin dress there that suited her extremely well. On the way, the bus driver did not ask us to get off as we crossed the Gravesend Ferry. Not a bright move, because as the front wheels of the coach went down the ramp onto the rather smallish ferry, the deck dropped with the weight and there was a sufficient change that the mid-section of the coach bottomed out, denting the side panels. We had to get off, the front wheels rose, and the coach was embarked.

This was one of the last years that the ferry ran – it was discontinued for vehicles in 1964 as traffic started to use the Dartford Tunnel.

Both Stephen and I remember Peggy buying an embroidered fire screen. Mary and I are the current custodians, perpetuating Peggy’s initial eccentric choice of having a fire screen in a dwelling with no fireplace. I believe we acquired this in Canterbury, but it may have been elsewhere.

Stephen and Peggy stayed mostly at 56 St. Mary’s Road in Tonbridge, the home of my Moss grandparents, but I spent quite a bit of time with Audrey and Harry Shaw in the house behind their shop. I had enough time in England to buy a model glider from a shop in Southborough High Street and build it. My late cousin Ralph and I flew it several times, and I also took it to Sutton, where the park behind the house of Dolly and Reg was ideal for such flying. Stephen also remembers being there. Reg also took me to see the radio control and free flight models at Epsom on the race course when no horses were about.

Harry Shaw took me to soccer at the local (I believe in Southborough) Club match. I always got along very well with Harry, who was a gear maker for a local precision engineering firm that produced small gearboxes for specialty equipment. Stephen says he could never understand Harry, and it took Mary some time to learn, aided in part by a common love she shared with Harry Shaw of picallily sandwiches.



Figure 20.7: Harry and Audrey Shaw in their small shop at 3 Springfield Road, Southborough.

One thing I recall that I have not been able to document satisfactorily is that late in our visit, England was quite warm and there were a lot of wasps about. The bakery windows were alive with them. On television there was a warning to make sure that children did not accidentally eat them if they landed on sandwiches or confections. One thing that made an impression on me was a suggestion that if one got stung on the tongue, it should be rubbed with raw onion to quell the swelling until medical attention could be obtained. I have no idea if this is reliable information.

During 1963, the Beatles were becoming the leading pop band. Though various sources show “Roll over Beethoven” (which is a cover of a Chuck Berry tune) was not released until the Autumn, I remember hearing it during the summer, possibly on a pre-release broadcast by the BBC. It was almost difficult to come home to start Grade 12.

University

In 1964 I graduated from High School and started in the Honours Chemistry program at the University of Alberta at Calgary. Four years later, I graduated from the University of Calgary – the independence of the institution occurred



Figure 20.8: The University of Alberta at Calgary in 1962. In the far left background is the “gym”, with the original two-storey (plus basement) Arts and Sciences buildings at right angles to each other.

between my second and third years when I was on the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Seminar in Turkey.

By this time (1964), the first Library had been built and was operational, and there was some sort of new Arts building as well. The second phase of the Science complex was under construction – at one point in the Fall it was completely black with a waterproofing material that was installed before the final stone facing. In the first year physics class, the professors (Anger and Prescott) liked to talk of the use of a “black box” approach to physics, where one described the behaviour of a system without necessarily seeking to probe its underlying mechanisms. Some wits managed to paint “The Big Black Box” on the building on this tarred-board material, a very imaginative and essentially non-destructive prank.

In the mid-1960s, first year university had a high failure rate. I did not discover that my studies were very difficult, though they did demand a certain level of time management, but I believe the sudden freedom to choose what to work on and when, with many distractions – especially card games such as bridge and hearts – led to inefficient learning for many. We started with 15 in Honours Chemistry, but I believe a dozen changed to a general degree program after one year.

At this time, the city of Calgary was only just starting to surround the

campus. It was quite a journey by bus. I car-pooled with some others, starting very early. We had 8 a.m. classes, even on Saturday. On Saturday, classes were less well-attended, of course, but in comparison with today would seem quite full.

At one point our carpool consisted of the Vandoremalen brothers, Barbara Khoury, myself and possibly Al Scrobogna or Roy Diehl. Barbara was a pleasant and sensible girl with a very prominent bustline. I sense that she had to put up with a lot of boorish comments, but managed to be very good natured. One dark morning not long before Christmas we were on our way to 8 a.m. class and likely still half asleep. Barb was in the middle of the back seat. She woke us up by loudly pronouncing, “I don’t care if your name is Santa Claus, get your hands out of my stockings!”. The joke was on us. We all had a good laugh.

I took a packed lunch – cafeteria food was expensive. My finances were reasonably good, as I had won a number of scholarships and prizes, but none that were for more than the current year. Harry was quite annoyed at this. Overall, I probably did better with my bits and pieces than I would with a multi-year prize. However, there was always that ever-present fear, that all immigrants have, of not having enough. Both Mary and I still find ourselves more cautious in spending than perhaps we need to be. During this time I kept a record of my expenditure – I needed to make the money last from September until May, and I knew my parents had little to spare. Harry said that he would offer room and board, but I was responsible for everything else. The Frohns said the same to Mary. Luigi di Marzo had to pay “rent”.

Harry also would reward Stephen and I for good work in school. Through this I acquired a very good Pentax camera, for example. Useful things, not frills.

After my first year, I got a job with Mo Granger and Tom Swaddle as a research assistant. I learned a lot of practical chemistry skills, and earned what today would seem a pittance, but then seemed a good wage. Peter Lewis was also hired. We carpooled. Lunch was still carried, but we’d sometimes splurge on a chocolate bar. In doing so, we discovered that if you put in two nickels instead of a dime, you got a chocolate bar and one nickel back. For a couple of weeks we enjoyed cheap chocolate. Then someone got greedy one night and emptied the machine this way and it was fixed.

Chapter 21

THE DIFFICULT TIME 1965 - 1966

Our Situation

By 1964, we were getting established as a “new” Canadian family. I was finishing Grade 12 at St. Mary’s Boys’ High, and about to start university at the then University of Alberta at Calgary. Stephen was at St. Thomas Aquinas School across the road from our house. Harry was doing quite well at Acme Novelty.

Peggy, however, was seriously ill, though at first we did not realize it. Remember, that the Canada Health Act was not yet in force. There was some hospitalization insurance, but the sort of coverage we have come to expect in Canada was still in the future. Indeed, the Medical Care Act of 1966 was being debated when Peggy died, as we point out below.

Harry is silent in his recorded notes on this period. Possibly he found it painful to recall, awkward to report, or the subject simply did not mesh with his strongly optimistic attitude to life. Stephen has said to me that he cannot remember Harry ever talking about anything that would be personally painful. However, from the point of view of the social history of the period, I believe it is important to appreciate how families dealt with medical crises then.

For a number of years we were aware that Peggy had high blood pressure. She took “tablets” (English) or “pills” (Canadian). I recall a huge bottle of some sort of medicine she had to swallow as a potassium supplement, suggestive that she was prescribed diuretics for the hypertension.

Sudden Surgery

At some point in the summer of 1965 she started to have seizures. I believe I had got my driver's license earlier that year. I can recall driving her to the General Hospital (in Bridgeland – its demolition on October 4, 1998 was apparently a result of funding cuts) for an electro-encephalogram (EEG) as epilepsy was considered a possible cause. However, she had a much worse seizure soon after – neither Stephen nor I recall the date nor the conditions nor where. Possibly I was not present. She was admitted to the General Hospital.

I remember that we got the call about 1 or 2 a.m. that she had had a much worse seizure and would need surgery. We heard about 6:30 or 7 a.m. that she was out of theatre. The neurosurgeon (I recall the name Dr. Barlass) had removed a tumour the size of an orange behind her left eye. The history of the Clinical Neurosciences department of the University of Calgary has a Jack Barlass as neurosurgeon already practicing in Calgary who joined the program in the early 1970s. He died in 1999 at age 74.

After the surgery, Peggy recovered reasonably well, but of course was missing a large swath of hair and had a large scar. She also clearly had some neurological consequences from the surgery and was quite tired.

Within a week or so we had to arrange radiation treatment, which at that time was less well-tuned than today. She had to deal with the nausea and general fatigue, along with more hair loss. We got her a wig, I recall. She was likely depressed, and on at least one occasion expressed to me that she thought it may have been better if the doctors had let her die. I believe she felt that she was a burden to us. I know there was a suggestion that she should have electroshock therapy because the tumour had changed her personality or because of depression. She was very afraid of this – with good reason given later understandings of such procedures – and Harry, with my complete support, refused this option, as we pointed out that we had got quite used to Peggy's personality. That we supported her in this seemed to bring more calm, and I recall a generally less anxious time through the winter of 1965-66. Personally, I was very glad Harry listened to her fears, as he could often place more faith in doctors than I believe was justified.

Relapse

Later in the winter of 1965-66, a fellow student named Julio Esteban told me about the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) International Semi-

nars. He suggested, for which I am very grateful, that I apply for this, which included a scholarship to offset the loss of summer working time that participation would involve. I not only applied, but was awarded the University of Calgary slot for the 1966 Seminar in Turkey. However, as the time for departure approached, it became clear that Peggy's tumour had not been totally excised.

I said that I would drop out of the Seminar and stay home. Peggy, in a manner that showed her character was not altered by her illness, very firmly stated that I should go, and that if I did not, she would not talk to me at all. It was clear that she would make good on this threat.

Her decision in this regard, as viewed over four decades later, seems to me totally rational. At the time of her death I took it as selfless and generous. Now I am much less convinced of this. I think she disliked the idea of people visiting her when she was sick. She possibly, and correctly, realized that my staying home would do nothing to materially alter her situation, though I may have been able to assist Harry and Stephen.



Figure 21.1: A sign that life went on. Stephen Nash in cub-scout uniform.

My experience in the WUSC Seminar was one that very greatly enlarged

my world view and my understanding of myself in that world. However, except as it reflects the desire to take on the problems of the world, a desire central to most of my generation, I do not believe it is directly pertinent to life in the UK or Canada of the era.



Figure 21.2: Jasper Park. Dolly and Ann Barry with Stephen Nash.

To help out while I was away, Dolly came to Canada, bringing Ann. I am grateful to Dolly in the extreme for her coming to help my mother, Harry and Stephen. The movies and photos of this period show that they took what appears to be a pleasant holiday in Banff and Jasper. Dolly recently recalled the main anxieties concerned the possibility of running into bears in the campground / cabin area. Indeed, bears figure in the photos and movies – today there would be much greater concern for the potentially untoward interactions for both animals and humans.. Peggy was there, and seems to have enjoyed this last holiday. Despite the obvious outcome of Peggy's illness, nobody seems sad. Perhaps all realized it is important to take the best from the present moment.

After this Peggy went into the then brand new Rockyview hospital just before my return on Wednesday 17th August. I went to see her the next day with some pictures, and I believe she was genuinely pleased and enjoyed what I had to tell her. I forget when Dolly left, but it was very soon thereafter.

Peggy declined very quickly after that. I went to see her on Thursday afternoon, August 25, and she was already in a coma. At one point she quietly stopped breathing, and I remember thinking that I need not rush to fetch the nurses, and that this was her moment. However after a couple of minutes she



Figure 21.3: One of the last photos of Peggy, here with Stephen. The film tore in the camera, but apparently was rescued and developed, but this part of the developed slide film was not mounted. It has been scanned “as is”.

began to breath again. I left quietly and drove home. I don’t think I said anything about this to Harry or Stephen.

For some reason, possibly related to how we had to share the car for errands, I believe we did not visit on Friday. On the Saturday evening, sometime mid-to late-evening – I seem to recall it was dark and possibly after supper – we were in quite a lively mood when the call came that Peggy had died. I thought Mary was with us, but she says not, and possibly she was with her parents in Banff or similar camping place.

The next day we had to pick out the coffin, and chose a simple one that was covered with a grey material that was also one of the least expensive. Though I was not directly conscious of money concerns, I knew we had to be careful. This was at Jaques Funeral Home (pronounced Jakes, and indeed spelt as written) on 17th Avenue S.W., not far from St. Mary’s Cathedral and

my former school.

On August 29, 1966, (Monday) the Calgary Herald printed the following on p. 28.

August 27, 1966. NASH, Ella Margaret (Peggy). Age 42 years. Beloved wife of Harry Nash, 4536 25 Avenue SW. And dear mother of John and Stephen, Calgary. Also surviving are her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George S. Moss, Kent, England, and three sisters and a brother in England. Born at Gleichen Alberta, Mrs. Nash resided in Kent, England from 1929 until coming to Calgary in 1957. She was a member of Holy Name Church. Requiem mass at Holy Name Church (2223 - 34 Street SW) Tuesday at 10 a.m. Jaques Funeral Home in charge. Interrment at St. Mary's Cemetery.

The cemetery is just west of the McLeod Trail between 31 and 34 Avenues S. We never had a headstone, and I have only once been back to the cemetery. Where others make a large event of a funeral, we seem to prefer to move on. There was no attempt to have a period of mourning, and Mary at one time said I never mourned my mother. I believe the knowledge that Peggy would die weighed on Harry, Stephen and I, and that her passing was simply that. The emotions had already been tested. We needed to figure out how to continue our lives.

In the way that memory tricks us, Stephen says he did not go to Mom's funeral, though my memory has him with me at Holy Name church. If he was not there, who looked after him? Also Mary says she was not there, and indeed I do not remember her. It is possible she was working, and with her first university year coming, could not afford to lose a day. However, I do recall that her mother, Willy Frohn, came to the funeral, and possibly Peter came also, though it is more likely he was working. There were a number of Harry's Kiwanis friends, including, I think, Art Dixon, then Speaker of the Alberta Legislature, who sent a hand-written letter of sympathy that is clearly sincere.

For some reason, I believe it was rainy when we went into the church, but the sun had come out at the grave site. I do not remember any feelings, sad or happy, from the day. Possibly we were numbed by too much stress from the previous year.

In another way, my own response to Peggy's death was to redouble my efforts to advance my academic career. I wanted to go to a good graduate school, and my summer employer, Dr. Bill Laidlaw, said he thought that while many Canadian students would find the lack of direction of Oxford unsettling, I was sufficiently self-motivated that I would do well. In this he was correct,



Figure 21.4: Flowers that arrived over the weekend of Peggy's death. Many are on the stereo, often called a 'hi-fi' in that time. Note the 'sideboard' or buffet on the right.

and I greatly appreciate his support in that direction. Getting there, and getting sufficient financial support, was my form of memorial to Peggy. This was clear to me at the time, but it took me several decades to tell Mary, and only then when she was dealing with her own grief relating to her mother and later her father.

In Harry's notes, I found:

During the later years in Calgary, Peggy was sick and because of this we stayed around home with the boys working hard at school and doing well. John won lots of scholarships with myself researching many of these. John once said because of our family set-backs "we sure knocked the hell out of the word 'work'."

As it happens, I don't remember saying that, but it fits with my sense of the time.

Aftermath

Our troubles were not entirely over. Paying for the funeral was no doubt a burden, but soon after we got a letter that the mortgage cheque had bounced.

The account from which it was paid was joint between Harry and Peggy, and the laws at the time (and to some extent still) required that all accounts of deceased persons be frozen until estates were probated. CIBC, with no notification, simply locked the account so the mortgage cheque bounced. I believe the first we knew was when the threat of foreclosure arrived. So Harry had to find money for that.

The real bombshell was the bill from the hospital. The Pearson government's Allan J. MacEachen had only introduced the Medical Care Act on July 12, 1966. So Harry, who was earning, I believe, \$14,000 per year, was rather shocked to get a bill for \$8,000. As I recall, he managed to negotiate a much reduced figure. In part, I am sure, the medics were uncomfortable that Peggy had been put through a great deal of unpleasant treatment for very limited gain in either time or quality of life.

Quite quickly after the funeral, school and university started. We got back to trying to live a normal life.

Chapter 22

ADJUSTING & EXPO '67

The period after Peggy died was one of some uncertainty. Harry expressed concern that we would not be able to cope. While finances were tight, Harry – and I fully supported him in this – insisted that we should eat properly, indeed well. Neighbours showed great kindness and quite frequently brought us dishes. However, one of them commented that perhaps we ate better than they did. I recall doing quite a bit of the cooking, in some cases learning as I went. This has served me well. To this day, I do most of the cooking in our own household, though Mary does the initial preparation in an “I’ll cut, you cook” arrangement so we are not in the kitchen together. She does baking. I generally don’t, except for bread. When breakfast is cooked, I am the cook, with poached eggs being a particular specialty. This had an origin during the times Peggy was ill and after she died.

We hired a school girl (I think her name was Karen) who came by after school and prepared dinner. Her mother and I shared her training! I felt that it was more work to direct her efforts than to do the cooking myself. However, Stephen was only 10, going on 11, and Harry likely wanted to have someone at home when he returned from school. I was in my 3rd year of an Honours Chemistry degree and my hours, while somewhat regular, still included some late afternoons. As I recall, I was still car-pooling with Roy Diehl, and John and Frank Vandormalen, and Barb Khouri filled up the car.

Sometime in the Winter of 1966-1967 (I have appointment book entries on January 8 that states “Dad in Holy Cross”, and “Drive Dad to doctor” on January 18), Harry went into the Holy Cross hospital for a hernia repair. Dr Atkinson again! He had, in the previous winter, been lifting a box at Acme Novelty when he sneezed. While he had been to the doctor immediately, he kept the information to himself until after Peggy died. I recall being very uneasy at his going into hospital, having just lost one parent, but had to keep

up appearances to not cause upset for Stephen. We went to visit Harry on a Sunday morning, which was easier for parking, and I believe that Stephen came along. I remember a very sunny, mild though winter day, with little or no snow on the roads. Indeed until I found the appointment book, my memory suggested Fall or Spring. Harry's surgery was uneventful, and he was back at work in about a week, though was sore for a while and not undertaking anything strenuous. While I said little at the time, I was greatly relieved.

