

## APPENDIX

As I go through my story years and years after it was written, I realise that there have been many incidents that overtook my wife and I that were very much worthy of mention. Whereas it is difficult to fit them into their correct place in the story, each incident may even now be well worth reading.

The first of these is that during the time Eva was employed in the NAAFI, (Navy, Army, Air Force Institution) she and the rest of the staff were paraded for some inspection or other. The Inspecting Officer asked the assembly were there any complaints. The routine answer in the Service to that sort of question was always "No complaints Sir!" Eva, however, was not well versed in any discipline, took one place forward and asked the Inspecting Officer - "Would he like to wear a uniform like this?" The Inspecting Officer was probably more than a little taken aback by this sort of thing, and agreed that he would not care to don that particular form of dress. Immediately after the parade, the Manageress cornered Eva and complained in no uncertain manner that employees in the NAAFI did not make those sort of complaints. Eva found out later that the Officer she had complained to was Lieut General Ironside, Chief of the Imperial Staff. It may have been sheer coincidence, that the canteen uniforms were changed to become a very smart outfit very shortly after.

Throughout our lives together, Eva has quite often mentioned the odd complaint. When we married, I held the rank of Sgt. so having practiced on the C.I.G.S., she may have felt entitled to put a common Sgt. in his place.

As a Senior Sgt. I often had to advise new and very young officers as to how things should be done. I always found it to be very much an advantage if I knew a certain amount of the young person's background. I asked one of these young men at one time "Which part of the country do you belong to, Sir?" His answer was that he came from a place that I had probably never heard of. I then asked "Which place is that, Sir?" His answer was, that he belonged to a place called Frizington. I realized immediately, that the gentleman's name was Holman, and that he was one of the Holman family of Rieda Mansion, Frizington. At the time I had enlisted in the Army, we had lived in a house, Acrewalls Mansion, that was part of the Holman Estate.

Acrewalls was a beautiful place, but at that time it had no electricity, only well water, and was almost a mile from the nearest bus stop. It had been empty for some long time when we moved in, and I should add that one of the main reasons for the Hardy family living in a mansion was the fact that the rent on the place was Ten Shillings per week. It is an odd thing, that a few years ago, my sister's grand-daughter, without knowing anything about our family connection with the place, bought it and now lives there. I should have said there that her husband, who is a carpenter/builder, bought the place. It is now a mansion in the full meaning of the

word - beautiful.

Visiting Acrewalls after all these years, was an unforgettable experience. I had left the place to enlist in the Army, so it was always "Home". On a recent visit, I felt as much at home now as I had done then. My family had always loved that place, part of the family still does.

With the passing of time, I attained the same rank as the young Holman, (Mike). He and I became the closest of friends. He became a Queen's Counselor. At one time, Eva and I were greeted by Mike with the sentence - "Hello Eva, how are the children?" My wife's answer to that was - "Mike, when I am out to a Regimental Ball, don't ever mention the children!" At a later Regimental affair, we were again met at the doorway by Mike with the greeting - "Hello Eva, how' s the. . . . .dog !"

At one time during our training, we were doing a mute march, and as we went past the Carrier Platoon, there was many an exchange of sarcastic remarks about the smell of petrol. The fact that they were suffering from sore feet, instead of bums, etc. etc. The sarcasm ended up with a challenge to meet them on the football pitch, half an hour after we had completed the 25-mile route march. Both teams played a great game, so at half time, I mentioned - "Win, and we shall meet at the Bullington Cross pub at 8 pm". Meet, we did, and largely on account of the fact that Eva used to darn a lot of my men's socks, she was always invited to these sort of meetings. During the evening, she inadvertently came out with the remark that she hadn't tasted a chicken for a long, long time. The next day there was an All Officers calf, where the C.O. told us that some members of the Regiment had been stealing poultry, and that we had to confine all our men to Barracks and inspect every kit for any sign of feathers etc. etc. I very carefully inspected my men's gear. Not a sign of a feather anywhere. I reported back to the orderly room that my Platoon was all clear. I honestly believed at the time that they really were innocent. When I arrived at our lodging place that evening, Eva was cooking two chickens. I swear that I knew absolutely nothing about the affair until I arrived back in our digs. Had I known I would have been Court Marshaled. The type of men that I had the honour to command, never thereafter, made even the slightest whisper of the affair. In retrospect, I feel quite sure that they all knew perfectly well who had raided the poultry house and that they all knew well enough where the poultry ended up. It was never mentioned again. I still do not know which of the men did it. I feel that their thoughts had been a reward for darned socks.

Shortly after the poultry affair we were sent out to North Africa to prepare for the invasion of Sicily. Eva's father was an ex-Police Inspector so finding a house to rent in Plumstead was no problem at all. To find furniture to stock it with was a different proposition altogether. In War time the only things available in that line had to be second hand. Eva managed to buy a bed and of course a mattress. Her father forbade her to sleep on it until it had been disinfected. He knew that part of London. My wife doesn't use a great deal of strong language under normal circumstances. She told me later that when she looked out of her front door and saw a 30cwt. truck/panel van with

the words London Borough City Council, *Bug and Flea Extermination* in very bold letters, she had to tell her father a couple of home truths.

