

Jack Anderson's War Years

The start of World War II on Sept. 3 1939 found Jack at home for the weekend and out with his cousins to a dance at Sprucegrove located on No. 4 Highway near Centralia ON. This day would mark the start of a major change in the lives of all of them.

Jack continued to work at Lawson and Jones, after one unsuccessful effort to join the RCAF in early 1940. Curvature of the spine was considered a handicap and the Medical Officers said "Go back to work". It was the time of the "Phony War" as well, and not much was happening. Jack had always had an

interest in radio, building assorted sets starting with the Cats Whisker Crystal set in the early 30's. In the early part of 1941 an advertisement appeared in the London Free Press asking for young men interested in radio to sign up for an RCAF sponsored six month course as a Radio Technician. A weekly stipend would be provided to cover room and board, and miscellaneous expenses, and upon successfully passing the final test, they would be required to join the RCAF with an immediate promotion to Leading Aircraftsman.

At this particular time the technology called Radio Direction Finding was in its initial development in Britain and was top secret. RDF would eventually become Radar. Britain had asked Canada to take on the responsibility of training the Radio Technicians for the rapidly growing RDF system in Britain and on other War Fronts.

Jack left London, by train, early one morning in late July 1941 bound for Ottawa, the location of the training facilities. He arrived in Ottawa late in the day and found a rooming house not far from the City Centre. Because of limited finances (some cash from the sale of his bicycle) Jack decided to live sparingly on milk and bread for a couple of days until he got established. The course was given at the Ottawa Technical High School and started at 5 pm, lasting till midnight. Jack soon made contact with two other students, from Ingersoll, living with a Mrs Leigh at 295 Bay Street. on a room and board basis.

Fortunately Mrs Leigh could squeeze in one more student and Jack starting eating regular meals again.

Memories of Ottawa, included watching the filming of "Captains of the Clouds" with James Cagney, Midnight movies which we could just get to in time, the music of Frenesi on those soft summer nights, and dinner with Lorena Muldoon in the Chateau Laurier which shot one whole weeks stipend. About

mid December we were advised that we had passed and could now go on leave, then report back to Ottawa right after the New Year to officially sign up for the RCAF. So it was away for home in Crediton on a badly over crowded train, an all night journey to Toronto again, to the accompaniment of the haunting song "Blues in the Night" from someones portable radio, probably sung by Dinah Shore. After a great Holiday season at home, the last time as a civilian, Jack returned to the RCAF Recruiting Centre in Ottawa and on January 5th 1942 took the Oath, "I Jack Fenton Anderson do sincerely promise (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty".

Within minutes it seems, Jack was on his way back to Toronto by train, and was taken on strength at No. 1 Manning Depot that same day. The Manning Depot was located in

the Toronto Exhibition Grounds. He spent the next 20 days getting uniform and equipment, and as promised was immediately promoted to LAC, much to the surprise of the many new arrivals. The group learned how to handle a rifle and marched around the streets in the vicinity of the Exhibition grounds. New recruits from all over Canada crowded the Cow Palace, and after getting all kinds of shots we shared the common misery of being sick together in the also crowded toilet area. Memories include sore feet, coffee and donuts in the warm Tip Top Tailors Canteen, trying to keep warm in the Cow Palace, and sarcastic Corporals (Gods to us) who seemed to enjoy pushing us that extra mile. On January 26 1942 Jack was posted to No. 31 Radio School, located just south of Clinton ON. to start an intensive course in the radio detection system. The School was "Top Secret" as far as any discussions outside the gates. The students were introduced to the new technology and enjoyed every minute. Since Clinton was quite close to Exeter and Crediton Jack was fortunate to be able to spend leaves at home and recalls parties hosted by himself and cousin Doris Hay, when groups of Jacks friends would come down to Exeter. Doris would line up the girls and the group would go dancing at the old Opera House. Jack also joined the RAF Clinton Male Choir and their outstanding rendition of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" brought down the house at the Clinton United Church.

A few of the students who were fortunate enough to get good marks were interviewed for the opportunity to become an Officer. Jack must have answered the questions fairly well because on 24 May 1942 he received his commission as a Pilot Officer, and then had 5 heady days to walk around the Station with a white arm band signifying his new rank, and to enjoy the amenities of the Officers Mess. The station was run by the RAF at that time so it had inherited all the trappings of formal British Stations. How imposing to enter the Mess and pause and click your heels, and then glance about to see if the C.O. was present.

Now the problem of getting a new Officers uniform, and no money, at least not enough, so a loan from Grandma Anderson was arranged and Jack got his new "Blues". The final loan repayment was sent from England a few weeks later.

Jack enjoyed the new privileges at RAF Clinton for a few days and then was granted extended leave pending an overseas posting to Britain. June is a wonderful time to have leave and Grand Bend was a popular destination. However these carefree days did come to an end and Jack remembers the

rather sad farewell from his Mom and Dad in London ON, when it was time to go to Moncton NB, by train. Jack was posted to No. 31 P.D. Moncton, and arrived in Moncton on June 20th. The Station was an assembly station for assorted members of the RCAF, as they gathered for overseas posting. Much

waiting for a convoy assignment, and we passed the time discovering the joy of lobster in all forms, and short trips in and around Moncton. A Great Surprise on July 11th when cousin Gerald Schroeder came looking for Jack. We had a happy reunion. Gerald was on his way to Charlottetown PE. The RCAF

Radar contingent consisted of: Bud Harris, Leaside ON; Ray Skelton, Toronto ON; Jack McJannet, Montreal QC; Ronald Blair, Hamilton ON; Ken Thrasher, Montreal QC; Gord

Scott, Toronto ON; Phil Sheridan, Sudbury ON; James McKerr, Toronto ON, A.C. Tester, Montreal QC; Jim Stringer, Saginaw MI, USA, Jack Hanna, Belleville ON; and Jack Anderson, Crediton ON.