Christmas 1966 was "different". I already knew Mary, and we spent some time together during the holidays. As far as I can determine from letters and my own imperfect memory, George Moss Jr. was still in England, returning to Canada with Joy in the spring of 1967. I do not exactly recall where we spent Christmas dinner. It may have been with the Frohns, Mary's family, as there are pictures there with Stephen included, but I don't see Harry in them.

In 1967, the year after Peggy died, John, Stephen and myself thought it would be a good thing for us to travel to England to see relatives since I personally had not been back there since emigrating to Canada in July 1957.

In February 1967 the company sent me to Chicago, U.S.A. for seven days to check out several supplier companies and to attend the giant advertising specialty trade show at the Palmer House Hotel, the intention being to get plenty of information to set up a advertising specialty division for Acme Novelty.

I worked hard and collected lots of ideas but soon realized to do the job properly I would have to attend the counterpart smaller Canadian show.

It may have been during the time Harry was in Chicago that Stephen got some sort of food poisoning or stomach flu. He had bad cramps and was not able to go to school. I believe I drove him to Dr. Atkinsons's office that was on 26 Avenue S.W., somewhere not far from 14 Street. A very vivid green "tonic" was prescribed. Stephen thinks this was just a placebo, but I recall atropine being mentioned. Whether placebo or active medicine, he recovered very quickly, but the fragility of our support system was obvious.

On returning home to Calgary and then reporting on my trip to Bryce in Edmonton I mentioned it would be ideal if I attended the Canadian show. I told him I thought a lot of tongues would be wagging since the Canadian show coincided with the Montreal opening of Expo celebrating Canada's 100th birthday.

Bryce replied he was not worried by "wagging tongues" and it was important that I make plans to go. At this time we had an elderly housekeeper named Mrs. Offord.

I informed John as to what was being planned in my work and stated it

might be a better idea if instead of going to England in 1967 we instead all went to Expo as this was a special one year only celebration. We would then visit England in 1968.

My plans were as usual to do all my own travel arrangements and my thoughts led me to also book separately the boys air travel, since all my expenses were company paid.

When booking the hotel, I arranged for room with two beds with an additional portable.

I then told the boys that instead of my eating in top class eating establishments we could eat in coffee shops to cover the expenses. Both John and Stephen were very excited about our plans.

We booked our flight to Montreal three days before the Expo Exhibition but in time for me to do business at the advertising specialty show.

At supper time on the Sunday before we took off, Bryce phoned me from his home in Edmonton, wondering when I was off to Montreal.

I replied that it was on Tuesday morning, and he immediately said “Why don’t you take your two boys with you? You have done so much for our company”.

I thanked him very much and, putting down the phone, explained things to the boys. What excitement!! This meant we could all travel in style.

On arriving in Montreal, I remember we took a cab to the Holiday Inn. We were NOT expected. It turned out the meeting was at the Holiday Inn in Dorval – right by the airport, and we were at the downtown location. So a cab back to the suburbs was in order. This meant we had a quite long bus/metro ride to Expo, but Stephen and I were up to the challenge. Despite the travel, bustle and lots of walking and waiting, I recall no big upsets during our time there, given the stresses and fatigue.

Before Expo opened, while Harry was busy on April 27, Stephen and I explored Montreal. I had been there the year before, and already had some acquaintances even before that from Science Fairs. We met up with Attila Szabo, walked up the Mountain, and played tourist. Expo 67 opened that day, but I believe we decided it would be too chaotic with the opening ceremonies to try to go there. This was Harry’s 45th birthday, but I don’t recall us even noting it – a terrible oversight.

My appointment book served to itemize a long list of exhibits and pavillions at Expo, starting Friday April 28 through Tuesday May 2. Our plane left in the evening, and at that time one did not have to show up long in advance of departure. I believe we left our luggage at the hotel and went to Expo until the afternoon.

When Expo opened I spent the first two days attending advertising specialty show with John and Stephen enjoying the exhibits at Canada's 100th Birthday celebration.

Here Harry is referring to the year-long Centennial events, though there was more excitement nearer July 1.

My only instructions to them were to pick out the most interesting ones for me to see in the evenings.

On the Thursday when we returned to our hotel after midnight, there was an urgent message to phone Wes Van Dusen, the Chairman of our companies, at any time of day or night.

On phoning, I was told that something very important had come up, so important that Len Hardy, Wes's stepson, was going to fly to Montreal the next day to see me and would I choose a Pavilion where we could meet and have lunch together.

I suggested the Belgian Pavilion because of its unusual shape and so easy to spot.

On the Friday, when I met Len as arranged, he laughed when he said, "I'm glad you are buying lunch in this very prestigious and expensive place".

The reason for his urgent visit was to tell me that a Company named Bazaar and Novelty, on Front Street West in downtown Toronto, was for sale and he wanted me to go to Toronto instead of going home to Calgary after visiting Expo.

He informed me that the two principals of the company would be expecting me and there was no need to discuss anything with them; just check thoroughly on everything they do and spend as many days as you need.

He knew I had my two boys with me and suggested we stay in style at the Four Seasons Hotel near the CBC Broadcast offices, stating that we would be interested in seeing lots of important people.

We arrived in Toronto on a Monday evening and could not find a hotel room anywhere, it being the last game of the NHL Stanley Cup Final (a best of seven series) between Montreal Canadiens and Toronto Maple Leafs in Toronto.

When Canadians joke about unlikely events, there is some equivalence between "when hell freezes over" and "when the Leafs win the Stanley Cup". Hence, when Harry says Monday, we know he slipped a day because (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_St Stanley_Cup_Finals) it was Tuesday May 2 when the Leafs won the 6th game to take the best-of-seven series. My appointment book entries, even cryptic as they are, confirm this.



Figure 22.1: Harry and Stephen in the US Pavilion (geodesic dome by Buckminster Fuller) at Expo 67.

In the end a cab driver for a \$5.00 tip said he would find us a room. We pulled up at the Walker House, across from the Royal York Hotel, downtown Toronto. While getting our luggage John said this must be a very expensive place after perusing the prices on the menu of the attached German restaurant.

Once we disposed of the cab and entered the hotel it was anything but luxurious. Some of the clients were a little odd, the elevator did not work, and on reaching our room there was a man crawling through a skylight to another room. The toilet and bathroom was a shared deal and down the hallway.

With all these happenings Stephen began to cry. This was very disturbing until John spoke up to say that none of us was liking the situation. John also added that “Dad will do everything he can to get us out of here in the morning.” We then went a few blocks and the boys chose a nice place to have supper.

I recall very little about the Walker House. Possibly my experiences the year before in Turkey and the Ford Hotel in Toronto during the Science Fair made me less sensitive to seedy hotels. In any event, we went to an old-fashioned deli restaurant on Yonge Street. The waiter who served us seemed to shuffle, but was extremely efficient. He was chatty, and later told us he had run restaurants, but gambled – and lost! However, he greeted us with, “Gentlemen, before you finish your meal, Toronto will have won the Stanley Cup”. I believe we liked the restaurant enough to go back there again, and I remember going to it with Mary in the late 1970s when we spent a Christmas in Toronto.

Between 8:00 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. the next morning I walked over to the Royal York Hotel to check on accommodation but they were still full since it was too early and rooms were not available.

I walked further on to the Lord Simcoe Hotel and was offered a suite next door to the Toronto Argonauts office, within the hour we were settled in.

My appointment book says “Prince George”, which was across the street from the Lord Simcoe. Both have since gone. The Prince George – built as the Rossin House Hotel in 1856, rebuilt after fire in 1863, and renamed Prince George in 1909, was demolished in 1969 to make way for the construction of the five-tower Toronto Dominion complex. The Lord Simcoe was built in 1956 but lacked central air conditioning and consistently lost money. It was demolished in 1981 and replaced with the Toronto Stock Exchange in 1983.

The boys said they could keep busy and I headed for Bazaar and Novelty. To my surprise they offered me the use of a new Cadillac. I spent nearly three days inspecting every department and was very impressed with what I saw.

Stephen and I did keep busy. One of my former high school teachers, Fr. (Paul?) Meloche, had become a professor at St. Michael’s College in the University of Toronto, and we had arranged to meet him. He joked, with eminent joy, that for most professors it was “Publish or Perish”, but for him it was “Publish or Parish”. Sadly, I have been told (possibly by Fr. Lawrence Moran) that he died rather young from Alzheimer’s.

We also went to see Prof. Don Rickerd of York U. who I had got to know during the WUSC Seminar in Turkey. Don later became President of the Donner Foundation, one of Canada’s major philanthropic institutions.

On the second day John said it would be nice if we could all visit Niagara Falls before heading back home to Calgary.

I told him I had good reason to go there since we were doing lots of business



Figure 22.2: Harry and Stephen at the Brock Monument, Queenston Heights, Niagara, 1967.

with two firms, i.e., Oneida Silversmiths and Zippo Manufacturing. After the third day working I handed back their [Bazaar and Novelty] Cadillac and rented a car for a day to go to Niagara Falls. We had a good reception at both Oneida and Zippo, and apart from entertaining us to lunch, gave us all tickets for various things at the Falls.

On driving back to Toronto we checked the rented car at the airport and flew direct to Calgary.

My recommendations to the VanDusens were that, if they could negotiate a good price, they should do their best to purchase the company. However they did not do so but at a later date instead sold their own Acme Novelty Ltd. to the Jim Pattison Group and straight away advised the Pattison group to buy Bazaar and Novelty Ltd.

This they did, and Harry Nash was given the job of flying to and from Edmonton and Toronto joining the two firms together since we both had our

own catalogues and both had different suppliers. We needed to get [things] so both companies were on the same wavelength.

This was quite an experience for me.

As we noted, 1967 was the 100th anniversary of Canadian Confederation. Harry, Stephen and I went to the Public Building in Calgary to a very non-descript office where we took the oath to become Canadian citizens (at least Harry and I did; I think Stephen was included automatically with Harry). My certificate is dated June 30, 1967, but I believe the actual ceremony was a few days earlier. This change was, in my mind, part of the changing sense of identity perfusing the country. Prior to this, as British subjects, we did not feel un-Canadian, but the mood of the people was adjusting.

Harry and Stephen moved to Edmonton in the late summer of 1967. I found a basement apartment in the north end of Calgary, but the room-mates I ended up with were irresponsible and by December I moved to a couple of rooms upstairs from Lottie Tuff, a lively octogenarian whose grandchildren would come by to take her with them on outings. She lived next to Harry and May Lee on 9A Street NW. Harry was a cousin of George S. Moss. Lottie spoiled me, possibly to get conversation and company. However, her family kept her very much involved in activities. The grandchildren had boyfriends and girlfriends, and if their parents grumbled about dress or behaviour, Lottie would silence them with embarrassing recollections of their own youth. No wonder the grandchildren liked her so much.



Figure 22.3: Newspaper announcement of Harry's promotion.

Chapter 23

1968: AN ASTONISHING YEAR

Many changes

For Harry and all around him, 1968 was a year of many events and changes. To put things in perspective, let us give a timeline that merges the personal activities with some of the world events that provided the backdrop to the personal narrative.

- In January, Dr. Benjamin Spock was indicted on charges of conspiring to encourage violations of draft laws. The Vietnam War was tearing US society apart. Many young men came to Canada during this period to escape the draft system. The US aircraft losses in the Vietnam War passed the 10000 mark on January 10. At the end of the month, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet offensive, which turned out to be a military failure but a strategic, and ultimately history-changing, success for them.
- Through March, I received several letters offering funding for graduate school. The Commonwealth Scholarship found me a place at Wadham College in Oxford, and through Bill Laidlaw I had a doctoral supervisor in Prof. C. A. Coulson, F.R.S.. Coulson, “The Prof.”, as he was known to his group, wrote to invite me to the Theoretical Chemistry Summer School in September, 1968. Then the National Research Council offered me a Science Scholarship of either \$5000 to study in Canada or \$3600 elsewhere. I telegraphed Wadham – something that is no longer possible – to ask if my place were tied to the Commonwealth, and received the very Oxonian reply:

PLACE DEPENDS ON ADEQUACY NOT SOURCE OF FUNDS
DONT BE HASTY
WADHAM

- On March 31, Lyndon Johnson announces he will not seek reelection.
- On April 4, Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. There are riots in in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Newark, Washington, D.C., and many other cities, leading to 46 deaths.
- Later in April, buildings at Columbia University are occupied by students protesting the University's involvement in defense work. These occupations end violently.
- On May 10, the US and North Vietnamese begin formal talks in Paris.
- Also in May in France there are massive protests and riots for a wide variety of reasons, some left wing, some anarchist, that due to heavy-handed police action gained the support of a large portion of the working population, leading to strikes by numbers estimated between 9 and 11 million workers and the essential paralysis of all services.
- On May 27, I received my Bachelor of Science degree and the Lieutenant Governor's Gold Medal at the University of Calgary convocation in the Jubilee Auditorium. Harry bought me a three-piece suit for this occasion, but believe he was not able to be at the ceremony.
- In early June in New York Andy Warhol survives an assination attempt with serious injuries. Robert Kennedy does not survive in San Francisco. It is a dangerous year.
- Sometime after Stephen has gone to England for the summer, I join Harry on one of his business trips and we visit Victoria and Vancouver.
- On August 7, Harry, Mary and I fly to Gatwick, UK, via Wardair.
- On August 14, Ella Moss dies, age 75.
- On August 20, 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops invade Czechoslovakia where the moderate government of Alexander Dubček has given the Soviet hard-liners a scare. A few days later the goons of Mayor Daley of Chicago generate five days of mayhem at the Democratic Convention.



Figure 23.1: Harry Nash at Butchart Gardens in Victoria, BC, summer 1968.

- October sees many student protesters killed or injured in Mexico City. It also sees the Summer Olympics there marred by African boycotts due to South African participation. The black power salute of Tommie Smith and John Carlos after their success in the 200 meter race create a massive controversy.
- In the midst of everything, on October 20, Jacqueline Bouvier-Kennedy marries Aristotle Onassis.
- George S. Moss dies on Saturday, 9 November, 1968. Bobby the budgie dies at the same time in the same house.
- Harry Nash marries Erma Rowley on 30 November, 1968. At the same time, the 56th Grey Cup was being played at Toronto's Exhibition Stadium, with Ottawa Rough Riders defeating the Calgary Stampeders 24 to 21 before 32,655.

To England

In early August 1968 John, his girlfriend Mary and I flew on a charter flight with Wardair (a favorite with both Canadians and Brits) from Edmonton to London. Stephen was already with relatives in England having traveled in early June.

John was on his way to study at Oxford University on a scholarship provided by the National Research Council of Canada.

We stayed at Sutton, a suburb of London quite close to Croydon, with Peggy's sister, Dolly and family. In addition Peggy's parents were also there but Ella was not in very good shape; in fact was in bed.

We arrived on a Thursday and soon got settled as jet lag never seems to bother me since I sleep so well when I am traveling.

I'm not sure that Mary and I did quite so well as Harry with jet lag. The flight was a long one – the Boeing 727 of Wardair, packed as it was, did not have the range to get all the way from Edmonton the Gatwick, and we refueled in Gander.

One thing that still amazes Mary and I is how we were all fitted in at 46 Rose Hill Park West. There were Dolly and Reg Barry, Ella and George Moss, Ann Barry, and the three of us. Peter Barry says he remembers sleeping at the house of some friends close by. There was a single toilet and a bathroom – with a bath, not a shower. Things have changed in four decades.

I met with my mother-in-law Ella and she immediately said, "Its so good to see you and the boys and how are you doing?" I answered, "Mum, we are doing fine" and she straight away said, "How are you really doing?" I said again "I am really doing fine". The next day when I sat with her again she repeated the same question. This was the Friday and as we were having supper I asked Reg, Dolly's husband and our brother in law how far it was to Wimbledon.

Stephen, who was very close to me, wondered what was on at Wimbledon. I told him that there were dog races and there was a very big race named "The Gold Collar Classic". Reg said it was not very far and he offered to drive Stephen and I to the track and we would return home by public transport.

There were very big crowds as we were dropped off at the main entrance but as we went to enter we were stopped since the County of Surrey in which the track was situated had a rule where anyone under age of 16 was not allowed in. However they said you can enter the restaurant overlooking the track; but with such a big race everything was fully booked.

Stephen's face showed his disappointment and he wondered what we were going to do. We walked away from the brightly lit main entrance and towards a poorly lit entrance on the other side. We went to a wicket that was poorly lit and I told the male cashier that we were from Canada and used to going to horse races and showed him a 10 shilling bill. He quickly looked around and let us both in. Stephen was 12 at the time but fairly tall for his age.

On the Saturday I again had a long visit with Ella and she said "I am glad you and the boys are doing well" and added, "Don't be affraid to get married

again". This latter remark was a bit of a surprise to me but she was very realistic and such a wonderful person.

On Saturday afternoon Stephen and I went into Central London to see Tottenham Hotspur versus Manchester United, two of the best teams in the premier English Soccer League. In those days 95% of the spectators stood on terraces for the whole game, approximately two hours.

Since it was a big game the crowd was large. Just before the game started Stephen, not surprisingly, said he could not see anything. The men around us asked where Stephen was from and when he told them Calgary, Alberta, Canada they said they would get a solid wooden box for him to stand on. They sure were friendly to us both.

On the Sunday I again had a nice chat with Ella and after I rented a car and Stephen and I journeyed to Southborough, a suburb of Royal Tunbridge Wells, where Peggy's sister, Audrey and husband Harry Shaw had a small general store, operated by Audrey.

On the Monday, Stephen and I decided to drive to Halesowen, near Birmingham in the English Midlands, to see my sister Desly and husband George. On the way we took our time and stopped at points of interest. On the Tuesday evening there was a big, all-ticket soccer match between Wolverhampton and another of the top English teams.

Desly and George generously bought Stephen and I tickets, plus a coach trip to and from the game included. As we were finishing supper the phone rang and when Desly answered, she said that the person needed was not available but she would get the call answered later that evening although it might be late.

When at 10:30 p.m. we returned from the soccer game Desly told us that Ella Moss had died and would I phone Dolly.