Our first baby was stillborn on the 31st March 1941, in Fernlea Maternity Home near Southfield Street, Nelson, Lancashire. For our next one Eva refused flatly to go into the same home, so our eldest daughter, Irene, was born with the aid of a mid-wife at my sister Betty's place, 16 Southfield Street, Nelson on the 13th May 1942. Come 1943, the Regiment left the camp at Barton Stacey and headed for North Africa. Eva was pregnant again when we left U.K in May 1943.

We landed at Oran in Algeria about ten days later. We were transported in 3-ton trucks by a Black American Transport Company. They were excellent drivers but had little to say. They dumped us on the side of some hill or other twenty or thirty miles from Oran. We just dropped our gear and slept beside it. We awoke to see that we were alongside an American Camp, and it quickly became obvious that we were on what was not the best side of their camp. A very short distance away we saw a line of American soldiers in the sitting position, on a very long sort of pole arrangement that was precariously balanced over a very smelly trench. They were at pains to let these "Limey" people know that '*Our American Boys had landed on OKINAWA*'.

It had been my job on countless occasions to lecture the troops on Tropical Hygiene, almost a daily task during the months before we embarked. After all, I was an old *soldier*, a man of much experience. I had been there and done that. Within an hour of waking up on that first day in North Africa, I had the most dreadful pains in my stomach, so severe, that I felt it was necessary to report to the doctor, and up to that time, I had never once had to report sick in my six years of service. The doctor listened to me very carefully, examined me thoroughly, and then gave me a very large dose of Castor Oil.....I didn't bother to tell any of the men that I had lectured on Tropical Hygiene about my first day in North Africa. I don't think any of the men ever knew just how well the 'Old Soldier' had made a fool of himself. The stomach pains disappeared in a very short time.

Our arrival back at home meant that we were back to training as hard as we knew how. It was during this training period that I crashed in a glider, would you believe it, in the outskirts of Shepton Mallet! My next glider crash was on my arrival in the Dutch city of Arnhem. When I refer to this particular landing as a *crash*, it was sufficiently rough to put me through the seat. None of my crew was hurt to any extent.

As mentioned above, Eva was three months pregnant when we sailed to North Africa in May. Because of the build up for "D Day", we, the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, were returned to U.K. as soon as we had advanced into Italy as far as Foggia where our main task had been to take the very large airfield. Because of the fact that I was abroad, Eva had made arrangements for my Mother and my sister to come down to London and to take Irene back north whilst she was evacuated from London to Shepton Mallet to give birth to our second baby, son David. I had come straight from the port of disembarkation to visit

Eva. We had completed the North Africa thing, Sicily, back to North Africa, then on a Royal Navy ship to Taranta, advanced as far as Foggia, back to North Africa, and then back to the U.K in exactly six months.

At this time of our lives, we often have the great treat of listening to the Three Tenors. They always bring to mind the fact that Eva's father's cousin was Dame Clara Butt. She was supposed to have been one of the great singers of her time. It was said that she had the sort of voice that could fill the Albert Hall in London and that was long before the days that the microphone and public address equipment came on the scene. She came out to Australia and it was said that Dame Nellie Melba advised her that when she sang out here she should sing "muck" - meaning of course, that anything that was the slightest bit classical would not go down well at all. In spite of this, she sang medium to classical all the time she was out here and the Australians loved her for it. It was an odd thing that the miners in the gold fields were the part of the public that showed the greatest appreciation of the classics. She loved them, the miners, and they in turn loved her. She was often invited to sing in Windsor Castle and in many of the other Royal Houses. The Prince Consort used to turn the pages for her. She was Ivor Novello's God Mother.

The Regiment was moved around the country, time and time again, so, whenever it was at all possible Eva used to come down to the locality and I would search for digs somewhere near the barracks. With this system, we made some wonderful friends, in England, Scotland and in Wales. We had many really great friends in the Regiment over the many years. One that springs to mind was Smith 10. There were usually 6 or 7 Smiths in the Battalion, so each one became known by the last two figures in his Regimental number. Smith 10 was the Heavy-weight Champion of the Regiment, pug nose, cauliflower ears, walked like an ape and was said to have shaved with a brace and bit. He was as tough as they come and always looked the part. In reality he was basically a very gentle man. He would whip any drunken soldier straight into the Guard Room then go back to make sure the soldier had sufficient blankets to keep himself warm. At one time when we were stationed at Crickhowell in Wales, Eva and I went to the village hall to a dance. Smith 10 was terribly concerned that Eva should be at a dance when it was only five or six weeks since she had lost our first baby. During the Sicily campaign, he had the greater part of his hand blown off, but would not leave the scene of the battle until he was ordered to do so by a senior Officer. When he did leave, his wound was full of maggots. He brought his wife down to where we were stationed at the time. She was red-haired, beautiful and it looked as though he could have carried her around in his pocket. She was a small, petite, lovable girl, about quarter the size of her husband. He never returned to the Battalion, but was posted to a Reinforcement Camp in France and was killed in an air raid.