On July 15th we were told to get packed and 2 days later we took the train to Halifax harbour and a mixed bag of about 30 Airforce personnel boarded the Winnipeg II a small ship carrying some cargo, the Air Force contingent and a group of missionaries returning to England from China. We sailed at dusk, part of a large convoy of ships, consisting of 28 merchant ships, 2 destroyers and 4 corvettes. The first night out was quite exciting with much whooping of horns and sharp zigging and zagging. Only later did we learn that many German subs were in this part of the Atlantic at that time. Our crossing took 13 days from the 18th of July to the 31st of July. Convoys move very slowly. The small Air Force contingent was assigned watch for two hour duty periods, on a rotation basis. When we reached mid Atlantic the ships Captain assigned us to duty on twin barrelled heavy duty machine guns mounted on the high points of the ship. We were to shoot down any attacking aircraft. Due to lack of experience with such heavy armament we hoped we wouldn't shoot off the Ships Bridge in the event of an attack. Fortunately as we approached Ireland the only aircraft we saw were friendly. The Winnipeg II landed at Liverpool in the late afternoon of July 31st and we boarded the train for Bournemouth. We experienced our first air raid a short time later as our train was delayed by bombing in Manchester. We arrived in Bournemouth the next morning after being diverted through a much bombed city of Bath.

August in Bournemouth - how delightful - The few Radar Officers were moved into the Cottonwood Hotel with a view of the English Channel. We could see the German Luftwaffe raiders coming in for high level day time reconnaissance. We did have one night time air-raid. First items of business included the issuing of tin helmets, revolvers, ammunition, and the necessary webbing plus ration and clothing coupons. We also had to establish banking arrangements, because pay would be directly issued to a Bank. The first major adjustment was the blackout. We had no idea how intense it could be on a moon less night. Unfortunately the beautiful beaches were "Off Limits" due to barbed wire, barricades and mines galore. However Bournemouth was still the summer place for the senior British vacationers and we recall attending a presentation of Swan Lake in a large pavilion. It was customary for newly arrived Canadians to have a period of leave before receiving a station assignment.

Jack decided he would like to explore some of southern England, having read many books on this area before the war, and also fascinated by the history of the area. With a rented bicycle Jack started west reaching Dorchester. Along the way he passed through villages with such exotic names as Bere Regis, Turners Puddle, Tolpuddle and Puddletown and recalls the sheer delight in having tea and scones on a table beside a thatched roof cottage. It was just as he had imagined. The trip continues to Salisbury where Jack gazed with awe at the beauty of the Salisbury Cathedral. To continue on the circle tour

the bicycle headed for Southampton. The final lap from Southampton to Bournemouth went through the area known as the New Forest, but it had been planted some 600 years before.

The leave period ended and Jack was notified that he had been posted to 60 Group and 71 Wing of the RAF. After passing through these two headquarters Jack found himself near the small village of Balmedie, just north of Aberdeen Scotland. Jack arrived on August 20 1942, and discovered that he was now the Commanding Officer of a Coastal RDF Station with some 70 personnel under his control. The sudden shock of this much responsibility for a 21 year old was somewhat alleviated by the fact that he was billeted with a marvellous family by the name of Eaton. To Jack their home looked like a Castle and Mr Eaton was obviously a man of means. The home was called "Menie House". Memories include the best porridge ever tasted, happy evening gatherings in front of a huge fireplace, and the wonderful hospitality of the entire family. The hospitality included the invitation of his RCAF buddies, Jack Hanna and Clarence Woodman to come and spend time in the Castle. Jack Hanna spent two weeks with the Eatons as Jack's guest before moving on to the Shetlands. That is what you call real Scottish Hospitality.

Some mail caught up with Jack at Balmedie, and then just to confuse the Postal Service Jack was moved to RAF Monikie, just outside Dundee. Here he was confronted with a somewhat larger station and his "Command" now included units of the British Navy and Army. The Station was a cosmopolitan

place with servicemen from Canada, and New Zealand and very shortly a unit of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) moved in. While most of the unit was stationed in the Monikie Town Hall, Jack was again billeted nearby at the home of a charming old lady by the name of Mrs Smith. Her daughter had married a Canadian in the first World War so she had a soft spot for Canadians. The members of the WAAF were also billeted off base. Staffing at Monikie consisted of about 100 people and Jack was soon snowed under in the administration of such a large unit, plus the additional duties of supervision of construction of housing for the airmen. At this time there was considerable concern about a German raid on Coastal RDF Stations due to the top secret nature of the equipment. For this reason an Army contingent was under Jack's command to repel attackers - and Jack had his trusty Smith and Wesson at his side every night when he slept in the Station Control Room area. The Army group gave Jack some training in the operation and firing of a machine gun as well, so he was ready to repel the enemy.

Word from higher up convinced Jack that he would be at Monikie for some time so he quickly established the routines necessary to cope with all the responsibilities, and was able to use his room at the home of Mrs. Smith as a place to relax for an hour or two.

The duties of the C.O. covered about every aspect of life it seemed, from listening to tales of distress and sending someone on compassionate leave to making sure the the WAAF personnel had enough knickers. September 26 1942 is remembered as the day the first parcel of Canadian "goodies" arrived from home. Mrs Smith and Jack had a great time marvelling at each item as it was removed from the box.

The second in command was Sgt. Ernie Morris and he would usually eat with Jack at the Monikie Hall. One topic for discussion was the impending arrival of a contingent of WAAF, and the need for special arrangements. Many of the camp problems were usually discussed over meals and solutions found.

Sgt. Smith was the head Radio Mechanic with the responsibility of keeping the specialised radar equipment in operation. About this time Jack was invited to the nearby base of the Royal Navy Flying service and not only enjoyed the pleasure of the Officers Mess but was taken for a ride on a flying boat out over the North Sea.

It was in November that Sgt. Morris felt that Jack was confining himself to the station, and not getting any change of scene, and he strongly recommended that Jack join one of the "Liberty Runs" into Dundee some evening - and this was how Jack first discovered the "Palais" one of the popular dancing establishments in Dundee. Quite a change from the barn like arrangements back in Canada. The Palais was large with a good orchestra at one end, and the walls were lined with chesterfields and also tables for refreshments and food. It was here, while casually watching the dancers drift by that he noticed a stunning tall young lady dancing by in the arms of a very colourful Royal Marine Officer. Jack watched for some time and finally got up enough nerve to ask the beauty for a dance. Doris was her name and she was obviously a very good dancer.

From this first encounter Doris was eventually invited to the Station Christmas Party. A new Canadian Officer, P/O Lowman was temporarily attached to the Monikie Station over the Christmas and New Years season. Jack received leave at this time and went north to Balmedie to spend some time with the Eatons, and met the Eurasian daughter Ann who lived north of Aberdeen. At this time Bette was mourning the loss of her Army Husband who had been killed in an accident. Hairpins were in very short supply in Britain at that time and Jack recalls taking a selection, which he had received in a parcel from home.

Many parcels arrived around Christmas from as far away as Aunt Mae in Los Angeles. Some of the goodies were shared with Doris and her parents living at 33 Baxter Street in Dundee.

During this period Mrs Smith met Wynn (Doris) and really approved of this fine young girl, and since that confirmed Jacks own feelings that this was the girl he had been looking for, a ring was purchased, an engagement ring, and one evening in December Wynn and Jack walked down to Greens

Playhouse for a tea and cookies, and while enjoying the togetherness Jack asked that important question, and presented the ring to a very startled Wynn, who did accept. Jack sent a telegram and letter to his parents back in Canada. They were engaged to be married, but no decision was made for the wedding date.

Early in January 1943 Jack joined his friend Jack Hanna for a two week course put on by the RAF, somewhere in England. Jack also noted that RAF Monikie was getting many official visits from Army and Air Force officers. Maybe they were assessing the abilities of Jack because it was about that time that he received word of his promotion to the rank of Flying Officer. This would mean an increase in pay the next time he went into Dundee to collect some cash from his

account. Shortly after word of the promotion Jack was notified that he would be posted to Swanage in Southern England to form up a mobile RDF station for future overseas service. This would become the Air Ministry Experimental Station 8032 - or AMES 8032. It certainly wasn't an experimental station but maybe the RAF hoped to confuse potential enemy spies. The unit had two officers, F/O Jim Goodwin, Administrative officer and Jack as the Technical officer. A crew of RAF airmen formed up in Swanage and we were introduced to the mobile equipment that we would take with us. Basically it consisted of an Aerial Truck, a large flat bodied truck with a huge aerial that could rotate 360 degrees, a large truck containing the transmitter equipment, another large truck containing the receiver unit with its cathode ray tube display, two trucks, each carrying a huge diesel unit to provide electrical power to the radio station. Another truck was called the water bowser, and it was equipped with a large tank to supply fresh water for the unit. Cooking facilities on another truck to provide the needed items so that our two cooks could keep us going no matter where we ended up. We were a completely self contained unit and presumably once landed on the shore of some future war activity we could set up quickly and by means of radio or telephone links report on aircraft movement back to the command centre in the rear.

The entire crew realised that we were indeed slated for overseas activities, and this was emphasised by a three week posting for our entire mobile unit to Lord Louis Mountbattens Commando training school near Troon in Scotland. Here we were trained in beach landings and how to live off the land, four nights under canvas it was called, and how to march miles per day in a one mile run one mile walk pattern. At the end of the three weeks of rigorous training the crew was probably in the best physical condition of their lives up to that date. Jack recalls that he and Jim discussed the role of the officers during the beach landing and it was agreed that Jack would be the first to go when the front of the landing craft dropped. The landing craft headed into the Troon beach and when it grounded the front dropped and Jack fully laden with tin hat, sidearm, ammunition etc leaped into the water to promptly disappear. When he came up spluttering he saw the rest of the crew still standing on the ramp, waiting to see what happened. The landing craft had grounded on a sand bar and as a result everyone was soaked by the time we struggled to the beach.

The initial forming-up period at Swanage lasted four weeks, then two weeks leave, and Jack and Wynn decided that they should get married during this leave so Wynn offered to make arrangements with the Wishart Memorial Church. Sgt. Morris would be Best Man for Jack and a girl by the name of Jan

Simpson would stand up with Wynn in a small ceremony in the Church vestry. Jack obtained the necessary approval from the RCAF for his marriage and Jack and Wynn met with Rev. James H. Telfer to discuss their plans prior to the wedding. Apparently Jack passed scrutiny and the Rev. agreed to perform the ceremony and wished them the very best. March 10 1943 was the big day, and Wynn later reported that her Dad had to take a couple of days off to recuperate from the Wedding Party, and undoubtedly the loss of his daughter with the very good possibility that she would be going to Canada later. Only when

Jack and Wynn had children of their own did they fully realise the emotional impact their wedding would have had on Edward and Mary. The honeymoon consisted of seven days at the Royal British Hotel on Princes Street in Edinburgh. Early the next morning they were awakened by a knock on the door and the delivery of a tray with hot tea and scones. They never did find out the name of the sender. While in Edinburgh Wynn and Jack visited such diverse places as the Edinburgh Palais, very posh, with its revolving stage for the various orchestras, and the Edinburgh Art Gallery. At the Palais, Jalousie was a popular tango, and they both recall a very lovely song called the Isle of May being played. Movies, another place to visit and a Mickey Rooney- Judy Garland film called "For Me and My Gal". One day the twosome took a bus to the south-west to a small community called Tweedsmuir. Here they hiked in the hills, and had tea and scones in a delightful Inn, served by what appeared to be a full fledged British Butler. Many years later, 1991 to be exact, Jack and Wynn returned to this very Inn, with friends Jack and Jerry Greswell. The present day owner remembered the "Butler" who apparently served with the Inn for many years.

While Jack was taking his Commando training in Troon, Wynn managed to come to Glasgow for a weekend, for more dancing and movies, and just the chance to be together and do a little day dreaming about their plans for the future. One final weekend in Dundee and when Wynn saw Jack off at the Dundee railway station on April 26 1943 it would be over two years before they would see each other again at that same station. Jack rejoined his unit and after some more short trips about the country he and the unit embarked at Liverpool - destination unknown. On May 1st the unit was given a new address A 9943 RAF c/o APO N 4370. That certainly didn't tell us very much. Jim Goodwin and Jack shared a cabin with Bob McComb from Toronto and Woodie his administrative Officer. This was the start of an eleven day voyage aboard a large passenger ship, formerly a Castle Liner, used in the prewar days for the Southampton to Cape Town run. The convoy consisted of several large passenger ships, an aircraft carrier and many Naval ships patrolling the perimeter. The amateur navigators assured us that after going west for a couple of days we were now going south and the increasing number of sun bathers indicated that it was certainly getting warmer. The first week could only be classified as a pleasure cruise with excellent weather, excellent food which everyone really appreciated after the limited food variety in Britain. Also a plush dining room, where we enjoyed for the eleven days some of the advantages of being an Officer in the RCAF. Here we met other Radar Officers, indicating that several mobile Radar units were on board. Two of the men we got to know quite well were killed by land mines in Sicily several weeks later. However until our convoy crept through the Straits of Gibraltar, at night, we were not sure of our destination. We now knew it would be North Africa. Just before our ship reached Gibraltar the convoy was spotted by a German Bomber that unloaded bombs around the aircraft carrier, fortunately without a hit. Now that the convoy had been spotted added security took place and after clearing the Straits our particular ship raced for the harbour at Oran, and ordered us off

immediately even though it was 11pm. They expected the ship might be attacked. So everyone ended up on the Dock and no provision to move all the men. As a result everyone had to bunk where they could on the Dock. In the morning Jack discovered he had been sleeping on a coal pile - soft coal he hoped. Transportation arrived in the morning and the unit was hustled away to a former French Air Base outside of Oran. Jim and Jack shared a room in the Officers quarters and to their amazement found the the toilet in the adjoining washroom consisted of a hole in the floor.

The unit spent several days in Oran waiting for the twelve vehicles and trying to keep cool. The heat was wonderful, but it meant keeping cool involved trips to the nearby Mediterranean to bathe and swim. Who could really complain about that. By some postal miracle many letters caught up to them in Oran, and that along with drive-in movies, African style, they kept fully occupied. Jack was thrilled at this opportunity to see North Africa and he and Jim ranged far and wide during this waiting time.

Finally the vehicles were assembled and we joined a land convoy leaving Oran for Algiers. Jim and Jack, because of their Officer status were equipped with a Staff Car, which looked much like a Station Wagon, so they could carry their tent, folding beds, folding washstands and such equipment in the car.

With Jack driving they headed east for Algiers with the other eleven trucks in line astern. AMES 8032 was located on a lovely farm just outside Algiers, and here they set up their equipment to make sure everything worked and to incorporate one or two modifications.

Again they were near the Med, so much cooling off in the beautiful blue waters. Their address was now changed to BNAF standing for British North African Force.

The unit spent about four weeks outside Algiers and during this period Jim and Jack explored much of the city. While in Algiers Jack learned that cousin Ray Carson was stationed in Casablanca but had no opportunity to contact him. With the conflict about over in the Tunis area, Jack and Jim realised that the next step would likely be an invasion of Sicily or Italy and that our unit was going to be involved. It was about this time that AMES 8032 was formally attached to the U.S. Airforce. The address changed again to Attached to Provisional Signals A.W. Battalion APO 766 U.S. Army. This provided Jim and Jack

with the hint that they would be landing on enemy soil with the Americans. One immediate advantage, at least for Jack, was the switch to American rations -- hmmm - good. The British boys on the crew had a somewhat difficult time adjusting to peanut butter, succotash and grits. A letter from Wynn advised Jack that she was now serving as a periodic night time fire watcher at her plant.

Around July 1 the unit prepared for travel to Tunis, and they were soon travelling in convoy style over very dusty roads and in terrific heat. The traffic continued to increase as many military units moved toward Tunis and the upcoming invasion. When the convoy entered Tunisia the signs of war quickly developed as the convoy wended its way through alleys of burned and destroyed trucks, tanks and other military equipment. Traffic congestion slowed down the movement of the AMES 8032 convoy, but they were eventually routed by the overworked M.P.s to a site in the Cap Bon peninsula. Here with literally

thousands of other military invasion forces they awaited orders to embark. Living conditions became rather primitive, and latrines consisted of huge slit trenches without any shelter. Jack recalls one ride in a jeep, when he was going to H.Q. for information. The trip started with the windscreen in the down position, but within a few miles, the intense heat and complete lack of humidity meant that their eyeballs could not move for lack of moisture. The windscreen was put up for the balance of the trip.

About July 6th Jim and Jack received orders for the embarkation for Sicily. The crew and equipment would be split up into units of one or two and would proceed to Sicily on various American tank landing craft in a convoy that would sail from the port of Tunis at dusk on the night of July 13th. The initial landings were planned for July 10th. Jack was assigned to a large American Tank landing craft (TLC) which was carrying a huge load of ammunition and assorted American trucks. The passengers consisted of men from about every conceivable unit, based on the premise that if some of the ships were lost only part of any unit would be lost. Shortly after departure Jack, who was in khaki shorts and shirt, was approached a member of the ships American crew and invited to join the ships captain for dinner. He was ushered into a spacious cabin, and invited to join about ten others for an excellent dinner, served on white table cloth, with shining silver - a sight he had not seen for some time, and as it turned out a sight he would not see again for several months. Jack does not recall sleeping as the excitement of landing on enemy soil the next morning filled his thoughts. It was also hard to find a comfortable spot on the very crowded decks. It was much too hot to go below.

Early the next morning the convoy steamed into the harbour at Gela, on the south coast of Sicily. Since the one dock had been destroyed, the TLC moved up to the beach and the bows opened and a huge ramp lowered to the sandy bottom. A friendly truck driver told Jack to climb aboard his rig. So Jack rode ashore, without even getting his feet wet. Now the moment of truth. Did all the equipment and men reach the shore safely. While some Sicilians glared at the men coming ashore, most smiled and waved at the invaders.

By nightfall they had been directed to their set-up location, on a high bluff overlooking Gela and the Med. During the day all the crew slowly assembled at the site, and the first order of business was to dig fox holes for themselves and somehow construct a mosquito netting tent over the hole. They were in malaria country. The next morning, after listening to the rumble of guns to the north, and some anti aircraft fire to scare off night raiders, they awoke to discover that the aerial truck had not yet turned up. Much searching throughout the area, being very careful to avoid mines which had already claimed two radar types, and no sign of the truck. It was decided that Jack should fly back to North Africa to find out what had happened. Jack was told that he should go to the Gela airport the next morning, and could probably get a flight on a DC 3, which was slated to bring in some medical supplies. Jim drove Jack to the small airfield that consisted of one small building and a grass field, long grass as Jack soon discovered. One American soldier, the entire airfield staff, and one British Army Officer

met him. The British Major also wished to get back to Africa. The American advised them that one DC 3 was expected but it would land at the very south end of the field and would not taxi up to the Control building. So they would have to walk to the aircraft. The reason, as the American friend told them, was the danger from thermal mines which had been dropped over the airport the night before. The British Major and Jack quickly realised that they would have to walk through the mines to reach the aircraft. Fortunately it was still fairly early in the morning so the heat from the sun had probably not reached the point of setting off the mines. The two of them separated by about 100 yards and gingerly made their way to the aircraft, trying anxiously to see if they could spot any mines in the high grass. As Jack's Dad would say "Someone could get killed at this game". They climbed into the waiting aircraft. Two passengers for the return flight to central Tunisia.

The DC 3 had some seats along the side, and they flew back to Africa at an altitude of 100 feet to avoid enemy air attack. The huge side cargo door was open so they had a great view out over the Med, plus some cooling breezes. The two passengers landed at a large American air base in central

Tunisia, and after a big bowl of Ice cream (will wonders never cease) the travellers were fixed up with a long jeep ride to Tunis, and in Jack's case on to the Allied HQ, in particular the Admiral in charge of shipping. Shortly after Jack's arrival at the Admirals tent, the dreaded problem of dysentery struck and Jack was stretched out on the floor of the tent when help arrived to haul him to a nearby British Army Hospital in Carthage (of ancient History fame). Jack does remember the kind ministrations of a Scottish nurse, but his big worry was getting back to his own unit in Sicily. It was customary for sick and injured to be placed in something of a floating reserve, from which they could be dispatched to any unit needing extra bodies.

Fortunately after about three days of rest and medication, Jack was fine for a quick flight back to Sicily to rejoin his unit and to find that the missing aerial truck had turned up at the bluff overlooking Gela. The unit was in operation sending information back to base. British and Canadian forces under General Montgomery slowly moved up the east side of Sicily, while American forces under General George Patton, which had landed at Gela, swept west and around the west end of Sicily to take Palermo. About this time AMES 8032 was alerted to move to the north coast of Sicily. The unit packed up, and the small convoy headed directly north through Sicily, with its spectacular views of small villages hanging on the side of cliffs, and on top of mountains. Upon reaching the north coast they entered the combat zone, and the sad sight of dead American soldiers waiting for burial. The convoy followed the American forces to Cap Millazzo, and set up for operation looking north over the Med to the Islands of Lipari, and toward Naples. The first job was to bury a dead Italian soldier and to complete the graves of several German soldiers who had been left partially buried in the hasty retreat of their comrades.

The new location at Cape Orlando had the usual magnificent view north and we could just see the Lipari Islands, at that time still in the hands of the enemy. While in this

location Jack had the opportunity to get into the recently captured town of Messina and scrounged through shattered buildings to help himself to anything that was useful, like a typewriter. Jack made a couple of trips to the field HQ of General Montgomery at that time. During these weeks Jack could send home to Wynn, small packets containing almonds, smoking tobacco for pipe smoking Edward, and the unbelievable luxury of real, honest to goodness silk hosiery.

With the final clearance of all hostile forces from Sicily, the next move would be into the Italian peninsula. AMES 8032 was advised that it would be moved to the Island of Salina in the Lipari Islands to provide radar coverage over the Salerno invasion area and to assist allied aircraft in trouble. To do this two Controllers would be assigned to the station, with the necessary radio equipment to be in constant contact with allied bombers and fighters. In addition a High Speed Royal Navy Launch would be stationed on the Island so that it could rescue any downed airmen. The GCI controllers, members of the RAF, were F/O Tom Glaze and F/O John Libby.

The trip to Salina by two landing craft was a rather memorable experience. The landing craft sailing from Milazzo carried the complete convoy of trucks, plus all personnel. They sailed in late afternoon well aware that they could be subject to attack by enemy aircraft from the mainland, but all went well and the two ships approached Salina about midnight. Not a light to be seen. The blackout was complete, and while they had been assured that no enemy forces were known to be on the Island, the American Naval Officers in charge decided to approach very carefully and very quietly. Everyone was asked to keep quiet. The two towering extinct volcanoes, slowly loomed up in the darkness. The lead ship carrying Jack slowly and very quietly moved into what was thought to be the harbour, while a naval look out whispered directions. Everyone strained their eyes looking for some docking facilities as the blackness of the Island seemed to enfold them. The lookout started to report "Another thirty feet" - but the rest couldn't see a thing. "Another twenty feet" he whispered, and at that moment they hit something with a earth shaking crash. If the Germans were waiting for us they sure knew we had arrived. Complete silence, everyone ducked down, and then slowly raised their heads to peek over the railing. They continued to wait. The naval lookout was whispering some unprintable comments. Not a move, not a sound as they waited some twenty minutes. Then a voice from the dock asking if we were the "Tedeschi" (German). Our lookout assured the voice that we were American and British. More silence then the voice assured us that the Tedeschi had left the Island. A Big sigh of relief after about one hour of high tension. It was agreed that we would not make any further moves until dawn.

It is doubtful that any of the people aboard the two landing craft had much sleep, but with the arrival of dawn, the two naval skippers wished to get us ashore as quickly as possible. Landing operations started immediately, and since the island had only one cart path across to the north side it would be a precarious trip. The road was designed for about three small cars and a great number of carts then in use on the island. The first problem developed as they tried to get out of

the harbour area. The trucks were too high for the narrow street, and a balcony on a private home would not permit the large trucks to get by. Before breakfast Jack was on top of the truck with a sledge hammer taking his turn at demolishing the balcony, while the sad owner waved his arms. The lighter and smaller trucks left as soon as possible for the set-up point near the village of Salina, on the north-east side of the island. The cart path wound its way through olive groves, up and over the valley between the two extinct volcanoes. Jack remained with the two heavy trucks carrying the transmitter and receiving equipment. Shortly after leaving the harbour the transmitter truck slowly climbing up the narrow road to the pass, slipped off the road and rolled down a slope into an olive grove. Fortunately no one was hurt, but here we had a major piece of the equipment on its side, down a slope about fifty feet from the road. Not a tow truck in sight - in fact no truck of any kind. After much consultation it was agreed that we would have to dig a cavity to roll the truck upright, then dig a road back up to the cart path in the hope of winching the truck back up to the path. It was now about 8am, no breakfast and it was getting hot. They worked and sweated and slowly some islanders came to watch, and then to help. A pulley appeared. Ladies started to come with some food and much vino. It wasn't so hot after all, in fact everything took on a rosy hue, with much laughter, some singing and the general appearance that everyone was having fun. About mid afternoon they had the transmitter truck upright and ready to winch back to the cart path. When it was back on the path much cheering and a few more shots of vino to celebrate and they started for the other side arriving after dark, and Jack was so exhausted that he just put his bedroll on some deck like area that he found in the intense blackout. The next morning Jack awoke to find the islanders walking right by with amused glances his way. He had bedded down on the entrance to the local Church.

Within a few hours everything was ready for operation, and the crew, controllers, and naval personnel from the launch soon settled into the routine of daily, and nightly operations. Jim and Jack eventually found an apartment that suited their needs. Should mention that a S/L Medical Officer arrived with the launch. He had enough equipment to look after any ditched air crew that would be rescued and brought to the island. It is remembered as a delightful time. Beautiful scenery, wonderful weather and the excitement of some exploring, including that of a crashed German Air Force Junkers, just at the beach area.

Not a beach really. Just a cove. They watched wine made in the old fashioned way, with the village lassies crushing the grapes with their feet.

One night some of us had the pleasure of a night trip on the Naval launch to see nearby Stromboli, with its active volcano. When we blundered into a blacked out British/American naval convoy we had a few tense moments while those in charge of the convoy assured themselves that we were not a German High speed launch.

Shortly after our arrival on Salina the local Chief of Police invited Jim and Jack to his office to show us a stack of guns that he had collected from everyone on the island. This was in accordance with his instructions from Allied HQ. Theoretically we were allied troops on an occupied enemy island.

However we were treated as rescuers, more than as the enemy. While with the Chief of Police he wanted to show us that the guns were indeed operational, although some looked like antiques. He picked up a revolver and shot a huge hole through what turned out to be the bathroom door. We were convinced, and happy that he liked us. He then asked us to take any guns that we liked. Jack picked out two, one a modern pistol and one an antique. The antique gun is now in a frame on the wall of Louise's apartment in Windsor. The other revolver was eventually turned over to a collector. Jack recalls that a Mr. Vargona wished Jack to become his Canadian agent for the sale of wine, olives, almonds and capers. Mr Vargona gave Jack a silver St. Christophers medallion to give to his mother after the war.

During this period of time, American and British forces, under General Mark Clark, and after a very shaky start, finally firmly established their beach head at Salerno. British and Canadian forces led by General Bernard Montgomery were slowly moving up from landings at Reggio in the toe of Italy. The forces finally met south of Salerno, and then moved forward towards Naples. It was at this time that the Salina unit received their marching orders, and AMES 8032, was again on the move aboard two American landing craft, sailing toward Salerno. Also about this time Mussolini was forced from power and King

Victor Emmanuel of Italy signed a peace treaty with the advancing Allies.

Mail from Dundee and Canada got through once in awhile, but the next move would throw things out of kilter again. AMES 8032 was again reassigned, this time back to the RAF and placed under the Desert Air Force for administration and supplies, and this meant that they returned to British rations, which the crew found a bit unsuitable for the hot summer weather. Steak and Kidney puddings and something called plum duff were our normal meals, and were almost guaranteed to put everyone to sleep on a hot summer day. They all dreamed about seeing fresh white bread. Crackers lost all appeal.

The unit sailed from Salina on Oct 6th, with their first stop at Salerno. Here we saw the devastation of the long fought battle to get the bridgehead established. German prisoners were being marched down to the waterfront for shipment back to Africa. We went ashore while our Naval escort decided what to do. They were awaiting clearance to sail into Naples, which had just been captured. While ashore we saw the temporary graves of both German and Allied troops dug wherever the men had fallen, with just a stick and maybe dog tags to mark the spot. Naples harbour was now clear to accept the two ship convoy, so we sailed around the Sorrentine Peninsula under ideal weather conditions, marvelling at the beauty of the area, including the Isle of Capri. On landing in Naples we were advised that the Germans had mined all public buildings with time delay bombs, and therefore be very careful. For this reason our unit was told to occupy a school building at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius just outside Naples. Because all utilities and services had been destroyed, the remaining residents of Naples were in a desperate situation, and we observed some people trying to get a trickle of water out of fire hydrants. Fear of an epidemic brought in Medical crews to fumigate everyone with DDT. AMES 8032 was included in the mass fumigation.

Maybe that is why Jack's hair turned white. The stay at Herculaneum, at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius was short but most interesting because we had time to visit Pompeii, the ruins in Herculaneum, and the odd trip into Naples (staying well clear of public buildings). We were told that we would likely be sent to the east coast of Italy in the vicinity of Brindisi, to provide early warning, and ground controlled interception facilities (GCI). Yugoslavia, across the Adriatic was still firmly in German hands.

About the middle of October 1943, our convoy moved east across Italy, going through Potenza, and seeing more of the destruction of the recent fighting. On arrival in the Brindisi area the unit set up a few miles inland on the flat plains just to the west of the harbour. Our RDF equipment looked out over the Adriatic to warn of enemy aircraft coming from occupied Greece or Yugoslavia. After several months of almost continuous movement we were now established, and for Jack it meant settling down until late April 1944.

With the approach of winter and the firm resistance of the German forces the advance of allied forces was slowed, and eventually stopped, to settle in over the winter months. AMES 8032 finally settled into a routine at the Brindisi location, and permanent housing facilities were found for all members of the crew adjacent to the RDF site. It was while in this location that our unit first saw 'window' a device developed by the German Air Force to blind RDF. Basically it consisted of large quantities of tin foil strips dumped from the approaching aircraft that created the impression of a mass raid on our RDF screens. In effect the RDF screen became a mass of echoes making it impossible for the Controllers to direct the Allied aircraft toward the hostile aircraft. Shortly we could see the raid on Bari just to the north of our location which inflicted major damage on allied shipping and dock facilities.

While at the Brindisi location Jack did have the opportunity to see Taranto several times, and to tour about the entire southeast section of Italy.

Jack also recalls that a major eruption of Mount Vesuvius created black snow over the Brindisi area. With the arrival of Spring Jack was transferred north to AMES 899, on April 22 1944, just outside Foggia and here he saw the rapid development of large American air bases for arriving squadrons of aircraft which would carry the air war into Austria as well as the occupied areas across the Adriatic Sea. On August 2 1944, Jack handed over the station to a Radar crew from the Union of South Africa.

Jack now had a couple of short postings, first to AMES 8031 for 22 days, then AMES 8044 for 11 days. In both instances Jack was filling in for the regular C.O. who was absent for other duties. Then a posting to AMES 8016 at Peschici out on the end of the spur of land which jutted out into the Adriatic.

The move to AMES 8016 took place on September 4 1944, and Jack would remain with this unit until May 5 1945. The RDF equipment was located on a high section of land overlooking the Adriatic, while the crew was stationed in a very large building on the outskirts of the village. It was quite a beautiful location from a scenery point of view, and looked out over a wide clear beach, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. Jack was appointed Town Maggiore by the British High

Command and was expected to represent the Allied Forces in that rather remote corner of Italy.

In the late summer of 1944 Jack joined Bob McComb for a two week leave. We had decided to visit Rome, Florence, Pisa, Naples and the Isle of Capri. For transportation we hitch - hiked on jeeps, trucks and airplanes. For example by showing up at the military air field near Florence we were able to get a ride to Naples. While in Pisa and Florence we visited the Ponte Vecchio, the only bridge still spanning the Arno after the fighting. We also climbed to the top of the Leaning Tower in Pisa and braved a look over the leaning side. However the main memories focus on the beautiful art work, paintings, sculptures and architecture we saw on every side. In the evenings entertainment could be found consisting of movies and night clubs for Allied troops - we even met Argentinean soldiers at the Music Box, a popular club for the Allied troops. After the flight to Naples Bob and Jack hitched rides to Sorrento, so they could take a trip to the famous Isle of Capri. We met two English girls, from the British Army also waiting for the next boat to Capri. We joined forces for the visit and were able to rent carriages for touring this very scenic place on a warm sunny afternoon. Back to Rome again to tour more of this historic city and to enjoy some very good meals at the Roman Hotels, some of which were reserved for members of the Military. The favourite for the Canadians was the Albergo Massimo D'Azeglio, renamed during the war to the "Chateau Laurier", and reserved for Canadian Officers. Then it was good bye and back to our units.

While located at Peschici Jack witnessed huge bombing formations forming up for their raids into Austria. The flat lands around Foggia became one huge aerodrome. Raids of 500 to 700 aircraft would pass overhead and the roar of the climbing aircraft literally shook the ground in the village. It was an awesome sight. AMES 8016 watched for the return of the flotilla later in the day and provided considerable radio help, and also operated as a rescue unit for damaged aircraft that had to crash land or be abandoned due to damage. As a result of one of these rescue operations Jack was given a used parachute by the American who had to bail out over the mountains several miles from our location. We found him and brought him back to our station. A large part of the parachute silk came home with Jack, and some years later his mother Olive would make a christening dress for a very young Linda for her christening in the Presbyterian Church at Hensall ON in 1948.

Jack looked forward to the weekly ration run into Foggia, because this was an overnight trip offering Jack the opportunity to see a movie or live entertainment. He recalls that Lunt and Fontaine, famous actors from Broadway dined at a nearby table at the Officers Hotel. Jack had acquired a radio in Sicily, from some shattered building and does remember how much he enjoyed the music on the American Armed Forces Radio which featured the songs of Dinah Shore and the Andrews sisters.

Recollections of Peschici include a very fine gentleman, who worked in the unit kitchen. He had been an employee of the Italian State Railway before the war and had brought

his family to the comparative safety of Peschici after their regular home was destroyed in the early days of the Italian campaign.

He very kindly invited Jack to join him and his family in their small upstairs apartment in the village. It was here that Jack was introduced to roasting chestnuts around the hot coals on a platter shaped firebox. Members of the family helped Jack to acquire a few words of Italian which did make it easier for his duties as Town Major. However Jack did find that Peschici had several villagers, who had spent their early years in the USA and acted as Jack's interpreters when serious matters required his attention. Jack spent many an evening writing letters home to Wynn on a fairly good typewriter again one of the spoils of war acquired in Sicily. Mail from home which had been a real problem during the African -Sicilian activities now became almost routine, with the mail being picked up weekly during the ration run to Foggia. Jack Wadland, and Ernie Dixon representing the Red Cross and Salvation Army of Canada, dropped by the station periodically, to supply writing paper, candy, cigarettes and other goodies to the resident Canadians.

Jack was selected for an RAF Commanders Course which took place on Malta from March 5th to March 24th 1945. Jack had been promoted to Flight Lieutenant in January of 1944 and this special training may have been part of RAF plans to prepare RDF forces for the Pacific Campaign. While in Malta

Jack enjoyed the privileges of the RAF Officers facilities, which included movies between late afternoon tea and the more formal evening meal at 9 pm. Jack also had the opportunity to meet some of the Islanders and was invited to tour the Catacombs with one particular family. Jack returned to AMES 8016 at Peschici in late March.

The German forces slowly retreated north, but the Allied forces had to fight for every foot it seemed, with the result that the Italian Campaign moved slowly through the year of 1944, with the army slogging its way north. The Front lines in the winter of 1944 were located above Florence and across to the Po

River valley. Jack was in Peschici when the German forces surrendered on the Italian front in May 1945 and recalls that he took the station Very Pistol to add some colourful flares to the celebration in our small village of Peschici that night. It was maybe hard to believe, and the thought that Jack would soon be

returning to Scotland (he hoped) made it a wonderful time of joy and happiness.

When the war in Italy ended Jack was notified that he would have two weeks of leave before he would be shipped home - and the shipping would of course depend on the availability of passenger ships. Jack immediately headed for Rome to check in at the Maple Leaf Hotel in the center of the city. He

had been there before on leave and enjoyed the opportunities to see the ancient parts of the city and of course to enjoy some Italian cuisine. While at the Maple Leaf Hotel Jack met his friend Ron Blair and about the same time made the acquaintance of S/L Butcher the Presbyterian padre for Canadian forces.

During conversations we discovered that Padre Butcher was going north to the foothills of the Alps to return the Secretary of the Waldensian Church to his home. The Secretary had not been able to get back to his family for over a year as a result of being in Rome when the Allied forces took the City in May

1944. Padre Butcher asked Ron and Jack if they would like to join him for the trip north. We jumped at the chance.

The trip north to Florence again provided another reminder of the ferocity of the fighting. The sides of the roads were often lined for miles with the rusting hulks of many pieces of war equipment, such as tanks, artillery, and trucks. Shattered buildings and destroyed bridges, now replaced with Bailey

Bridges, and the utter devastation told us that it would be some years before this area returned to some form of normalcy.

After leaving Florence we entered Milan which had just recently fallen to the Allied forces, but did have a chance to visit the magnificent Cathedral, which had escaped any major damage. From this point our truck with the driver, the Padre, Ron and Jack, and the Italian Church Secretary started to work its

way north to the Alps, and soon we were into the towering ranges, and quite close to the Swiss border. The residents of the Valley (Torre Pellice) welcomed their Secretary home with tremendous excitement, and that night the four members of the Allied forces, almost the first seen by the residents, were

welcomed in a manner that could only be called 'Fantastic". While the memories have grown dim, Jack will always remember the fish course freshly caught in the mountain streams being served on musical platters. Music boxes were built into each platter. We suspect that the people of the Valley had saved all their very best in food and wine for that very happy event. It was truly a night to remember.

After returning to Milan Ron and Jack decided to hitch-hike to Venice, and crossed the vast Po River on one of the longest Bailey Bridges built by British Army Engineers. It was the only bridge, because all of the original bridges were in ruins from Allied bombardment. The travellers spent about three days

in Venice, and of course climbed the Campanile for a great view over the City. Like any ordinary tourists we visited all the special locations and had coffee with the pigeons in St.Marks Square. Then back to Rome to wait for that ship for England.

Jack sailed from Naples on June 20 1945, and does not recall anything in particular about the trip, except it was now peace time and the ship could sail with full lights, and without fear of attack. It would be classified as a pleasure cruise, but contained all service people anxious to get home. The ship

landed at Southampton on June 27th, and Jack was taken to RCAF Bournemouth. It was a very crowded Bournemouth because all the RCAF prisoners-of-war had just been flown back to England. Many of the former prisoners were squandering their back pay in some of the biggest crap games that ever took place in Bournemouth.

Leave for Scotland was quickly arranged and the records show that Jack left for Scotland on June 30th for a meeting with Wynn. They had not seen each other since April of 1943, but had certainly kept the postal system busy with many letters during the long separation. Wynn met Jack at the Dundee

Railway Station, and some changes must have been noted in appearance, like lots of gray hair for Jack.

It was decided to go to Edinburgh for a week as a second honeymoon, with plans to meet Jan and her husband Bill in Ayr for the remaining days of the leave. While in

Edinburgh the reunited couple again bussed to Tweedsmuir for a day at the Crook Inn. However while in Edinburgh Jack received a telegram requesting his return to Bournemouth to complete arrangements to get back to Canada, for onward shipment to the Pacific. Jack had volunteered for the Pacific War theatre, which was still in full action at this time, but all signs pointed to an early collapse of the Japanese Empire.

On reaching Bournemouth Jack found that some delay had materialised, and he would have more time. A telegram was sent at once to Wynn telling her to come, and bring her bathing suit and the bank book. Jack made arrangements to stay at a B. & B. in Bournemouth, and the young couple spent some time getting reacquainted after the long absence. They remember it as a very happy time of movies, hiking, dining and dancing. Bournemouth in July is always beautiful. Within a few days Jack received orders to embark for Canada, and was soon on his way to Glasgow, to board the Ille de France along with several thousand other Canadian service men for the trip to Halifax. The lady who owned the B. & B. suggested that Wynn stay a few extra days to take advantage of the summer weather.

The trip to Canada was uneventful. No bombs, no submarines, no blackout. After arrival at Halifax the RCAF contingent was shipped to Lachine QC to await arrangements for what was called disembarkation leave. This took several days and of course the servicemen flooded into Montreal to start remembering the Canada we had left almost four years before. Jack does recall almost getting sick on a super rich banana split. The next move was to Trenton for the official start of leave on August 10th for one full month to September 10th. Jack immediately arranged to head for home and was met at the London railway station by Dad and some of the Schroeders. The station was crammed with returning service men and their families - it was an emotional moment for everyone. A few days later Jack hitch-hiked to Sarnia to visit Mother, who was living with Lola Webster at that time. While in Sarnia VJ day was announced. The war was over. The city went wild, as this marked the end of WWII. It also meant that Jack would no longer be on his way to the Pacific. On Sept. 10th Jack returned to Trenton, then moved to nearby RCAF Mountain View for all the arrangements to be de-mobbed as it was called it. On Sept 29th 1945, Jack left Mountain View as a civilian, after about three years and nine months with the RCAF.