When doing so Dolly said that Ella had said to her, "Now that I have seen Harry and the boys and know that they are doing well, I am ready to go". She passed away the day after.

The funeral was in Tonbridge, Kent on the Thursday so Stephen and I took another day of sightseeing on the way back, stops included Churchill's birth place and Blenheim Palace.

It would appear that Ella had hung onto life long enough to see us after all of those years. Ella was a fantastic woman; she could have easily been a saint. George, Senior, her husband was never the same after this and he died at the dining room table less than three months later.

Another viewpoint

While Harry and Stephen were away from Sutton, Mary and I had travelled to the Netherlands so she could show me where she had been as a child. We fortunately have a loose-leaf binder from which we made a photo-album and scrap book, and in it are the bus tickets from Schiphol to Amsterdam on August 10 and back on the 15th. We managed to see and do a great deal, including a Strauss opretta “Wiener Blut” at Statsschouwburg (a difficult name for the non-Dutch to pronounce!). I found it hard to follow, as the dialogue was in Dutch while the songs were in the original Austrian-German. It had rained, and we bought a nice umbrella, only to leave it at the Hotel van Sprang on our departure.

We also met with several of Mary’s extended family. I best remember Om Anton and his dog Pasha, a rather pleasant dog that both of us remember to this day as quite smelly.



Figure 23.2: Rie and Anton Frohn with Mary Frohn and dog Pasha, August 1968. Anton died a little over a year later, having been born in 1894. The car is a Daf, which had an interesting variable-speed transmission.

As I recall, the funeral for Ella was not in Tunbridge but at the Kent and

Sussex Crematorium in Tunbridge Wells, which is off Forest Road. George Moss was very quiet, and I was shocked to see tears running down his face, forcing a realization of the deep and abiding affection that had existed between my grandparents for nearly half a century.

From the scrap-book/album, it is clear that the pictures at Queen's Folly (Brick Cottage) in Figure 2.1 were taken on the day of Ella's funeral, as related pictures show me in my graduation suit. In fact, I am the only one in a three-piece suit, as I was travelling to stay in England rather than be on holiday. Also we had more formal clothes then; Mary had several outfits that were acceptable for the funeral. Today we wear much less formal clothing.

Despite the obvious upset of Ella's death, we pursued our holiday vigorously. Dog races at Catford, horse races at Lingfield and Epsom, cars at Brands Hatch, Speedway at Wimbledon, "Half Way up the Tree" with Robert Morley at the Queen's Theatre, and "The Mousetrap" at the Ambassador Theatre. We went to Hampton Court, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park. There were visits to Canterbury, Salisbury, Stonehenge, Southampton and Plymouth. Harry kept us on the move, but he had been long enough in Canada that we had to remind him "Don't change the window into 2nd gear!" after a few instances where he grabbed the handle on his right rather than the shift on his left.

Early in September, in Sutton, Mary and I were treated to a wonderful celebration of our 21st birthdays. The stopwatch my grandfather gave me is in front of me as I write – it still serves to measure elapsed time of computations more simply than some software tools.

That was very close to the day of departure, where Stephen took my place going home. I recall the week or so after as quite quiet, though I did go to Liverpool on the train to clear my trunk of books. I also had time to sit in the garden and talk to my grandfather, who related some stories of his experiences in the Great War. If only I had known more then about the history of the time. He had much to say, and without context much of what he said did not have great meaning to me.

After this, I went to Oxford for the Theoretical Chemistry Summer School which lasted over a week. We were housed in Somerville College, which is close to the Maths Institute where lectures took place. Until 1992, Somerville was all-women, so I had the distinction of being one of the few men to sleep there legitimately. At one dinner, I was seated with some Dutch participants who were chatting away busily in their own language. One of them said, "Geef me de kip, alstublieft." I passed the chicken and there was silence until one of them asked, "Do you speak Dutch?", to which I replied, "Een beetje." He said, "Then we will have to be more careful what we say."

The Summer School included some outings, including a play at Stratford. I forget which it was, though I believe it was a comedy. I have a record that I paid 18/- (about \$2) for the coach and play in a small notebook that I used to track my expenses. Though I did not keep a diary, I have found this accounting record – used to help me survive being paid only three times a year – sometimes more helpful because it shows the prices paid at the time.

After the Summer School ended, I went back to Sutton. Ralph Parks came with his mini van and helped me move my trunk to Wadham, where I got installed a week or so before term started sometime in October, and my time at Oxford began in earnest. I recorded that I spent 33/- on fuel (I wrote “Gas for Ralph”). For the first few days I was in one of the older quads. It was said, only half-jokingly, that John Keats had stayed in the room I was in, and the linen had not been replaced since. At this time the [dining] Hall was not open, so students such as myself had to eat in local restaurants. This was relatively expensive – I had to budget very carefully. Worse, some of the cheaper ones, like Crawford’s and the Clarendon, where one got a meal for about 5/-, were sub-standard, and I got diarrhoea to the extent I needed to see the College physician, who prescribed some medicine that cost me 2/6. These “restaurants” were large, rather ugly, upstairs cafeterias. After getting sick, I went up-market a bit to pubs like the Kings Arms, which was almost part of Wadham, or the Lamb and Flag, the Turf, or the Mitre, or else to Chinese or Indian restaurants, spending from 8/- to 12/- per meal, though I did occasionally return to the cheaper haunts, especially as my digestion adjusted to 1960s institutional fare.

My “regular” room was in a converted, quite modern, house at the back of Wadham College. A doorway had been cut in the College wall to this. It was called Staircase 18. I had a ground floor room that had been someone’s library. It was all bookshelves. I had a window onto a walled garden. Truly delightful, except that the wall to the garden had a six-foot high gate that became a “climbing in” route to the College, which was closed at 11 or midnight, after which late entries were reported to the Dean. In that time of miniskirts, I awoke one night to hear voices discussing the procedure. A fellow explained that you put your foot on the gate handle as you pulled yourself up to a standing position, swung your leg over, stood on the handle on the inside, brought your other leg over, and dropped down. Easy! After a pause, a female voice complained, “You’ll see up.” I have sometimes mused on the strange innocence of this girl who would want to climb in to a mens’ college after hours.

The account book, if read between the lines, tells more than its mere words and numbers, showing an expenditure of 55/- on flowers on November 11,



Figure 23.3: Wadham College, Oxford. Holywell Quad, looking at the south wing of the Main Quad. Mary and I held our wedding reception in the Middle Common Room whose windows are the right half of the ground floor in this 1968 photo.

presumably for the funeral of my gradfather, George S. Moss. It appears that on November 15 I took a coach to London and tube to Dolly and Reg Barry. However, I recall the funeral was once again at the Crematorium in Tunbridge Wells. I think I got a ride there and back with the Barrys, and do not remember staying overnight, but took the late bus back to Oxford. All the expenses are shown for the 15th. In this case, I may – though I do not explicitly recall doing so – have had to arrange a late entry with the Porter, which would not be an issue in the case of a funeral.

The relative costs of things are a shock after all this time. A radio was £15 / 4 / 6, and the license 25/-, or about a week's wages total. Two pairs of trousers were £7 / 15 / - , more or less what one pays now in Walmart for cheap jeans. I spent 3/1 on bananas, but only 1/7 for milk and a pie.

At the end of the year, I went to Tunbridge Wells for Christmas with Audrey and Harry Shaw. On the way I shopped in London, finding Gordon Lightfoot's "Did She Mention My Name" album and a very compact record player. On Dec 28, I went to Weymouth and spent two nights in a B&B to visit a new Oxford friend Gillian Murphy (now Seagrave). Her father was in the Navy at the Underwater Weapons Research Establishment at Portland. The weather was cold but sunny. I got some interesting photos of sun on frosty ground on Portland Bill. Mary later crewed with Gillian and her husband

Jonathan on the Oxford Canal. On December 30, I took the train back to London and I believe Ralph Parks and I went to a folk music club that was dim and smokey. I think I crashed with Ralph, and spent New Years Eve at the (infamous?) 13 Frederick Street, near King's Cross. It was, I believe, on that occasion that the chimney caught fire, though the "fires" were all gas heaters. Evidently, the chimney had not been swept after coal fires were replaced with the gas heaters. Ralph and three or four others had the main and basement levels, with a toilet under the stairs in the basement and a bathtub in the kitchen, drawing hot water from an Ascot heater.



Figure 23.4: Harry Nash, George S. Moss, Dolly Barry and Ann Barry in garden of 46 Rose Hill Park West, Sutton, September, 1968.

Chapter 24

ABS

Through 1968 and 1969, Harry was working with Acme Novelty, but the company was sold in 1969 to the Jim Pattison organization. As Harry reveals, his relationship with the new bosses was not a comfortable one. 1970 was a very important year for Harry, and the following years a challenging period for him, in that he left Acme Novelty and, after some mixed efforts in diverse areas, started Alberta Bingo Supplies or ABS with Heinz Oldach.

Meanwhile, I was in England, working on my studies (and sometimes other activities!) In 1970, Mary and I married in Oxford, we were naturally preoccupied with building a life together. Thus, in this rather long chapter, I have merged several of Harry's stories about this period. These overlap in time and in events, and I hope that I have managed to get the sequence and nature of the events correct. Indeed, during this whole period, I was only in Edmonton either for brief visits or for the period July 1972 to February 1973, when I was a post-doctoral fellow with Fraser Birss in the Chemistry Department of the University of Alberta.

Acme Novelty Essay Competition

Harry's move from Acme Novelty to becoming his own boss may have seemed sudden, but the process took several years. He points out that the ideas came over time.

In 1963 Peggy, the two boys and I had been in Canada six years and we thought it was time for Peggy and the boys to visit her family in England. Because of finances it was decided that I should stay home in Calgary.

My checklist included painting the outside of our bungalow and then go camping and fishing for seven days at Moraine Lake, not far from Lake Louise.

A few days after the family left in early June of 1963 for three months holiday, all the staff, including myself, at Acme Novelty Ltd. received a letter from Len Hardy, a Vice President in Edmonton, announcing a competition in which four business-type questions were asked.

We had to answer in essay form, entries to be returned to Edmonton by September 1st and the replies to be judged by two professors in the Business Faculty at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

The one and only prize was a trip for two to Harrison Hot Springs in British Columbia or \$300 in cash. I immediately thought this was well worth going after, and I took four white 8 x 10 cardboard inserts from the packaged clean laundered shirts that cleaners used. On each of the four pieces I wrote at the top one of the questions.

Then, over a period of six weeks, I kept making notes of ideas as they came to me on the various questions. As the end of August drew near, since Peggy was still away, I had to get a typist friend that was not in the employ of Acme Novelty to type my presentation.

Lisa Gardner, wife of Wilf Gardner, one of our supervisors volunteered to do the work; at the time she was a secretary at the famous Glenbow Foundation. My promise was that if I won I would take Lisa and Wilf for supper.

Around the 7th of September Peggy and the boys returned home and a few days later Len Hardy phoned to congratulate me on winning the competition. I replied that I preferred the cash to a trip for two to Harrison Hot Springs. I am sure the result helped over the years, although not immediately to bigger things.

I note that September 7, 1963, is part of the weekend after Labour Day (September 2), so I wonder if Stephen and I missed the start of the school year. Harry never did learn to type, but Peggy had taught Stephen and I. Stephen was very quick at 110 words per minute on the IBM Selectric, but when he applied for a typists job with the University of Alberta after completing High School, he was told he could not be hired because he wasn't female.

Starting Crown Amusements

A year or so after this I transferred to Edmonton. Stephen and I moved in September 1967. In January 1969 the company sent me on an advanced management course at the Banff School of Management.

Wes van Dusen, the main owner, and I were the only ones from our company to be sent on this course. To qualify to enroll one had to be a President, Vice President, General Manager. The course ran for six days per week, even

in the evenings. The total length of the course was six weeks. Lecturers were excellent and came from all over North America.

Later in 1969 Acme Novelty was sold to the Jim Pattison Group in Vancouver. Soon after the Jim Pattison Group took over Acme Novelty Ltd. the new people arranged a meeting at the Royal Glenora for cocktails inviting key personnel from our firm.

Jim Pattison himself was not in attendance but a number of his accountants were. In situations such as this I only drink Seven Up, keeping by wits about me.

During the course of the meeting I was cornered by a couple of their accountants and asked what I thought of the idea of Acme Novelty expanding into Eastern Canada with emphasis on the Toronto area.

My reply was that I thought it would be disastrous as it would mean competing with the "big boys" in the east. My response was not received well and from then on I knew my days were numbered with the company.

My corporate office on the top floor was taken from me and also my title as Operations Manager. I was given a position as manager of Acme Amusements Ltd. and a very small cubby hole office, my responsibilities being to look after all rental games and equipment together with prizes. Bingo and Lucky 7 gambling pull tickets were included, as were trophies, award items and hats and novelties for New Years Festivities. It was a very profitable division!

Around this time the Pattison accountants suggested to Bryce Van Dusen that Harry Nash was earning too much money, since I was still earning my salary as Operations Manager, and that I should be let go. Since I was still valuable to Bryce, he said that if I was let go, he would leave too. It was a very tense few days with lots of phone calls after work hours.

They kept me on, but I knew my days were numbered. Heinz was very valuable [to the business] too as he knew the carnival business so well.

This seems to have been early 1970. Over the Christmas vacation of 1969/70, I had returned to Canada, and Mary and I had announced our plans to marry in the Summer of 1970. We spent some time in Edmonton (Mary was then completing a Bachelor of Library Science there), and also in Calgary before my return to England. A side note is that I had, during the summer of 1969, tried allowing my beard to grow. Before this, I had recurrent problems with razor burn due to a quite tough beard but less tough skin. So the new face was a surprise for everyone but me to get used to.

I told Bryce that I would be giving him two weeks notice to leave sometime at my convenience in the next twelve months. It was then that Heinz said that if I left, he would too. Bryce then wondered with Heinz gone what would they

do with the carnival operation of Acme Novelty, made up of half a dozen rides such as a Merry Go Round, Ferris Wheel, etc. At the time these things were being said, Bryce, Heinz and I were at a "Fairs" convention in Saskatoon.

I said the best thing would be to sell the "carnival operation", including all of its old trucks. Bryce asked who would be likely to buy it and my reply was that Heinz, the carnival manager for a number of years, was the most logical person.

When Heinz and I got back to our shared hotel room Heinz immediately stated he had no money to make a purchase. My reply was that no one had any money.

The carnival used to operate from April to early September, and Heinz helped out in our warehouses during the winter months. When we returned to Edmonton from the convention, I instructed Heinz to get the carnival equipment in the best shape ever in case it was sold. He hired a couple of workers and really worked with enthusiasm.

When it came to March [1970] Bryce asked Heinz if the carnival was ready to go on the road, and his answer was that the equipment was ready but Heinz himself would not be going with it.

Bryce remarked that Heinz was being really serious, so he would approach the Pattison Group. Their accountants, who hated the carnival because it was difficult to control the cash, were all for selling to Heinz. Since Heinz did not have much money, Heinz's wife Dianne, Erma and I formed a new company, Crown Amusements Ltd., each of us being equal partners.

The purchase price of rides, trucks and accessories was \$23,000. We decided we needed \$30,000 to include operational cash. Erma put up the most, inserting \$7,000, with Heinz and I three to four thousand each, and with Heinz's Dad putting in a small balance to bring it up to \$15,000.

We then went to see a Bank Manager friend at the Bank of Nova Scotia, only to find he had just been transferred. We were introduced to a Mr. Bell, an older person and the new manager. After listening to my presentation, he said he felt we both knew what we were doing and, although many of his peers would not do a deal, he felt confident in loaning us \$15,000.

Heinz went on the road and I stayed on at Acme Novelty in a diminished role with same pay, making sure any carnival related business was forwarded to Heinz.

In September the carnival came to a halt and Heinz attempted to rent portable games to clubs and organizations for fundraising. This was a small amount of business. However, during our first season, we paid off the Bank and Heinz's Dad and had a small bonus ourselves, as well as paying Heinz a modest salary.

In early December the new President of Acme Novelty, Ron Meredith, invited me for lunch at the popular 700 Wing.

Meredith had been “around” Acme Novelty for some time. Harry has mentioned him in regards to negotiations for the takeover of a Winnipeg jewelry company. Harry felt that the Pattison group was run by accountants who were too focussed on the reported numbers to observe what was really going on in a business. He reported two situations that underline this. First, while he doesn’t mention it above in regard to being relieved of his position of Operations Manager, he said several times that his instructions to get more merchandise in the branches were countermanded by the “accountants” so they could preserve cash to purchase other businesses. That is, the business plan of Pattison’s group was to acquire businesses, then milk them for cash to buy other businesses.

A second story he told was that he and Heinz “knew” that the accountants were suspicious that the carnival operators were stealing money, i.e., “skimming”. When I was cashier for one of the bingos at the Calgary Stampede that was operated for a Kiwanis or Kinsmen club, the Acme people were very concerned that the volunteers might put a hand in the change apron they wore, then in their own pocket. Thus they used aprons that wrapped around and covered pockets! Indeed, Harry said he and Heinz were strict to point out that there must be absolutely no diversion. I don’t think that there was a genuine concern that the workers were dishonest, but that even paying for a needed drink out of working funds could pose a danger while it was possible there were snoops about. However, they contrived to make the rides much less profitable. These were rides that had been paid off, in full, years before, so should be raking in cash. The snoops could probably count the customers and work out the revenue. But Heinz had told the staff to ensure the kids got a really good ride. The long rides cut the revenue, even as the lines stayed relatively long. People will join a line that is moderately long, especially if there is good value for money after the wait. So any snoops saw longish lines, happy kids, and no chicanery, but the revenue was lowered.

Returning to Harry’s account of this period,

During lunch he [Meredith] mentioned I had been badly treated since the takeover and stated that as of the first of the year they wanted me back on the corporate business decision team. No mention had ever been made that I was a partner with Heinz, and Bryce was positive that they would not have sold to us if they had known Harry Nash was involved.

I told new President how pleased I was with his offer!! Two weeks later on New Years Eve [1970] I handed in my written resignation. Immediately they

held a top notch board meeting over lunch and after I was summoned to the President's office. He at once asked if there was any sense in sitting down to discuss things and my reply was, "No". He replied, "I thought so".

The next week I started on a meager salary with Crown Amusements Ltd.

Mary and I were not present at any of these events. She had come to England in May, 1968, arriving on a day that was auspicious in that the trees were a riot of blossom. The first night I had arranged a B&B for her, but by the next night we had found a rather decrepit room not far from St. Aldates. I had also managed to borrow a bicycle, which, with one I had purchased for less than £2 from Gillian, meant we could get around. We then proceeded to organize the bureaucratic formalities of getting married at St. Aloysius Church in Woodstock Road.

Medicine Hat Exhibition / Harry Viner

In the early part of 1970 Acme Amusements Ltd. got the contract to supply the equipment and operate Medicine Hat's first casino.

The exhibition did not have a building but were willing to build one, but were undecided where the location should be.

In early March I traveled there, joined by Erma, so we could also visit with her sister, Hazel, and husband, Bruce.

I had an appointment to meet with the Exhibition's general manager and board members for Saturday lunch at the prestigious Connaught All Mens' Club.

Early on Saturday morning with snow on the ground, Erma and I walked around their exhibition grounds and, after careful thought, I made up my mind on the location I would recommend.

When Bryce sent me on the job he gave no indication of what I might expect. When arriving at the Connaught Club I was cordially greeted by four members of the Board. Soon after a big, loud-speaking individual entered and shouted, "Where is this fellow, Nash?"

Dirk Shoulton, a dutchman who had been a high ranking undercover officer in World War Two, was a tough individual to deal with.

After ordering drinks, but before looking at the menu, he openly stated that he had chosen the location where he thought the casino should be. I quickly replied that I had also done so. He immediately asked "Where?"

I told the group that my choice was a spot behind the grandstand, between the ladies and mens washrooms. To my surprise Dirk Shoulton, General Man-

ager, said that was also his choice. After that it was plain sailing with him. He treated me royally and never once questioned any of my decisions.

After our very enjoyable lunch he asked what other things I did for Acme Amusements Ltd., and if we were doing other business in their City. I told him we were doing very little so he suggested we visit some of the key service clubs and he would introduce me to management.

We spent all of Saturday afternoon going to the Canadian Legion, Army & Navy Club and the Elks group. During this time I kept Dirk supplied with drinks and myself with 7-Up. I am sure he drank a bottle of rye during the session.

The managers of the clubs all thought that my prices for "Break Open Lucky 7" gambling tickets were very competitive, and I was given orders for over 3000 bags of tickets. This is a very large amount of tickets, and on returning to Edmonton, Bryce was overwhelmed. However Bryce was no longer a part owner, so my "perk" for this effort was not a raise in pay but rather some other small thing.

In August of the same year I was back in Medicine Hat, organizing their very first casino, and there were lots of curious watchful eyes.

On the first evening, Dirk Shoulton, the General Manager, came to see me in the casino and said he had an interesting person to introduce me to.

It was Harry Viner, present Mayor of the City, nationally known entrepreneur, multi-millionaire and owner of numerous operations including factories.

I had, through Acme Amusements, purchased gift items from his "Hycroft" china factory. After a few minutes I told him that Acme Amusements often purchased "rejects and seconds" from various outlets to use in their carnival operation. I asked if he had any "seconds" and he said he did not.

I replied that his was the first factory I knew of that did not have "rejects". He laughed and invited me to visit his china factory. After looking around we came across a pile of cases covered in thick dust; merchandise was stacked around 4 feet high and enough inventory to fill a one ton truck. I opened a few cases to find tankards, mugs, ashtrays, cups and saucers, etc. I asked him a price on condition I purchased the whole pile and he suggested \$5.00 per dozen items. I told him he was way out of line since we were buying lots of "seconds" from Cutler Brands, Canada's large glass distributor, situated in Toronto, all for \$2.40/ dozen, and some for \$1.20/dozen.

He agreed on a price of \$2.40/ dozen and I asked him to get his staff to count and list everything and I would return to give him a purchase order. We would pay for shipment.

On the Friday I returned to Harry Viner's factory office and was given the

quantities and total price. As I filled out the purchase order he said, "No one usually gets the better of me on a business deal!!". I replied, "Don't give me that load of crap since you are getting over \$3,000.00 for something that will never sell in stores".

He then said "Harry, you are not anyway like an Englishman".

I asked whom I was like, and his reply, "You are more like an American, German or Jew." Incidentally, Harry Viner was Jewish.

1970 Exhibition Casinos

Again backing up a few months, Harry relates the last summer he worked for Acme. I rely on Harry's notes here.

The summer of 1970 was my last one with Acme Novelty. With Heinz gone from Acme, Bryce did a deal when the carnival was sold that Heinz would return for a fee to manage the ten day exhibition casinos in Winnipeg and Edmonton. We had operated Winnipeg's very first casino the year before. I was to manage the new casinos in Swift Current, Moose Jaw and Prince Albert, all in Saskatchewan. In addition, I was to manage the new one in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and one we had done previously in Red Deer, Alberta.

Heinz took off for Winnipeg, and the exhibition people were helped by their City Police in screening casino help. Heinz phoned me to say they had rejected a good number, since they had criminal records, but the many of the ones hired appeared worse than those let go.

It was so bad that Heinz asked me if I would fly to Winnipeg and help him out. I told him that "He was a big boy!" and to do his best by himself. I had plenty on my plate watching as best I could over the carnival we had just bought and preparing to take a crew and equipment to Swift Current.

The "watching over the carnival" would be under the table, as Harry's role in Crown Amusements was not then in the open.

At the end of the first day of the casino in Winnipeg, after all monies had been tabulated, it was found that the float in the [casino] Bank was \$2,000.00 short. Heinz phoned Bryce in the middle of the night, and Bryce soon gave orders for me to get to Winnipeg as soon as possible.

On arriving Heinz and I had a very quick meeting and I was told the exhibition people insisted on having two people in the Bank, as well as our two staff, which comprised of a retired insurance agent Tommy Visser and his wife. Bryce had known this couple for years.

The exhibition staff counted all the gaming table revenue watched by their own security people. After careful consideration Heinz and I decided to make some drastic changes. Before acting on these Bryce was contacted in Edmonton and he endorsed what we intended to do. The [new] contract was simple in that the exhibition paid all wages and expenses and the profit was to be split 50/50 between the exhibition and Acme Novelty Ltd.

We asked to speak to the exhibition general manager and the casino manager. Our first proposal was that for the Bank [of the casino] they could have their people in the Bank by themselves or they could chose to have Acme Amusement people alone, and no way would we allow some of each. In addition if the float came up short, the group operating the Bank would have to make the losses good. In regards to counting the revenue from the gaming tables, I stated that no one, repeat no one, from either party would be allowed to count money. We would hire people from a national accounting firm to do this, and a rope barrier would be erected around the large table so that no one could get within eight feet. Either side could stay in the room but behind the barrier.

The casino was being held in the Winnipeg hockey arena and the count room was the Winnipeg Jets change area.

The managers from the exhibition rejected our proposals, so I said that after today we would be closing the casino and taking all the equipment back to Edmonton.

They finally agreed to this and even though the first day had losses we finished up with \$94,000 to split between the two parties. This may not sound like much compared with today's figures, but one must remember that the maximum bet on any game was \$5.00. Everyone was very pleased.

After settling things I returned to Edmonton and prepared staff and equipment for the carnival "B" circuit which consisted of the five cities mentioned earlier. Since the exhibition casinos were all spread out in different locations, we were continuously training dealers, pit bosses and cash handlers.

Swift Current exhibition was held following the one in Winnipeg, and since they were having their very first casino, they did not have a suitable building available, Acme Amusements decided to rent them a 60' x 40' tent. However the same tent had been rented to Winnipeg exhibition, so Heinz was to hitch a trailer to his station wagon and drive the tent from Winnipeg to Saskatoon. With summer exhibition season we not only had to operate the casinos, but had to set up and take down all the equipment, then drive the many miles to the next location and start all over again. This meant that, for a couple of months, we worked sixteen to eighteen hour days, plus moved everything on Sundays.

I was getting my straight managerial pay and expenses. The financial deal with all these casinos was the same; the exhibition paid all expenses and the profit was split in half.

To prepare for Swift Current, I drove the 450 miles from Edmonton to await the arrival of Heinz with the tent. The expected arrival time was 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon but he did not get there until midnight, and then with a rental truck. He had left Winnipeg with his station wagon but only got a few miles when it stalled. Someone had put sugar in his gas tank. We worked through the night; erected the large tent and set up gambling equipment.

The first evening it rained "buckets" and the carnival rides closed early at 9:00 o'clock. The gambling crowd dwindled but it was replenished by the carnival workers wanting to play. By midnight we were down to two busy blackjack tables operating. We were supposed to close at 2:00 a.m., but we stayed open to around 2:30 a.m. To be fair to the losing players, I said we would deal four more shoes, each shoe with four decks. The players thought this was fair, and we continued and had a very profitable evening.

The next day when I approached the exhibition manager he was overwhelmed with pleasure.

After the casino closed we worked with exhibition staff to count, balance and night deposit the money at a local bank. At the end of the week I presented the exhibition manager with expense memo for six days at \$50.00 per day i.e. \$300.00.

Swift Current was followed by Moose Jaw, Red Deer and then Medicine Hat. I submitted expense memos to each place and received cheques. These I pocketed but did not cash. On returning to Edmonton, I spoke to Bryce and told him what I had done and emphasized I had worked around the clock and made the company a good profit. I gave him the cheques since I was already getting my expenses paid by my firm. He said he would have to speak to the new owners accountants.

When he came back he said "What do you think they had to say?" I said "I bet they said Harry Nash is already getting enough money". He told me that was exactly what they told him, but they would give me a receipt for the cheques so I would not have tax problems.

I was about to drive 360 miles for the casino in Medicine Hat, Alberta, to be followed by the one in Prince Albert, northern Saskatchewan. I told Bryce that I knew this would happen and that I was prepared to operate in Medicine Hat, but I would not be going to Prince Albert. Instead I had been able to book a last minute flight to England with Erma and three children and was leaving two days after completing my work in Medicine Hat.

Bryce asked who would work Prince Albert, and I suggested he do it himself.

He realized I was upset, and wondered if Heinz would leave Crown Amusements Ltd. and do the casino for him. He offered Heinz \$400.00 plus expenses and Heinz refused saying he wanted \$1,000.00 plus expenses.

Heinz went and they had another successful casino.

When Erma and I returned from our four weeks in England I wondered if I would have a job. However I carried on and several weeks later we had a frantic phone call from the manager of Red Deer Exhibition, stating they could not find the money from their casino.

I told him that when arriving to run their casino, I had gone to the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and opened an account in which I could only deposit money for their exhibition. Each night after the casino closed, I helped count the money, made up the bank deposit, phoned the RCMP, and got escorted to the bank for the night deposit.

Within minutes Ernie Coombs, the manager who was an ex RCMP phoned back laughing his head off. All the money, exactly as stated, was there.

Fair Circuit Bid, Regina

At the end of 1970, coming off a personal good year in charge of Acme Amusements; a demotion from operations manager of the whole company but doing well with all areas including the five casinos in the "B" fair circuit (i.e. Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Prince Albert, Swift Current and Moose Jaw) I resigned by job.

Two days later on January 2nd 1971 I was working with Crown Amusements Ltd. with Heinz Oldach my partner at 6710 – 76 Avenue SW in Edmonton.

News spread quickly that Heinz and I had both quit Acme Novelty Ltd. and it was not long before we had a phone call from Ernie Coombes, general manager of Red Deer Exhibition and also a committee member of the "B" Fair circuit.

He was wondering if we would be able to make a proposal and bid to operate and supply equipment for their five exhibition summer casinos.

Heinz, who is a specialist when it comes to having equipment built assured Ernie that we had almost enough equipment already and it would only take a few weeks to build the balance as well as purchasing security listed casino chips and signs, etc.

Heinz and I were invited to the "B" circuit fairs convention in mid January in Regina, Saskatchewan. At the time it was terribly cold and we drove the 500 miles to Regina on the Wednesday; the day prior to start of meetings.

Since we were not members we had to meet with various managements and

committees outside of their meeting rooms. This was not hard to do but after two days Heinz and I both felt we were not getting anywhere and decided we would leave Regina empty handed first thing Saturday for the drive back to Edmonton.

At around 5:00 p.m. we got a phone call to our hotel room from the President of the "B" Fairs Circuit group asking for us to make a presentation to all the members at 11:00 a.m. Saturday.

As always I did the presentation and Heinz and I spent several hours going over my talk.

The room was packed and we knew most of the 60 plus people in attendance having operated their very successful casinos the year before. My presentation with question period went extremely well and we were complimented on it and then invited to their windup luncheon meeting.

At the luncheon I was approached over the meal by the Treasurer of Red Deer Exhibition who asked "What is the financial position with your company Crown Amusements Ltd." I replied that I was surprised he had not asked this question at the meeting in from of the other delegates. I added that we had of course prepared for this question and had a letter from our Bank Manager stating that although we were a fairly new company we were financially sound.

At the breakup of the luncheon meeting we were told that the casino committee was going to meet and we would have their decision later that Saturday afternoon.

Heinz and I sat in the hotel room with our bags packed waiting for that phone call. It was a very long afternoon.

At around 5:00 o'clock the phone rang; it was the "B" Fairs President with the news that after careful discussion they had decided to give the casino contract to someone else. I enquired politely to whom and was told it went to Acme Novelty e.g. Bryce Van Dusen. I thanked him very much for allowing us to make a bid and for lunch.

Acme Amusements were not at this meeting but I believe what beat us was the fact Bryce Van Dusen is a well-respected Mason-Shriner having later become Potentate in Alberta and all the exhibitions we were dealing had many Shriners in their membership.

We checked out of the hotel but Heinz's new General Motors Riviera would not start. The temperature had dropped to -35 centigrade plus a strong wind chill and motor was too cold. We called AAA car services and one hour later were on our way.

The 500 miles back to Edmonton were the "longest miles of our lives". We got home at 2:30 a.m. Sunday.

The End of Acme Novelty Ltd.

Early in 1973, my business (Harry Nash Agencies) working out of the home at 11463 – 51 Avenue was getting cramped for space. The garage was loaded with bingo supplies and we had the odd customer coming to the front door expecting it to be a sales room and warehouse. I started looking for alternative space, and one day mentioned the situation to Heinz Although we were not partners any more, we were often doing small odd business deals together.

He still was using his rental office and warehouse space at 6710 76 Avenue. A few days later he suggested we get together and become partners in a bingo business, with he also having Crown Amusements and I, Harry Nash Agencies. Heinz built a showroom and on April 1st 1973 we created Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd.

By this time I had three additional sales people with the advertising specialty firm so was giving more time to selling bingo items. Heinz looked after the office and shipping and receiving supplies.

As time progressed sales kept improving and we added other lines including hats and novelties for New Years. As this was happening Acme Novelty Ltd. was rapidly going down hill. Acme had spent millions moving into Eastern Canada and the move had been disastrous, losing them multiple millions of dollars.

Late in 1975 Acme Novelty began to wind down and finally went out of business in 1976. However Bazaar and Novelty Ltd., which I had recommended as a firm worth buying, if price was right, to Wes Van Dusen, but which instead had been bought out by the Pattison Group on Wes' influence, was kept in operation with a branch in Edmonton.

A few months went by when we had an arranged visit from Len Stuart and partner from Toronto. His reason was to talk to Heinz and I about all four of us joining forces to buy Bazaar and Novelty, including all of its branches across Canada. Len was of the opinion he could do a deal for \$ 2 1/4 million and buy it from the Pattison Group.

Since none of us had much spare cash it meant we would all have to mortgage to the hilt everything we had, and then borrow some more. When I asked Len "Will Heinz and I be getting 50% of Bazaar and Novelty Ltd.; his reply was "No"!! As we were talking we were having lunch at "Oliver's" a fine restaurant at 118 Street and Jasper Avenue. After Len had answered "No" I then said "Let us forget the deal and enjoy our lunch."

Len and his partner rounded up some other financing and concluded the deal. Before doing so Len, was selling us bingo supplies from his factory and

distribution centre, Bingo Press and Specialty Company in Scarborough, a suburb of Toronto.

After the purchase of Bazaar and Novelty he got much of his money back by franchising some of the branches, but had the sense to keep the best ones, including the Edmonton branch. This meant that not only was he supplying Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd., his best customer, but he now had a branch in Edmonton as a competitor.

In addition as Acme Novelty ltd. was “going down the drain”, three of its managers broke away and joined forces with a lawyer, John Hope, who happened to be Bryce Van Dusen’s son-in-law.

They created a firm called Imperial Amusements Ltd., and now instead of having Acme Amusements Ltd. as a lone competitor we now had two, all selling the same services. Business became much tougher.

After Acme Novelty closed its doors it still had in the west end of Edmonton a distribution warehouse, which they said was the same size as a football field. Still remaining was an assortment of merchandise that had not been disposed of in the numerous liquidation sales.

Heinz and I were invited to this warehouse to see if we were interested in any of the goods at distressed prices. All that was left was in numerous piles around the perimeter of this massive building. As we purchased we pulled the merchandise towards the centre and items were listed with the agreed price.

As we completed our purchasing, we saw a one ton truck in the corner and were told that this was for sale also. We agreed on a price and the truck was loaded with the goods we had bought.

That was the end for Acme Novelty Ltd.

Edmonton Ex / Calgary Stampede Casinos / Imperial Amusements

In the middle to late 1970s, it was very competitive going for Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd., and both Heinz and I were glade we had our own businesses to fall back on.

In late March 1978, we received in the mail an order signed by Frank Johnson from Edmonton Northlands Exhibition for one hundred rolls of tickets (2000 tickets per roll). There was no mention of colour on the order, so I immediately phoned Frank to ask whether tickets should be all the same colour or assorted colours.

He replied, “All one colour” and we could choose the colour. In addition,

he added "I have just mailed you a letter asking Alberta Bingo Supplies to bid on our large exhibition casino to be held during last ten days of July.

I immediately said that I was under the impression that Imperial Amusements Ltd. had the contract, together with a similar contract for the lucrative Calgary Stampede during ten days in the early part of July.

He told me that Imperial Amusements Ltd. had had some trouble with the Alberta Government, and they had lost their license to operate casinos.

Both these large ten day casinos had 120 Blackjack tables apart from roulette and "Big 6 Wheels of Fortune". We ourselves only had 20 Blackjack tables and a small amount of other equipment.

I contacted Heinz immediately for a quick important meeting. This was a Friday morning and to add to the urgency Erma and I had booked a holiday in England for early April.

On talking to Heinz, we both realized that no one except Imperial Amusements had enough equipment to handle these two large contracts, and they no longer had license to operate.

All the key people at Imperial had been in some form of management at Acme so Heinz and I knew them all very well.

Heinz phoned Paul Kotylak, their President, at once, and he said that they knew why we were phoning. We arranged a meeting for 6:30 p.m. Monday with their four partners and Heinz and I. We met at their offices at 112 Avenue and 142 Street and we took with us a blank cheque.

We left the meeting having bought their business on condition the Government and Calgary and Edmonton Exhibitions would agree to allow us to operate their casinos. Both contracts only had one year to run.

The price negotiated on was \$400,000 for all their equipment, but saleable merchandise would be at factory cost and extra.

Early the next morning we met with management at Edmonton Northlands and they said they would get their lawyer to meet with George Akers, our lawyer, and the lawyer from the Alberta Government.

On the Wednesday we drove to Calgary, and since the management at the Exhibition was not at all familiar with Harry Nash, Heinz Oldach and Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd. we, with Imperial Amusements Ltd., decided it would be better if one of their owner partners went with us. The person chosen was Ari Hoeksema. Our meeting was arranged in advance to see Don Weldon, whom I knew briefly through the Kiwanis Club.

When we mentioned we had purchased Imperial Amusements, Don Weldon was very skeptical and stated that he understood that a "Bruce Daniels" had the option to buy all the "Imperial" equipment. We said that was the reason we had brought Ari Hoeksema along, one of the partners. Ari said it was true

that Bruce Daniels had had an option to buy, but had not exercised the option and the date had run out. We then had to leave it to Calgary Management and their lawyers to get back to us.

Two days later on the Friday morning, Heinz and I were preparing for a meeting with Edmonton Exhibition the same afternoon, when Don Weldon phoned from Calgary to say everything was fine and he had a signed contract and did we want it mailed.

I said I would pick up personally and would catch the 11:00 a.m. plane to Calgary. I arrived at Don Weldon's office after plane and cab ride at 12:30 p.m. in the middle of lunch Hour. I had to wait what seemed to be a very long 90 minutes for Don to return from lunch.

I thanked him very much for the their trust and added that since the contract was for only one year and since we were investing a large amount of money I wondered if we could have an agreement for another three years subject to us performing well in our first year.

He agreed to check into this and let us know.

While I was traveling from Calgary back to Edmonton Heinz was meeting with management at Edmonton Exhibition. The meeting went well, but he did not walk from the meeting with a contract, since they wanted their lawyers to check things once more.

On the Sunday Erma and I flew to England and on the Tuesday I phoned Heinz to find out how things were developing and report on my efforts to buy gambling equipment in London.

I had a pleasant surprise when told that no only did Heinz have the Edmonton contract, but also that Don Weldon had sent a letter giving us three more years subject to our performance.

That was a start to lots of business, since we supplied the equipment in Calgary for over 20 years and in Edmonton supplied all the equipment and management from 1978 to 2005.

When purchasing Imperial Amusements, we had very little money so went to the Bank of Nova Scotia and raised a debenture for \$400,000 of which we made a \$200,000 payment and gave a note of \$200,000 to the four owners of the company, to be repaid monthly with 7% interest and paid off within 24 months.

Surprisingly to most people we did not inspect their [Imperial] financial books when making this deal. All we wanted to know was the total of their annual sales. We sold the same merchandise and did the same things so when we knew this number, it did not take us long to estimate how much profit we could generate, and we were very close on this estimate.

1980: Casino ABS Founded

Sometime in May 1980 I received a phone call from Len Stuart at Bazaar and Novelty Ltd. in Toronto.

Len mentioned that we must be getting fed up with the fierce competition between them and Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd. and he wondered what I thought about them buying Heinz and I out.

I replied "Or?" and he said "Do you wish to join the firms together?" I replied "Or?" and added "What if we buy you out?" Len acted very surprised and said he would get back to us. This whole phone call lasted less than two minutes.

Later in the same day Len phoned again and said he thought my suggestion may have some sense to it and he would fly to Edmonton with his financial Vice President, Jack Stanley, to discuss things in more detail.

This meeting was followed a couple of weeks later with a getting together with the principals of both companies, together with both of our lawyers, in the offices of Nicholl & Akers.

There were 23 points to be agreed upon in order for the deal to be finalized. Len suggested we start with point one and, if agreed upon, move to point two. If there was a point we could not agree on, then the deal was off. There were a few "hot spots" but we finally cleared the whole list and Alberta Bingo Supplies Ltd. finished up owning Bazaar & Novelty subject to Heinz and I being able to raise more money. Remember, we were still paying off the earlier deal with Imperial Amusements Ltd.

With this deal we needed our homes and chattels as security and this included assets of both our wives, Dianne and Erma.

When they went to see George Akers, our lawyer, he advised them to think things over for a few days before deciding to sign the papers. He emphasized to Erma that Harry was 20 years older than Heinz and if a mistake was made Harry did not have many years left to recover whereas Heinz being much younger had a much better chance.

Five days later when Erma returned to see the lawyer, George Akers, he asked her what she had decided to do.

Erma replied "When Heinz and Harry have spent many hours coming to a decision, and then left things for a few days to think things over, and finally decided to go ahead, I am ready to sign".

George Akers replied, "Let's roll up our sleeves and get on with it."

The deal cost us another \$400,000.00, so we had to use the balance of our debenture with the Bank of Nova Scotia and Bazaar & Novelty carried us for \$200,000.00 at Bank interest. The purchase included all their inventory but

not their debts or receivables. It also included the leased old Acme Novelty building at 112 Street and Jasper Avenue. None of the management came with the deal although Len insisted on placing one worker at our expense, I am sure to be able to report on our work methods.

Once again Heinz and I did not inspect their financial books, but only obtained their annual sales figures.

During our first year we closed their warehouse, but kept open an office and showroom with a skeleton staff. In our first year, with our guidance and expertise, we increased sales by 33 1/3% and in addition saved over \$100,000 on wages.

The only drawback was we were paying \$4,000 per month on our lease, and were not using the warehouse.

At this time we were also operating a number of two day charity casinos out of community halls, legions and hotel facilities. This meant moving the equipment every two days. After trying unsuccessfully to rent our warehouse, Heinz and I wondered if we could get it zoned to operate casinos.

To our great surprise the City of Edmonton gave us a permit to create a casino. We contacted our friend Bert Plum to do the alterations and slowly went ahead.

Two weeks prior to opening we installed a large \$20,000 cinema sign on the outside of the building. Two days later George Akers, our lawyer, phoned to say the City of Edmonton had been sued for giving ABS a license to open a new casino. We hurriedly went to see George Akers who told us the situation was very serious, and as things stood he could not contact the group causing the problem, since we ourselves were not being sued. George recommended that he personally go before a Judge to ask permission for ABS to be allowed to go on the same docket as the City of Edmonton.

The Judge granted permission for us to be sued as well, and this enabled George to get the group causing the problem into the legal chambers of Nicholl & Akers and proceed with discovery and questioning.

George informed us that it was the law of torts which means they were creating mischief.

The group consisted of people associated with Creative Casino Ltd. whose President was Mr. C. Joshee. The person initiating the law suit against ourselves and the City of Edmonton was a university dental student who did summer work with R. Joshee, a dentist, and part time work as a blackjack dealer and also a booking agent for singing acts in bars.

His complaint was that when making sales calls in the vicinity of our proposed casino there was very little parking for his vehicle.

After questioning George Akers advised Heinz and I to sue this group for \$500,000. As expected this group had their lawyer, Jim Cox, phone George Akers with an offer that the group withdraw their charges against the City and ourselves if we would withdraw the \$500,000 part. This we did after keeping them waiting for a few days.

Ironically a couple of years later Mr. C. Joshee was appointed Commissionaire of Gambling for the Province of Alberta. He had to give up ownership in Creative Casino Ltd. But after our legal case involving him and ourselves it sure made us feel uneasy.

However when we first met him on business he said, "You and Heinz are sure good business men".

Over the years we had no problems with Mr. C. Joshee whatsoever and actually became friends.

I can confirm this, as Mr. Joshee introduced himself to me at Harry's memorial ceremony on February 25, 2009, and told me essentially the same story.

We named the Casino in the Acme Novelty building "Casino ABS", a name chosen by our Vice President, Lawrence Croteau. The leasehold improvements done by Bert Plum's firm cost \$340,000. The casino was the first operating out of its own facility in Alberta; all others were using rental properties, mostly two day rentals at a time.

As things happened we were able to open the casino on time and were fully booked for eight continuous years, until we built and opened a free standing building at 102 Street and 106th Avenue.



Figure 24.1: Harry Nash, Bryce Van Dusen, Heinz Oldach at Casino ABS (south Edmonton), 1987.

During this time Casino ABS did not have a single loss.

The downtown casino described here has gone. In the mid-1980s, despite an economic slowdown with 20south-side Casino Edmonton. Harry once told me that they did not take out a loan for this, but built it out of receivables, that is, operating revenues.

Sunalta Bingo Ltd.

Over the years the majority of the deals put together by Heinz and I did very well but this is the story of one that did not.

In the mid 1980s Jack Inkster, a sales person with our company ABS, approached me to say he and some other business people were in the process of putting together a bingo hall in Calgary and wondered if they had our blessings.

Since this would mean a new client for us, and was not in competition with what we did, we approved.

A month or so later he again met with me to say his business friends did not have the money, and wondered if Heinz and I were interested. To start the ball rolling Erma and I traveled to Calgary to check the location amongst other things.

The building was the Hudson Bay warehouse on CP Rail property with lots of parking at 8th Street and 9th Avenue SW. There were lots of high rise apartments nearby and it was next to a bus stop, so had plenty of potential bingo players.

Erma and I liked what we saw, so soon after Heinz and I went to Calgary to get another opinion for ourselves.

When we decided to go ahead, we realized there were three partners, Jack Inkster, Heinz and I and we felt that Lawrence Croteau, our Senior vice President, would be upset by not being included.

Since we felt it was a very good deal, we decided to have 4 shareholders each putting up \$25,000 and borrowing whatever else was required from the Hong Kong Bank of Canada. We named the new company Sunalta Bingo Ltd.

The change to the Hong Kong bank occurred sometime in the early 1980s as a result of some friction with the Bank of Nova Scotia. Harry and Heinz were approached by the Hong Kong Bank (now HSBC). Curiously, the deposits were still made at a Scotiabank branch.

Since I felt it was a first class investment, I made Erma a shareholder with Heinz, Lawrence Croteau and Jack Inkster. Heinz and I called the main shots, with Jack Inkster the manager.

When the “chips were down” and the shareholders had to provide \$25,000 Jack Inkster was somewhat short so Erma lent him \$10,000 with interest of 8%.

The building was owned by CP Rail so we arranged a lease and did sizeable leasehold improvements. While this was taking place we were advertising for a group of charitable organizations to physically operate the bingo games under license from the Alberta government.

Our revenue would come from renting this bingo hall seven evenings per week and also for two matinee games. Plus, we would sell bingo daubers and chips and operate the food and beverage concession. The hall had a seating capacity of 475 and had good lighting and we furnished it nicely.

Of the number of charities involved, a Lions Club and Elks Club appeared the most powerful and these two appointed the executive.

We opened to a full house and the publicity in the local paper was very good for us. However, it did not take us long to realize the executive were not good business people for running a bingo operation. We repeatedly gave them valuable advice, but no one would listen and to our disgust crowds began to dwindle.

In our contract with the clubs, we had a clause which stated that with the evening games if crowd was less than 200, the hall would be rent free. To our surprise we found that their persons operating the door would upset clients so as not to go over 200. In addition their executive broke gaming rules in their bingo operation, and the clubs lost their license for 14 days. Another clause in our agreement with the clubs was that if for any reason the clubs missed operating bingos for 3 days in a row we could terminate our deal with them.

Because of this the group went crawling in front of the Alberta Commissioner of Gambling, and informed him of our legal agreement. The Commissioner, to save them from this embarrassment, said the 14 days suspension could be carried out over 7 weeks with the hall closed every Sunday and Monday. We had been open about a year and were in a very cold spell at the end of January. It was a Thursday when I had a “stand-up meeting” with Heinz. I suggested we send men and trucks to Calgary and empty the Bingo hall to the walls. Heinz said “Let us arrange to do it next week!!” My reply “No way!! We will do it after they close at 10:30 p.m. this Saturday night.” Heinz agreed, and on Saturday evening four men with tractor and 40 foot semi trailer, together with a one ton truck left Edmonton for Calgary. In Calgary they were met at 11 p.m. by Jack Inkster and Wilf Gardner, Manager of ABS Calgary. By 6:00 a.m. Sunday morning the hall was empty and trucks were on their way back to Edmonton.

ABS was able to sell most of the bingo equipment, tables and chairs, etc.

We walked away from our lease with CP Rail but our leasehold improvements were so good they leased the building again very quickly to an office furniture company.

After the dust had settled, Sunalta Bingos shareholders owed the Bank \$80,000. Heinz and I decided we would buy out the shareholders for \$1 each and we would assume the \$80,000 debt. Jack Inkster would return to ABS as a sales person.

Heinz and I then racked our brains on how to get back the \$80,000, and Erma started getting small payments from Jack Inkster on her \$10,000 loan. After conferring with tax accountants, lawyers and Revenue Canada we were allowed to set up Sunalta Bingo Ltd. to do the payroll and deductions for all the staff of ABS, with a fee for this paid monthly. By doing this we were able to get rid of the bank debt. About the time this happened Jack Inkster left our employ and stopped making repayments to Erma.

We traced Jack down, and our lawyer put a lien on his home with the result Erma was paid off in full although it took 5 years. Erma's remark was "You sure know when to do a deal with my money!!"

Appendix: Gaming Convention Speech 1992

The following is a speech Harry gave entitled **The History of Gaming in Alberta**. This was for the Gaming Exchange Convention and delivered November 21, 1992, in Edmonton, and it is included here as a unified account of its subject.

Good morning to you all and thank you for the introduction. Firstly I would like to thank and recognize the following for the source of much of the information I am passing onto you today.

Mr. Bryce Van Dusen, past Vice President of Acme Novelty Company, a landmark Edmonton company found in 1931 and sold to Jim Pattison of Neonex for \$8 million in 1968 when a dollar was a dollar. As you heard in the introduction Bryce hired me literally off the boat in February 1958.

Mr. Bill Mcaull, Director of Gaming control for many years and who retires later this month.

Mr. Verne Elliott, Audit Manager for Gaming Control and who also retires later this year. Verne was also a working colleague at Acme Novelty.

Mr. Phil Gibeau, past President of the Separate School Board for many years and actively involved in bingo since 1956, firstly at the Rainbow on 82 Avenue, with Troc '59 and then with the Knights of Columbus.

Len Stuart, an Ex-Edmontonian and long time employee at Acme Novelty, now Chairman and main shareholder of Bazaar & Novelty, Toronto and in addition Main Officer of Bingo King, one of the biggest Bingo companies in the U.S.

Not forgetting, my partner and also an Ex-Manager of Acme Novelty, Heinz Oldach who is presently President of ABS group of companies.

Bingo

In 1958 when working at Acme Novelty in Calgary, the only source at the time of bingo supplies in that city, the inventory amounted to:

- *4000-6000 Shutter Cards (1500 series) from Bingo King;*
- *3000-4000 Cheaper made Shutter Cards, made by Regal Games in Chicago,*
- *6000-12000 PushOut Cards (ideal for Drive In Theatres),*
- *12000-15000 Paper sheets (1500 series)*
- *2 – Wooden & 2 Ping Pong Ball Hand Turned Bingo Machines*
- *1 Table Top & 2 Floor Model Electric Bingo Ball Machines*

We also carried a few heavy weight and medium weight cards on which players used metal, plastic or paper markers, - all part of our inventory. In 1956 Rainbow Bingo had a fixed prize board. Rainbow was on 82 Avenue and 109 Street in Edmonton.

In 1959 a bingo sponsored by St. Pius Church and Dovercourt Community League was held in the Troc '59 Hall next to "The Bay" on 103 Street. Lead by Phil Gibeau they created a "Pot of Gold" game. They gave a prize of \$500 and started with 46 numbers. If the game was not won in the first 48 numbers they call 49 numbers at the next event and increased the amount of numbers called by one at each event until the "pot of gold" was gone, at the "end of the rainbow", so named by Vi Walmesley, Manageress of Troc '59. Players had to buy new cards at each event and the pot of gold was usually won in 54-58 numbers. Since the next event went back to 48 numbers the meant that excitement was high when 54 numbers were called and depressed when they reverted to 48 numbers. Because of this, attendance during the 8 – 10 days that it took to complete the game went up and down like a yo yo. Low when the game started out and high near its completion.

In 1962, Phil Gibeau was invited by K of C to start a bingo in their new hall on 119th street just north of Jasper Avenue. The committee could tell by the amount of money Troc '59 was generating that the time for "Big Money" had arrived. With the pot of gold game, prizes were won mostly in 54-58 numbers over a period of 7-10 days. So the questions arose, "Why not a big game every event?"

It worked – in 1962 K of C introduced two new features;

1) Progressive prizes based on attendance. The more players the higher the payouts.

2) The "Dare To Be Great Bingo". This game offered a guaranteed prize of \$500 per cent on 48 numbers or less; 48 numbers were called early in the evening before the main program, if no winners the draw was continued at end of the evening until won.

With 2500-3000 cards sold at .50 cents per event, the K of C became rich and famous. This was when and where "The Bonanza" game was born – the year was 1962.

At the time bingo factories had only 1500 and 3000 perms. The K of C folded each card and put it in an unsealed envelope. At the first K of C Bingo in 1962 using the new format they lost \$31, but after that never looked back. In the '50s and '60s the few factories supplying bingo sheets were Capital and Metro, both firms owned by the Wildman Brothers in New York; K & B cards in Wadsworth, Ohio; Worthmore Sales Promotion, Chicago and the lone Canadian printer was Richardson Bond in Northern Ontario whose one and only contract for bingo sheets was Bazaar & Novelty, Toronto owned until 1969 by Mr. Silverman and Frenchie Dix. Bazaar & Novelty used to order 1 years supply at a time of skidded stock, 15 colors and 3000 series. Bazaar had their own warehouse and plant for cutting mainly into single sheets in those days and for packaging which was a very simple system compared with today.

In 1969 Neonex bought Bazaar & Novelty and it was my responsibility to join physically Acme with Bazaar & Novelty. In 1970 Len Stuart left the employ of Acme Novelty, he was working in Toronto at the time and for \$8000. bought a share of a basement printing plant owned by a Mr. Baker and located in Scarborough, a suburb of Toronto. The plant was among other things printing bingo sheets for local clubs. Len convinced Mr. Baker that with his "know how" and sales ability he could rapidly expand the business.

I personally had also left Acme Novelty and was operating Harry Nash Agencies an advertising firm from my home in Malmo, Edmonton.

Len Stuart came to see me and I became his first customer in Western Canada. Len expanded his business and quickly moved into larger premises under the name "Bingo Press & Specialty". He soon had a 6000 perm and as long as an order was 30,000 cards and for five separate colours he would print the name of the club on each sheet, all included in the same price as an ordinary card. This really got our business going to the detriment of Acme Novelty and Bazaar & Novelty.

In 1973 I joined with Heinz Oldach and we formed Alberta Bingo Supplies Limited. We had been partners for a short while in 1971-72 in Crown Amusements Ltd., a carnival operation. In 1976 Jim Pattison closed Acme Novelty and sold Bazaar & Novelty to a group headed by Len Stuart. Acme Novelty had been run into the ground by its new owners and management. Acme had been in business 45 years.

Since 1976 the number of bingo sheets per perm has been getting steadily bigger, as of now in Alberta it is at 27000 and will be getting higher.

The 80's saw the introduction of booklets, copied from Great Britain. Incidentally Canada is way ahead of most states in the U.S. in the ways of playing bingo.

In the 60's hard cards gradually took over from the shutter cards and these came in 4 colours. Players used beans, paper, metal or plastic markers. Ink doblers were introduced around 1970 by the Richard Venne Company from Levittown, Pennsylvania. The firm is still in business although they now have a host of competitors. I should mention that many fortunes have been lost in the setting up of factories to manufacture ink doblers.

Break Open Tickets

In the late 50's Acme Novelty sold Lucky 7 tickets and illustrated and priced them in their catalogues as fund raising "Jar Tickets". With each bag of tickets they offered a selection of prizes. At the same time a bag could be purchased without prizes and most were sold this way. Labels were available from the factory showing cash payouts. The Lucky 7s were supplied by Empire Press out of Chicago and later by Douglas Press owned by Frank Fineberg who had worked previously at Empire Press.

The machines used to print the Lucky 7s were very old and all had been hand made.

In 1973 "Break Open Tickets" surfaced and in 1974 the Government of Alberta began issuing licenses for the sale of these type of tickets for fund raising.

Lotteries

In the '50s and '60s the only big lottery was the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes and one could get sent to jail for having tickets in one's possession, let alone been seen selling them. When purchasing, customers used "Nom do Plumes" and traveled to Ireland to pick up the big prizes. How things have changed compared with the government run lotteries of today. Now the lotteries people are among Canada's biggest advertisers.

Casinos

The first casino in Alberta and I have no records to disbelieve in fact in Canada was held in the Klondyke Village at the Annual Edmonton Exhibition in July 1967. The village was set up in the area to the west of the Silver Slipper and to the south of the Golden Garter. It came about when the Edmonton Exhibition Association decided to put a Klondyke Village on the Exhibition Grounds and they approached Bryce Van Dusen with a view to renting him space, to put something in for the Exhibition. Bryce inspected the village and stated that the only thing he was interested in was to put in slot machines or some kind of gambling.

At the time Royal American Shows were supplying the rides and carnival games for the Exhibition and agreements were in place so that it was very difficult for outsiders to come in and run anything. The problem was straightened out between

Royal American Shows and The Edmonton Exhibition Board and Bryce then told Al Anderson who was The Exhibition's General Manager at the time that he would like to run a Casino with just a few games in the space available. The size of the space was approximately 40' x 24'. The situation was discussed with Bill Stewart, the Head of Morality, City of Edmonton Police Department. Bill immediately ruled out slot machines and when the Casino opened it had; 6 Junior Wheels of Fortune, 1 Roulette and 2 Blackjack games. Each Blackjack game was dealt from 1 deck out of the hand on to a round kitchen type table covered with a loose green felt cloth, without any markings. For décor there was an original bar from the Klondyke and this served soft drinks only. Two days prior to opening Bill Stewart brought in someone from the R.C.M.P. Morality Squad to check things out. Everything was fine and Bryce asked if he could put in an old slot machine for décor only. When Al Anderson, The Exhibitions General Manager walked into check things out he put a quarter in the "one armed bandit" and pulled the handle, the tumblers spun and when they stopped out poured a handful of quarters. The machine was 50-60 years old and had not been checked for years. After this checkup the Exhibition gave the go ahead to operate but told Bryce to be careful. Bryce gave the job of managing the Casino to Heinz Oldach. The hours were from Noon – 2 A.M. Monday through Friday and Noon-Midnight on Saturday.

There was a \$2 limit on all games and since there were no chips or money boxes all transactions were for cash out of the dealer's apron. With the Roulette there were seven colours of cheap quality plastic chips and players could buy in for 10 cents or 25 cents per chip. As soon as the doors opened the place was completely packed, so much so that the number of Blackjack games gradually increased over the first two days to 6 Blackjack.

At the first casino the house kept the "Push".

In 1967 during the first year of operation a huge thunder and rain storm hit the Exhibition grounds and the Casino floor was flooded to a depth of 4-6 inches. The water was soon swilled out with brooms once the storm was over. Results of the very first Casino surprised everyone since it had a gross win of just over \$30,000. As per agreement, after expenses the Edmonton Exhibition and Acme split the winnings 50/50. Through what is believed to have been a misinterpretation of Section 179 of the Criminal Code the "21 Game of Blackjack" was actually an illegal game as the section exempted such games as Bingo and Wheels of Fortune at Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions but this did not include "21" games.

Two years ago at Edmonton Northlands Community Appreciation Night Banquet Bryce Van Dusen was honored for his contributions to Northlands. Colin Forbes, General Manager for Northlands remarked that with the very first Casino's Bryce knowing all had not been approved legally fronted the Casino operations with a German and an Englishman, names Heinz Oldach and myself.

In 1968 the Casino moved into the Silver Slipper with Proper Blackjack tables, dealer shoes, locked money boxes, trays and plastic \$1 chips. Blackjack table limits

were \$1 - \$5 with the rest of the games a maximum bet of \$5. Entertainment was provided 4 times daily on the Silver Slipper stage by a troupe of high kicking dancing girls. Interesting to note that the dancing girls did not influence or disturb the gamblers but the Casino was jam packed with interested fairgoers at the times the dancing girls were entertaining. Some of these fairgoers stayed to play the Wheel of Fortune. In 1969 the Silver Slipper was extended to double its previous size and there were 38 games made up of 25 Blackjack, 3 Roulette and 10 Wheels of Fortune. In 1968 Bryce started to bring in experts from Nevada to give him advice. During these early years these people included Paul Spencer, Jim Powell, Phil Downey and Jim Cooper. Jim Cooper was a "card mechanic" and a first class act. In 1969 the Silver Slipper had a gross win of \$157,000. Limits at this Casino were \$1 - \$5 and \$5 only Blackjack tables, other games had \$5 maximums. In 1969 Bryce also signed contracts to have Casinos at Brandon and Winnipeg Exhibitions and Heinz Oldach managed these also. In 1969 Calgary Exhibition had its very first Casino managed by Hymie Garshman a very colourful character. Hymie amongst many other things formed a Travel Agency. Garshman Travel specialized in Junkets to Nevada.

It was also in 1969 during the Edmonton Casino that I was approached by Ernie Coombes an ex-R.C.M.P Officer and Manager of the Red Deer Exhibition. He inquired as to how Red Deer Exhibition could get a Casino and I in turn introduced him to Bryce. It was 11 pm at the time on Thursday evening and at 9 am the next morning Bryce was in Red Deer. Within a few days a concrete slab was poured, a butler typed building erected and a Casino was opened within 10 days of inquiry. Heinz Oldach managed the first Casino too. The word "management" meant working 16-18 hour days, unloading and loading gaming equipment, setting up, managing, pit bossing, dealing, training, running chips, and initially helping count the money and depositing it in the bank. During late June through early August we saw the sun go down and come up every day, seven days a week.

In 1971 Heinz Oldach left the employ of Acme Novelty to form Crown Amusements Limited a carnival company with rides. He and I had jointly purchased the rides from Acme. Bryce arranged the sale on condition that Heinz returned to manage casinos in Winnipeg and Edmonton. I remained with Acme to manage the Prairie Circuit Casinos in Swift Current, Moosejaw, Red Deer and Medicine hat with Heinz returning again to manage Prince Albert. The Prairie Circuit had a gross win of over \$59,000. And a net win of over \$37,000. In its first year, with the five exhibitions sharing almost \$21,000 and Acme Novelty receiving \$16,000. Each of the Prairie Circuit Casinos had between 12 and 20 games.

In 1971 when Heinz was in Winnipeg to hire and train staff for the Casino – remember this was 3 or 4 days before the Casino opened – he phoned to say what a rough bunch of applicants he had in spite of the fact that all had been screened on the R.C.M.P. computer. He said that many of those that passed looked much worse than those that failed. After the first day of operation of the Casino the cashiers cage and bank which was jointly managed by 2 people appointed by the Exhibition

and 2 people appointed by Bryce was \$2000 short in the float. Heinz phoned me after midnight and Bryce sent me to Winnipeg on an early flight the next day. After meeting with Heinz we decided to give the Winnipeg Exhibition the choice of Acme Novelty running the cashiers cage or letting the Exhibition operate them with which ever one having a shortage making the shortage good. We also hired off duty bank tellers to count the proceeds in the count room which incidentally was the Winnipeg Jets dressing room in the Winnipeg arena. We allowed each side to be in the count room but onlookers from both sides had to be at least 10 feet back from the counting tables. After a shaky start Heinz managed a very successful Casino. On Sunday morning while leaving Winnipeg on the way home with station wagon and trailer loaded with equipment for the first Casino in Swift Current Heinz had the car stall. Someone had put sugar in the gas tank.

In July 1971 I traveled to Red Deer to manage the Exhibition Casino and one of my first jobs was to open a deposit only bank account with Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Each night after 2 am I helped two Exhibition staff count the money and make up the bank deposit. When finished around 3:30 am I phoned the R.C.M.P. to escort me to the bank and make the night deposit.

In August after the Medicine Hat Casino I went with my family to England for holidays. On my return, while at work in September, Bryce had a phone call from Ernie Coombes of Red Deer Exhibition wondering where the money was from their Casino in July. Bryce summoned me to his office, being concerned was a mild word to describe the situation and we phoned Ernie Coombes immediately. He phoned the bank, then phoned us back laughing to "beat the band" and saying all was well. The money had been sitting there in the bank for two months.

Before 1970 no licenses were required so in actual fact the Casinos were "Common Gaming Houses". The only exceptions to this being Wheels at Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions.

In 1970 changes were made to the Criminal code and by an order in Council certain Police Officers were allowed to issue licenses. This was a stop gap measure.

In 1973 Sharon Tymo joined Lorne Bradley to form the Lotteries License Section of the Attorney Generals Department of Alberta. In 1976 Jim Foster was the Attorney General and he took control and made things happen.

Between 1970 and 1976 no statistics were published.

On April 1st, 1976 Ron Shepherd was appointed Chief Inspector of the Gaming Control Branch of the Attorney Generals Department. On June 14th 1976, Bill McCaull was hired as Chief of Investigations in the Province of Alberta. This I might say was an impossible and hopeless task.

On June 30th, 1976 Verne Elliott was appointed Chief of Audit. Verne Elliott by the way had worked the Casinos of 1968 and 1969 in charge of the cashier's cage and the bank as well as control of all the chips. He continued to work Exhibition Casinos after these two years.

I should add that in the words of Bill McCaull everyone was a "Chief" in those

days. Both Bill and Verne retire from gaming Control in the next few weeks. These one man teams faced formidable tasks since they had to have a plan to create control, hire staff, set up rules, terms and conditions.

Between 1973 and 1976 three lawyers, Darlene Wong, (now a Judge), Lionel Jones (also now a Judge) and John Lee were added to help formulate these plans.

In 1974 "Pull Tabs" and "Lucky 7s" were made legal and in 1976 they were renamed "Pull Tickets" and licensed. In 1973 we at ABS were selling lots of Lucky 7s to Legions and other clubs that had their own premises, remember at the time these tickets had not yet been made legal.

One day I received a phone call from Lorne Bradley and he came right out and asked "are you selling Lucky 7s?" I answered "yes and no" and he replied what kind of answer is that. I said we are selling to bona fide clubs with their own premises and not to corner stores or individuals. Soon after they were made legal. By the years 1977 and 1978 demand for licenses for Casinos, Bingos, Pull Tickets and Raffles exploded and there was a dramatic increase in the number of licenses issued. In the next while many charities complained that Gaming Control had too much power. Gaming Control did the licensing, prosecuting and could take licenses away. A Citizen's Advisory Committee recommended that a Gaming Commission be formed in Alberta and this was done in 1981. The first Commissioner was Don Gardner and he held the position for 5 years. The second being Krishan Joshee for 6 years, and now Ziad Jaber who took over the helm in the spring of this year. Krishan Joshee who was working as a math teacher during the early years of Casinos earned extra money by working many of those Casinos as a pit boss and as a time keeper.

In closing I would like to relate an amusing incident that happened in 1973.

Bryce Van Dusen traveled with Ken Knowles to Nevada with intentions of looking for and purchasing a second hand Roulette Wheel and table to be used at the Calgary Stampede Casino. Ken Knowles at the time was in management at the Calgary exhibition; he presently is in Senior Management at Edmonton Northlands. They visited a firm with Roulette tables and Wheels for sale. The owner had it stored in a vault covered in dust and he pulled it out. Bryce purchased the Roulette and chips to go with it. The wheel needed work on it so Bryce instructed this to be done and shipped it to Calgary in time for the Stampede Casino. It arrived two days prior to Stampede. The Roulette table was set up but it did not have a money box on it. Bryce took a drill to the table but the drill would not go through the table. He pulled back the cloth covering the table only to find a gaff. In the carnival business a gaff stops or slows down a wheel and this one had been there for years. The wheel was an antique. Bryce was worried and called the R.C.M.P. in Edmonton who put him onto Ron Shepherd who was then in charge of gambling for the R.C.M.P... By the time Ron arrived in Calgary, Bryce had removed the gaff and Ron stated that the wheel was fit to operate. The RCMP sent the gaff to their lab and they assembled it and made it operate again. They were of the opinion the wheel had been used years before in some of the mining towns of Montana. Their gambling clients did not have

any chance at all.

I sincerely hope you have found my talk on the history of gaming in Alberta interesting. I am breaking off at the year 1981 since others will be speaking on the years following and trying to visualize the future. In my mind the industry has come a long way.

Thank you.

Chapter 25

PEOPLE

This chapter is about people or groups of people who came into Harry's life and were important to him. In his own words, he describes them in very personal terms, as we might expect. However, there is also a level on which Harry's stories reveal the social environment of his times.

Kiwanis

Harry's membership in the Kiwanis service club for men was very important to him. It brought him new friends, business associates, and contacts, but also tumbled him into the life of the community and the problems of that community the club tried to alleviate.

In 2006 for Christmas John and Mary gave us a book "Spaghetti Western: How My Father Brought Italian Food to the West" by Maria L. Cioni who went to the same school as Mary.

This was St. Mary's Girls' High School. The Boys' school where I went was "across the tracks" – literally. The Canadian National station was next door to the Boys' School and dead-ended after crossing the Elbow River that ran behind both properties. The Dayliner motorized train car that did an Edmonton Calgary run (?? ref??) was the only passenger service.

Her father's name was Genesio (Gene) Cioni and he had immigrated to Calgary, Alberta at the age of 16 with his family from the Abruzzi region of Italy.

At first he was a barber but his passion was for food and cooking and he worked his way up from busboy to cook and became one of Western Canada's celebrity chefs. With his wife Martha, Gene opened Calgary's first Italian restaurant. He had a secret spaghetti sauce for 100 people, as well as meatballs,

polenta, lasagna, gnocchi and Gene's original style of cooking Calgary's T-bone steaks. He was famous for his anchovy salad and introduced pizza to his colorful clientele.

Italian immigrants frequently faced discrimination and suspicion, especially during the Second World War when they were classified as enemy aliens. My wife Peggy's family had experienced this first hand in England during the war since her grandmother was Italian and lived in Eltham, a suburb of London.

Gene's restaurant was a meeting place for business leaders, sports heroes and politicians. These included Sugarfoot Anderson, Stu Hart, Duke Ellington, Primo Carnera and much other city society. With all of this Gene always had room in his restaurant for immigrants who needed a helping hand.

This restaurant was operating in Southwest Calgary when Peggy, myself, John and Stephen arrived in Calgary from England in 1957 but in those early years we hardly ever went out to eat.

After reading and enjoying this book I was prompted to write another story since two of my Calgary friends were mentioned in the book having also been friends of Gene.

In 1959 after I had been working at Acme Novelty for almost a year, Ivo Brandelli came to see the manager wondering if I would be interested in joining the Kiwanis Service Club of S.E. Calgary. Since I had no idea what Kiwanis meant "Sax", the manager, said that if I was interested I should attend a couple of meetings to see if I liked them and if so the company would pick up the tab for all expenses.

I said I would give it a try and was told the club met every Tuesday evening for a supper meeting at the Stampeder Hotel. I decided to attend and was then told that the next meeting had been changed to the hospitality room at Molson's Brewery. What an initiation to Kiwanis with all the wonderful food and beer! I attended several more meetings which I enjoyed and then Ivo Brandelli said an initiation meeting had been arranged for two new members, "Nobby" Clark, Sales Manager for Seagrams Whisky and me. When the time came we both stood in front of the club with Ivo Brandelli handling the formalities.

Ivo started out by saying, "You all know 'Nobby' Clark, he sells holy water!!!" Then he said, "Harry Nash is a 'DP' (Displaced Person) like me!!" Everyone roared with laughter since it had to be the shortest induction on record. While in the S.E. Calgary Kiwanis Club I enjoyed it very much and Peggy enjoyed the numerous functions when ladies were involved.

One of the members that became a good friend (also mentioned in the book) was Frank Manzara. When I met him he was getting along in years and had a juke box business where he had these music boxes placed in businesses

throughout Southern Alberta on a percentage agreement and he would keep the musical records up to date. Prior to being in the juke box business Frank Manzara had a tough time. He was slightly built but a good boxer; so good that he ran out of opponents at his own weight. Since he fought for money he used to have to fight men heavier than himself or not fight at all. He did this all the time and ended up with two “cauliflower ears” which are not nice to look at. He also had a “White Spot” restaurant with his wife Millie in S.E. Calgary. A couple of years after meeting Ivo Brandelli his wife and family decided because of climate to move to California and we lost touch.

When I left Calgary in 1967 after Peggy had passed away I moved to Edmonton and soon after joined the Edmonton Downtown Kiwanis Club. Altogether I spend over 40 years with Kiwanis before resigning, but have to say that many of our best friends came out of this association.

Essentially Harry resigned when Kiwanis, like many of the general community service clubs (Kinsmen, Rotary, Pilot, IODE and others) started to give way to more issue-specific groups that were focussed on particular diseases or social problems. In the 1960s the service clubs were hugely important in community development, but also served as a way for men or women (separately!) to network and advance various business or social agendas. I believe a number of Harry’s bridge-playing group were Kiwanians. Given his efforts for Kiwanis, I can understand why he comments:

I am glad I read Maria’s interesting book to prompt me to write these notes.

Cross-generation Friendships

At his memorial service February 25, 2009, three of Harry’s friends asked to speak. One was George Akers, another was Luigi di Marzo and the third was Brad Warkentin. What I find particularly interesting is that George is of Harry’s generation, Luigi of mine, and Brad one later. Harry was not unique in making friends, and strong friendships, with people outside his own generation, but he was likely more active than most in so doing.

He wrote particularly how he got to know Luigi, who I first met in 1957 at Sacred Heart School. I was 10 and he was 11, but due to my very early start in the UK I was one grade ahead (and younger than almost all in my class). Luigi followed me to the University of Calgary (in fact it was the University of Alberta at Calgary until the end of my second year and his first) and then to Oxford. He was Best Man when Mary and I married in Oxford in 1970.

Harry wrote:

This story starts in the summer of 1963. Peggy, myself and the two boys, John and Stephen, had been in Canada for six years, having emigrated from England to Calgary, Alberta in the summer of 1957. Peggy's parents were not in the best of health and we as a family were struggling to get established in our new country.

We decided that Peggy and the boys would take a summer trip to England for three months and I would stay in Calgary and paint the outside of the house and take a week's holiday camping at Moraine Lake which is a few miles from Lake Louise.

On leaving for their flight to England I had firm instructions from John to sell his Grade 10 school books to an Italian boy. I phoned the home of this boy and Luigi Dimarzo came over to the house and for three or four dollars I sold the books. Luigi was a likeable young fellow and we sat and had a "pop" together and chatted. Luigi's father was a laborer and Luigi was the first of the family to get past Grade 9. When the family returned from England we at times used Luigi to "baby sit" Stephen (aged 9) if we were going out for the evening.

In 1966 Peggy passed away with cancer and in 1967 I received a company promotion and moved to Edmonton with Stephen, leaving John in Calgary attending university there. It was early in 1968, late one winter's evening that I received a phone call from Luigi. He was in Edmonton for a few days, being shown around the Alberta Legislature Buildings. He was at the time at the University of Calgary and was Student Union President.

He said on the telephone that he thought I would like to see him. I arranged to have supper with him and arranged to pick him up at the Government building. I took Stephen along and we had a reservation at the "Seven Seas" restaurant which at the time was the best of the few Asian eating places in town.

When Stephen and I reached the Legislature we were met by Luigi and a very attractive young lady. Luigi said straight away "Mr. Nash I knew you would like to meet my friend, Mary Pilkington". I immediately said to Mary, "you are President of the University of Alberta Students Union". She asked how I knew and I said it was in the local newspaper.

*We had a good meeting and supper and during the meal I asked Luigi what his plans were. He was not at all sure. I suggested he, being both an excellent athlete and a very good scholar, should apply for a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford or Cambridge. [JN: Rhodes Scholarships are **only** to Oxford. But I am biased!]*

There is only one of these given each year per Province and I emphasized

that Calgary being a fairly new university was due to receive this honour.

Luigi laughed at my comments and I said “Luigi, I am very serious”. Well, he did apply and was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford where John was already attending on a different scholarship.

A few years later he phoned me again this time near the time he was graduating and was on a trip home from the U.K. He wondered what kind of career she should head into.

My advice was he was best suited to be a Professor at a University or get into the Government political system since he had done some volunteer work in this area. He chose the former and taught at the University of Calgary.

Some years later he had left teaching and was working for Alberta Energy. He had married and become a father to a daughter, Laura, then divorced and sometime later married Charlotte Moran.

It was about this time I received another phone call from Luigi and we arranged to have lunch at the Mirabelle Restaurant on 109th Street in Edmonton. As always, before looking at the menu, I asked the reason for the call.

Luigi stated that he was well established with Alberta Energy but was at a level he could not go much further. But he had made some calls to his many connections in the energy sector and he felt he could do reasonably well in his own business. After talking things over for a while I said “Luigi, what does your new wife think about all this?” He immediately said that Charlotte was “all for it”. I said then, “roll your sleeves up and get with it”.

This he did and has been with computers and phones at home working with various Provincial Governments in Canada on various contracts involving inter-governmental and energy matters.

We consider Charlotte and Luigi as good family friends.

The year Luigi came to Oxford on the Rhodes Scholarship for Alberta (1969), Ontario sent its subsequent Premier Bob Rae, while Newfoundland sent the current Premier, Danny Williams. While I think that Oxford was very good for Luigi, I would hazard that he found it more useful than enjoyable. He had the good fortune that Oriel did not have a tutor in one subject – I would guess literature – so he was asked to go to a particular room on a particular staircase at Magdalen College (pronounced Mawdlin). The tutor was J R R Tolkein.

Personally, I found my first year at Oxford awkward, but then started to enjoy my time there immensely. However, I was a graduate student and therefore lived at a different rhythm than someone doing a second undergraduate qualification. I think the structure of Oxford life, especially in this role, was less agreeable to Luigi. However, the Rhodes Trust helped him get estab-



Figure 25.1: All together: Luigi di Marzo, Erma, John, Harry and Mary Nash, Charlotte Moran, 2001.

lished to do a doctorate at Geneva, where I believe he had a more satisfying experience.

Meeting Erma

Over the years one question I have often been asked is “How did you and Erma meet?” It is quite a story so I will answer it in detail.

In 1967, a year after Peggy’s death, I moved with Stephen to Edmonton, transferred by the company I worked for, Acme Novelty Ltd. Over the years I had refused several promotions which involved moving because of Peggy’s illness.

We moved into a brand new two bedroom apartment at 109 Avenue and 124 Street. I was promoted to Operations Manager and after settling into the job traveled regularly to Calgary, Vancouver, Regina and Saskatoon and soon after when new branches were added to Winnipeg and Victoria. This meant being away from home 3 or 4 nights per week.

In order to look after Stephen I hired a senior citizen grandmother to move in with Stephen on Monday afternoons before he arrived home from school. I used to leave usually early Monday mornings having left breakfast for Stephen and food for lunches, etc. I used to phone every evening and it is a sad story

as even when I phoned on the Monday evening the first thing he would say was “when are you coming home”. This was enough to make one feel like crying.

On weekends we always did things together, he was quite happy since I chose things he wished to do. On Thursdays or Fridays when I returned home the sitter would be ready to leave; I would pay her and drive her home.

One week when I phoned my plans to the senior citizen she stated she would be out of town visiting relatives. I related my problem to Don Merkel, a senior manager at work and he said how about using my 16 and 17 year old daughters moving in together. This we did so this gave me two chances if one could not make it.

In February 1968 we had a “cold spell” and on a very cold Saturday evening Stephen and I were having supper; Stephen eating in the living room with a small TV table and watching television. I was eating in the kitchen with a milk bottle (they were in fashion at the time) in the centre of the table propping up the Edmonton Journal.

As often, it was a very lonely evening especially after Stephen went to bed. I read every section of the paper “back to back” and finally came to a whole section on computer dating. This was at the time something entirely new.

On the back page there was an elaborate questionnaire with a caption at the bottom stating that if one completed the answers and placed this page in a stamped envelope with a \$20.00 bill and mailed to the Journal they would, within a few weeks, send some introductions.

I received four names so decided to answer in alphabetical order.

It was not easy for me since I was out of town so much, and then had to make sure Stephen was looked after, and if I was leaving him at a weekend making sure he had something to do that he really liked.

The first person I met, we went for a drink together; she was well-educated and attractive but after talking for a short while we both agreed we were not in the least bit compatible. We both had a good laugh about this, had another drink and parted ways.

The second phone call resulted in my being told she had decided on pulling out of the system.

It was now the end of April when I phoned the third name but after dating a couple of times I realized that I was not interested.

Just before the Victoria Day Weekend holiday I phoned the fourth name, “Erma Rowley”. I wondered if we could get together over the weekend and was told surprisingly that she was working the holiday at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. My immediate thoughts were that I personally had never had much luck with nurses, but these thoughts changed when Erma said she was a pharmacist.

On the Tuesday after the Queen Victoria holiday we went to the Derrick Club for a drink and had a very enjoyable first meeting.

Afterwards I checked with my little black book and found an entry which said "do not marry widows with four children".

One of our next dates was to the Jubilee Auditorium to hear Harry Belafonte. I invited Erma to this show at a late date and could only get seats in the back row in the top level. Not a very good way to impress somebody.

On another date, this time to go for dinner at the Seven Seas restaurant I had at the last minute an unexpected visit from John, visiting from Calgary. Since I had not seen John for sometime I phoned Erma to see if she minded going as a threesome. We had an enjoyable dinner evening and Erma invited myself, John and Stephen to her family BBQ being held on Sunday.

We all had a good time and met Chick's [Dorum] family. On the way home John said he could not help but admire Erma with her well behaved family, nice home, garden, garage and two cars.

We had a few more dates, a couple taking the younger children to a drive-in theatre since we both needed to get sitters.

I was still on the road weekly with my job and home weekends. One week neither of my two regular sitters could help me. After thinking things out I phoned Erma to tell her of my predicament, told her what I was paying and wondered if I could do a deal with her. The deal was on the Monday I left Erma would pick Stephen up from my apartment on her way home from work. The next morning on her way to work she would deliver Stephen back to the apartment. He would then pack his lunch and go to school. They would repeat the procedure daily throughout the week and on my return, return Stephen back home.

I used to still phone Stephen nightly but when at Erma's home he never asked "when are you coming home". Because of this, seeing Stephen was much happier having other children around was a big relief to me.

One week after arriving home from travel I phoned Erma to say I would be having supper then visit to pick Stephen up. We spent the evening playing card games and around 10 p.m. (Friday) I told Stephen it was time for us to leave. He got me in a quiet corner and wondered if he could stay with Erma's family over the weekend!!

In mid June 1968 I sent Stephen by himself on a direct flight on Air Canada to England to spend three months with his grandparents and other close relatives. I went over to England in early August with John who was enrolled to study at Oxford on a [National] Research Council of Canada scholarship. We had an excellent time marred only by the death of Ella, Peggy's mother shortly after we arrived.

In the last paragraph, Harry omits that Mary and I joined him in Edmonton a few days before we departed for England. I was a one-way passenger on my way to Oxford. During those days we went out as a foursome. Strangely, it is only from a distance of many years that I consider one could interpret this as double dating with one's parent. On two occasions Harry rang the doorbell at about 3 a.m. having forgotten his apartment key (he had given one to me and left the spare at home).

Also omitted are the few days when I accompanied Harry to Vancouver and Victoria, as mentioned in Chapter 23.

On our return home things returned as they were before we left Canada.

During the summer I had joined the Kiwanis Bridge Club; thinking being new to Edmonton I would meet more people even though I did not have a bridge partner but felt I would be able to get a last minute substitute. It was about this time that I asked Erma if she played bridge and as she said "Yes" I invited her to the Kiwanis Bridge Opening Night even though we had never played together.

When it came close to the opening night for the bridge club with dinner at the Mayfair Golf Club on a Friday evening in September, that week I was in Victoria and Vancouver and had booked a flight to arrive home in Edmonton by 5:00 p.m. To my surprise the plane was delayed so I phoned Erma to be ready as I was dressed in business suit and I would pick her up at her home.

We arrived at the Mayfair Gold Club after the 60 odd people had had "Happy Hour" and dinner. They were clearing the buffet but we had a small amount to eat. All the tables were set up for four people to eat and then play bridge. We sat at the only two spaces available with Eileen and Ted Groffe. Erma and I won the first round and we both moved on only in difference directions. The next three rounds I lost with my new partners so stayed at the same table. I kept watching to see how Erma was doing and she kept winning and moving. During this time she had the Mayor of Edmonton, Bill Hawrelak and a Mr. Glasgow, one of the cities best bridge players. At the end of the four rounds they announced that a record score had been made for ladies, Erma Rowley.

All in attendance wondered who Erma Rowley was since there was not a Kiwanian with that [sur]name. Erma won a china candy dish from Birks which we still have.

Shortly after, for the regular bridge season, I had to host eight people including ourselves to a light meal, drinks and bridge. I got all the refreshments together and Erma came prior to guests arriving to help out. Erma said I was nuts to join a club where I had to host especially when traveling so much.

However we managed and had over 35 years in the club making many of our best lifelong friends.

On September 19, 1968, I proposed marriage to Erma and we were married on Grey Cup Day November 30, 1968. We married in Strathearn United Church and I had a working honeymoon starting in Victoria followed by Vancouver and Calgary. We had our wedding reception in the revolving restaurant atop the Chateau Lacombe (now Crowne Plaza).



Figure 25.2: Wedding of Harry and Erma on November 30, 1968.

Mary and I had observed Harry and Erma together, comfortable in each others' company. They were both in situations where a partnership made so much sense as to be obvious, so the announcement that they were going to get married was non-news. While we were in the UK, Harry bought gifts for Erma and family. It may be significant that he knew her size for sweaters.

In late September, Harry wrote to me in Oxford to let me know. I replied in an aerogram with a line of "congratulations and best wishes", then related other news, as I did not feel it was necessary to say more. I got an immediate reply asking if I was upset because my response was so terse. The reality was that I felt this was one of the best things that could happen for all concerned, and I had to take the effort to underline that.

At the time of writing [2007] we have been married almost 39 years and those years have been very full, wonderful and exciting! I feel we must have done something right.

INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Over the years a number of people have influenced by way of life and herewith are the people that in the long term made things more beneficial.

To start with at a young age my parents, Louise and Henry without being overpowering came up with good advice. Unfortunately both died at young ages of 42 and 46 in the World War II years of 1942 and 1944.

My father in law in my first marriage to Peggy shared a lot of my ideas. He was a good businessman having been successful in Canada up to 1929 when he and his family moved to South East England where he was also successful. He too had a love or horses having been in the Artillery section in the first World War. We often had a day at the races; our favorites being Ascot, Epsom, Lingfield Park, Brighton and Plumpton. Whenever we were together I had questions about Canada and the fact that that is where his heart was made the answers very interesting. At around that time 1948 – 1953 I had no thoughts whatsoever of every leaving England.

In 1952 having sold the business in Pembury, Kent I went to work for Weston's Biscuits as a sales person. I did short stints in London and Winchester (which is the old capital of England) before settling in Southampton. Garfield Weston was head of this company as well as numerous others. He started with a bakery in Toronto but in the depression of the 1930s opened a Biscuit (cookie) factory in England. At the time only the upper and middle classes in England could afford to buy cookies. Garfield Weston set about changing this by making cookies that everyone could afford. The English masses soon caught on and business was brisk. However the middle and upper classes boycotted his goods. To change this he made several popular classy items and bought out several well known Brands of other competitors. When I worked for Garfield Weston there were over 20 well established competitors selling cookies in the Unite Kingdom.

I only had the pleasure of meeting him in person once and that when receiving an award for Salesmanship at a convention in the Grosvenor Hotel, Park Lane, London. Not only was I impressed by his talk but by how all his companies were operated. At that time he was the world's 6th richest man.

The remainder of my list of names were all Canadians. First two brothers, Wes and Bryce VanDusen whom started Acme Novelty Ltd. from scratch in the early 1930s. The two men were educated in Weyburn, Saskatchewan and finished their schooling in Grade 8. However they continued to self educate themselves throughout their working years and Wes attended the Banff School of Advanced Management three times. They also sent me to the Banff man-

agement School for two two week courses and in February 1969 to the 6 week advanced management course.

In addition they gave me lots of extra responsibility checking out competitors and on two occasions visiting at length with other business with a view to buying them out. It was an honour to receive this trust.

Heinz Oldach whom I met at Acme Novelty Ltd. when I was transferred to Edmonton in September 1967 was at the time Manager of the outside carnival. When I was promoted to Operations Manager of the whole company his operation came under my control. I felt that during the first few months of my making decisions regarding the carnival and other operations I earned the respect of Heinz. When we both had left Acme Novelty Ltd. and joined forces to go into business we had legal agreements drawn up but in lots of other think just a handshake suffice.

Heinz had many strengths and these complemented mine, when it came to buildings, equipment, vehicles, etc, these were his strong points. His real strength of which I have never been able to compare was forecasting what would happen in the future to our business and the industry in which we were involved. It was uncanny how correct they were!!

I conclude my list with my wife, Erma. She has always been 100% supportive to both myself and Heinz. When things have gone well with our lives including business decisions she does not get excited. When things go the other way she is very philosophical often stating if it is something out of one's control there is nothing you can do about it. However if it is controllable then discuss the situation thoroughly and do something about it.

When making decisions, they are well thought out and very businesslike. We are both human beings and do make mistakes but fortunately not very many. Myself and our six children all love and respect her very much.

FAMILY

In his own writings, Harry does not say much about family, but his actions fairly scream out that this was one of the most important aspects of life for him. Almost all my own telephone conversations with him were about three topics – family, horses and money. I suspect the last two were merely keen hobbies relative to the “real” matter of the children and grandchildren.

One of the actions that speaks to the focus Harry and Erma put on family is the purchase and development of the Wizard Lake “cottage”. This was a place to welcome the family and friends, grow a garden, and get away from



Figure 25.3: 25th Wedding Anniversary, November, 1993. Harry and Erma Nash in the middle, with their children: Linda Hutchinson, Phyllis Book, Allen Rowley on left, Stephen Nash, John Nash and Patricia Dubé.

“work”. It was difficult to telephone to the cottage until Harry and Erma got cell phones.

Similarly, the condo in Scottsdale has been a place of meeting for family and friends.



Figure 25.4: Harry Nash with daughters and grandchildren, Maui, 1990.



Figure 25.5: Harry Nash at one of his favourite places – the Wizard Lake cottage – with a favourite activity – a bonfire. Apparently 2005.

Chapter 26

ANIMALS

Those who knew Harry will recognize that animals occupied a large place in his life. He liked to have dogs as pets, and he liked horse racing, eventually becoming an owner of several. Around the house and stores there were also cats. In Canada we had several dogs that did not last very long, a cat for several years, and also a bird for a while. However, there were periods where we did not have any, for example, most of the time in Southampton. I also believe there were no pets from roughly the time Peggy died until the merged family was established on 51st Avenue in 1970.

Dogs, Cats and Birds

Harry has talked about the cats at The Stores and how they helped him keep rats and mice under control. However, they were not pets, but more working



Figure 26.1: Our spaniel Beauty with John Nash, 1948, in back yard of The Stores.



Figure 26.2: Harry's poodles: On the left, Licorice and Winsome, Edmonton, 1980s.

members of the staff. On the other hand, the black spaniel bitch "Beauty" was a pet. She had been bred as a show dog by a Lady Berry who lived in Pembury. Harry told me he once tried to show Beauty, but she took offence at the judges hands on her and bit him. I have mentioned her antipathy to the cats and also that she acted in a very proprietary manner to the Stores and all the merchandise.

In later life, Harry and Erma have had several poodles. I believe Winsome was the first, joined by Licorice. Beau was resident in the 1990s, and at the time of writing, Madonna has been in charge.

At various times, Harry also owned non-pet animals that he nevertheless enjoyed having. We have pictures of him with elk, but none with his bison (often called buffalo). Both the elk and bison were kept on a game farm north-east of Edmonton owned by Heinz Oldach.

Horses

Numerous people have asked how I got interested in horse racing.

Growing up in England I was exposed to the sport in all the newspapers and there were a number of horse tracks in South East England where my family lived. In addition a good farmer friend, Les Bowman, had hunting horses



Figure 26.3: Madonna. Edmonton. May 2001.

which he rode with The Eridge Hunt and at the end of hunting season raced a horse named "Thomastown" in local amateur point-to-point steeplechase races.

I often traveled on Saturdays to point to point races with Les and the horse in his trailer. Les was too heavy to be a good jockey and although it was often 2nd or 3rd it did not win with Les riding; in fact he fell off a number of times which was very common in those types or races.

After I married Peggy, her Dad, George got me interested in thoroughbred horses; just to see them race and study their form and appearance. George had been in the Canadian Horse Drawn Artillery during World War I and he had really got to know horses. George and I often had a day at the races together; our favourite tracks being Ascot, Lingfield Park, Brighton and Epsom.

When I arrived in Calgary I occasionally went to the thoroughbred racing in Calgary and when in 1967 I moved to Edmonton I attended both thoroughbred (with jockeys) and standardbreds (with buggies). I began to enjoy the standardbreds ore since they individually raced more often than thoroughbreds and I personally found them easier to handicap and so pick more winners.

It was while attending the races regularly in the early 1980s that I was approached by Colin Forbes, the racing manager for Northlands Park. We at ABS were doing a lot of business with Northlands Exhibition so Colin had got to know me quite well. He wondered because of my interest in racing that I did



Figure 26.4: Harry with one of his elk at the game farm of Heinz Oldach. Apparently 1998.

not own a horse. My reply was that I had known a number of owners over the years and they never had a winner. I continued by saying that if I purchased a race horse it would have to be a good one, one that had a chance of winning races.

A year later he mentioned that he had found a horse in Toronto that he felt would do very well. On March 7th, 1986 we flew, from Toronto to Edmonton, via Purolator, in the middle of the night, during a snowstorm in Edmonton a four year old standard bred horse named "Rock'N Willy". The horse had already winnings of \$47,000 and the cost was \$40,000. Four partners went in on buying the horse; Colin Forbes, Jack Nicholl, Heinz Oldach, my partner and myself.

Within a few weeks of Rock'N Willy arriving in Alberta he won four races including "The Invitational" at Edmonton's Northlands Park. This got us hooked on racing and as Colin Forbes was importing some good horses from New Zealand he got us interested in buying another one. This was a New Zealand bred by the name of "Nero Reign". This cost us \$12,000 and it won several races before being claimed for \$15,000 after coming in 4th in a Calgary race on Boxing Day, the same year we purchased it.

We next bought Benalla N another very promising New Zealander. This time our partner was Keith Clark, champion driver over the years. The horse won 3 races but broke a leg while training and had to be euthanized.

With my next venture I bought on Colin Forbes's advice "Columbia Baron".



Figure 26.5: Harry with two of his horses (which?). Apparently 1995, but I believe the camera date is incorrect.

As it was Erma's birthday I put the horse in Erma's name as Joint owner with Keith Clark, the champion driver/trainer. We paid \$17,000 and in five starts it won three times and in the money the other two races but was claimed for \$20,000 in the fifth race. Keith Clark wanted us to buy it back for the same price which I refused to do, but this was a mistake since it was a good horse and won many races.

Some of Erma's friends wondered if she was sad at losing her horse and her reply was why should she be sad when she was \$7,000 better off within a few weeks!!

One day at supper time Todd Beelby, my now new driver/trainer phoned to say that there was a maiden (for horses that had never won) claiming race and there was a horse named Safflower that he liked and was I interested. With Todd being a good horseman I decided with him to enter a claim for the horse. With a claim one puts the money in an envelope and puts this envelope in the "claims" box before the race. Then after the race, no matter what happens the bidder gets the horse, but not any of the purse, if any. A strange thing happened with our claim in that Safflower won the race but was disqualified. In addition there were four claims on the same horse. The stewards had a draw and we won plus we had an easy winner of a maiden race that did not count so we had the opportunity to get any easy win in the next maiden race. Safflower was good to us winning seven races in three months before being claimed from us. During this time Rock'N Willy had made good money for

us but unfortunately on a muddy track in Edmonton going round a turn he took a wrong step and bowed a tendon. This was a very serious mishap which often ends a horse's career. Heinz and I did a deal with the other partners and we owned the damaged horse outright. We put Rock'N Willy on Heinz's Easy Street Game Farm in a paddock with elk on one side and buffalo on the other. Every day for six months Heinz rubbed the damaged leg with a Chinese liniment. It was now spring and the tendon was as hard as a rock. We then did a deal with Don Monkman for him to have one of his workers walk Rock'N Willy for two hours daily over a period of two months. We then had Rock'N Willy jogged for two months and then put into regular training. A year after the tendon was bowed we felt he was ready to race. After being away from racing for so long the racing authorities insist you horse races in a qualifier race (no betting). Rock'N Willy won this race and we then took a chance and entered him in a \$7,000 claiming race, standing a chance to have him claimed. Lots of horsemen were interested at this price but everyone thought there was still something wrong with his leg.

Rock'N Willy won again but in the next race we entered him in a \$17,500 claimer, he continued to do well winning over \$50,000 after the bowed tendon. Then age began to catch up with him and he was claimed from us and soon after was put on a stud farm for breeding. As no surprise to me he was not successful as a breeder over the years. I have studied bloodlines and Rock'N Willy was about the only really good offspring from his background.

In 1990 after talking with Todd Beelby we thought it was time to "raise our sights" and buy a well bred USA yearling. We studied the Hanover Farms Sales Black Book listing over 800 yearlings for sale in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in early November. Plans were made for Todd and I to travel to Harrisburg for three days with plans to purchase a yearling with a budget of \$20,000 US.

Three weeks before traveling I was awarded a First Class fully paid trip for 10 days to Hong Kong and China financed by the Hong Kong Trade and Development Corporation. When I told Todd of my good fortune he was both pleased and devastated because both trips were at the same time. I immediately said that he could go to Harrisburg by himself. This bothered him since he was only 26 years old and had never been to a sale of this stature before. After assuring him that I thought he would handle himself well he went with \$20,000US in search of a well bred yearling.

He purchased 141P61, "Eddy Hanover" on the first day of the three day sale for \$15,500 US so was able to absorb lots of other happenings leisurely.

After Eddy Hanover arrived in Edmonton Todd had the job of training him for twelve months hopefully so he could have a few races while still a two year old. In August 1991 Eddy Hanover had his first of many wins, this

at Stampede Park in Calgary. In September at the same trace he raced in a terrific rain storm with the track very muddy. In the race was the hot favourite “Madeleine’s Magic” and Eddy was and 8 to 1 outsider. Soon after the start of the race the favourite was 6 lengths in front with Eddy in the pack behind. Suddenly one of the horses in front of Eddy kicked up mud and a large clod hit Todd right in the eyes. Todd could not see a thing and relaxed the reins, instead of slowing down Eddy went away from the pack and after the leader. Todd could not see but could hear the noise of the crowd as Eddy closed in on the leader and went on to win by 5 lengths.

About this time we claimed “Clouds and Rain” for \$15,000 and this won several races but he had lots of leg problems and after each race we have lots of bet bills for treatments. At the end of 1991 Todd decided to take 5 horses including Eddy Hanover and Clouds and Rain to winter in California and race at Los Alamitos near Los Angeles. We thought that Clouds and Rain would get claimed for US dollars. As things turned out Eddy got injured in training so we did not race him and Clouds and Rain won 3 races before being claimed for \$20,000 US. Ironically he was claimed by Canadians from Vancouver and never won afterwards. The rest in California did wonders Eddy and he improved tremendously because of it. Whenever he ran in races, win or lose he always ran as best he could.

One morning before 7 a.m. Todd was training him on Northlands race track all by himself. As they were traveling fast around a bend close to the rail a piece of the rail was protruding and it caught the shaft of the sulky. With the impact the sulky broke throwing Todd to the ground and Eddy broke loose and paced on alone. Todd was injured badly with a dislocated hip and lay curled up on the track. Eddy went on for a quarter of a mile before stopping. He then turned around and trotted back to where Todd was on the ground and stood over him until help arrived. Todd was taken by ambulance to hospital and with this mishap was off work for a month.

The next year I went to Harrisburg sale with Todd and we purchased two yearlings, Hill Road, a filly, for \$25,000 and Harvette Hanover, a filly, for \$30,000. Harvette grew into a real beauty and trained exceptionally well so much so that Dr. Brad Gunn, known as “Mr. Racing” in Western Canada used to say to me “Let’s go and see that machine of yours train”. Our criteria for training yearlings was to be patient and get them to go increasingly but slowly faster. Then when they could run a mile in 2 minutes flat it was time for them to race.

With Harvette Hanover we were unfortunate in the fact that when she ran a mile in close to 2 minutes she came up puffing. After many medical tests she was found to have a breathing deformity. We phoned Murray Brown, Public

Relations Director for Hanover Farms only to find that it was a birth defect. Since she was so well bred we turned her out until she was 3 years old and in the spring bred her to Bombrickle, a prominent stud standing in Red deer. Eleven months later she gave birth to a nice filly, whom we named Harrietta whom we kept, raised and trained. Harrietta won numerous races for us including the prestigious Alberta Sales Stake at 3 years old. After continuing to win more races we sold her to American interest in Sacramento, California where she won more races.

We went on to breed Harvette Hanover and she produced some good offspring that went on to win lots of races, the most notable of which was Del Norte who was bought from the Annual Yearly Alberta sale in Calgary even though we bid \$23,000 to buy her back. The sire was "That'll Be Me" who was an American Breeders Cup sinner. Del Norte won over \$400,000 before being bred.

While this was all happening Eddy Hanover was still doing well and one summer Todd went with him to Sandown Park, Victoria and Vancouver Island to race in 3 races. Todd's brother, Brent and his in-laws lived nearby so it was a holiday for Todd and wife, Michelle. In the month they were there Eddy won all 3 invitational races.

Hill Road became a so-so racing filly, only won 3 races although very well bred, so we decided to breed her.

In September 1993 we purchased Corporate Song, a colt from the Alberta Yearling Sale in Calgary for \$15,000 and in November a filly in Harrisburg named "Café Comic" together with a very athletic looking colt called "Scudbuster".

In 1994 Corporate Song won all of its seven races and was voted 2 year old Alberta Colt of the Year. Café Comic was no world beater and after winning 3 races we sold her. Scudbuster was another story; he was so strong and fast but according to an expert horseman we were told he was short in his body length. Because of this when racing very fast he would cross his legs. Drivers, including Todd were not keen on driving him in spite of changing gear to adjust his stride. After several tries to win a maiden race we felt the time was ripe for him to win. On one December evening driving under the lights he was a good 4th going into the last bend. Todd put him to the outside and he was traveling like a winner when he crossed his legs, did a somersault with Todd and sulky flying through the air and bringing another horse, driver and buggy down. Both Todd and the other driver had broken bones. The next day we sold Scudbuster after having paid \$28,000 US as a yearling for him and training him for 14 months. Our selling price was \$1,000 for the horse to be used as a riding horse.

In between all these happenings we claimed Dukes Scarlet who won several races before being claimed from us.

In 1995 Corporate Song continued to race well and qualified to run in the Western Canada Pacing Derby for a purse of \$130,000. It is really something to qualify for this 8 horse race since over 1000 horses are entered for this race from all over North America; entries start off when they are yearlings and the race is for 3 year olds. In the race Corporate Song drew #6 and was an outsider at 12 to 1. Coming into the final straight Todd made a charge and with 50 yards to go I thought we had the winner only to be caught in a photo finish by Breach of Faith, a New York horse in the final few strides.

In the fall of 1996 we purchased another yearling colt in Harrisburg; this time a gray horse named Red Rum which name when held to a mirror reads "Murder". This horse was big and strong and won a good number of races.

It was near the end of this run of wins when Todd because of his young family decided that traveling from track to track was not suited to family life. He decided to go into Commercial Insurance Sales and has done very well, now settled with family in Victoria, B.C.

He still does consulting work as a knowledgeable horseman on certain track's broadcast systems. He is very good at it. After Todd got out of racing I had 5 different trainers over a period of 3 years and used to "shake my head" at some decision that were made. It was because of this that I began to think it was time to get out of racing.

My last horse was Petridge which I bred and raised and who won 7 races before I literally gave him away.

In 21 years I had lots of fun and excitement and had 137 winners with lots of 2nd, 3rd and 4th finishes and 5ths which also qualify for part of the purse.

These numbers do not include the winners I bred and sold which amounted to more than 30. Strangely I do not miss being involved in racing but surely enjoyed it when I was participating.



Figure 26.6: Harry and Erma Nash with Peter and Robin Rowley and Beau in the 1990s.

Chapter 27

LEGACY

In this book, I have used my father, Harry Nash as the main character to describe life of a person who grows up in England and later becomes a Canadian. Harry's later endeavours that built a thriving business in Alberta have been included because they provide a slice of history that otherwise might not be organized and recorded.

The account here, as an overview of life and socio-economic conditions, ends around 1970. This is now four decades ago, predating personal computers by over a decade and cell-phones and the modern internet by a quarter century. This means that those younger than myself – essentially all who are of working age or younger – will still have to apply their imagination to understand how life was lived in the 1970s, 1980s and perhaps even the 1990s.

With my panorama essentially closing in the early 1970s, I have also hardly mentioned my four step-siblings, who I have come to regard with great respect and affection, even though I never shared a roof with them. They are parents and grand-parents, and this book has been prepared very much with them and their families in mind. Hence any materials or tools I have that may help them extend the time-span of this work will be willingly passed on.

Indeed, I invite any reader to consider the importance of understanding our past, not just in its narrative elements, but in the scenery, the rhythms, and the understandings of that past.

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