Eva's father was always popular with young ladies and often used to get invitations to go to functions that were attended in general by the younger fraternity. However, his eyesight failed somewhere about 1943 but this in no way affected the usual invitations to various functions. London blackout had to be seen to be believed. If the weather was the

slightest bit misty, as indeed it often was, it was almost impossible to see an outstretched hand. As father was leaving one particular party, he was given the solemn advice - "Now, Mr. Butt, do be careful when you go out there, it is very, very dark". He did not tell the young lady that his life was always in the dark.

Father had had a very successful career with the London Metropolitan Police and ended his service as Chief Inspector of the Woolwich Division. It was his boast that he had been paid more as a Pensioner than he ever drew as a policeman. At the start of his service, his weekly pay would be no more than a few shillings; his pension at the end of his service would doubtless be ten times that amount. He passed away in 1954.

There were one or two reasons for the fact that I had decided to leave the Army. I felt that I had had enough of course - who wouldn't after what we had been through, but the catalyst was brought about by a friend of mine, a Major Jock Neil, D.S.O. He and I had talked about applying for a Regular Commission on many occasions. After all, he was a Major with a D.S.O. He, like I, had come through the ranks. I had reached the rank of Captain and was by normal Army standards a fairly experienced soldier. I had served in the Palestine Campaign, had joined the British Expeditionary Force in France the day the war broke out, had been through Dunkirk, the Sicily and Italy From North Africa, had been decorated with the Military Cross after the Battle of Arnhem and had finally served in Norway. Our task in that beautiful country was to have the Germans retire at least three miles from all military installations, to disarm them, and then to release the many Russian prisoners of war.

Jock put in his application, and was called in for an interview. He told me that three Brigadiers questioned him for about three hours and then came up with the answer that he was too old for a Regular Commission. One of Jock's great boasts was that his father was a crofter, way up in the very north of Scotland and Jock talked in the language of that area. Broad Scots and his service in the Officer's Mess had not altered his twang in any way at all. He was quite sure that the Commission was refused on account of the fact that he had not been born with a silver spoon in his mouth. They were well aware of his age when he had put in his application form. I decided that my education would doubtless bring me the same answer as he had.

It may be of interest to know that he was classified as unfit to become a Regular Army Officer. After discharge he joined the Civil Service and was posted out to Nigeria. He was transferred to the Police and was later seconded to the Malayan Police Force, where he ended up as Chief Commissioner of Police; Malaya. It was part of his duty to inspect the Malayan Infantry Regiments and each of the first two he had to perform this duty on were both commanded by ex-Border Regiment Lieut. Colonels. The three Brigadiers who had refused him a Regular Commission may have had their sights set just a little bit high. Some fourteen years ago, whilst I was fast asleep watching television, Eva recognised Jock on TV. I managed to get in touch with him, and he and his wife came up to Coleambally to stay with us on a couple of occasions.

During the Battle of Arnhem the powers that be decided that I should be awarded the Military Cross. Towards the end of the war we were paraded in front of King George 5<sup>th</sup> to have the medal presented. It was a great honour, in that for a normal Investiture, the three services are taken in the following order: Royal Navy, The Army and then the Air Force. The King wanted to meet the Airborne Guard of Honour and the recipients of the medals, not only as a separate thing, but the whole affair was carried out in the Red and Gold Hall. Her Majesty, the Queen also insisted on attending the Parade to watch the Medals being awarded. The King noticed that I was already wearing the Palestine Campaign medal, and made the remark that "It was pretty hot out there." He wasn't referring to the weather!

After the presentation, Eva's stepmother insisted on going somewhere posh to celebrate. This was a sad mistake, as her father, being an ex-member of the Metropolitan Police, knew all the good places one could go to for the purpose of having a feed. The stepmother had her way, so we ended up in the Cafe' Royal. The menu was naturally written in French, and I think Eva's father was the only one that had any idea at all of what each section of the menu amounted to. He left Mother to give the order, the rest of us being slightly out of our depth chorused "we shall have the same". The same amounted to a very small helping of tripe and onions, followed by a very naked looking apple, with the smallest drip of jam filling the hole where the thing had been de-cored. So much for the great celebration.

I should add here that whereas we had all been warned to be on our best behavior, the Brigade Major walked straight up to Eva, in the Palace, and gave her a great hug and kiss. He was perhaps too senior w worry about such things as best behavior. Our youngest son, Frank, was born on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1944 at Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire